

**PUBLIC MAKING OF MASCULINITIES IN BARACK OBAMA'S *DREAMS*  
FROM MY FATHER AND NELSON MANDELA'S *LONG WALK TO FREEDOM***

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**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirement of the Award of  
Masters of Arts Degree in Literature of Masinde Muliro University of Science and  
Technology.**

**November, 2025**

**DECLARATION**

This thesis is my original work prepared with no other than the indicated sources and support and has not been presented elsewhere for a degree or any other award

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The undersigned certify that they have read and hereby recommend for acceptance of Masinde Muliro University and Technology a research thesis entitled '**Public Making of Masculinities in Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father* and Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom***'.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my family members

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## ABSTRACT

This study analyzed Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father* and Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* to flesh out political masculinities constructed by the two leaders in their autobiographies. It examined how Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela narrate their life stories, facilitating the emergence of narratives that reflect the development of masculinities within their respective contexts. Additionally, the study interrogated how these leaders articulate their experiences to reveal aspects of their iconic images. To this effect, the study analyzed the gap between Nelson Mandela's and Barack Obama's self-portrayals in their texts and the iconic expectations of their masculinities in their texts. The objectives of the study are as follows: to analyze how social, cultural, and political contexts shape the masculinities of Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela; to examine how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama are constructed as icons by the public persona in their autobiographical narratives; and to assess the narrative techniques employed by both Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama that challenge the expectations surrounding their iconography. The study was guided by Michel Foucault's theory of power and discourse, as well as Judith Butler's gender theory of performance and performativity. Judith Butler's theory examined how masculinities are constructed through repeated performances and societal expectations, allowing for an analysis of how Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela present themselves in their narratives and how their portrayals reflect or challenge societal norms regarding masculinity. Michel Foucault's theories help to understand how the narratives in their autobiographies shape the public personas and contribute to the construction of political masculinities. This framework facilitated an exploration of how these figures negotiated their masculinities within the power structures of their respective societies. Together, these two theories provided a comprehensive lens for examining the complex interplay between individual masculinities, societal expectations, and the political contexts in which Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela operate. The study employed an analytical study research design and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. Ultimately, this research aims to offer insights into the study of autobiography as a means of understanding political figures and the strategies they use to shape perceptions of themselves. By exploring how these two politicians construct their masculinities within their autobiographies, the study sheds light on their roles in defining concepts of black masculinity. The findings show that Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama exhibit traditional, hyper, emancipatory, performative and interactional masculinities that were mutually inclusive as a result of the prevailing context and power dynamics. These masculinities showcase Nelson Mandela's and Barack Obama's unique approach to political masculinity often challenging traditional and stereotype societal expectations surrounding masculinity in politics and leadership thereby inspiring readers on notions of leadership and understanding concepts of masculinities. The findings reveal there is a contradiction between the ways Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama conceptualize their selfhood in their autobiographies and the symbolic expectations associated with their public images.

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## OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Iconography:** In this study iconography refers to how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama, as authors, are constructed by the narrative's public persona as icons. It pertains to the imagery, symbols and narratives that contribute to the readers perception of the two leaders as iconic figures. The study views an icon as a role model, a public figure who is respected and seen as a source of inspiration. An icon here is a renowned public figure who has a huge impact on the global roadmap in leadership, more so leadership by people of minority race in spaces where they were seen as marginalized with all those challenges and have succeeded. They are seen as a source of moral inspiration.

**Political Masculinities:** Political masculinities refer to the specific forms of masculinities that are constructed, performed, and recognized within political contexts. This includes the behaviors, attitudes, and identities that are deemed acceptable or aspirational for male political leaders. In the study, it focuses on how Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela embody, challenge, or redefine these masculinities through their autobiographical narratives and how these representations resonate with societal expectations. The research looks at political masculinities as a process whereby somebody/someone is being nurtured through many ways of cultural and social upbringing and shaping to become a role public leader.

**Public/s:** In this study, "public/s" refers to the readership that engages with the autobiographies of Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela, including but not limited to readers, academic and scholarly analysis that engage

with, interpret, and respond to the narratives presented by the two political figures. In this context, the term ‘public’ encompasses the various stakeholders who interact with, interpret, and respond to the public personas and narratives presented by Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama in their autobiographies.

**Public Making:** Public making involves the processes through which individuals, particularly political figures, are constructed and understood as public personas in the autobiographies. This includes the ways in which autobiographical narratives, and public discourse contribute to shaping the identities and legacies of these figures. In the context of the study, it examines how Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela leverage their autobiographies to craft their public images and influence perceptions of their political masculinities in their texts.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the study

The construction of political masculinities is a nuanced and multifaceted process, deeply intertwined with personal narrative, societal expectations, and narrative personas. Autobiographies of political figures serve as pivotal texts that not only recount the individual life stories of these leaders but also reflect and shape the broader socio-political landscapes from which they emerge. As a tool of power, politicians use the autobiographies to leverage their public images and influence their perception. Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father* and Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* are exemplary narratives that illustrate the complexities of political masculinities within distinct historical and cultural contexts.

Leaders often present two distinct performed narratives: one crafted for their audience and a private one reflecting their true selves (Atkins & Gaffney, 2020). This aligns with Gbadamosi (2021) idea that individuals, especially those in leadership, possess dual personas—a public face for public appearance and a private face for private or human appearance. Political leaders leverage autobiographical narratives to construct a public persona that aligns with the virtues and ethics expected to their office. This “persona” is a carefully constructed perception, distinct from their genuine/actual person/character of the narrator that acts as a mask to manage impressions and potentially conceal the true nature of the author (Atkins & Gaffney, 2020). Although the performed persona is different from the real/actual one, the ‘masking’ or concealing as done by the public figure are not necessarily deceptive but rather serve to distinguish their public persona, often rooted in their civil duty, from their private/personal lives, as public and

personal /private expectations can diverge (Atkins & Gaffney, 2020). Only the performed persona is politically relevant since he is the actively cultivated one producing the public set of traits as seen from the texts hence forming a perception (Atkins & Gaffney, 2020). This perceived view is created through a succession of performances of self and narrative and the retelling of these by others (Moore, 2015). Since narratives of leadership are performed, the current study is interested in both the persona (the perceived construction) that forms the iconographical images and the real/the true self as brought out in the autobiography.

Political masculinities are shaped by a myriad of factors, including cultural norms, historical legacies, and the personal experiences that inform a leader's masculinities. For Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela, their journeys are not merely accounts of personal triumphs or struggles; they are also embedded in the larger narratives of race, apartheid, and resistance. Barack Obama's narrative is situated within the context of a post-civil rights America, grappling with the legacies of racism and the quest for identity as a biracial individual. Conversely, Nelson Mandela's autobiography emerges from the backdrop of apartheid South Africa, where his life story epitomizes the struggle against systemic oppression and the fight for equality.

In their autobiographies, both leaders navigate complex terrains of race, class, and gender, employing their narratives as tools for self-definition and public engagement. Through their stories, they articulate their understanding of masculinity, often challenging traditional notions that equate political power with aggression and dominance. Instead, they present alternative masculinities that incorporate vulnerability, resilience, and moral integrity, thereby redefining what it means to be a political leader in their respective contexts (Slate,2014).

The concept of public making via a narrative persona is central to understanding how these leaders forge their masculinities in the eyes of diverse audiences. Through their autobiographies, political leaders construct and negotiate their public images, alongside their private ones, influencing how they are perceived and remembered. As mentioned above political leader often present two distinct performed narratives: a public one crafted for their audience and a private one reflecting their true selves (Atkins & Gaffney, 2020). This process is intricately linked to iconography the symbolic representations that encapsulate their political personas. The way these figures are portrayed in their autobiographies contributes to the societal narratives surrounding their political masculinities, often embodying ideals of strength, resilience, and moral authority among others. The imagery and symbols associated with Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela' whether through their speeches, photographs, or literary references, play a crucial role in shaping public consciousness and defining their legacies.

Furthermore, the interplay between personal narrative and public perception reveals the power dynamics inherent in political discourse. Both Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela utilize their autobiographies not only to reclaim their narratives but also to engage with the political climates of their times. Their writing serves as a means of asserting agency, challenging dominant discourses, and fostering a sense of collective identity among their audiences. By situating their personal experiences within the larger historical and cultural narratives, they invite readers to reflect on the broader implications of their journeys and the societal structures that shape them.

Masculinity refers to the social, cultural and psychological characteristics associated with being male. It encompasses diverse experiences and expressions and can entail a range of ideas about manhood including honor and integrity, leadership and authority, personal growth and development among others. Masculinity is a social construct and

different contexts always construct different forms of masculinities. Political masculinities on the other hand refer to the specific forms of masculinities that are constructed, performed, and recognized within political contexts. This includes the behaviors, attitudes, and identities that are deemed acceptable or aspirational for male political leaders. In the study, it focuses on how Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela embody, challenge, or redefine these masculinities through their autobiographical narratives and how these representations resonate with societal expectations. Political masculinities are therefore an assemblage of a variety of masculinities that shape up into the political personality that we eventually see in a politician. Politics and social discourses are performed in the public domain by political leaders since they live a considerable part of their lives in the public arena. Political leaders therefore write their narratives which highlight their public life and how these experiences have shaped their masculinities.

Political masculinities, like other forms of masculinity, are inherently cultural. This study explores political masculinity as a dynamic process nurtured through cultural norms and socialization during an individual's upbringing. The public making of Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela is seen as a developmental journey with distinct stages, reflecting how their identities evolve over time. Both Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama come of age within their autobiographical narratives, allowing readers to discern the various expressions of masculinities that ultimately shape their public images

In the history of the post colony, in the history of recent societies after Independence Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama represent very strong moment in history. Iconic history in which for some good reasons black defined what was good leadership, what was a good person and who was a good moral person (Hyslop, 2008). The representation of black masculinities was being put at the highest of stages in a global moral stature. The current study engages with black masculinity and public making of masculinities because these in themselves are inspirational stories that can be applied across the globe to encourage marginalized groups that they can also reach that space (Walters,2007). And therefore, reaching that space in itself is a moral story, an inspiring story enviable and worthy emulating.

The concept of public making in personal narratives is integral to this research, as the autobiographies of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama are themselves personal narratives. For the study at hand, a personal narrative is seen as a real, successive first-person account of an individual's life in which the performed persona is a male who is politically relevant. The persona goes beyond simple fact of storytelling to represent the teller's established realities. Since personal narratives are politically charged and stemming from power dynamics, they reinforce existing power structures and dominant realities. Beyond their political role, personal narratives are crucial for constructing and transmitting social values and cultural realities, serving as a primary means of articulating a society's cultural inclination. In this context, autobiographies serve as platforms where political figures articulate their experiences and values, thereby shading light on how their masculinities have been formed.

The notion of iconography plays a crucial role in public making, as it highlights how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama are perceived as figures worthy of emulation. Their images are constructed through public discourse, the speeches they deliver, and the political arenas they inhabit. Iconography is deeply rooted in the perspectives and myths that surround political figures. Certain politicians intentionally cultivate specific narratives about themselves, which may or may not align with reality. Both Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama emerge from societies marked by racial divisiveness, with their masculinities shaped by the legacies of apartheid and segregation. As black leaders, they embody an iconography that resonates with a conciliatory public, positioning them as unifying figures in fractured societies. Their roles as political leaders and their personal narratives contribute to the gravitas that surrounds them in the public sphere, rendering them exemplary models of moral leadership. While they construct certain images of themselves as political icons, their autobiographies may also reveal aspects of their personal lives that either reinforce or challenge these crafted identities.

The concept of political masculinity is relevant to the present study. Traditional notions of masculinity, such as strength, courage, and leadership, have long been associated with political power and authority. However, these notions are complex and multifaceted, and can be subject to contestations. The study of political masculinity provides insights into the ways in which politicians negotiate and perform their masculine identities, and how these performances shape public perceptions of their leadership and authority.

The autobiographies of Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela serve as significant historical accounts that contribute to the understanding of public narratives and personal narrative. This study aims to explore how their personal histories are interwoven with broader historical contexts, emphasizing the concepts of public making, political masculinities, and iconography. It posits that literature plays a crucial role in constructing, reconstructing, and retelling history. While these texts illuminate the lives of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama, they also reveal aspects of their histories that may not be widely known or discussed in the public domain. The narratives not only reflect public perceptions but also confirm or contradict the commentaries made about them.

The intersection of public making, iconography, and political masculinity is particularly relevant in the context of this study. Both Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama are iconic figures who have been celebrated for their leadership style, which have been characterized as embodying certain traits of masculinity. By examining their autobiographies, this study aims to contribute to our understanding of how masculinity is constructed, performed, and negotiated in public sphere.

In examining the nature of autobiographies, one might question whether the authors are presenting historical truth or are they crafting a particular narrative. Are they making conscious choices, or are these decisions more subconscious? The autobiographies of these political figures construct and deconstruct the public narratives of their masculinities. This study asserts that while certain ideas of political masculinity are presented by the authors, they simultaneously challenge and dismantle those same ideas through their narratives.

Life writing often oscillates between fact and fiction, as noted by Abdul Rashid Boye.

This oscillation raises critical questions about how political masculinities and iconography are created and deconstructed. By investigating how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama navigate the narrative expectations surrounding their iconography, this study addresses the perceptions and misconceptions that exist about them. It considers whether certain historical accounts align with the narratives in their texts or if there are notable silences regarding aspects of their lives that remain unaddressed. These silences themselves speak volumes about the contradictions inherent in their public personas, highlighting the deliberate choices they make in what to reveal and how to express it.

The concept of political masculinity, as explored within the selected autobiographies, emphasizes how the narrators wish to portray their political lives. Questions arise regarding the timing of the publications of *Long Walk to Freedom* and *Dreams from My Father*: Where was Nelson Mandela politically when his autobiography was published? What was Barack Obama's political standing at the time of his autobiography's publication? These autobiographical narratives serve to generate a political premium around the authors, a process that this research seeks to understand. It argues that multiple masculinities contribute to the broader political masculinities represented by Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama.

The study of political leadership has long been dominated by traditional notions of masculinity, with leaders often expected to embody traits such as strength, courage, and assertiveness. However, this narrow definition of leadership has been challenged by the emergence of female leaders who have brought new styles and perspectives to politics. The intersection of politics and gender is complex, with both masculinity and femininity being performed and negotiated in different ways.

While traditional notions of masculinity have been associated with strength, courage, and leadership, femininity has often been linked to qualities such as nurturing, empathy and collaboration. However, these binary opposition are not always clear-cut, and both men and women can embody a range of qualities that transcend traditional gender norms.

The study of political femininities highlights the ways in which women leaders, such as Angela Merkel, Jacinda Ardern, and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, have navigated the complexities of politics and leadership. These leaders have demonstrated that femininity can be a strength in politics, bringing new perspectives and approaches to leadership. In contrast, the construction of masculinity in politics is also complex, with leaders like Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela embodying different forms of masculinity that have been celebrated and critiqued. By examining the autobiographies of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama, this study aims to contribute to our understanding of how masculinity is constructed and negotiated in public sphere.

The study of masculinity and leadership has been a significant area of inquiry in the fields of literature, politics and other cultural studies. The construction of masculinity in politics is particularly noteworthy, as leaders often embody and reflect societal norms and expectations of masculinity. The autobiographies of notable political figures, such as Mahatma Gandhi's "*My Experiments with truth*", Malcom X's "*The Autobiography of Malcom X's*", Desmond Tutu "*Rainbow People of God*" and Nelson Mandela's "*Long Walk to Freedom*", among others, provide valuable insights into the ways in which leaders construct and perform their identities.

In the context of this study, the autobiographies of Barack Obama *Dreams from My*

*Father* and Nelson Mandela *Long Walk to Freedom* offer a unique lens through which to examine the public making of masculinities. Both Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama are iconic figures who have been celebrated for their leadership styles, which have been characterized as embodying certain traits of masculinity. In illustrating how these male politicians construct their narratives of masculinities, both Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama employ creative devices to convey their masculine experiences. The autobiographers consciously utilize artistic techniques to highlight the interplay between fiction and fact in their works. Despite the complexities involved, both leaders excel in narrating their experiences with remarkable detail. They are attentive to the mundane aspects of life, as well as the emotions associated with pivotal episodes. These nuanced descriptions provide insight into their sensitivities and formative experiences, illuminating how their early lives shaped their character and ultimately influenced their paths as prominent political figures.

### **Contextualizing Barack Obama's and Nelson Mandela's Autobiographies**

Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama are political leaders that stood out in specific moments in their lives and exercised their leadership under extremely difficult conditions and periods of political transition that conditioned their performance of masculinity in diverse ways. Nelson Mandela was the first president of South Africa after independence in a multi-racial society that had been defined by apartheid for a long time. He led South Africa immediately after it got its independence from apartheid, though a few decades after colonization. It was a great moment, a turning point moment in history in terms of a multiracial racial society. Equally Barack Obama was a political leader at the turning point in America- the first African American to be president in America. Barack Obama's reign can be considered an interregnum period in terms

of cultural transition as he was the first black president in a country with a history of apartheid and racism. Although Obama's rule was in a diaspora context, tales of his leadership pervade African spaces on the continent, and it is for this reason that he is read alongside Nelson Mandela for purposes of deconstructing discourses on political masculinities.

The social, cultural and political orders have given rise to how male powers are organized within a given society. These male powers are likewise gotten from masculinities that are within the historical and cultural setups of a society (Maluleke, 2018). Morrel (2012) argues that these male powers within their societies are brought about when a given masculine ideal is more prevalent and/or oppressive than the other. Ggola (2009) further argues that the ideal masculine/hegemonic masculinity (which is the dominant societal public masculinity) is always in competition with the other weak forms of masculinities. In South Africa for example, the African patriarchal masculinity, power and freedom-driven by anti-apartheid political agency is in constant competition with the white gendered apartheid masculinity (Suttner, 2008 & Maluleke, 2018). The African patriarchal masculinity performed by the South African political leaders had to correspond with anti-apartheid African gendered masculinities to fight apartheid so as to reclaim black African masculinity distorted by dominant white and apartheid ideologies (Maluleke, 2018 & Ggola, 2009; Faris, 2014).

The assertions of the political agency of black masculinities by South African black political leaders is seen by the followers of the political leaders as heroic actions hence exaltation of the political leaders to iconic status. This iconic status holds not true a realistic portrayal of the individual political masculinities of the men fighting in the liberation struggle to reclaim the lost African glory before apartheid (Ggola, 2009).

During moments of national crises, such as apartheid in South Africa, liberation/national movement leaders tend to create personal/national political narratives that give directions on how a given country/nation undertakes its national values, national history and its political agency among other important functions. Javangwe (2011) points out that "individual self-defines itself in relationship to its others selves, others around it, the national image and historical processes" (p.18). Nelson Mandela's political agency is created around the national and personal political narrative of solving the racial power conflict struggle through negotiation strategies and the national and personal political narratives of struggle to restore the lost political masculinity (Maluleke, 2018 & Hyslop, 2008). These political agency narratives are anchored on performance of patriarchal masculinities (Read, 2010; Gqola, 2009; Maluleke, 2018 & Couser, 2012). Barack Obama as a political agent uses the American Dream narrative to unsettle the dominant hegemonic masculinities of the conservative proponents to restore the American lost glory of democracy (Rowland & Jones, 2007). Barack Obama uses the personal narrative of a more perfect union to restore the American dream as a symbol of unity and democratic change that was suppressed by domination (Rowland & Jones, 2007 and Jucan, 2013).

Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama as national leaders also create personal image narratives that shade light on national values of their respective countries. These narratives of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama's image had symbolic power of representing the ideals and values that the two political male leaders stood up for which ultimately translated into the national values that majority of South Africans and Americans stood up for (Rowland & Jones, 2007 and Hyslop, 2008). These personal ideals and national values include those of love and passion for rule of law, self-acceptance, honesty, love and caring, simplicity, hard work and perseverance,

humility, friendship, being hopeful, unity, equality, human dignity, justice, peace, democracy among others (Flores, 2003; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; More, 2004; Rowland & Jones, 2007; Jucan, 2013; Maluleke, 2018; Washington et al., 2018 & Davis 2014).

The whole concept around Mandela and Obama's masculinities is centered around their iconography. Iconography here pertains to the imagery, symbols and narratives that contribute to the readers perception of an individual as iconic figure. In other words, the world out there constructs a completely different idealistic image of a person, which is contrary to the real person (Read, 2010). Part of what makes Mandela and Obama political magnet or allegorical figure for their followers as moral beacons, political rhetoricians or icons of how politics should be run is because they manage to create certain faded images of themselves in other deferent ways and yet they also live a very normal human life (Rowland & Jones, 2007; Baillie, 2011 & Hyslop, 2008). More (2004) maintains that the personification of Nelson Mandela in human suffering and moral courage under the apartheid regime won the admiration of his followers. Their admiration by their followers emanates from their simplicity (Rowland & Jones, 2007 & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). They are moral icons because they lived normal ordinary lives that everybody admires (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018 and Rowland & Jones, 2007).

In this world where morality is always a question in everybody's character, Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama, because of their many self-identities, managed to win the admiration of their followers by upholding the shared societal morals and values (Hyslop, 2008; Davis, 2014 and Rowland & Jones, 2007). Smith Zadie (2009) looking at Barack Obama's autobiography *Dreams from My Father* describes the many self-identities of Obama as:

The tale he tells is all about addition. His is the story of a

genuinely many-voiced man. If it has a moral it is that each man must be true to his selves, plural (p. 4).

The oratory skills for both Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela are also what make them icons (Flores, 2003). Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama were ahead of their time in terms of how they could say things that make universal meaning to almost every fabric of human society. Nelson Mandela for example spoke about human rights and democracy long before these narratives become international discourses (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Ngcaweni, 2018). The study deliberates on these deferent versions of masculinities of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama.

The study is aware of the potential challenges posed by describing Barack Obama as an African politician, but he can be regarded as an African politician, first because of the filial ties he establishes with his Kenyan father Barack Obama Senior., and also because of his African roots (Walter, 2007). Barack Obama is often regarded as the symbol of gentlemanly behavior and good leadership in America and beyond (Washington, et al., 2018). Similarly, Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa from 1994 to 1998, has become an icon of proper leadership following his advancement of the idea of a rainbow nation (Lodge, 2006). The two leaders share one thing in common; they have both been presented in their autobiographical texts as symbols of ideal political masculinity. The research also explores how elevating Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela as the benchmark of good leadership overlooks ways in which their leadership is culturally conditioned (Camille, 2009; Hook, 2013; Couser, 2012; Gqola, 2009; Read, 2010 & Washington et al.,2018). The research argues that the two leaders' representations as coherent, stable and admirable political figure functions as a normative expectation of a political masculinity (Mtenje, 2016).

Never has the study of autobiography gained more academic attention like in the recent times where a good climate has enabled critique of life narratives (Benton, 2005). A lot of attention is drawn to the study of construction of masculinities in autobiographies more so within the political sphere (Camille, 2009; Mwapangidza, 2014; Heikal, 2016; Baillie, 2011; Javangwe, 2011; Davis, 2014 & Washington, et al., 2018). The self that is represented symbolizes a historical landscape of great significance in the present day (Washington, et al., 2018; Stein, 2011; Kloppenberg, 2012 & Mwapangidza, 2014). As Swindells (1995) asserts:

The autobiography now has the potential to be the text of the oppressed and culturally displaced, forging a right to speak both for and beyond the individual. People in a position of powerlessness- women, black people, working-class people have more than begun to insert themselves into the culture via the autobiography, via the assertion of a 'personal' voice, which speaks beyond itself (p. 7).

The study borrows Bruner (1993) idea about conception of the autobiographical process who asserts:

There is no such a thing as a "life as lived" to be referred to. On this view, a life is created or constructed by the act of autobiography. It is a way of construing experience and of reconstructing it until our breath or our pen fails us. Construal and reconstructural are interpretive. Like all forms of interpretation, how we construe our lives is subject to our intentions, to the interpretive conventions available to us, and to the meanings imposed upon us by the usages of our culture and language (p. 38).

In a similar vein my research views autobiographies of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama as ways through which the narrators exercise resistance to various forms of domination such as racial subjectivity, imposed social-economic distortions and control. With this understanding, the rise in autobiographical writing is to provide evidence of existing social, cultural and political reality in the lives of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama as an idea for example of liberation/emancipation. The study seeks to examine how autobiography of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama might facilitate a literary discourse that will deliberate on how politics intercept with masculinities.

The research work also argues that the paternal figure in the formative years of a child significantly influences the adult masculine self. Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela define themselves in relation or opposition to their paternal figure (Lodge, 2006; Stein, 2011; Hammack, 2010; Baillies, 2011 & Odanga, 2017). Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela are shaped by the concept of manhood that is dependent on paternity and paternal heritage (Read, 2010; Senaha, 2009; Nanda, 2015; Couser, 2012 & Suttner, 2014). Nelson Mandela's father was related to the tribal leader of the Thembu tribe from whom Nelson Mandela inherits the chiefly/cultural heritage pride and learnt from his father adequate education on tribal administration issues (Billabong, 2011 & Hyslop, 2008). One of the things that constructs Barack Obama's political masculinity is his admiration and yearning for the father. It is this admiration and search for the father that makes Barack Obama think that he can go for the political office and finally gets it hence feels that he has achieved some sense of fatherhood.

Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama subscribe to the gender order of defining man in their cultural and social political setting. The political masculine features about Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama which we are looking at now as readers were acquired at

a very young age (Lieberfeld, 2004; Oppenheim, 2012; Lodge, 2006; Suttner, 2016 & Avner, 2014). The two came from those homely, personal domestic sense but they had different orientation in their upbringing (Rowland & Jones, 2007; Flores, 2003; Suttner, 2014; Washington et al., 2018; Mwapangidza, 2014; Kloppenberg, 2012; Suttner, 2004 and Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Ngcaweni, 2018). While staying at the royal family of chief Jongitaba Dolindyebo, the regent of the Thembu tribe, Mandela at a young age learnt the African democratic leadership abilities of his tribal people (Garba & Akuva, 2020), Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Ngcaweni (2018). Barack Obama likewise draws from the caring and loving moments that he receives from his close relationship with his mother and his maternal grandparents at his early childhood stage to liberate himself and see the world differently.

The bond of a child to a mother in the earlier formative years of their childhood also influences the child's adult masculine life and has a bearing to him in being a public personality later on in life. Both Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama enjoyed their mothers love, support and protection. Their mothers instilled in them values of honesty, religious beliefs, fairness, courage, straight talk, endurance, and independent judgement necessary for maturation from boyhood to manhood. Their mothers are also credited for taking the initiative of enrolling them into schools where Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela were able to acquire ideals and values which later gave them new insight and progressive open mindedness towards diversity (Suttner, 2014; Kloppenberg, 2012; Murtaza & Khatak, 2018; Garba & Akuva, 2020 and Bongila, 2011).

A crucial factor guiding the study is the interregnum period that African nations or nations with people of African descent exist(ed) in since the advent of slavery, colonization and independence: in South Africa there was the political change from apartheid to multiracial democracy; in United States of America there was the healing

of the polarizing wounds of racism through slavery. These post-colonial realities frame both Barack Obama's and Nelson Mandela's narratives (Morrel, 2012 and Gqola, 2009). Okuyande (2011) observes that from the late 1970s, the majority of African countries began to experience dramatic transformations in political rule. Most African citizens by this time were already disillusioned with nationalism and its proponents since dictatorship was the probable means of leadership in post-colonial Africa (Nkrumah,1962).

One legacy of this historical and cultural context is dictatorial politicians, an image that has become metonymic of African presidency, becomes the benchmark against which Nelson Mandela's personality and Barack Obama's by extension acquires iconography. According to Walonen (2016) the post-colonial African dictator was invariably a product of the related social instability and state of economic underdevelopment that reigned in the wake of the vast colonial pullout. Most of these figures rose to power either via coup d'états or overthrowing the fragile democracies that had succeeded colonial rule. Tiyambe (2014) argues:

Set against many of his fellow founding fathers, Mandela stands out for his singular contribution to democratic politics; he relinquished power after only one five-year term in office. This is attributed to his "remarkable understanding of the nature of politics and the performance of power (p. 131).

The study foregrounds Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama as two great public personalities who by their own nature were politicians and by this fact of being politicians, there are aspects of politics that shaped why we are looking at them as special kinds of men who were and still are immensely idolized. The research argues that Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama were idolized as symbols of hope and racial change to their nations and the political culture of their times. This idolization of Nelson

Mandela and Barack Obama as symbols of hope and racial change possess a number of challenges/problems: that the two were idealized as symbols of hope and racial change to their nations and the political culture of their times and this touches on how the nation is conceptualized.

Some people would say that Barack Obama did not, as a presidential candidate, talk tough on structural inequalities that have disadvantaged, excluded and subordinated the black American (Sinclair-chapman & Price, 2008). That Nelson Mandela as he became the first black president of South Africa, he ended up collaborating or brought up the idea of the rainbow nation. These were the real problems facing the two great presidents. Nelson Mandela had the rainbow nation and its vision while Barack Obama had the "Yes We Can" slogan. Barack Obama was about overcoming the obstacles of class, gender, religious and racial hierarchies in the modern society that hinder attaining one's desires. At the core of the slogan was the call by Barack Obama to the American society to value and treasure the American narrative of the civil rights movement and the American historical narrative of progress, justice, equality, prosperity and opportunity which clearly designates the country's destiny as they start the new chapter in their historical journey (Williams Hettie). While for Nelson Mandela it was about the kind of ending the racial standoff that had framed the South African nation. Nelson Mandela realized that there were people who thought that the best way was to chase the white South African man. But he (Mandela) discovered that that was not going to be possible because some of these people South Africa was their home.

Nelson Mandela was intelligent enough in understanding the delicate narrative about who owns South Africa. With this in mind, the only best solution for Nelson Mandela was to unite and form a rainbow nation. And this was the problem so that when one

reads these autobiographies of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama's one realizes that the two politicians were just common people who lived within these challenges that had been facing South Africans and Americans long before they came into power. So, for them coming into power was just healing that rift in order to push their nations forward, to open up in their own different ways, the commonalities that they all wanted to make their people realize that it was possible to accept a new national imaginary. That both texts are tied to reconceptualizing of their nations.

The research argues that both Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama espoused a vision towards reimagining a united nation that was divided by their deep cultural and social politics, racial divisions, gender and sexual hegemony, societal colonial hierarchies and racist past. It was these ideas of change (that they lived in these realities) and these realities are what they present in their autobiographies. However, when their societies listened to their speeches or in terms of conceptualizing a nation the two were seen as nationalists who were out to liberate their nations within the nationalistic struggles. For Nelson Mandela it was about anti-apartheid struggles and for Barack Obama it was a kind of the continuation of the civil rights movement that began with Martin Luther King's social philosophy "I have a dream."

One can make a connection between Barack Obama and Martin Luther King because the dream that Luther King was proclaiming is actually actualized and fulfilled in Barack Obama. So, these two leaders by the time they are coming into leadership they are carrying a burdage of historical traumas and historical injustices which their followers unfairly expect them to solve in a short time and this is the problem. Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela are idolized because they represent these desires by their nations to end the injustices that were committed against their people. This idolization is unfairly symbolized to the two leaders since they cannot solve these injustices within

a short time. That is where there is a disconnect between the societal expectations of the iconic representations of the two because they were kind of embodied as the people who will bring an end to the forms of injustice against marginalized people. And yet it is impossible because the two are human beings and individuals yet they have been given this superhuman expectations. On the other hand, these burdome of historical traumas and historical injustices need time to change a mindset what Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) was talking about when he said it is important to decolonize the mind. The American society in which Barack Obama lives in and the South African society in which Nelson Mandela lives in need to decolonize their minds without which the individuals and communities in the aforementioned societies will continue suffering from lack of self-confidence and self-esteem. More so, as Ngugi Wa Thiongo (1982) notes, decolonization of the mind is a long-term process that sometimes takes as much time or even twice the time of how it was brought in and this is the dilemma in which the followers of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama placed their two famous leaders in.

A postmodern approach to analysis of Mandela and Obama's autobiographies is a deliberate choice as it reveals the power dynamics inherent in both dominant and alternate discourses. Towards this end, I seek to demonstrate how autobiographies of the two male leaders portray aspects of their narrative persona that constructs their iconographic images which influences how the public perceive the political masculinities of Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela.

A number of scholars have conducted research on political masculinities: Mark Leopold, (2009) has studied "Sex, Violence and History in the life of Idi Amin: Post-colonial Masculinity as Masquerade"; Eijun Senaha, (2009), has studied "Barack Obama and His-Story: Paradox of Hybridity and Masculinity in His Autoandrography"

; Azza,& Azziz (2016), has studied "African Identity, Self and Other, in Obama's Dreams from My Father" ; Susanne W. Jones, (2010), has studied "The Obama Effect on American discourse about Racial Identity: *Dreams from My Father* ( and Mother ), Barack Obama's Search for Self" ; Solomon Mwapangidza, (2014), has studied "In Search of Desired Self: Constructions of Self-Identities in Barack Obama's Dreams from My Father and Nelson Mandela's Long Walk to Freedom". The current study and Mwapangidza (2014) study share similarities in analyzing both Barack Obama's and Nelson Mandela's autobiographies. However, difference lies in the study focus. The study at hand focuses on "public making of masculinities", while Mwapangidza's explores "construction of self-identities." The study at hand sets out to analyze the gap between Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama self-portrays in their texts and the iconic expectations of their masculinities in their texts.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

There is a contradiction between the ways Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama conceptualize their selfhood in their autobiographies and the symbolic expectations associated with their public images in their texts. Their autobiographies show that Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama's self-perceptions differ from the symbolic roles they embodied. Political masculinities are founded on hegemonic expectations of political masculinities. The focus on iconic image of political men instead of a realistic portrait of an individual's political masculinity overlooks ways in which the performance of political masculinities is in actual sense constructs that are products of social, cultural and economic processes. This study examines how Barack Obama and Nelson Masndela in their political autobiographies narrate and facilitate emergence of narratives showing the complex process of the construction of political masculinities within their respective historical and cultural context.

### **1.3 Objectives**

1. To analyze how social, cultural and political context shape the political masculinities of Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela.
2. To explore how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama are constructed as icons by the public persona in their autobiographies.
3. To assess the narrative techniques employed by Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama that challenge the expectations surrounding their iconography in their texts.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. Do Mandela and Obama have different versions of social, cultural and political orders that precondition their masculinities in their autobiographies?
2. In what ways are Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama constructed by the public personas as icons in their autobiographies?
3. What are the narrative techniques employed by Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama that are used to deconstruct the normative expectations of their iconography in their work?

### **1.5 Justification for the Study**

This study explores the interaction of politics and personal narrative through a comparative analysis of Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* and Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father*. By examining the autobiographical accounts of two influential leaders, this research aims to shed light on the complex dynamics between personal identities, political leadership and the construction of public personas.

The current study explores the construction of masculinity in the political autobiographies of Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* and Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father*. By analyzing these texts, this study aims to shed light on the complex and nuanced ways through which masculinity is performed, negotiated and contested in the context of political leadership. By examining the intersections of masculinity with other aspects of identity, such as race, class and culture, this study provides a nuanced understanding of how masculinity is performed and negotiated in different contexts. More so, this study examines how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama, as public figures, construct and perform masculinity in their autobiographies. By analyzing their life stories, this research study sheds light on the complex and nuanced ways in which masculinity is publicly made, negotiated and contested.

Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama were chosen for this study due to their global stature, both of whom have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of their contributions to peace and reconciliation. They are pivotal figures in their respective nations, leading during historical moments that redefined leadership for black individuals and marginalized communities. Their significance warrants further exploration within the literary discipline, as there remains a need to understand how literature and historical narratives intersect to illuminate gaps in our knowledge about these influential leaders.

Among Barack Obama's writings, *Dreams from My Father* was selected because it stands out as a seminal work that not only chronicles his early life but also delves deeply into issues of identity, race, and belonging. Written before he entered the political arena, this autobiography provides a candid exploration of his struggles with his mixed-race heritage and the complexities of navigating different cultural landscapes. Unlike his later political memoirs, such as *The Audacity of Hope* (2006) and *A Promise Land*

(2020), *Dreams from My Father* is rich in personal reflection, making it a valuable text for understanding how his formative experiences shaped his political ideology, identity and masculinity.

The interplay between personal narrative and public persona is a critical focus of this study. Understanding how the narratives of the two leaders create the public personas of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama, as well as how they shape their narratives within their autobiographies, is crucial for comprehending their roles in defining notions of black masculinities. This research highlights that, like any individual, these politicians strive to embody the ideal of masculinity within the complexities of political life. However, the study also posits that these so-called icons may not be as infallible as they appear, suggesting a more nuanced understanding of their humanity, which is a central theme in literary studies.

By analyzing the aspects of the narrative's public personas that contribute to their idolization, this research seeks to uncover the contradictions between how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama conceptualize their selfhood and the iconographic expectations surrounding political masculinity. This exploration connects to the literary tradition of examining character development and the construction of masculinity, revealing how narrative techniques can both reinforce and subvert traditional notions of masculinity.

Furthermore, the study aspires to deconstruct the various iconographic images that have emerged around these figures, revealing the complexities of their narratives and the ways in which they both challenge and conform to societal ideals of masculinity. Through the application of literary theory, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the political legacies of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama and the ways in which their stories resonate within contemporary discourses on masculinity

and leadership. By situating their autobiographies within the field of literature, the research underscores the significance of narrative in shaping cultural and political identities, thereby broadening the scope of inquiry into the intersection of literature, politics, and gender studies.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study contributes to the existing literature on political autobiography, identity politics, and leadership studies. This study provides valuable insights into the complexities of political leadership, identity formation and the power narrative in shaping public perception. The study suggests that Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama, conceptualize their political selfhoods and agency through the cultural upbringing and socialization which poses to them a number of challenges which they have to negotiate. This study contributes to the understanding of autobiography as a literary genre and its role in shaping public perception and historical narratives. Their autobiographies embody meanings which extend beyond their personal experiences to represent a wider social order that defines masculinity and iconography. This will thus provide valuable information and insight to critics and scholars.

### **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

This study employs an eclectic theoretical framework that centers on two primary categories: postmodern theories of power and discourse, and theories of gender as identity constructs. The proponents of these theories: -Jacques Derrida whose deconstruction illuminates how meaning, identity and masculinity are fluid, shaped by language and cultural context within a narrative, Michel Foucault concept of power dynamics that illuminates how societal structures influence their public personas and the construction of their political masculinities, and Judith Butler concept of gender performance and performativity illuminates on how the two leaders enact their

masculinities through repeated behaviors and in response to societal norms- offer critical insights in uncovering the complex interplay between public personas, power dynamics and cultural discourses in shaping their political masculinities which will guide the analysis of the autobiographies of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama. These theories aid in analyzing how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama construct their identities and how their narratives interact with societal discourses on masculinity.

According to Jacques Derrida, deconstruction emphasizes that meaning is not fixed but constructed through language, which is inherently ambiguous and filled with contradictions. His approach reveals how identities are fluid and shaped by cultural contexts. Deconstruction allows for the examination of how the texts of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama reflect or subvert societal norms and expectations.

Jacques Derrida's concept of "overturning" can be applied to the study of public persona construction in autobiography. Overturning refers to the process of challenging and subverting dominant meanings. Norms, and power structures. Derrida (1981) advances the argument that texts are structured around binary opposition in which one of the terms dominates the other. Derrida (1981) notes:

[w]e are not dealing with the peaceful co-existence of a vis-a-vis, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (oxiologically, logically e.t.c) or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment (p. 41).

Overturning here signaling possibility of diving into assessing the 'violent' hierarchal double presentation of an individual on one hand as a larger-than-life hero and on the other as an ordinary human being, particularly in narratives of social life including social systems like politics.

The analysis of the current study on public making of political masculinities acknowledges that in deconstructive sense, a text makes meaning and defers these meanings at the same time. Therefore, the study approaches the analysis of these autobiographies from the angle that they are constructing certain images of these people while at the same time deconstructing them. The above-mentioned tenets of Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory help in unsettling some of the gender orders of public making of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama. In the context of Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* and Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father*, Jacques Derrida's tenets of overturning could be applied to analyze: how the two authors challenge dominant narratives around masculinity, power, and politics in their texts, how the two leaders negotiate complex identities and challenge fixed notions of self and masculinity in their autobiographies, and how the two political leaders subvert expectations around leadership, masculinity and narrative structure. Post-modern reading of the current study also comes in through the deconstruction of the discourses of iconography of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama. The iconic images labeled against the two are unrealistic and difficult to adhere to hence the need to deconstruct. Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory helps the study in looking at how the Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama deconstruct and re-invent themselves. By applying Jacques Derrida's deconstruction, the study explores the complexities and contradictions in their texts, revealing how they both conform to and resist societal expectations.

Michel Foucault argues that power is not merely repressive but is also productive; it shapes identities, social practices, and discourses. His analysis of power dynamics helps to understand how societal structures influence individual behaviors and perceptions, particularly in the context of political masculinities. Michel Foucault's

ideas about surveillance and normalization are highly relevant in examining how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama navigate their public personas in their autobiographies.

Michel Foucault's notion of surveillance refers to the ways in which individuals are monitored, observed, and regulated by external forces, such as institutions, social norms, and power structures. In the context of autobiography, surveillance can be seen in; how authors may self-censor their writing to conform to societal expectations, how public figures like Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama who are under constant scrutiny, which can influence how they present themselves in their texts, and how authors may internalize the gaze of others, shaping their self-presentation to meet expectations.

Michel Foucault's concept of normalization refers to the process by which individuals are compelled to conform to societal norms and standards. In autobiography, normalization can be seen in: how authors may feel pressure to conform to traditional notions of masculinity, leadership, or identity, how authors may perform their identities in ways that align with societal norms, rather than challenging or subverting them, how autobiographies can be seen as a means of regulating identity, with authors presenting themselves in ways that are deemed acceptable by society. Michel Foucault's insights provide a lens through which to examine the power dynamics at play in their autobiographies, particularly how these leaders negotiate their identities within the historical and cultural contexts of racial and political struggles.

Michel Foucault argues that power is not merely repressive but is also productive; it shapes identities, social practices, and discourses. His analysis of power dynamics helps to understand how societal structures influence individual behaviors and

perceptions, particularly in the context of political masculinities. Michel Foucault's ideas about surveillance and normalization will be instrumental in examining how Mandela and Obama navigate their public personas. Michel Foucault's insights provide a lens through which to examine the power dynamics at play in their autobiographies, particularly how these leaders negotiate their identities within the historical and cultural contexts of racial and political struggles.

Judith Butler posits that gender is not an inherent characteristic but a performance shaped by societal norms and cultural practices. This perspective challenges traditional notions of gender as a binary construct, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of how men, particularly political figures, navigate their masculinities. Judith Butler's concept of "doing gender" suggests that gender is enacted through repeated behaviors and actions, reinforcing the idea that masculinity construction is a dynamic process rather than a static state. This notion is crucial in examining how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama perform their masculinities in their respective contexts.

Judith Butler's framework facilitates an exploration of how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama construct and express their political masculinities through their autobiographies. By analyzing their narratives through the lens of gender performativity, the study assesses how their enactment of repeated behaviors is influenced by cultural norms and expectations surrounding masculinity. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the complexities of their experiences as black male leaders in predominantly patriarchal societies.

The study also incorporates Sidonie Smith's notions of autobiography. According to Sidonie Smith, autobiography is a complex and dynamic genre that involves the construction of identity through narrative. Sidonie Smith argues that the

autobiographical subject is a constructed entity, created through the narrative act. The author constructs their identity through the selection and arrangement of events, experiences, and memories. Sidonie Smith suggests that autobiography is a performance of identity, where the author presents themselves to the reader through language and narrative structures. Sidonie Smith highlights the importance of considering the cultural, social, and historical context in which autobiographies are written. She argues that autobiography can be a powerful tool for marginalized voices to assert their identities and challenge dominant narratives.

The integration of postmodern theories of power and discourse alongside theories of gender as masculinity constructs provides a robust framework for analyzing the autobiographies of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama. By utilizing the insights of Derrida, Foucault, and Butler, this study aims to uncover the intricate relationships between masculinity, power, and societal norms. The theoretical framework helps in revealing how these leaders navigate their political masculinities and contribute to broader discourses on masculinity and leadership in contemporary society.

In summary, this study utilizes Butler's theory of gender performance and Derrida's deconstruction theory to analyze the autobiographies of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama. By focusing on how these theories intersect with the concepts of public making and political masculinities, the research seeks to uncover the ways in which individual masculinity is constructed and performed within specific cultural and political contexts. This theoretical framework enables a nuanced exploration of how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama navigate their masculinities as political figures, as well as the broader implications of their narratives within contemporary discussions of masculinity and leadership

## 1.8 Literature review

The construction of masculinity is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has been shaped by various cultural, social, and historical contexts. This literature review explores the public making of masculinities in the autobiographies of two influential leaders, Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father* and Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*. By examining the intersection of masculinity, identity, and power, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how masculinities are constructed and performed in public spheres.

Masculinity is a social construct that has been historically associated with power, strength, and leadership (Connell, 2005). However, recent scholarship has highlighted the complexity and diversity of masculinity identities, revealing the ways in which masculinity intersect with other aspects of identity, such as race, class, and culture (Hooks, 2004).

Autobiography has proven to be a valuable genre for studying masculinity and identity. Many scholars have examined how autobiographers construct and perform their masculine identities through narrative (Smith & Watson, 2010; Watson, 2012). For example, some studies have explored how male autobiographers use narrative strategies like storytelling and self-representation to construct and reinforce traditional masculine norms (Benwell, 2003).

Autobiographies of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama offer a unique opportunity to explore the construction of masculinity in different culture and historical contexts. Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* and Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father* are both critically acclaimed autobiographies that have been widely studied in the field of politics and literature.

According to Copper (2006) masculinity studies describe the ways and assumptions about the meaning of manhood and how they are used to justify particular ideas, behavior and institutions. Kreisky (2014) defines masculinities as "the culturally specific ways of how (male) children and adolescents acquire a male identity through socialization" (p. 189). In South Africa, masculinity is associated with a warrior tradition that is interwoven with belief systems that go hand in hand with existence of social, cultural and political organizations. Lindsay & Miescher (2003) looking at masculinity argue that there is relationship between masculinity and manhood. They define masculinity as a "[c]luster of norms, values and behavioral patterns expressing explicit and implicit expectations of how men should act and represent themselves to others. Ideologies of masculinities, like those of femininity, are culturally and historically constructed, their meanings continually contested and always in the process of being renegotiated in the context of existing power relations..." (p. 4).

The key concept guiding this study is political masculinities. Kreisky (2014) defines political masculinities as "[a] system which is embedded in the organizational culture of political institutions based on informal networks, relationships and career cultures as demonstrated by men" (p 192). The research paper looks at two political male figures; Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama in relation to how the two male leaders conceptualize(d) their political selfhoods through their cultural upbringing and socialization and how the resultant norms and expectations make specific notions of their political masculinities. The study at hand looks at political masculinities as a process whereby somebody/someone is nurtured through many ways of cultural upbringing and shaping. The texts under this study demonstrate the nature and intricacies of performance of political masculinities through adopting various literary strategies. The study treats politics as a form of governance but also politics as a way of life.

**Objective one literature review analyzing how social, cultural and political context shape the political masculinities of Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela.**

Couser (2012) in his work *Filiation in Barack Obama's Dreams from My Father* situates Barack Obama's autobiography as a petrography - a life writing about father by the son (p. 259). The research underscores the importance of the performance of patriarchal masculinities in shaping the political agency in the life of a public persona. The present study looks at how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama are shaped by the concept of masculinity that is dependent on paternity heritage. In support of the above ideas, Couser points out that the absence of Barack Obama's father shapes up his political life. Barack Obama uses his father's past as an inspiration to get into public life. Obama uses his father's past as an inspiration to get into public life. Couser further argues that Barack Obama's absent father's history and life provide answers to the lived realities of the African American communities and their reconciliation with their freedom (p. 266). That Barack Obama's autobiography highlights the notion of father-son-relation where he yearns and wishes to be like his father and is in-turn inspired to even outperform his father. Couser further notes that the patrimony lineage of Barack Obama's paternal forefathers brings to life the need for on to invent oneself in new tough circumstances. The present study on the other hand looks at how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama are shaped by the concept of masculinity that is dependent on paternity and paternal heritage.

Writing in her work *"The difficult task of normalizing freedom": Spectacular masculinities, Ndembele's literary/cultural commentary and post-apartheid life* Gqola (2009) advances the argument that there is always a tussle between the weak and the dominant in gendered public and cultural life in apartheid South Africa (p.62). One idea that caught the attention of this study advanced by Gqola (2009) is that institutions

and structures of meaning that were created by long centuries of apartheid and slavery have given rise to racial, economic and gender effects (p.64). The present study suggests that political masculinities are constructed under different environments. According to Gqola, political autobiography looks at everyday macro-political life experiences of the writer as a common ordinary person in a nation that is undergoing racial transformation. That these everyday experiences are made by small political occurrences (p.62). She asserts that in South Africa political masculinity is seen as a "Hyper visible and self-authorizing performance of patriarchal masculinity" that is always in competition with other forms of manhood (p.64). She maintains that in South Africa, apartheid was always a gendered project hence its reclamation meant performance of anti-apartheid adult masculinities that were gender structured and could be achieved on political agency. That these assertions often resulted in glorification of heroism (p.66). In relation to the above views the study at hand looks at the complex process of constructing political masculinities within Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama's respective historical, social and cultural contexts. Gqola's critique of spectacular masculinities also resonates with the ways in which Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela construct and perform their masculine identities in their autobiographies. Both authors engage with traditional notions of masculinity, but also subvert and challenge them in various ways.

Heikal (2016) writing in his book *African Identity, Self and Others in Obama's Dreams from My Father* looks at the ideas about culture, race and identity in Barack Obama's text. He relates Barack Obama's colonial experience and cultural background to notions of apartheid and race in Africa. He argues that like Africans experiencing apartheid, Barack Obama feels marginalized by racial discrimination and dreams about uniting these divided colors one day. He asserts that Barack Obama's cultural

background is in constant collision prompting him to use his higher culture of masculinity through education, freedom and upbringing as a voice of liberation. The present study intends to use the above observations to underscore the contradictions between how/ways in which Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama conceptualize their selfhood and how the society looks at the iconic images that the two have made around themselves as they shape their personality images.

In line with this study's objective of analyzing modes of narration that are either deliberately or unconsciously used by Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama in their language use, Suttner (2016) looks at how Nelson Mandela resolves his political and personal identity of becoming "a man" in his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*. He maintains that the title *Long Walk to Freedom* is suggestive of the long Journey(s) associated with masculine notions of going through many challenging tasks in life before attaining a given objective. Barack Mandela considers his early journeys in life before coming to Johannesburg very important particularly the initiation into manhood journeys. Suttner argues that to Nelson Mandela this is an elaborate process that prepares one for manhood in as far as peace and war are concerned. Suttner asserts that colonialism led to the loss of self-governance and independence hence initiation through circumcision was a bravery act of instilling warrior-like values necessary for recovery the lost manhood, freedom and nationalism. Nelson Mandela first understood his journey of self-conscious to have been brought about through his relationship with other boys, men and other people and later on his relation to being a member of Aba Thembu then finally as an African. Suttner, more so, looks at Nelson Mandela's self-conscious as being brought about with "his awareness of the white domination" and the steps that Mandela undertakes to remove them (p. 25). This observations by Suttner enables the study at hand to look at these post-colonial

realities to see how these realities of racial subjectivity, imposed social-economic distortions and control inspire the Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela to get into politics with ideas of liberation/emancipation.

Senaha (2009) raises very important ideas on the influence of the paternal figure in the life of an individual. Senaha argues that Barack Obama uses the autobiography to look at representation of his life narrative as a man who is trapped by the myth of masculinity through his relationship with his father (p. 57). Senaha goes on to assert that Barack Obama is shaped by an anti-postmodern concept of manhood that is dependent on paternity. To him Barack Obama's autobiography is seen as his record for self-search through Barack Obama's paternal heritage. The study at hand focus on how the paternal figure in the formative years of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama significantly influences their adult masculine self in relation to construction of political masculinity.

Nanda (2015) observes that Barack Obama's "self-creation" is motivated by "the haunting lack or void left by an absent father figure" (p. 39). Nanda's arguments on narrator's 'self-creation' are linked to the present study's concept of culturally specific ways of how male adolescent acquire a male identity. Nanda maintains that in shaping up his personality Barack Obama looks up for manhood qualities that are inherent in his absent mythical father figure. Nanda further says that Barack Obama's search for the absent father figure is in line with the son's wish to recreate the past (p. 42). These observations highlight the psychological and emotional factors that shape Barack Obama's construction of masculinity. The research work relates Nanda's observations to look at how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama are shaped by the concept of manhood that is dependent on paternity and paternal heritage.

Lieberfeld (2003) looks at personal traits of Nelson Mandela that made him a successful negotiator, peacemaker and a public personality. He observes that Nelson Mandela's self-confidence is as a result of him having been brought up in a family environment that encouraged supporting one another. Nelson Mandela's experience of having been brought up in an extended family enabled him to have an ability to argue nationally. The above discussions by Lieberfeld which are the focus of the study at hand therefore make it possible to bring to context the social, cultural and political environments that are produced by resources of culture, history and language which enable Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela develop their masculinities.

Lieberfeld (2004) ideas about influential periods in Nelson Mandela's life, as discoursed in his work *Peace Profile: Nelson Mandela*, is relevant to the current study as they highlight the significance of specific life experiences and events in shaping Nelson Mandela's masculinity and leadership. Lieberfeld's ideas looks at the important influential periods of Nelson Mandela's life from childhood up to and past presidential period. For the present study, the elements of socialization are key elements in highlighting cultural ways through which male children establish their masculinities. Lieberfeld observes that Mandela's childhood and education significantly had a long- lasting influence on his personality for example his strong sense of self-efficacy, self- confidence, self-discipline and trust. Lieberfeld ideas helps in understanding the complexities of masculinity and identity construction in Nelson Mandela's and Barack Obama's autobiographies.

Morrell et al. (2012) in their work *Hegemonic masculinity/masculinities in South Africa: culture, power and gender politics* argues that hegemonic masculinity refers to how race and social class national realities are aligned to cultural and political gender-based powers (p.12). They maintain that because of apartheid and colonization, men

were perceived to portray different power of domination whereby one group of men was seen to be superior in power domination over the others (p.12). They argue that hegemonic masculinity is the dynamic, nature and form of male power (p.12). That "gender order" organizes the "male power" within a given cultural society. The male power of the gender order, to them, is brought about when a given masculine ideal is more prevalent than the other (s) (p.13). The present study looks at how gender orders have invented specific notions of masculinities of Obama and Mandela and borrows from Morrell et al. (2012) work the ideas on how gender orders organize male powers within a given cultural society.

Reeder (2019) asserts that masculinity appears within a given culture and historical context and traditionally linked to power. He further argues that some institutions create masculinity, but masculinity likewise contributes to the creating of these particular institutions. The invisibility of masculinity, he asserts, hold particularly true for public spheres such as politics. Hence Reeder's work highlights the complexity and multifaceted nature of masculinity, which is reflected in the diverse ways in which Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela construct and perform masculinity. Reeder's research emphasizes the role of power dynamics in shaping masculinity, which is essential for understanding the ways in which Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela negotiate and construct their masculine identities in their autobiographies.

Oppenheim (2012) writing in her work titled *Nelson Mandela and the Power of Ubuntu* looks at Nelson Mandela through the spiritual concept of Ubuntu, an African idea about unity, humility, commitment and harmony. She argues that Nelson Mandela practices Ubuntu in three stages in his life namely: his Xhosa childhood his education/profession and his imprisonment. For this study, spiritual concepts of Ubuntu just like the spiritual concepts of 'hope' are cultural and personal source of

inspiration necessary for maturation of male adolescent. The Xhosa community lays out the foundation for Nelson Mandela's noble purpose in life. Oppenheim argues that Nelson Mandela prides in personality attributes of his father and those of the Xhosa community kingship and family connections which promote wholeness, purpose and unity in Mandela's life. As a result of his father's power and respectful position in society, Mandela got missionary education which bettered his life and ambitions. Oppenheim argues that because of chieftaincy and Xhosa status of his father, Nelson Mandela understood that chieftaincy wielded power and respect, the two important centers that dictate life. While at the regent Nelson Mandela learned a number of lessons and principals of democracy and democratic rules including: collective decision making, the making of final opinion from a consensus point of view, power and the art of public speaking, debate opinion and argument. In line with these views expressed by Oppenheim, the current study looks at how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama are nurtured through cultural norms via socialization in the course of their upbringing.

Suttner (2004) looks at how masculinities and Femininities issues are formed, maintained and brought out in ANC liberation movement. Readings of masculinities in ANC as closely linked to a warrior tradition and belief system like initiation and other rites of passage to manhood downplay the contributions of women in liberation struggles. Suttner argues that unlike previous autobiographical notions that ANC operated only on male heroic masculinities, ANC had "female heroic projects too" (p. 2). African men asserted their manhood in relation to reclaiming their denied masculinity manhood in prevailing historical context of colonial encounters as a result of colonialism and apartheid. These observations by Suttner enable the study at hand to look at these post-colonial realities to see how realities of racial subjectivity,

imposed social-economic distortions and control inspire the two to get into politics with ideas of liberation/emancipation. The present study looks at these post-colonial realities of racism through apartheid, through slavery and colonization that frame both Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela.

Suttner (2014) looks at quality measures that make Nelson Mandela to understand himself as a man who journeys a changing and demanding environment. He maintains that shifting influence, agency, cultural and political conditions made Nelson Mandela not to have one identity as a man. As a notion of this study, Mandela's masculinity is seen as a notion of how boys and men explore strong and gentle ways of being a man. Masculinity is associated, among others, with belief system that go hand in hand with a tough masculine aspect that is interwoven with existence of social, cultural and political organizations.

Washington et al., (2018) looks at the themes of character and the moral self. In the article he analyses the development of Barack Obama's character traits namely: love and caring, temperance, courage, love of learning, justice and spirituality. It's through the cultivation of the above character traits that Barack Obama liberates himself to see the world free from the blinders of racism in America. He argues that for Barack Obama to be electable in USA he had to work on the development of his character and moral self as blueprinted in his autobiography, *Dreams from my Father*. He advances the argument that Barack Obama's autobiography gives him an opportunity to sharpen his cultural thinking and historical experience through a written narrative. The study at hand argues that the different periods of political, social and cultural transitions conditioned the performance of masculinities of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama in diverse ways.

**Objective two literature review analyzing how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama are constructed as icons by the narrative's public personas in their autobiographies.**

The study views autobiographies of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama as ways through which the narrators exercise resistance to various forms of domination such as racial subjectivity, imposed social-economic distortions and control. Camille (2009) writing in his book *Radical paradox and Eclipse: Obama as A Balm for What Ails Us* looks at the paradox of the racial landscape in America through the eye of racial identity. He asserts that racial negotiations are much a part of the black legacy in America. Knowing that he was a black person in a hegemonic white world (p. 752), Barack Obama had to know, management and negotiation his identity. In view of the above arguments by Camille the study looks at hegemonic expectations of political manhood on the political masculinities of Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela.

Hyslop (2008) looks at circumstances that enabled Nelson Mandela and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi practice modernist politics. He maintains that Nelson Mandela and Mohandas Gandhi's game as successful leaders emanates from their role in being national movement leaders. Hyslop advances the argument that the two leaders were admired by their followers for a number of reasons. The two famous leaders were admired by their followers for having formed inclusive political visions which had a national outlook regardless of one's religion, status or race (p. 3). The two were also admired by their followers for having moral stands which boarded on humanistic values that were shared with almost all international communities. In as much as Nelson Mandela and Mohandas Gandhi had inclusive national political visions and advocated for shared international humanistic values, the two famous politicians did not let their political visions and moral values be led by their own political

constituencies (p. 4). Hyslop asserts that Nelson Mandela and Mohandas Gandhi won international admiration also due to the immediate contradictions emanating from their life representations and the created national political visions that were grounded on values that had universal appealing. The two come from those rural, village, homely backgrounds and set-ups but were able to embody the nation/national politics founded on universal rights/values. Nelson Mandela's emphases on his chiefly traditional heritage have adversity shaped how he is perceived (p. 4). Basing on Hyslop's observations the research at hand seeks to examine how autobiographies of Mandela and Obama might facilitate a literary discourse that deliberates on how politics intercept with masculinity.

Javangwe (2011) in his thesis *Contesting Narratives: Constructions of the Self and the nation in Zimbabwean Political auto/Biography* looks at auto/ biography as a tool of understanding identity politics at the level of self and of nation. He asserts that life narratives of an individual are a good source in understanding both individual self-identity and national history. This study foregrounds Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela as politicians who were shaped by aspects of politics which make them special kind of men. The study argues that through their Identity politics of hope and racial change the two conceptualized greater concepts like how the nation is conceptualized, concepts which make them to be immensely idolized. That in writing political life narratives the narrator claims to represent the self and national sentiments, culture and present circumstances demands such as race, ethnic environments, class among others. Societal colonial hierarchies and racial past as lived realities as presented in autobiographies of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama are ideas that the present study seeks to explore.

Jucan (2013) looks at Culture wars in America and how they are represented in the

autobiographical works of Barack Obama. The study intends to reflect on the issue of informal network, relationship and career cultures as demonstrated by men in developing their masculinities by arguing that there is a correspondence between autobiography, culture and politics. Jucan sees Barack Obama as a cultural offspring of the 1960's embedded on culture wars, race and religion among other black cultural discourses in order to demonstrate his possibility to represent Democratic American tradition. The autobiographies of Barack Obama bring to the surface the making of a public figure, an American leader of many cultural inheritances deeply rooted on democracy. To "reclaim" the American dream there is need to bind together the symbols of unity. The concept of political masculinity within male political autobiographies and as conceptualized within this study highlights the political life according to how the narrators want to portray themselves. Jucan argues that in this way the author uses his own perspective image to persuade the public (reader) to construe significations from his writing of the life story. Barack Obama uses the autobiography to "raise the curtain on the making of a politician's will naturally to attract the American reader...because of the wish to share the political vision of a democrat, of an African- American origin." (p.9).

Obama (2008) asserts:

Finally, there are the dangers inherent in any autobiographical work: the temptation to color events in ways favorable to the writer, the tendency to overestimate the interest one's experiences hold for others, selective lapses of memory. Such hazards are only magnified when the author lacks the wisdom of age; the distance then can cure one of certain vanities. I can't say that I've avoided all, or any, of these hazards successfully (p.ix-xvii).

This study borrows much on the idea of political premium from the above observations to examine how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama in their political autobiographies narrate and facilitate emergence of narratives showing the making of political

masculinities in their various settings.

Laura (2003) looks at how Nelson Mandela's names and image have the symbolic power of representing the ideals that he stood up for (p.9), Iconography as a result of representation of personal and national ideals and values is part of what this study sets out to undertake. Laura argues that the idolization of Nelson Mandela's image by his followers and popular culture hinder the true manifestation of Nelson Mandela's ideals to the rest of the world (p.5). She maintains that image of the name Nelson Mandela progressively takes shape at various different levels in his life notably: during the Defiance campaigns of 1952, during his involvements with the *Umhonto WeSizwe*-the ANC armed wing, during the Revonia Trial speech giving, during the 27 years imprisonment time, during his public making by the anti-apartheid movements where Nelson Mandela's personality campaigns of 1980s intensified (p.6). Laura asserts that it is through the acts of Speech giving at the dock in Revonia that Nelson Mandela's political carrier was established (p. 7). She asserts that the image of Nelson Mandela's name Madiba too played an important role in his political life. That the name Madiba referred to Nelson Mandela's clan-his tribal background that represented his humble life journey from his humble rural upbringing and the global representation of equality. It also represented Nelson Mandela the father and leader of South Africa and African continent's struggle for unity, peace and equality (p. 11). From the above-mentioned observations, the present study borrows notions of how national leaders create personal image narratives which have symbolic power of representing national ideals and values.

*Codes of Conduct: Mandela's Politics* by Lodge (2006) looks at how Nelson Mandela acquired his moral, personal and public virtues which helped him shape his politics of reconciliation. Lodge maintains that Nelson Mandela's virtues were instilled at an

early age during his upbringing. That Nelson Mandela is very proud of his father's lineage which is also the foundation of his charismatic abilities and confidence. Lodge argues that Nelson Mandela learned a lot about Xhosa frontier wars and other conflicts during fireside story telling sessions at the great palace and at his father's fireside. The study at hand looks at Lodge's arguments with an aim of analyzing how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama in their autobiographies are influenced by different existing social, cultural and political settings in their performance of their political masculinities. From Lodge's observations this study gets to learn that autobiographical writing provides evidence of existing social, cultural and political realities in the lives of the narrators.

Nawas, et.al (2018) in their work *Asserting Self through 'Ahimsa': Intrinsic Thought of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and its influence on Nelson Mandela* look at political growth, mentors and factors that shaped Nelson Mandela's political personality. They maintain that Nelson Mandela's mother's religious beliefs inspired Mandela's spiritual values. They argue that Nelson Mandela was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's principals of self-determination and non-violence in his (Mandela) moral struggle against racism and white domination (p. 148). Although Nelson Mandela did not at first adopt the non-violence strategies as his political principal, he later incorporated it together with other passive resistance and civil disobedience in fighting apartheid. Nelson Mandela would later move away from these violence political strategies and adopt the reconciliation political ideology. The above discussions represent Nelson Mandela as coherent, stable and admirable political figure and this is in line with the present research focus of how these representations function as normative expectation of a political masculinity.

Read (2010) provides valuable insights into the leadership style and power dynamics

at play in Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* and Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father*. Read (2010) writing in his article *Leadership and power in Nelson Mandela's Long Walk to Freedom* asserts that Nelson Mandela as a leader had a role to play in solving the racial power conflict struggle in South Africa (p.317). The author argues that Nelson Mandela's autobiography looks at the risks taken by Nelson Mandela to unify the two sides through negotiation strategies of possible win-win consensus deal (p.317). Read argues that in his autobiography Nelson Mandela is seen as a reasonable self-understanding transformational leader with an ability to understand the different perspectives at his disposal. That as a transformational leaders Mandela is able to transform attitude, beliefs and quality values in the larger society that he operates in. The study at hand looks at how the world constructs an individual as an icon and therefore the study borrows from Read's ideas that unlike most of Mandela's followers who emphasized more on charismatic/heroism that they associated Mandela with at the expenses of Nelson Mandela's inherent qualities of his leadership more emphasis should be placed more on Nelson Mandela's blended strategies of bargaining alongside his political vision of an inclusive racially democratic South Africa as his leadership qualities (p.319). The author argues that Nelson Mandela's leadership qualities are shaped by his understanding of the South African racial power conflict alongside his understanding of all historical traditions of all groups in South Africa (p.320).

Rowland & Jones (2007) argue that the narrative given by the political movements dictates a lot about how a nation handles its values, agency, opportunities and challenges (p. 427). The authors maintain that the Americans place a lot of importance on values thereby Barack Obama is seen as a hero-a political agent of ordinary upbringing who has been made great as a result of the values that he shares with his

fellow Americans, values that are enshrined/casted on the American Dream (p. 427). They maintain that the variant individualistic reading, interpretation and embrace of the American Dream narratives by the conservative wing has for the better past prevailed and dominated the American political scene hence promoting conservatism above and beyond the progressive liberal approaches by the communal responsibility perspective proponents (p. 428). Barack Obama's key address at the Democratic National Convention was highly seen as are acclamation and refocusing of the American Dream narrative aimed at redefining democratic ideological narratives of a more perfect union as advocated for by James Madison (p. 428). The research at hand borrows from Rowland and Jones ideas of how Barack Obama uses different platforms and narratives to generate political premium and conceptualize his political masculinities through different cultural shaping (Carpio, 2011).

Rowland & Jones maintain that the societal values of hard work available to Barack Obama in the absence of his father were similar to those that his absent father possessed and wanted his son to have. They assert that Barack Obama was one of a multitude of hard-working Americans who had risen from humble begins with hard work and perseverance, some assistance from government and faith in possibilities that lay with a tolerant and generous America to achieve the seemingly impossible (p. 435). Barack Obama valued historical and cultural values of the right for life, liberty and for the happiness which are the dreams of ordinary people (p. 438). From the above arguments, the current research is able to look at how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama use their autobiographical form to create national/personal political narratives that give directions on how a given nation undertakes its national values, national history and political agency.

**Objective three literature review analyzing the narrative techniques employed by Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama that challenge the expectations surrounding their iconography in their texts.**

Looking at the way the two famous narrators narrate their experiences; this study argues that Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela are very particular in description of their mundane basic feelings that relate with their episodes in their life. The study maintains that in describing these episodes the selected male politicians use certain creative devices to bring out their masculine experiences. Exploring *Dreams from My Father* as a text that looks at how Barack Obama negotiates his identity, Baillie (2011) in her work titled *From Margin to Centre: Post-colonial Identities and Barack Obama's Dreams from My Father* argues that Barack Obama employs rhetorical as well as literal strategies to re-write his public and political life (p. 317). She asserts that in resolving his cultural, racial and national identity Barack Obama uses the African American experience together with the American Declaration of Independence ideals - ideals which according to Obama have the capacity to change, consolidate and reconcile (p. 320). Through his quest and interior search for his absent father, Barack Obama is able to negotiate his black American identity (p. 320). Baillie argues that Barack Obama uses the dreams that his father had to start telling his story. She asserts that it is through Obama's father that Obama is able to project his mission and vision (p. 322). As a result of the Barack Obama's father's absence, Obama searches for alternative history of his people, his family and himself. From these alternative histories Barack Obama equips himself as a political activist, an orator and as an intellectual (pp. 324-325). The research at hand aligns itself with the aforementioned strategies to look into how masculinity is located in the connections between cultural discourses and the social performances. In this way the present study is able to get its bearing in understanding Nelson Mandela's and Barack Obama's sensitivity to their

earlier upbringing and how these experiences shape their personal characters which later help them be what they eventually become.

Davis (2014) highlights Nelson Mandela's experiences as brought out in his autobiographical text *Long Walk to Freedom* that helped in the shaping of his moral self-principles. Davis argues that Nelson Mandela's autobiography recounts the life story of Mandela as a national and political reconciliatory and healer (p. 170). That Nelson Mandela's autobiography shades light into his self-shaping and growth, life experiences alongside his political experiences and the South Africa's past. In line with Davis views the study at hand looks at the construction of identity in autobiographies of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama.

Kloppenber (2012) in analyzing Barack Obama's writings; his two autobiographies *Dreams from My Father* and *The Audacity of Hope* argues that Barack Obama's world view has been formed by his personal experience, history of American democracy and American political tradition. In his summary work on his text *Reading Obama Dreams, Hopes, and the American political Tradition* Kloppenber says that Barack Obama's ideas are within the context of the social and political underpinnings. He maintains that Barack Obama's political success as a president bears its foundation on the ideas of great philosophers. To Kloppenber, Barack Obama's writings point towards his multidimensional and multicultural education. He points out that Barack Obama got his values of honesty, fairness, straight talk and independent judgment from his mother's Midwestern childhood. He suggests that Barack Obama's most influential years were when he was Occidental college in Los Angeles where he studied history and political theory. That while at Occidental college Barack Obama was exposed to work and ideas of great thinkers like Karl Max, James Madison among others from whom he traces his speech and books. The above observations help the present study

to understand the sensitivity of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama to their earlier upbringing and how these experiences shape their personal characters which later on help them to be what they eventually become.

More (2004) writing in his work *Albert Luthuli, Steve Biko, and Nelson Mandela: The philosophical basis of their thought and practice* argues that Nelson Mandela's political growth is shaped by humanistic principles of justice, equality, human dignity and democracy (p.207). He maintains that Nelson Mandela's idea of taking up his enrollment for a course in law was out of his love and passion for rule of law, human dignity and justice (p.210). More maintains that Nelson Mandela's personified in human suffering and moral courage under the apartheid regime won the admiration of his followers. He asserts that the pre-Robben island Nelson Mandela is different from the post- Robben Island Mandela. That the pre-Robben island Nelson Mandela was a radical one and leader/commander-in-chief of *Umhonto wesizweq* who fought against the principles of the white supremacy by defying the laws made by the whites. Laws which were designed to preserve white supremacy and promote black inferiority (p.210). More's work is particularly relevant to this study, as it highlights the impotence of considering the intellectual and philosophical traditions that shape our understanding of identity and experience. His analysis of Nelson Mandela's thought and practice demonstrates how African philosophy and cultural heritage can inform and shape public leadership and activism. This thesis builds upon More's insights, exploring how Nelson Mandela's and Barack Obama's public personas reflect and shape broader cultural norms around masculinity.

Writing in his work *of wounded killers and 'failed men': Broadening the quest for liberating African masculinities* Maluleke (2018) looks at manhood a key term in this study as far as construction of masculinities is concerned. Maluleke looks at how

masculinity, race and class are connected with Black liberation movement as a means of reclaiming Black manhood. He argues that the autobiography of Nelson Mandela *Long Walk to Freedom* highlights the struggle of the Black South African men to restore and reclaim their lost manhood (p. 45). Nelson Mandela and other South African liberation struggle leaders incorporated African masculinities together with conservative African traditional masculinities (which had notions of violence and gender insensitivity) to fight the apartheid white oppressive male masculinities (p. 46). Maluleke suggests that racism required men to prove their manhood by confronting its dehumanizing horrors (p. 40). To be seen to be a man one has to pass through and undergo dangerous and difficult tasks like circumcision ritual sports, war and imprisonment where the test of men values is tested from the would-be boys (p. 38). Maluleke also maintains that beyond ritual manhood of circumcision there lays other important sites of human values and manhood. Humanity values of friendship, self-acceptance, survival and being hopeful show and bring more positive higher feelings of manhood than those of enduring pain and suffering (p. 49). Maluleke's work offers a critical perspective on traditional notions of masculinity and explores the complexities of constructing liberating African masculinities. Maluleke's insights help the study at hand in looking at the public making of political masculinities concept that underscore how cultural, social and historical institutions create masculinities.

Mangu (2020) asserts that Nelson Mandela's lineage from his great grandfather king Nyubengcuka had a history of pragmatic co-operation with colonialists. He maintains that Nelson Mandela's father and great grandparents played a bigger part in shaping his leadership qualities more so decision making. Considering Mangu's arguments the current research explores how elevating Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama as the benchmark of good leadership overlooks ways in which their leadership is

culturally conditioned.

Writing in his work *In Search of Desired Self: Constructions of self-Identities in Barack Obama's Dreams from My Father and Nelson Mandela's Long Walk to Freedom*, Mwapangidza (2014) argues that self-identities are always made in response to historical and cultural circumstances. He asserts that Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela use identities to answer the questions about their origin. He argues that the two political leaders share common cultural and historical realities that foster their identities i.e. radicalized others. The respective narratives of the two have an obligation of rectifying the distorted cultural image. The study, in line with Solomon Mwapangidza's observations seeks to look at the social, political and cultural norms that dictate how political masculinities are performed and how these processes produce different expectations of political masculinity.

Advancing the iconographic idea Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Ngcawen (2018) look at the iconic/charismatic Nelson Mandela and how he embodied alternative politics enclaved on the will to live as opposed to will to power. They point out that Nelson Mandela was not obsessed with power but forever remained human, honest and humble. In their work they underscore the importance of understanding the global context and epochs in which Mandela led and practiced politics in South Africa. That Nelson Mandela operated within the third humanist revolution predicted on imperializing and decolonizing the world to enable the foundations of human rights, democracy, harmony peace and humanism through *Ubuntu* take root for the building of a rainbow nation. They argue that Nelson Mandela's political life struggles faced major challenges namely: how Mandela would operate above cultural identity, how Nelson Mandela had to deal with his political formation and political consciousness, how Nelson

Mandela had to decide on and confront the issue of being a freedom fighter, and on how Nelson Mandela had to deal with meaning of being a symbol of resistance. They also asserted that through his symbolic presidency, Nelson Mandela ensured a political reborn in a new South Africa free of racism.

Odanga (2017) looks at how Barack Obama uses memories and reflections to narrate on the role his absent father plays in his personal, public and political life. He maintains that Barack Obama inherited his courage, determination, the power of knowledge and oratory skills from his father. Barack Obama perceives his father as a bold, respectable wise man of great stature who had excellent skills in handling the current racial debate. Odanga argues that Barack Obama associates his father with the kingly masculine warrior type typically associated with great leaders. In line with Odanga's arguments above, the present study deliberates on these deferent versions of masculinities of Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela.

Omuteche (2004) offers a thought-provoking analysis of the narrative structure and thematic concerns of Nelson Mandel's *Long Walk to Freedom*. In his study, Omuteche examines how Nelson Mandela's narrative constructs the theme of struggle, highlighting the ways in which Nelson Mandela's story is mediated by cultural and historical context. Omuteche's work provides valuable insights into the ways in which Nelson Mandela's autobiography reflects and shapes broader cultural narratives around struggle, resistance and identity. While Omuteche's work focuses specifically on the theme of struggle in Nelson Mandela's narrative, this study seeks to examine the broader cultural and social contexts in which masculinity is constructed and performed. By comparing and contrasting the ways in which Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama construct and perform their masculine identities, this thesis aims to

contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex and multifaceted nature of masculinity. Omutche's work on *Long Walk to Freedom* posits that Autobiographical personality is shaped by self-representation and interpreted lived experiences, an important concept of an autobiography that is important for analyzing how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama define themselves and reveal their masculinity development through direct narration or action. Omutche suggests that Nelson Mandela engages in retrospection and introspection through monologues and reminiscences to shape his self-portrayal an observation that relates to the study at hand in looking at modes of narration that are either deliberately or unconsciously used by the two leaders in their works.

The study at hand, maintains that the self that is represented in autobiography symbolizes a cultural, social and historical past landscape that is of greater significance in the present day. Stein (2011) advances the argument that Barack Obama uses the autobiographical text to unfold his father's past so as to be able to make sense of his rich generational heritage. Stein asserts that Barack Obama's performative creation of re-inventing himself through "acts of self- creation" are in line with his master plan of becoming a public personality (p. 4). The study at hand seeks to examine how autobiographies of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama might facilitate a literary discourse that will deliberate on how politics intercept with masculinity.

Ndlovu-Gatshani (2014) writing in his work *From a "Terrorist" to Global Icon: A Critical Decolonial Ethical Tribute to Nelson Mandela of South Africa* looks at the making of Nelson Mandela as a public figure through the eye of his Autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*. He maintains that from Nelson Mandela's Xhosa traditional society, he learned how to govern democratically. Ndlovu-Gatshani advances the argument that Nelson Mandela was greatly shaped by Xhosa's culture and customs.

Nelson Mandela's political conscious was formed by what he saw happening at the great palace. He argues that education and schooling shaped Nelson Mandela's nationalism where he learned to see himself as an African. He observes that travel and exposure enabled Nelson Mandela to know and experience the racial discrimination and domination by the white minority in apartheid South Africa. Contextualized this way Ndlovu-Gatsheni's analysis is seen to be concerned with how the self is made/represented by the autobiography form by specific formation of personal and political agency produced by specific social, cultural and political environments and produced by resources of culture, history and language which are the concerns of the study at hand.

In conclusion, this literature review has explored the complex and multifaceted nature of masculinity in the autobiographies of Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela. By examining the social, cultural and political contexts that shape their political masculinities, it becomes clear that both leaders' identities are constructed and performed in nuanced and context-dependent ways. The analysis of Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela's personas in their autobiographies reveals that they are constructed as icons, embodying ideals of leadership, masculinity, and nationhood. However, a closer reading of their texts also reveals narrative techniques that challenge and subvert these expectations, highlighting the complexities and vulnerabilities of their experiences. The study of public making of masculinities in Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father* and Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how masculinity is constructed, performed and negotiated in different contexts. By analyzing the intersections of social, culture and political contexts, this study explore how Mandela and Obama's autobiographies reflect and challenge dominant narrative around

masculinity identify and leadership. The findings of this study shed light on the way in which masculinity is constructed and performed in autobiographical narratives, and how these constructions reflect and shape broader cultural and social norms. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the complex and multifaceted nature of masculinity and its intersections with power, identity and culture

### **1.9 Research methodology**

This research study employs a qualitative approach, using close reading and textual analysis to examine the construction of masculinity in Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father* and Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*. To achieve the objectives and answer the research questions of the study, the analysis focuses on narrative structure (to analyze how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama structure their narratives to convey their experiences and constructions of their masculinities), language and imagery (to analyze the language and imagery used by Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama to describe themselves and their experiences and how these choices shape their representations of masculinity), and themes and motifs (to analyze the themes and motifs that emerge in Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama's autobiographies and how they relate to their construction of masculinity). The data analysis involves theme identification (identifying and analyzing themes and motifs related to masculinity such as fatherhood, leadership and vulnerability), and comparative analysis (comparing and contrasting Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama's constructions of masculinity, highlighting similarity and differences). The analysis is guided by theories of autobiography by drawing on theorists such as Sidonie Smith to understand the genre of autobiography and its relation to identity.

## **1.10 Research design**

The study used analytical research design that give the description and justification of the overall approach taken in this study in relation with the above outlined research questions of the study.

### **1.11.1 Qualitative research methods**

The study employs qualitative research methods for data collection and analysis.

The research at hand explores socially constructed reality using a framework which is context sensitive through description of these realities from the perspective of the narrators of the autobiographies who situate themselves socially as context subjects. It looks at how social experience is created and given meaning (Yilmaz, 2013).

The research work looks at characterization, themes and styles to demonstrate that the storyline is about political male figures but in the construction of these male figures there are certain small creative devices that the two use to bring out their experiences. Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela are very good with giving their experiences about their early boyhood upbringing, education, racial and cultural life with finer details. They are very particular with description of the mundane basic feelings and emotions that are related with episodes in their life (Willig,2013).

### **1.12 Study focuses and sampling**

When selecting the two autobiographies by Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama for the current study, the following factors were considered.

1. **Relevance:** Both autobiographies deal with themes of identity, leadership, and masculinity, making them relevant to the study.
2. **Comparative potential:** The two autobiographies offer a unique opportunity for comparative analysis, allowing researchers to explore similarities and differences in the construction of masculinity in different context.

3. Representativeness: Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama are both influential figures who have shaped the course of history, making their autobiographies representative of broader themes and experiences.
4. Accessibility: Both autobiographies are widely available and well documented, making them accessible for analysis.
5. Contextual difference: The autobiographies were written in different cultural, historical, and geographical context, providing a rich opportunity for exploring how masculinity is constructed and performed in positions of power.
6. Leadership roles: Both Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama have held significant leadership positions, allowing researchers to explore how masculinity is constructed in positions of power.
7. Autographical genre: Both texts belong to the autobiographical genre, enabling researchers to analyze the ways in which the authors construct and present their selves and experiences.

### **Sampling rationale**

1. Purposive sampling: The autobiographies were selected purposively based on their relevance to the research question and objective.
2. Comparative analysis: The study aims to compare and contrast the construction of masculinity in two different contexts, making the selection of the two autobiographies suitable for comparative analysis.

### **Data collection instruments**

The present study of the selected autobiographies uses textual analysis that involves close reading of the autobiographies to identify themes, patterns, and discourses related to masculinity. According to Foucault (1978a) the form of autobiographical as a data collection document with historical accounts, personal histories and written

experiences is able to put the real/actual experiences into communicable representation and give the knowledge concerning the narrator in the original language hence functioning as the primary data source of information for the study at hand. Using Michel Foucault's and Jacques Derrida's methodology in collecting data which focuses on meaning-making, image, social identities and language in assembling and compelling meaning, literature related to the study at hand is searched to look for data material that talk about, provide evidence or expose patterns and meaning about gender orders, narration component of various settings, modes of language used in deconstruction and the narrative expectations of the iconography of Mandela and Obama in their autobiographical texts. The study uses the above-mentioned cultural patterns of discourses as data sources (Foucault, 1982; Derrida, 1976). The study does a comprehensive review of the existing research on masculinity, identity, and autobiography to contextualize the study and identify gaps in the literature.

### **1.13 Data collection**

The study uses textual analysis whereby it collects two broad data types that includes primary data from the two autobiographies namely *Dreams from My Father: Story of Race and Inheritance* by Barack Obama and *Long Walk to Freedom* by Nelson Mandela and the secondary data which includes data sources from articles, internet, books, memes, newspapers and references which are related with this study. The study at hand guided by Fairclough (1992) and Willing (2001) notions that selection of objects which are meant to be discussed in a study ought to be connected/related to research questions, the readings of the two data types of the study were guided by the research questions of the research and designed to guide the research towards identifying that Barack Obama in *Dreams from My Father* and Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* are indeed products of boyhood, social, historical and political

experiences that construct them.

For the purpose of looking at the social practices through which Mandela and Obama are conceptualized as public/political figures, primary texts, seminal books and articles on comparative studies are examined and included with an aim of examining political masculinities related texts and work on the online catalogues, the main publishing academic houses, those cited in Google Scholar and other 'social' databases.

The research data collection begins with close study and critical reading of the two data sources with an aim of investigating/discovering social cultural representations, underlying ideas/assumptions, meaning, and patterns of significance (Weatherall, Taylor & Yates, 2001). The study aims at collecting words, phrases, masculinities image, themes, characterization and stylistic devices as data sources to be used to interrogate and see how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama narrate the making of their political masculinities in different settings in their autobiographies. These help the study to see if the texts in themselves demonstrate the different trajectories of how the two develop their public figures.

#### **1.14 Data analysis and interpretation**

Using Discourse analysis theory of analyzing and interpreting data, the study at hand looks into how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama as human subjects are produced through the set of discourses/sociocultural interactions that they operate in. Discourse analysis as advanced by Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida looks at language use and discursive practices within social, cultural and historical interactions in texts. In supporting the use of discourse viewpoint in literature works Cheek (2004) holds the view that:

Discourses are the scaffolds of discursive frameworks,  
which order reality in a certain way. They both enable

and constrain the production of knowledge, in that they allow for certain ways of thinking about reality while excluding others (p. 1142).

This in itself foregrounds the rhetoric of opposition which is the core aim of deconstruction as highlighted in binary opposition views by Derrida (1978). This is important for looking at how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama narrate their life stories to reveal aspects of their iconographic images as the society expects and the emergent contradictions with their realities. Discourse analysis looks at modern practices that enable individuals to compose themselves as subjects of knowledge (Foucault, 2010). Derrida's and Foucault's data analysis theory guides the present study to look at how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama are each constructed by the different historical, cultural and social realities/practices that they live in. In talking about practices and techniques that enable discourse study to analyze ways through which approaches and objects are formed Foucault in *Discourse on language* (1972) hypothesizes:

I am supposing that in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and Denver to cope with chance event, to evade ponderous, awesome materiality (p. 216).

The research looks at masculinities' images, characterization and stylistic devices that are collected as data sources as presented in the autobiographical texts. This process of searching for the recurring above mentioned patterns guided by the research questions as grounded from the research problem (Rose, 1998; Foucault, 1978b). The study then examines in depth the discourses of gender orders, settings as narrative components and modes of narration to seek an interplay between how the way Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama narrate their life stories reveals aspects of their masculinity that is the opposite of their iconographic images as the society/public expects and the emergent realities in these contradictions. The study reads what they

have written alongside what others have written about them in their biographies and other related materials to demonstrate that episodes of their lives have defined their public figures outlook as evident in their texts.

In conclusion, this study employed a qualitative research approach, utilizing analytical research design to explore the public making of masculinities in Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father* and Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*. The study's methodology was guided by discourse analysis framework, which enabled a nuanced examination of the ways in which masculinity is constructed and performed in the autobiographies.

### **1.15 Ethical Considerations**

The study at hand raises important ethical considerations that must be carefully addressed .as research project that examines the construction and performance of masculinity in the autobiographies of two prominent public figures, this study involves the analyses of texts that are both personal and public in nature. Given the sensitive and potentially controversial nature of the topic, it is essential to consider the ethical implications of analyzing and interpreting the lives and experiences of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama. This includes ensuring that the research is conducted in a manner that is respectful, responsible, and sensitive to the subjects and their legacies.

This section outlines the ethical considerations that guide this research, including issues related to representation, interpretation, and potential impact. By acknowledging and addressing these ethical concerns, the study aims to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity and responsibility. The study had the following ethical considerations to be looked into:

Representation and interpretation: The study had to ensure accurate representation and interpretation of the authors' intentions, experiences and contexts.

Cultural sensitivity: The study had the responsibility of being respectful and sensitive to the cultural backgrounds and contexts of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama.

Power dynamics: Recognizing the power dynamics involved in the studying and interpreting the lives and writings of influential figures like Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama was considered while undertaking the study.

Objectivity and bias: The study strived for objectivity and acknowledging potential biases in its analysis and interpretation.

Respect for the authors' legacies: Being respectful of Nelson Mandela's and Barack Obama's legacies and the impact of their work on various communities was important while undertaking the study.

Contextualization: Contextualizing the autobiographies within the historical, cultural and social contexts in which they were written was crucial for accurate understanding.

Avoiding reductionism: Avoiding reductionist or simplistic interpretation of complex identities and experiences was essential while undertaking the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CONDITIONING OF NELSON MANDELA AND BARACK OBAMA'S POLITICAL MASCULINITIES

#### 2.1 Introduction

In the complex tapestry of modern political leadership, the interplay of masculinity and identity plays a pivotal role in shaping public perception and political efficacy. The construction of masculinity is a complex and multifaceted process that is shaped by a variety of factors, including cultural, social, and historical context. For leaders like Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama, their experiences and context played a significant role in shaping their political masculinities. This chapter explores the conditioning of Nelson Mandela's and Barack Obama's political masculinities, examining how their experiences, values, and context influenced their construction and performance of masculinity in the public sphere.

Addressing the first objective of the study which is to analyze how social, cultural and political orders condition Barack Obama's and Nelson Mandela's political masculinities in their autobiographies, this chapter explores the conditioning of the political masculinities of the two iconic figures. The concept of conditioning highlights the ways in which external factors shape and influence individual behavior and identity. In the context of political leadership, conditioning refers to the ways in which societal expectations, cultural norms, and historical contexts shape the construction and performance of masculinity. Both leaders emerged from distinct historical and cultural contexts, yet their narratives resonate with shared themes of resilience, hope, and transformative leadership.

This chapter draws on Nelson Mandela's and Barack Obama's autobiography, as well

as other relevant sources, to explore the experiences and contexts that shaped their political masculinities. By examining their early lives, their experiences of oppression and resistance, and their leadership styles, this chapter provides insight into the ways in which their masculinities were conditioned and performed in the public sphere. The study maintains that man is a political being. That any simplest social issue is political. Therefore, conditioning here refers to social constructions of manhood which happens even before the subject gets to active politics and continues throughout their existence. This aligns with Butler's idea of gender as a performative and that this performance is ingrained in every aspect of human life.

### **2.1.0 Socio-cultural and political orders.**

Social, cultural and political discourses have conditioned Nelson Mandela's and Barack Obama's performance of masculinities. These discourses have invented specific notions of masculinities of Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela. Before venturing into politics Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama have been nurtured by specific political, cultural and social environments that results in conflict between how a Blackman is invented and the apartheid/racialized societal expectations. These conflicts are the ones that set-up the stage for Barack Obama's and Nelson Mandela's political careers later as politicians.

Social, cultural, and political discourses profoundly shape the organization of male power within any given society. These forms of power are derived from prevailing masculinities that are rooted in historical, social, and cultural contexts. When a particular masculine ideal gains prominence, it influences how male masculinity are constructed and understood. The specific political, cultural, and social environments that molded Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama, such as colonization, apartheid, the warrior ethos of Xhosa culture, and the complexities of racialized communities, are

crucial for understanding their political masculinities.

Political masculinities are shaped by hegemonic expectations that define what it means to be a political man. This public construction involves norms and conditions within the political sphere that dictate how masculinities are conceptualized and how these norms translate into specific expectations. Political masculinities emerge through a process of cultural upbringing and personal shaping, reflecting the dynamic interplay between societal influences and individual agency.

The ever-changing circumstances surrounding Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama contributed significantly to the formation of their masculinities. Both leaders were influenced by their cultural backgrounds and personal experiences, which together fostered their unique masculinities. The public making of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama can be understood as a multi-stage process of development, where their earlier masculinities laid the groundwork for their eventual public personas.

A close reading of Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* and Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father* reveals their coming-of-age narratives, each offering different interpretations of masculinity. Their childhood experiences, shaped by fluctuating cultural contexts, played a pivotal role in how they defined their masculinities. As autobiographical texts, these works not only recount personal histories but also reconstruct broader historical realities to convey specific perspectives on their masculinity.

In his narrative, Barack Obama intertwines his lived experiences of race and inheritance with myth, creating a rich tapestry that illustrates his journey towards self-understanding. Nelson Mandela, too, reflects on the interplay between personal and collective struggle, emphasizing that the revelations in his autobiography serve the

greater cause of liberation.

The study delves into the ways Barack Mandela and Nelson Obama articulate their experiences, examining specific characterizations, themes, and creative devices that emerge from their early years. By exploring the particular conceptualizations of masculinity present in their texts, the study uncovers how these narratives not only reflect their personal journeys but also engage with broader social and cultural discourses that shaped their identities as political leaders. Through this examination, the study illuminates how the conditioning of their political masculinities informs their legacies and contributions to contemporary discourse on leadership and identity.

## **2.2 Conditioning Barack Obama's and Nelson Mandela's Adolescent Masculinities**

The journeys of Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela towards defining their political masculinities are profoundly shaped by their adolescent experiences, which are intricately detailed in their autobiographical works, *Dreams from My Father* and *Long Walk to Freedom*. Both leaders' formative years reveal a complex interplay of cultural, social, and personal factors that condition their understandings of masculinity, identity, and leadership.

Growing up in a multicultural environment, Barack Obama navigated the challenges of being biracial in a society that often rigidly categorizes individuals by race. His early years in Hawaii, marked by a blend of diverse cultures, offered him a unique lens through which to view masculinity, exposing him to both positive and negative exemplars of manhood. This multicultural experience allowed Barack Obama to critically engage with conventional notions of masculinity, shaping his understanding of strength and vulnerability.

In contrast, Nelson Mandela's early life in rural South Africa was steeped in Xhosa cultural traditions that emphasized values such as bravery and communal responsibility. The warrior ethos prevalent in his culture provided a framework for understanding masculinity that celebrated strength and resilience. However, Nelson Mandela's exposure to the harsh realities of apartheid and racial oppression complicated these notions, prompting him to reconcile traditional ideals of masculinity with the need for compassion and justice.

Family relationships played a crucial role in shaping the adolescent masculinities of both leaders. Barack Obama was primarily raised by his mother and grandparents, who instilled values of empathy, resilience, and intellectual curiosity. His mother emphasized the importance of education and self-awareness, traits that would later define his political identity. The absence of a paternal figure led Barack Obama to grapple with conflicting notions of masculinity, pushing him to seek alternative models that resonated with his values.

Similarly, Nelson Mandela was influenced by his mother's strong character and the communal upbringing he experienced in the Thembu culture. His early exposure to leadership roles within his family and community fostered a sense of responsibility and a commitment to social justice. The lessons learned during his formative years laid the groundwork for his future as a leader who would prioritize reconciliation over retribution.

Both Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela faced significant social challenges tied to their racial identities. As a young boy, Barack Obama encountered teasing and marginalization for his mixed heritage, which forced him to confront societal expectations of masculinity. These experiences fostered resilience and adaptability, traits that would become integral to his leadership style. His struggle for acceptance in

predominantly white environments compelled him to develop a nuanced understanding of race and identity, allowing him to articulate a vision of inclusive masculinity.

Nelson Mandela's experiences with racial oppression were similarly formative. Growing up under the oppressive regime of apartheid, he witnessed firsthand the brutal realities of racism and injustice. These experiences instilled in him a deep commitment to fighting for equality and human rights, shaping a political masculinity that emphasized collective struggle and solidarity.

Both leaders utilize reflective storytelling in their autobiographies to reconstruct their adolescent experiences, illustrating the formative nature of this period. Barack Obama's narrative not only recounts personal anecdotes but also engages with broader societal discourses on race, identity, and masculinity. By weaving together personal and collective histories, he critiques dominant narratives that often marginalize voices like his own.

Similarly, Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* reflects on his early life and the influences that shaped his character and convictions. His narrative emphasizes the role of personal and communal histories in understanding the struggle for freedom, demonstrating how his upbringing informed his commitment to justice.

The conditioning of Barack Obama's and Nelson Mandela's adolescent masculinities reveals the multifaceted nature of identity formation in the context of race, culture, and personal experience. Their early years laid the foundation for political masculinities characterized by empathy, resilience, and a commitment to justice. By critically engaging with the complexities of their upbringings, both leaders not only navigated the challenges of their identities but also redefined the parameters of masculinity in

public life. This analysis underscores the significance of early experiences in shaping political leaders, illustrating how personal narratives contribute to broader conversations about masculinity and identity in contemporary society.

### **2.3 Barack Obama's Adolescent Masculinities in *Dreams from My Father***

Barack Obama's autobiography, serves as a critical examination of his masculinity formation amidst the intricate web of America's political, moral, and cultural experiences. Grounded in the historical context of American traditions, Barack Obama's narrative reflects how these deeply rooted influences, coupled with the absence of his father, shaped his early navigation of masculinity.

From a young age, Barack Obama confronted profound inner conflicts stemming from his mixed-race heritage. The absence of his father left a void that he sought to fill through the stories relayed by his mother and maternal grandparents. These familial narratives crafted an image of a brilliant, confident father, yet they also highlighted the societal changes occurring within the American community (Obama 1995, p .25). Barack Obama poignantly notes that the stories of his father spoke more to the changing racial attitudes of those around him than to the man himself, illustrating how personal narratives are inextricably linked to broader social dynamics. This connection between identity politics and family stories underscores the complexity of Barack Obama's self-understanding and the pressures of racial identity that he would ultimately have to navigate.

In grappling with his identity, Barack Obama often retreated into solitude, which he describes as "the safest place I know" (Obama, 1995, p. 4). This retreat allowed him to cultivate a pragmatic approach to his social interactions. In acknowledging his boyhood friendship Barack Obama (1995) notes: "It was there that I would meet Ray

and other black close to my age who had begun to trickle into the island, teenagers whose confusion and anger would help shape my own (p. 80).” By reflecting thoughtfully on the expectations imposed by others, he developed the skills necessary to navigate the often-tumultuous waters of racial identity. Barack Obama’s relationships, particularly with peers like Ray, exposed him to the confusion and anger of other young black individuals, further shaping his understanding of race and identity. Barack Obama’s recognition of these social dynamics reveals his acute awareness of the shifting discourses surrounding race, enabling him to develop resilience in the face of discrimination. The concept of “racial two-ness” became a central theme in Barack Obama’s self-exploration. Barack Obama discusses the concept in his autobiography where he reflects on his experiences as a biracial individual. The concept shapes his masculinities in complex ways. His contemplation of the term “miscegenation,” which he characterizes as “humpbacked” and “ugly” (Obama, 1995, p. 11), reflects his early grappling with societal stigmas attached to his identity. This acknowledgment of his mixed heritage is fraught with anxiety, particularly during his formative years at Punahou Academy, where he faced taunting and isolation as one of the few black students. These experiences of ridicule, such as being asked if his African father “eats people,” revealed the harsh realities of racial prejudice and the internalization of inferiority that could accompany such stigma. Barack Obama’s experiences with racial two-ness shaped his understanding of what it means to be a man, particularly in the context of American society. Barack Obama had to navigate different expectations around masculinity, from both whites and black communities, and find a way to reconcile these different identities.

Barack Obama's narrative illustrates a critical aspect of his development: the necessity of confronting and reconciling his racial identity with the societal expectations placed upon him. Through these early experiences, he began to formulate a path toward racial

reconciliation and conflict resolution. His understanding that he need not internalize the judgments of others became foundational in shaping his political masculinity.

Barack Obama's adolescent experiences, as articulated in *Dreams from My Father*, reveal a complex interplay of personal narratives, societal expectations, and racial identity politics. The intersection of his familial stories with the broader American racial landscape not only informed his understanding of masculinity but also equipped him with the tools for navigating the challenges of his dual heritage.

As Barack Obama transitioned into adolescence, he grappled with the inherited racial injustices that marked his identity as a biracial individual. These struggles prompted him to seek alternative answers to the stigmatization and feelings of inferiority associated with his racial "two-ness". Barack Obama's relationships with black friends like Ray and Frank became crucial in this search, as he attempted to reconcile his social inheritance and devise a plan to address the systemic injustices he encountered.

Barack Obama reflects on his adolescence as living a "caricature of black male adolescence," a role that both parodied and critiqued American ideals of masculinity (Obama, 1995, p.78). He recognized that his identity was constrained by limited options shaped by racial identity, which forced him to adopt a façade, "a costume" that shielded him from the uncertainties of his environment (Obama, 1995, p. 80). This acknowledgment underscores the pressure he felt to conform to societal expectations, revealing how deeply entrenched racial dynamics influenced his sense of self.

Ray's perspective on being black, articulated through a lens of oppression, further complicated Barack Obama's understanding of his masculinity. Ray described the experience of "playing on the white man's court...by the white man's rule," emphasizing the power dynamics that restricted authentic expressions of black masculinity (Obama, 1995, p. 85). This framing highlighted the internalized self-

contempt and low self-esteem that could arise from systemic racism, compelling Barack Obama to confront the harsh realities of his environment and question his own racial authenticity.

Barack Obama's upbringing had shielded him from fully understanding the dehumanizing stereotypes that marginalized black individuals. His grandmother's fear of black men, despite her familial ties, revealed the pervasive influence of racial prejudice in their lives (Obama, 1995, pg. 88-89). This encounter was pivotal, as it exposed Barack Obama to the brutal nature of fear in society and instilled a sense of suspicion toward white individuals. Such realizations forced him to navigate a complex landscape of masculinity and race, ultimately shaping his worldview.

Frank's insights further illuminated the generational trauma embedded within black masculinity. His lamentation about the experiences of humiliation and desecration faced by black families contrasted sharply with Barack Obama's sheltered upbringing, compelling him to recognize the disparities in their lived realities (Obama, 1995, pg. 90-91). This dialogue catalyzed a deeper exploration of his black masculinity, prompting Obama to confront the social struggles that characterized the lives of many African Americans.

The internal conflict stemming from these experiences contributed to Barack Obama's eventual turn to substance use as a means of escape. He expressed a sense of fatigue over attempting to untangle the mess of racial identity that was not of his making (Obama, 1995, p. 93). This escapism, however, also reflected a broader struggle among youth grappling with identity in a society that often offers limited understanding and support. Yet, as he became involved in activism during his college years, Barack Obama began to channel his frustrations into constructive action, marking a significant turning point in his narrative.

At Occidental College, Barack Obama's engagement with the South African divestment campaigns served as a catalyst for his political awakening. This involvement not only helped him articulate a coherent political masculinity but also allowed him to mobilize his peers, showcasing his persuasive abilities and commitment to racial justice. His association with fellow black students like Marcus and Regina played a pivotal role in reshaping his self-perception, allowing him to reject notions of being "compromised" or a "sellout" in favor of a stronger connection to the black community (Obama, 1995, p. 115).

Barack Obama's desire for a sense of belonging became increasingly pronounced as he sought to anchor his identity in a physical and cultural home. His longing for community and shared history was ignited by Regina's stories of familial connections and traditions, which evoked a vision of black life filled with possibility (Obama, 1995, p. 104). This realization underscored the importance of community in shaping individual masculinity, illustrating how personal narratives can inform one's understanding of belonging.

Ultimately, Barack Obama's journey through adolescence reveals the complex interplay of personal experiences, societal expectations, and racial identity. His struggles with stigmatization and the search for belonging shaped his political and social consciousness, enabling him to emerge as a leader deeply invested in issues of race and justice. This highlights how Barack Obama's preconditioning was not merely a product of his environment but a dynamic process of self-discovery and activism that laid the groundwork for his future endeavors in public life.

Barack Obama's pursuit of identity and belonging culminated in his decision to study philosophy and political science at Columbia University, where he aimed to

conceptualize his black masculinity within a broader societal context. This choice reflects a critical turning point in his journey, as he sought not just academic knowledge but a deeper understanding of the racial and cultural dynamics that shaped his experiences. His acknowledgment of applying for a transfer program underscores his desire to immerse himself in a more diverse urban environment, where he hoped to find a community that resonated with his evolving identity (Obama, 1995, p. 115).

At Columbia, Barack Obama encountered the stark realities of social structural inequalities that permeate American society. His realization that the collapse of middle ground was particularly evident in the black community he had idealized speaks to his growing awareness of the systemic barriers faced by individuals of color. The contrast between his aspirations for a fulfilling life and the limited representation of black professionals in elite spaces highlighted the pervasive nature of racial inequity (Obama, 1995, p. 81). This awareness was instrumental in shaping his political consciousness, as he recognized that the promise of success in America was often accompanied by the weight of historical injustice.

Central to Barack Obama's maturation was his yearning to effect change within his community. The concept of "the promise of redemption" he articulated signifies his commitment to acquiring a political and social voice that could advocate for the marginalized (Obama, 1995, p. 134). This desire to become a community organizer in inner-city neighborhoods represents a pivotal shift from introspection to activism, as he sought to address the injustices that had long plagued his community. By engaging in identity politics through community organization, Barack Obama aligned himself with the collective struggles and aspirations of those around him, reinforcing the notion that shared experiences of oppression could forge solidarity and drive social change.

Barack Obama's experiences as a community organizer provided him with firsthand insight into the complexities of racial and economic struggles. Listening to the stories of individuals from diverse backgrounds enabled him to understand the multifaceted nature of oppression and the high expectations placed upon marginalized communities. His acknowledgment that "stories make up communities" underlines the importance of narrative in shaping collective identity and fostering a sense of belonging (Obama, 1995, p.195). This emphasis on storytelling as a means of connection reflects a broader understanding of how personal experiences can galvanize social movements and inform political action.

The historical and political contexts of Barack Obama's upbringing were pivotal in shaping his political masculinities. His reflections on segregation in America and colonialism in Kenya highlight the duality of his identity, which was marked by both African heritage and American experiences (Obama, 1995, p. 50). The legacy of his grandfather's servitude under British colonialism underscores the intergenerational trauma that informed Barack Obama's perspective on race and identity. This acknowledgment of ancestral suffering not only instilled a sense of pride in his heritage but also fueled his determination to challenge systemic inequalities.

Barack Obama's multiracial background, encompassing influences from Hawaii, Indonesia, Kenya, and the United States, further complicates his masculinity formation. Unlike figures like Nelson Mandela, who identified with a singular cultural background, Barack Obama's experiences across various cultures positioned him as a mediator in discussions of race and identity. His understanding of race as a fluid construct rather than a fixed identity allowed him to navigate and bridge the divides that characterized American society.

In articulating his journey, Barack Obama positioned himself as a facilitator of a new

era in identity politics, advocating for a vision of unity that transcended racial boundaries. His assertion that “this nation is more than the sum of its parts” encapsulates his belief in the potential for a cohesive yet diverse society. This perspective not only reflects his personal journey but also speaks to a broader aspiration for a post-racial America, where identities can coexist and enrich the social fabric.

Barack Obama’s conditioning reveals the intricate interplay of personal narrative, historical context, and social activism in shaping his political masculinity. His experiences underscore the significance of community, storytelling, and the pursuit of social justice in navigating the complexities of race in America. His masculinity formation can be understood as a complex interplay of race, familial influences, and societal expectations. The racial laws and customs of America constructed Barack Obama as black, compelling him to “fight to claim” his identity through the absent filiations of his Kenyan father (Gikandi, 2012, p. 218). This struggle for self-identity is poignantly articulated when Barack Obama expresses the challenge of being taken “at face value” (Obama, 1994, p. XV), a reality deeply rooted in the racial perception of his appearance. The societal imposition of a racial identity, based solely on his physical traits, obscured his authentic self, forcing him to navigate a world that often defined him by superficial characteristics rather than by his multifaceted identity.

Barack Obama's desire to embrace his black masculinity is intricately linked to the “ideal signification” of historical black identity (Foucault, 1980, p. 140). Mediating about the self-writing of the book, Barack Obama notes in the preface “I might have written a different book- less a meditation on the absent parent, more a celebration of the one who was the single constant in my life,” it is through this “more” mediated absent parent that Barack Obama works out “a workable meaning for his life as a black

American” (Obama, 1995, XVI). By drawing on the legacy of his Kenyan father, he sought not only to affirm his racial identity but also to connect with a broader narrative of black heritage. This duality highlights a critical aspect of his conditioning: the need to reconcile the expectations placed upon him as a black man with his personal aspirations and values.

Central to Barack Obama’s formative years was the love and moral guidance he received from his family. His early childhood experiences fostered a compassionate worldview, which he believed could transcend racial divides. In *Dreams from My Father*, he reflects on the transformative power of love, suggesting that it can serve as a bridge across cultural and racial chasms. His family’s actions, such as his grandmother addressing a black man as “mister” and his mother forming friendships across racial lines, challenged societal norms and instilled in Barack Obama the belief that love and acceptance could combat prejudice (Obama, 1995, p. 18). These early lessons in humanism provided him with a moral compass that would inform his later political ideology.

Barack Obama’s upbringing also involved an acute awareness of the historical context of his parents’ interracial marriage at a time when such unions were rare and often stigmatized. His father’s humanitarian ideals and the courage to defy societal norms sparked a sense of pride and resilience within Barack Obama, nurturing his determination to confront racial injustices in America. This backdrop of activism and defiance against systemic oppression significantly shaped his political masculinity, reinforcing the idea that personal histories and familial legacies are integral to understanding one's place in society.

As a “liminal subject,” Barack Obama occupied a unique space between two worlds, identities, or cultures. In this context Barack Obama describes himself as occupying

the place where his parents' dreams had been, suggesting a sense of inheriting and navigating the complexities of their aspirations and realities, his parents' dreams and the realities of their separation. He poignantly states, "I occupied the place where their dreams had been" (Obama, 1995, p. 27), illustrating his role as a mediator between the aspirations of his parents and his own identity formation. This positioning allows him to draw on both the cultural richness of his African heritage and the complexities of his American upbringing, crafting a public persona that resonated with Judith Butler's theory of performativity and construction of identity. Barack Obama's liminality highlights the performance nature of identity, where identity is constructed through repeated acts and performances that cite and reiterate social norms. As a liminal figure, Barack Obama's masculinity is therefore shaped by his experiences of navigating multiple identities, cultures, and expectations. Navigating the complexities of liminality required Barack Obama to develop resilience and adaptability, which are seen to be key aspects of his masculinity.

Barack Obama's narrative also elucidates the optimistic vision held by his parents for his future, rooted in the belief that "in a generous America you don't have to be rich to achieve your potential" (Leone, et al., 2015, p. 357). This aspiration reflects a broader commentary on the American dream and the potential for upward mobility, even in the face of racial adversity. It underscores the importance of navigating the dualities of his identity, embracing both black masculinity and the broader American experience, as foundational to his political aspirations.

Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father* serves as an Oedipal text that illuminates the profound influence of paternal figures on his masculinity formation. The figure of the father is central to the narrative, weaving through its beginning, middle, and end, representing both authority and the aspirational qualities that Barack Obama sought to

embody. This dynamic engagement with his father's absence and idealization reflects an Oedipal attraction to a paternal archetype symbolizing power and authority, elements that are deeply embedded in the construction of masculinity (Rine, 2010, p. 1). The absence of his father, rather than diminishing his sense of self, became a catalyst for Barack Obama's self-exploration and growth, propelling him to seek out a "workable meaning for his life as a black American" (Obama, 1995, p. XVI).

Barack Obama's relationship with the absent father figure exemplifies a complex interplay of desire and masculinity. At times, he idealizes his father as a kingly figure, embodying the warrior masculinity associated with noble leadership qualities. These kingly perceptions are linked to the warrior masculinity type, the "Burning spear" (Obama, 1995, p. 4). This perception is compounded by the cultural narratives surrounding black masculinity, which often valorize strength and resilience highlighting Barack Obama's connection to his black heritage and his exploration of black masculinity. By invoking these royal and warrior-like attributes, Barack Obama aligns himself with a broader historical context that shapes his political aspirations and construction of his masculinities.

The social, political, and cultural environments in which Barack Obama was raised are crucial to understanding his conditioning. In his narrative, Barack Obama acknowledges the significance of familial and cultural contexts in shaping his masculinity, particularly in a society marred by racism and discrimination. As he grapples with his father's abandonment, he experiences a profound sense of pain that adversely affects his psychosocial development. This trauma prompts a search for meaning, compelling him to confront the realities of his marginalized existence and the cultural problems associated with early abandonment. Such experiences resonate with many young African American men, creating a shared narrative of struggle and

resilience.

The institutions of family and school play a pivotal role in identity construction. As Sadjadi (2012) notes, these institutions provide the ideological frameworks through which individuals navigate their socialization. In Barack Obama's case, his upbringing in a mixed-race environment, under the care of his white maternal grandparents and mother, along with influences from his Asian stepfather, further complicates his self-perception. Growing up in Hawaii, a place characterized by its racial diversity, allowed Barack Obama to cultivate a sense of racial masculinity grounded in mutual respect and harmony. His reflections on Hawaii as “the one true melting pot” highlight the unique cultural dynamics that shaped his understanding of race and identity, enabling him to navigate various cultural contexts effortlessly (Obama, 1995, p. 28).

The contradiction between racial intolerance and cultural pluralism in Barack Obama's experiences, particularly in Hawaii, significantly shaped his understanding of identity and race politics influencing his masculinities. The contradictions highlight his awareness of racial dynamics, influencing his perspectives on family, identity, power, and social justice, and shaping his masculinities in response to these complexities. The contradictions Barack Obama faced prompted him to develop a more self-aware and reflective form of masculinity, one that acknowledges the complexities of identity, family and power; one that fostered resilience and empathy in Barack Obama, shaping his perspectives on identity, community, and social justice. Barack Obama's experiences navigating these contradictions influenced his approach to leadership, empathy, inclusivity, and social justice.

Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father* intricately weaves the influence of his mother, Ann Dunham, into the fabric of his masculinity formation, particularly through her

engagement with the Civil Rights Movement. This period in American history profoundly shaped his worldview, as she provided him with educational materials and films that highlighted African American culture and social activism. By immersing him in these narratives, Dunham not only connected Barack Obama to the broader struggles of African Americans but also offered a historical framework for understanding his own identity. The film footage he viewed with her became a "romantic image of a past I had never known," establishing a vital link to a heritage of activism that would later inform his aspirations and masculinity in public service (Obama,1995, p. 162).

Despite the love and support from his mother, Barack Obama's formative years were characterized by a series of separations and absences that significantly impacted his emotional development. His father's departure and his mother's relocations created an environment of instability, forcing Barack Obama to navigate the complexities of identity amidst feelings of abandonment. By age nine, he had cultivated a keen sense of self-control and emotional resilience, traits that would define his character (Falk, 2009). This early development of emotional intelligence enabled him to adapt to the challenges of his multicultural upbringing, laying the groundwork for his future leadership.

The patterns of separation and relocation in Barack Obama's childhood also highlight the profound influence of familial relationships on his identity. After returning from Indonesia with his sister Maya, Barack Obama found himself moving back and forth between his grandparents' home and his mother's various residences. These transitions, while disruptive, contributed to a deeper understanding of familial love. Barack Obama's reflection that he did not feel his mother's absence as a deprivation suggests a complex relationship with loss; he recognized its significance but also the

strength he derived from the unconditional love provided by his grandparents. This love became a stabilizing force in his life, instilling a positive attitude that would later manifest in his political career.

Barack Obama's grandfather, Stanley Dunham, played a crucial role in his emotional development. Described as “the kindest, most understanding man” in the absence of his father (Falk, 2009), Stanley's affection helped shape Barack Obama's personality and values. This relationship highlights the importance of intergenerational connections in fostering resilience. The nurturing environment created by his grandparents allowed Barack Obama to cultivate a calm confidence, enabling him to approach life's challenges with poise.

The transformative power of love in Barack Obama's life cannot be overstated. His mother's ability to teach him about the complexities of race and identity, coupled with her unwavering support, nurtured his capacity to love and empathize across racial boundaries. Barack Obama's assertion that his mother sought to instill in him a comprehensive understanding of his father reflects a broader theme of embracing complexity and nuance in relationships. This perspective allowed him to navigate the emotional landscape of his masculinity while fostering a commitment to social justice.

Moreover, Dunham's dedication to education profoundly influenced Barack Obama's intellectual development. By homeschooling him and supplementing his education with correspondence courses, she instilled a love of learning that became foundational to his character. His intellect, self-control, and temperance emerged as essential attributes that facilitated positive interactions with others, ultimately shaping his public persona. Washington et al., (2018) emphasizes that his family purposefully guided him away from isolation towards meaningful engagement with the community, reinforcing the value of connection and solidarity in his life.

The influence of Barack Obama's mother and grandparents provided a rich foundation for his masculinity, equipping him with the tools to navigate a complex and often challenging world. This critical analysis underscores the significance of personal narrative in understanding how formative experiences shape one's path toward public engagement and leadership in a multifaceted society. Through his reflections, Barack Obama articulates a journey of self-discovery that transcends the constraints of racial identity, ultimately positioning him as a leader capable of bridging divides and advocating for social justice.

Barack Obama's formative years were characterized by a unique blend of cultural exposure and personal challenges that fundamentally shaped his worldview and leadership style. His early life, particularly under the influence of his mother, Stanley Ann Dunham, and his stepfather, Lolo Soetoro, instilled in him vital lessons of resilience, cultural appreciation, and moral integrity.

Lolo Soetoro's lessons in boxing went beyond physical training; they symbolized a broader philosophy of survival in a competitive world. "Only the strong survive...it's sometimes not a matter of right or wrong, sometimes it is who is strong". He also advised him, "Your mother has a soft heart. That is good thing in a woman. But you will be a man someday, and a man needs to have some sense" (Obama, 1995, p, 39). The assertion, "Only the strong survive," reflects a pragmatic understanding of life's harsh realities (Obama,1995, p. 39). Soetoro's guidance on emotional toughness, contrasting his wife's nurturing disposition, highlights a critical duality in Barack Obama's upbringing. This foundational perspective on strength and foresight would later manifest in Barack Obama's political courage, enabling him to navigate complex sociopolitical landscapes.

Barack Obama's background, straddling the line between lower and working class, is

essential in understanding his drive and determination. His mother's sacrifices, including reliance on food stamps while striving to provide quality education through scholarships, exemplify resilience against socioeconomic adversity. This narrative is not merely a testament to personal struggle but also serves as a microcosm of the broader African American experience, marked by systemic challenges yet underscored by hope and ambition.

The four years spent in Indonesia were pivotal in shaping Barack Obama's masculinity. Amid political turmoil, his mother's commitment to fostering a sense of African American heritage was crucial. Through her emphasis on pride in their lineage, Barack Obama developed a nuanced understanding of race and identity, which would later inform his political rhetoric. The teachings about the "glorious burdens" of being black reflect a deeper philosophical understanding of identity as both a source of strength and a responsibility (Obama, 1995, p. 248).

Moreover, Barack Obama's exposure to diverse cultures in Indonesia, through his education in both Catholic and Muslim schools, further enriched his worldview. This cultural immersion cultivated an appreciation for diversity, teaching him self-control and adaptability, qualities essential for effective leadership. The experiences of racial teasing as the only African American student in his class did not deter him; instead, they instilled in him a sense of creativity and innovation. Rather than resorting to violence, Barack Obama learned to navigate social dynamics with intellect and empathy, gaining respect through protective actions rather than aggression.

Barack Obama's narrative also reveals the profound impact of literature and historical consciousness on his intellectual development. His mother's dedication to instilling knowledge about the civil rights movement and figures like Dr. King provided him with a framework for understanding justice and equity. This engagement with history not

only shaped his values but also equipped him with the rhetorical tools necessary for political activism.

Importantly, Barack Obama's experiences in Indonesia and Hawaii, marked by cultural pluralism, positioned him uniquely within the American socio-political landscape. His mother's teachings emphasized the importance of understanding and bridging cultural divides, a lesson that would prove invaluable in his political career. The ability to build coalitions among diverse groups—whites, minorities, and young people—demonstrates the effectiveness of his mother's liberal values, fostering an inclusive approach to governance.

Barack Obama's conditioning was a complex interplay of cultural exposure, personal hardship, and maternal influence, which collectively shaped his masculinity and leadership style. The lessons learned during his formative years—resilience, cultural appreciation, and moral integrity, were instrumental in his journey from a young boy in Jakarta to the presidency of the United States. This analysis underscores the significance of early life experiences in shaping an individual's capacity for empathy, understanding, and effective leadership in a diverse world.

Central to the conditioning was the rigorous educational framework established by his mother, Stanley Ann Dunham. By waking Barack Obama at 4 a.m. for lessons through a correspondence school, she instilled in him discipline and a strong work ethic. This insistence on educational excellence, even in the face of inadequate schooling in Indonesia, set the stage for his later achievements and ambition. Dunham's commitment to her son's education reflected a broader aspiration to transcend socioeconomic barriers, a value that Barack Obama would carry throughout his life.

However, this pursuit of academic excellence came at a cost. Upon returning to Hawaii and enrolling at Punahou School, Barack Obama encountered the stark reality of

racial isolation. The minimal presence of African American students left him feeling alienated and disconnected from his heritage. Key's observation that Barack Obama harbored "more resentments than my circumstances justified" underscores the internal conflict that arose from this isolation (Key, 2011, p. 2). Unlike peers who might have experienced a more cohesive cultural identity, Barack Obama grappled with the complexities of being a Black child in a predominantly white environment, which shaped his understanding of race as a multifaceted social construct.

During his time in Indonesia, Barack Obama was known as Barry Soetoro, a name that not only symbolized his geographical and cultural dislocation but also his search for identity amidst the complexities of race. The transition back to Hawaii, where he adopted the name Barry Barack Obama, reflects a conscious effort to reclaim his identity, yet it also highlights the struggle he faced in reconciling his multifaceted heritage. The notion of a "hidden enemy" that Barack Obama describes reveals a critical awakening to the systemic injustices and social hierarchies ingrained in American society (Obama, 1995, p. 51). His exposure to images of individuals undergoing skin-lightening treatments serves as a poignant metaphor for the lengths to which individuals might go to conform to societal beauty standards, illustrating the pervasive nature of racial identity crises (Obama, 1995, pg.29-30).

Barack Obama's experiences at Punahou further exacerbated his internal struggle. The racial jokes and comments from classmates not only highlighted his outsider status but also forced him to navigate a painful dichotomy between his identity as a Black man and his desire for acceptance within a predominantly white social framework. His attempts to distance himself from a Black classmate, in a bid to gain favor with white peers, reveal the deep-seated pressures he faced to conform to expectations that often conflicted with his own sense of self (Obama, 1995, p, 80).

The absence of positive Black role models in his life compounded this struggle. Unlike figures such as Nelson Mandela, who had strong mentors, Barack Obama's search for identity was modeled on the fragmented representations found in popular culture. While he sought solace in basketball and friendships with a few Black peers, these experiences were insufficient to provide a coherent understanding of his racial identity. Frank, a poet, offered a cautionary perspective on education, warning Barack Obama that academic success could alienate him from his own racial identity (Obama, 1995, p, 97). This advice highlights the tension between educational aspiration and cultural authenticity that Barack Obama grappled with throughout his adolescence.

Barack Obama's reflections reveal a profound awareness of the limitations imposed by societal expectations and racial stereotypes. His reliance on popular culture to shape his understanding of black masculinity, while insightful, ultimately left him feeling disconnected from a genuine sense of self (Obama, 1995, p. 78). The realization that he was embodying a caricature of Black male adolescence speaks to the broader societal pressures that often dictate the terms of racial identity. Barack Obama's recognition of these constraints illustrates a critical turning point in his consciousness, as he began to understand the complexities of racial representation and the societal narratives that sought to define him.

Barack Obama's journey toward self-discovery and community engagement during his formative years reveals the intricate relationship between race, identity, and belonging. His urgent need for a plan of action in life found expression through basketball, a space that became a refuge and a means of connection for him amidst the racial alienation he experienced in Hawaii (Obama, 1995, p. 80). His reflection on meeting peers like Ray illustrates the significance of camaraderie among young Black individuals grappling with similar feelings of confusion and frustration, highlighting how shared

experiences can foster a sense of belonging.

Barack Obama's acknowledgment of social inequalities and the pervasive influence of white supremacy reflect a critical awareness of the systemic barriers that shaped his upbringing. Such awareness deepened his sense of racial alienation, prompting a search for equalizing forces in his life. Basketball emerged as a vital unifying agent, providing not only a physical outlet but also a community where he felt accepted. On the court, Barack Obama discovered that respect was earned through skill and effort rather than lineage or social status: "Respect came from what you did not who your daddy was" (Obama, 1995, pg. 79- 80). This realization underscores the transformative power of sports as a microcosm where racial dynamics can be momentarily transcended, allowing individuals to connect beyond the limitations imposed by societal structures.

The basketball court became a significant site for Barack Obama's masculinity formation, characterized by an "inner life of its own" (McDonald & King, 2012, p.1028) This environment allowed him to engage with both Black and white teammates, facilitating a unique cultural exchange where racial identities could coexist without the weight of prejudice. The intensity of the game fostered moments of shared joy and connection, where individual performance merged into a collective experience. Such interactions not only helped solidify his sense of belonging but also encouraged him to explore and embrace "stylistic signs of blackness," as noted by McDonald and King. This exploration was integral to his understanding of self within a broader social context marked by racial history and cultural nuances.

Moreover, the notion that "basketball, like all American sports, is always spoken in a language that is historically racialized" emphasizes the role of sports in shaping cultural narratives around race (McDonald & King, 2012, p. 1028). Through his engagement with basketball, Obama began to articulate and navigate his dual identity, learning to

“slip back and forth between my black and white worlds” (Obama, 1995, p. 82). This fluidity in identity underscores the complexity of living in a society where racial categorizations are deeply entrenched. Barack Obama’s ability to understand and adapt to the differing languages and customs of these worlds speaks to his broader skill in communication and negotiation, essential traits for his future political career.

Barack Obama’s discomfort with terms like “white folks” further illustrates the challenges he faced in reconciling his racial identity with societal expectations. His initial hesitance reflects a broader struggle many individuals experience when confronting the language of race and identity. The memory of his mother’s smile serves as a poignant reminder of the values instilled in him, emphasizing the importance of maintaining dignity and respect in all interactions. This internal conflict, where he grappled with the implications of his language and the perceptions it evoked, foreshadows his later ability to engage in discourse around racial reconciliation.

The concept of “racial reconciliation” emerges as a hallmark of Barack Obama’s political masculinity, allowing him to position himself as a bridge between disparate communities. His early understanding of the necessity for careful navigation—where “a bit of translation” was required to bring together different racial narratives—demonstrates an innate political acumen (Obama, 1995, p. 136). His strategy of being courteous and approachable, which he notes was often met with relief from those around him, reveals a nuanced understanding of the power dynamics at play. By embodying the “well-mannered young black man,” Barack Obama was able to foster connections that transcended racial divides, ultimately positioning him as a leader capable of uniting diverse constituencies (Obama 1995, p. 94).

Barack Obama’s conditioning was profoundly shaped by his experiences in

basketball and his early awareness of racial dynamics. These experiences informed his understanding of identity, community, and the complexities of race relations in America. The lessons he learned on the court—about respect, belonging, and the art of negotiation—were instrumental in cultivating the skills he would later employ as a national political leader. This critical analysis reveals how the interplay of personal struggle, cultural engagement, and social awareness laid the groundwork for Barack Obama's unique approach to leadership and his vision for a more inclusive society.

In conclusion, Barack Obama's conditioning was marked by a dual journey of ambition and masculinity formation, shaped by the influences of his mother, cultural dislocation, and social isolation. His experiences in Indonesia and Hawaii not only informed his understanding of race but also instilled in him a resilient drive to navigate the intricacies of his social world. The internal struggles he faced, rooted in a desire for acceptance while grappling with the realities of racial identity, would ultimately inform his leadership style and political vision. This critical analysis reveals how the complexities of his early life laid the groundwork for a nuanced understanding of race, culture, and the pursuit of one's aspirations in a diverse society

#### **2.4 Conditioning of Nelson Mandela's Adolescent Masculinities**

Nelson Mandela's autobiography offers profound insights into his formative experiences, rooted in the communal values of his African Amakhosa cultural heritage and the oppressive realities of apartheid. By situating his narrative within the historical context of black South Africa, Nelson Mandela embarks on a journey that reveals the intricate interplay between personal identity and the social, cultural and political landscape of his time.

Nelson Mandela's reflections on his early rural life illustrate a paradoxical

understanding of freedom. He recalls a childhood filled with the joys of nature, running in fields, swimming in streams, and engaging in traditional practices without the constraints of colonial law (Mandela, 1994, p. 666). This idyllic portrayal of childhood freedom is undercut by the realization that such freedom was merely an illusion. The eventual recognition that this freedom had been usurped by the white minority becomes a pivotal moment in Nelson Mandela's consciousness, igniting a hunger for true liberation. His early experiences of perceived freedom serve as a stark contrast to the systemic oppression he would later confront, highlighting the complexities of identity formation in a racially stratified society.

The ideological framework of "white superiority" and "black inferiority" crafted the social dynamics under apartheid. This dichotomy not only informed the policies of oppression but also shaped the resistance narratives of the black majority. Nelson Mandela's recognition of these constructs underscores the foundational role they played in his development as a leader and activist. The oppressive structures of apartheid fostered a sense of urgency and determination within him, compelling him to challenge the status quo and seek justice for his people.

Nelson Mandela's exploration of familial relationships further elucidates the conflicts inherent in his upbringing. His name, Rolihlahla—which translates to "troublemaker"—is emblematic of the tensions between tradition and colonial authority (Mandela, 1994, p. 1). While he downplays the notion that names dictate destiny, he acknowledges that they can carry profound significance in shaping one's masculinity and societal role. This connection between his personal identity and the broader socio-political resistance is crucial; it reflects how individual experiences are often intertwined with collective struggles against oppression. The above views align with Derrida's difference tenant of deconstruction. Nelson Mandels's identity can be

seen as a site of difference, where his personal experiences and struggles are constantly deferred and differ from the dominant narratives of apartheid. This highlights the complexities of identity within collective struggles.

The tension between his father's adherence to Thembu customs and the magistrate's colonial authority epitomizes the broader struggle between indigenous rights and colonial domination (Mandela, 1994, p. 1). Nelson Mandela's father's defiance against the magistrate's illegitimate power illustrates a deep-seated resistance to colonial rule, highlighting the cultural and political complexities of black identity under apartheid. The loss of his father's chieftaincy and property serves as a poignant reminder of the violent dismantling of black authority and agency by colonial powers, shaping Nelson Mandela's understanding of authority, activism, justice and governance. Nelson Mandela's father standing up to the magistrate showed Nelson Mandela that the authority can be challenged. The act instilled in Nelson Mandela a strong sense of justice and a desire to fight against injustice. Ultimately, this experience influenced Nelson Mandela's later involvement in the ant-apartheid movement and his commitment to fighting against oppressive systems.

Nelson Mandela's narrative reveals the pervasive nature of violence and intimidation employed by the apartheid regime. The environment he describes is one where hegemonic masculinity, rooted in racial and class hierarchies, dictates social relations. The white male dominance, characterized by aggression and control, contrasts sharply with the struggles faced by black men, who were often relegated to positions of inferiority and subjugation. This systemic oppression informs Nelson Mandela's evolving understanding of masculinity, as he navigates a world where power dynamics are intricately linked to race and class. The experience of fighting against apartheid and the influence of military training contributed to the emergence

of a resistant form of black masculinity characterized by courage, resilience, and determination. Nelson Mandela's experience and those of his fellow activists shaped an Africanist form of masculinity that emphasized African pride, self-reliance, and collective action.

The influence of white masculinity and the experience of fighting against apartheid created tensions between traditional African notions of masculinity and modern, Westernized forms of masculinity. Black men had to navigate complex and often contradictory expectations of masculinity, balancing traditional African values with the harsh realities of life under apartheid.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity is particularly salient in the South African context, where racial and social inequalities intersect. Morrell's assertion that hegemonic masculinity privileges certain groups over others resonates deeply with Mandela's experiences (Morrell, 2012). The oppressive structures he witnessed not only shaped his understanding of power but also galvanized his commitment to dismantling these hierarchies. Nelson Mandela's life becomes a testament to the resilience and agency of those marginalized by systemic oppression, as he dedicates himself to challenging the inequities of a corrupt and violent regime.

Nelson Mandela's conditioning is marked by a profound engagement with the complexities of race, identity, and resistance. His autobiography serves as a critical reflection on the personal and collective struggles faced by black South Africans under apartheid. Through his exploration of early freedom, familial ties, and the realities of oppression, Nelson Mandela articulates a vision of justice that transcends individual experience, resonating with the broader quest for human dignity and equality. This critical analysis illuminates how Nelson Mandela's formative experiences shaped his identity as a leader and activist, ultimately guiding his lifelong commitment to the

fight against apartheid and the pursuit of a just society.

Nelson Mandela's conditioning is deeply intertwined with the socio-political landscape of apartheid South Africa, where white masculinity was not only privileged but also systematically constructed to perpetuate racial domination. Badenhorst (2015) highlights how the structured nature of white South African masculinity, including compulsory military training in public schools, equipped young white men for roles that enforced social violence against Black South Africans. This institutionalized preparation for domination underscores the broader mechanisms of apartheid that denied Black individuals their economic, social, and political freedoms, resulting in widespread dehumanization and humiliation.

Nelson Mandela's upbringing can be understood as a series of rites of passage that shaped his understanding of manhood and masculinity within this oppressive context. His journey toward political masculinity was marked by the gradual realization of the pervasive nature of white domination, which catalyzed his "long walk" toward liberation (Suttner, 2016). This evolution reflects more than personal growth; it encapsulates a collective awakening to systemic injustice that would inform his later activism.

Lodge (2006) asserts that Nelson Mandela's childhood environment was characterized by competing cultural, social, and moral authorities. He navigated a complex landscape where African mission education, colonial administration, and local traditions intersected, each exerting its own influence on his identity formation. The mission schools he attended provided a curriculum that included both Xhosa literature and English texts, exposing Nelson Mandela to a duality of cultures. However, this exposure was fraught with tension. His dissatisfaction with the portrayal of African leaders in history lessons, where they were often depicted as "savages and thieves",

highlights the pervasive racism embedded in the educational system (Lodge, 2006, p. 3). This disillusionment with colonial narratives fueled Mandela's burgeoning awareness of racial injustice and the need for a more inclusive historical representation.

Nelson Mandela's identification as an Anglophile, despite his criticisms of colonial attitudes, speaks to the complexities of his early identity. He recognized the influence of British culture while simultaneously grappling with its implications for his own people (Lodge, 2006, p. 5). The Methodist Church's mixed membership reflected an attempt to reconcile African and British cultural approaches, yet it also illustrated the contradictions inherent in his social environment. The coexistence of traditional African rituals, such as initiation ceremonies, alongside the colonial educational framework created a liminal space for Nelson Mandela, a place of negotiation between his indigenous identity and the colonial legacy.

As a liminal subject, Nelson Mandela transitioned from belonging to his Xhosa tribe and local Black community to emerging as a global figure advocating for peace, equality, and reconciliation. This transformation reveals a profound understanding of the interdependent nature of oppression: he recognized that both the oppressor and the oppressed were trapped within structures that perpetuated fear and deprivation. Badenhorst (2015) emphasizes Nelson Mandela's vision of liberation as encompassing not only the material upliftment of Black South Africans but also the psychological liberation of white individuals from their ingrained fears. This dual focus on emancipation reflects Nelson Mandela's nuanced understanding of the complexities of racial dynamics, positioning him as a leader capable of fostering dialogue and healing.

Nelson Mandela's conditioning is shaped by a multifaceted interplay of cultural influences, educational experiences, and social hierarchies. His early life experiences

within a racially divided society informed his evolving understanding of masculinity and identity, ultimately guiding him toward a vision of reconciliation that transcended individual grievances. This critical analysis reveals how Nelson Mandela's formative years cultivated a profound awareness of justice and equality, laying the groundwork for his lifelong commitment to dismantling apartheid and promoting a more inclusive society. These conditions not only influenced his life objectives and ideals but also molded his understanding of masculinity and leadership from a young age. Nelson Mandela's birth coincided with significant global events, such as the end of World War I and the Versailles Peace Conference, which underscored the early complexities of identity and struggle he would later embody in his fight for freedom (Mandela, 1994, p. 3).

From childhood, Nelson Mandela was acutely aware of the discrimination and exploitation faced by Black South Africans at the hands of the white minority. The stories shared by chiefs and elders at the Great Place imparted a fundamental understanding of the historical injustices that disrupted the harmony among tribes. Nelson Mandela learned that his people had lived in peace and fellowship before the encroachment of colonial rule, a realization that fostered a profound longing for the lost unity and dignity of his community.

Nelson Mandela's early masculinities were intricately linked to the patriarchal values of his Xhosa heritage (Suttner, 2014). His upbringing in a culture that emphasized traditional masculinity shaped his understanding of manhood, characterized by strength, leadership, and resilience. In *Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela reflects on how childhood experiences, playing and fighting with peers, were crucial for developing the skills and qualities associated with masculinity (Mandela, 1994, pp. 9-14). This socialization was vital for his masculinity formation, reinforcing the idea

that manhood was achieved through competition and camaraderie among boys, as noted by Webster (2018). The expectation to conform to these standards played an essential role in shaping his character and ambitions.

The broader socio-political context of apartheid and colonialism significantly impacted Nelson Mandela's masculinity development. Morrell (2012) highlights how these oppressive systems dispossessed Black Africans of their lands and enforced discriminatory laws that entrenched racial hierarchies. The resultant institutional structures not only marginalized Black masculinity but also constructed a complex framework of racial and gender dynamics. Gqola (2009) argues that apartheid was inherently a gendered project, necessitating the reclamation of masculine identities rooted in political agency and resistance.

Nelson Mandela at a young age became ambitious to 'truly become' a man one day. This ambition was in line with his quest to reclaim the lost manhood, the manhood that had been lost when the Blackman had been conquered by the white minority. The conquest led to the erosion of Black men's dignity and self-respect, as they were subjected to humiliation, oppression, and marginalization. The suppression of African cultures and traditions contributed to the loss of a sense of cultural identity and manhood. Black men's traditional roles as leaders and providers were disrupted, leading to a loss of authority and influence within their communities. Hence the reclaiming of the lost manhood was only possible through the Blackman being able to stand up against the white man and regain his cultural and political freedom. The African masculinities hence were the only means by which the proud and dignified Blackman could combat the white colonialist's male masculinities.

The struggle for freedom and equality became a means for Black men to reclaim their dignity, self-respect, and manhood redefining what it means to be a man in the context

of African culture and identity. The revival of African culture and traditions helped to restore a sense of cultural identity and manhood.

In his autobiography, Nelson Mandela reclaims the lost manhood through resisting apartheid. Nelson Mandela's fight against apartheid was a way to reclaim his identity, self-respect and manhood. Nelson Mandela demonstrated leadership and courage, inspiring others to join the fight for freedom and equality. Nelson Mandela proudly affirmed his African heritage and cultural identity and defines his own sense of manhood, rejecting apartheid dehumanizing definitions. At the end Nelson Mandela showed forgiveness and compassion towards his oppressors, demonstrating strength and humility. By taking these actions, Nelson Mandela reclaimed his manhood and redefined what it means to be a man in the context of African culture and identity.

The cultural and political influences of the Xhosa community, where Nelson Mandela was born into the Thembu tribe, played a pivotal role in shaping his worldview. Muswede (2017) notes that Nelson Mandela internalized the values and practices of his people, which remained integral to his identity. The stories of Xhosa warriors recounted by his father instilled in Nelson Mandela a sense of warrior masculinity, emphasizing the importance of courage and resilience in the face of adversity. Lodge (2006a) posits that Nelson Mandela's upbringing was akin to an apprenticeship, preparing him for a future role in leadership within the context of his cultural heritage. Nelson Mandela's father, Gadla Henry Mphokanyiswa, as a respected leader in the Thembu tribe, imparted essential moral values and a love for cultural heritage. This familial connection provided Nelson Mandela with opportunities for education that were not afforded to many of his peers, positioning him to challenge the systemic inequalities of his time. The influence of his father's lineage and the social standing within the Xhosa community reinforced Nelson Mandela's understanding of power

dynamics and respect, shaping his aspirations for leadership.

Nelson Mandela's pride in his heritage and the attributes of his father reflect a deep-seated belief in the importance of lineage and cultural identity. His acknowledgment that "nurture rather than nature is the primary nature of personality" suggests a profound understanding of the ways in which environment and upbringing shape individual character (Mandela, 1994, p. 6). Nelson Mandela's recognition of his father's "proud rebelliousness" and sense of fairness resonate with his later commitment to justice and equality, illustrating how the values instilled in him during childhood would inform his actions as an adult (Mandela, 1994, p. 60).

Nelson Mandela's conditioning was a complex interplay of cultural influences, social expectations, and historical injustices. His early experiences of racial discrimination, coupled with the teachings of his family and community, shaped his understanding of masculinity, leadership, and social justice. This critical analysis elucidates how Nelson Mandela's formative years laid the groundwork for his lifelong commitment to dismantling apartheid and advocating for a more equitable and just society. Through his journey, Nelson Mandela emerged not only as a leader of his people but also as a symbol of resilience and hope for oppressed communities worldwide.

Nelson Mandela's formative years were significantly shaped by the influences of his mother, Noqaphi Nosekeni, and the socio-cultural context of his upbringing. In *Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela reflects on the profound impact his mother had on his moral and emotional development. Mululeke (2018) highlights her encouragement, urging him to "brace yourself, my boy," a phrase that encapsulates the essence of resilience and the necessity of emotional fortitude in the face of adversity (p. 45). This early lesson in manhood became foundational for Nelson Mandela as he navigated the complexities of his environment after the loss of his father.

Nelson Mandela's relationship with his mother was characterized by love and support, but it was also marked by significant separations that shaped his character. After his father's death, Nelson Mandela experienced an early disconnection from paternal guidance, which deepened when he was separated from his mother. This separation instilled in him a sense of independence and the psychological ability to manage his emotions. Lodge (2006b) notes that Nelson Mandela learned to repress outward displays of emotion, a key lesson in the cultural expectations of masculinity in his Xhosa community. This ability to control pain and fear became defining traits of his character, essential for his later role as a leader.

The narratives shared by his mother, rich with moral lessons, played a critical role in shaping Nelson Mandela's ethical framework. The story of the traveler who selflessly helps an old woman serves as a metaphor for the virtues of generosity and integrity, which Nelson Mandela internalized throughout his life (Mandela, 1994, p. 11). Such stories not only stimulated his imagination but also laid the groundwork for a value system that would guide his actions in the fight against apartheid.

Nelson Mandela's early education in the traditions and culture of the Thembu clan was further enriched by his time with Regent Jongintaba, a paternal figure who became a surrogate father. The environment at the Regent's court exposed Nelson Mandela to the complexities of leadership, governance, and the principles of democracy. He observed tribal meetings and learned the art of public speaking, consensus-building, and the importance of collective decision-making (Mandela, 1994, p. 19). This early exposure to political processes and communal governance fostered his understanding of leadership as a dynamic interplay of power and responsibility.

Oppenheim (2012) asserts that Nelson Mandela's observations at the Regent's court were instrumental in shaping his political consciousness. He learned the nuances of

democratic principles, blending them with the aristocratic traditions of his lineage. This dual understanding allowed him to navigate the complexities of leadership that were both culturally rooted and politically progressive. Lodge (2006a) emphasizes that Nelson Mandela perceived his childhood as an apprenticeship for a destined role in the Thembu chiefdom, underscoring the weight of lineage and expectation in his early identity formation.

Nelson Mandela's journey also highlights the broader socio-political dynamics of South Africa during his upbringing, where colonialism and apartheid created a fractured society. The stories he heard around the campfire, recounting the histories of colonization and resistance, instilled in him a deep awareness of the injustices faced by his people. This historical consciousness became a driving force in his later activism, as he sought to reclaim not only his own identity but also that of his community.

Nelson Mandela's conditioning was profoundly influenced by his mother's teachings, the absence of paternal figures, and the cultural traditions of his Xhosa heritage. These elements collectively shaped his moral compass, emotional resilience, and political awareness, laying the foundation for his future leadership. This critical analysis reveals how Nelson Mandela's early experiences cultivated a deep understanding of justice, community, and the complexities of power, which would ultimately inform his lifelong commitment to the struggle for equality and human rights in South Africa.

Nelson Mandela's early life was profoundly influenced by the cultural and social constructs surrounding masculinity in South African society. The emphasis on physical strength and the associated virtues of courage and honor was integral to his upbringing (Mandela, 1994, p. 10). In *Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela reflects on learning stick fighting, which he describes as essential knowledge for any rural

African boy. This activity not only instilled physical prowess but also taught him important moral lessons about respect and humility in competition. Nelson Mandela emphasizes that he learned to defeat his opponents without dishonoring them, indicating an early understanding of the ethical dimensions of strength and the importance of compassion even in the context of rivalry.

Nelson Mandela's engagement in games like thinti served as a youthful approximation of war, reinforcing the societal valorization of competitive spirit and camaraderie among boys. The game's structure, where teams defended their targets and threw sticks at each other, mirrored the dynamics of conflict and collaboration that would later manifest in his political life. Those who excelled in these childhood battles were celebrated as heroes, highlighting how early experiences shaped his understanding of leadership and collective achievement (Mandela, 1994, p. 10).

Nelson Mandela later reflected on these formative experiences as instrumental in nurturing his political consciousness. He noted that the collective efforts he engaged in during his childhood laid a foundation for his later political activism. This early exposure to teamwork and shared goals contrasted sharply with the individualistic approach promoted by formal education, which he felt undermined the values of cooperation he had learned in his youth (Mandela, 1994, p. 10). This duality in his upbringing, between communal values and individualistic education, reflects a tension that Nelson Mandela navigated throughout his life, ultimately shaping his approach to leadership within the African National Congress (ANC) and the broader struggle against apartheid.

The influence of the Christian Church and mission schools further compounded Nelson Mandela's conditioning. These institutions provided him with a framework of moral and ethical guidance, contributing to his strong sense of self-efficacy, trust, and

discipline. The narratives of his Xhosa ancestors, filled with stories of heroism, unity, and resilience, instilled in him a profound sense of identity and purpose (Mandela,1994, p. 140). Nelson Mandela's acknowledgment that his life was shaped by customs, rituals, and the expectations of his ancestors underscores the significance of cultural heritage in his development as a leader. He internalized the belief that neglecting one's heritage could lead to misfortune, reinforcing his commitment to his people and their history.

The strict upbringing at the Royal Palace in Transkei exposed Nelson Mandela to various traditional, cultural, and ethical communal values. This environment played a crucial role in establishing his identity as an African leader and deepening his understanding of the responsibilities that came with that identity. The rites of passage he experienced were more than mere cultural practices; they were transformative events that shaped his consciousness and self-perception in relation to other boys, men, and the broader Xhosa-speaking community.

Nelson Mandela's journey from his childhood home in Qunu to the Great Place marked a significant rite of passage in his life. The relocation at the age of nine, following his father's death, forced him to confront the realities of loss and change. His emotional attachment to Qunu, described with the unconditional love of a child for his first home, highlights the deep sense of belonging and identity that place held for him. This longing for the past reflects not only a personal loss but also a broader cultural dislocation, as Mandela was thrust into a new environment that demanded adaptation and resilience (Mandela,1994, pp. 14-16).

The emphasis on physical strength, moral lessons learned from his mother, and the communal values instilled in him during childhood created a foundation for his later activism. This critical analysis reveals how Nelson Mandela's early experiences

equipped him with the tools necessary to navigate the challenges of his time, laying the groundwork for his lifelong commitment to justice, equality, and the fight against oppression. His journey from boyhood to manhood was not merely a personal transformation but a reflection of the broader struggles faced by his community, ultimately informing his vision for a free and democratic South Africa.

Nelson Mandela's early years were characterized by a series of relocations and cultural encounters that profoundly shaped his masculinity and worldview. These experiences not only altered his consciousness but also exposed him to diverse cultural discourses that would influence his future aspirations. Nelson Mandela's acknowledgment that he desired more from life than merely being a "champion stick-fighter" signifies a pivotal moment in his self-awareness and ambition, suggesting that his early experiences instilled in him a sense of potential that extended beyond traditional expectations.

Nelson Mandela's role as a counselor to the Regent's son, Justice, reflects the responsibilities and expectations placed upon him due to his lineage. Lodge (2006b) notes that while he was not among the privileged few groomed for rulership, his position as a descendant of the Xhosa royal house shaped his destiny (Mandela, 1994, p. 5). This nuanced understanding of his role illustrates the complexities of masculinity within the framework of traditional hierarchies, where Nelson Mandela was prepared for leadership not through direct power but through advisory capacity, a role that would later inform his political strategies.

The informal education Nelson Mandela received while living at the Great Palace was fundamental in shaping his understanding of history and governance. Listening to stories of the Xhosa frontier wars and colonial encounters provided him with a historical context that framed his identity as a member of a resilient tribe. These narratives were not merely tales of the past; they were lessons in courage and communal struggle that

instilled a sense of collective identity and purpose.

Nelson Mandela's introduction to the Methodist Church and the mission schools marked a significant transition in his life. Early on, he engaged with Christian teachings, albeit initially without personal significance. However, as he became more involved in church activities at his uncle's palace, he began to appreciate the role of the church in the community (Mandela, 1994, p. 18). Nelson Mandela recognized that many African achievements were facilitated through missionary efforts, particularly in education. He observed that mission schools produced clerks and interpreters who embodied the aspirations of their communities. This realization framed his understanding of education not merely as a pathway to civil service but as a vehicle for social mobility and empowerment.

Nelson Mandela's primary education at the mission school, where he received the Christian name "Nelson," further shaped his masculinity. The structured environment provided him with formal instruction in English, Xhosa, history, and geography, supplementing the oral traditions he had learned from his family. This combination of traditional and formal education cultivated in him a sense of purpose, discipline, and respect for authority. Lieberfeld (2004) argues that this mission education not only equipped Nelson Mandela with linguistic skills but also sharpened his capacity for reasoned argument and debate—an essential tool for his later political activism.

The rite of passage through circumcision marked a critical point in Nelson Mandela's journey to manhood, reinforcing traditional Xhosa values. At sixteen years Nelson Mandela was initiated into manhood through circumcision after the Regent felt that it was the right opportunity for Nelson Mandela to "become a man" (Mandela, 1994, p. 24). This initiation ceremony, deeply rooted in the warrior traditions of his ancestors, symbolized a transition to adulthood. However, Chief Meligqili's remarks during the

ceremony confronted Nelson Mandela with a stark reality: the promise of manhood was rendered illusory under colonial oppression. The chief's assertion that they were "slaves in our own country" deeply affected Nelson Mandela, prompting a reevaluation of his masculinity and the political landscape he inhabited (Mandela,1994, p. 27). This moment catalyzed his awakening to the systemic inequalities faced by his community and the broader implications of his own manhood.

Nelson Mandela's initial dismissal of the chief's remarks reflects a common resistance to confronting uncomfortable truths. However, as he later recognized, this seed of awareness would grow, shaping his understanding of responsibility and solidarity within his community. The circumcision ceremony, intended to signify strength and manhood, instead highlighted the vulnerabilities of his people under colonial rule, compelling Nelson Mandela to realize that true manhood involved not just personal strength but also a commitment to collective liberation.

The subsequent relocation to Clarkebury boarding school introduced Nelson Mandela to a diverse student body, where he confronted the realities of competition and meritocracy. His realization that he could no longer rely solely on his heritage but had to prove himself through ability underscores a critical shift in his understanding of masculinity. At Clarkebury, he encountered peers with distinguished lineages, prompting him to navigate his self-worth outside the confines of his royal ancestry (Mandela,1994, pp. 31-32). This experience of competition and the need for personal agency would become foundational in his development as a leader.

Nelson, Mandela's journey was shaped by a complex interplay of cultural expectations, educational influences, and personal experiences. His early encounters with traditional Xhosa values, the moral teachings of the Methodist Church, and the competitive environment at school collectively informed his understanding of identity

and leadership. This critical analysis reveals how Nelson Mandela's formative years laid the groundwork for his later activism, instilling in him a deep sense of responsibility, resilience, and commitment to justice that would define his lifelong struggle against apartheid. His journey illustrates the intricate relationship between personal growth and the broader socio-political context, ultimately shaping him into a prominent figure in the fight for equality and human rights

Nelson Mandela's time at Healdtown Methodist Mission School marked a critical juncture in his development, exposing him to a confluence of cultural influences and shaping his political awareness. At nineteen, Nelson Mandela encountered an educational environment that was steeped in English ideals, which he and his peers aspired to emulate (Mandela, 1994, p. 36). This aspiration reflected a broader colonial mindset that valorized British culture while simultaneously diminishing African identities. Nelson Mandela's acknowledgment that "the best ideas were English ideas" reveals the internalization of colonial values, positioning the Englishman as an ideal that young African students sought to attain. This desire to become "black Englishmen" illustrates the complexity of identity formation in a racially stratified society, where aspirations were often dictated by colonial standards.

Nelson Mandela's experience at Healdtown also facilitated his exposure to a diverse student body, including peers from different ethnic backgrounds. This interaction was pivotal, as it broadened his worldview beyond the confines of his Xhosa heritage. His friendship with Zachariah Molete, a Sotho-speaking student, symbolizes a significant step in Nelson Mandela's maturation, allowing him to recognize the commonalities shared among various African tribes (Mandela, 1994, p. 37). His reflection on his earlier naivety underscores the transformative impact of education in shaping his political consciousness. Nelson Mandela's recognition of a wider circle of fellow

Africans signals the beginning of a shift from a parochial identity to a more inclusive understanding of African solidarity.

The visit from the bold African poet Krune Mqhayi further catalyzed Nelson Mandela's evolving perspective on race and identity. Mqhayi's critique of white colonialism and his celebration of Xhosa heritage provided Nelson Mandela with a framework for understanding the cultural significance of his own masculinity. The poet's invocation of pride in the Xhosa people resonated deeply with Nelson Mandela, igniting feelings of intense pride that transcended mere ethnic affiliation (Mandela, 1994, p. 40). However, this moment also introduced a tension between tribal pride and a broader African nationalism. Nelson Mandela's confusion regarding Mqhayi's dual emphasis on Xhosa pride versus African unity reflects his struggle to reconcile these competing identities (Mandela, 1994, p. 40). His realization that he could take pride in his Xhosa heritage while simultaneously advocating for a collective African identity foreshadowed his later political philosophy, which emphasized unity among diverse groups in the fight against apartheid.

Nelson Mandela's journey continued at the University College of Fort Hare, where he engaged in student leadership, yet this experience was marred by the realities of misrepresentation within student governance. His decision to refuse participation in a student representative council that did not accurately represent the student body speaks to his commitment to inclusivity and moral integrity (Mandela, 1994, p. 52). This principled stance highlights Nelson Mandela's early understanding of the importance of representative leadership, a lesson that would underpin his later political activism.

Upon returning home to Mqhekezweni after his expulsion, Nelson Mandela faced familial expectations, particularly regarding an arranged marriage. His refusal to comply with these societal pressures marked another assertion of his agency, leading

him to Johannesburg in search of greater autonomy. This relocation not only represented a physical journey but also symbolized a pivotal shift toward independence and self-determination. In Johannesburg, Nelson Mandela encountered a diverse array of individuals who would form his first political community, further enriching his understanding of the complexities of South African society.

At this stage, Nelson Mandela's awareness of the systemic oppression faced by Black South Africans began to crystallize. His observation that a degree alone did not guarantee leadership reflected a growing understanding that true leadership required active engagement with the community (Mandela, 1994, p. 74). This insight was a critical turning point, as it underscored the necessity of grassroots involvement in effecting meaningful change. Nelson Mandela's commitment to serving his community was further solidified during his time at the University of Witwatersrand, where he connected with influential figures in the liberation struggle. His assertion that there was no single moment of epiphany but rather a "steady accumulation of a thousand slights" illustrates the gradual awakening of his political consciousness (Mandela, 1994, p. 95). This evolving self-awareness was rooted in his recognition of the injustices faced by his people, propelling him toward a dedicated pursuit of liberation.

Nelson Mandela was profoundly influenced by his educational experiences, cultural interactions, and the socio-political realities of his time. His journey through various schools and communities fostered a deepening awareness of identity, solidarity, and the complexities of leadership. This critical analysis reveals how Nelson Mandela's formative years laid the groundwork for his lifelong commitment to justice and equality, shaping him into a leader capable of uniting diverse communities in the struggle against oppression. His experiences reflect the intricate interplay between

personal growth and collective resistance, ultimately defining his legacy as a champion of human rights and dignity.

## **2.5 Comparative Analysis of the conditioning of Nelson Mandela and Barack**

### **Obama**

Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama, while both are prominent figures in the fight for justice and equality, they emerged from distinct cultural and historical contexts that profoundly shaped their identities, political philosophies, and leadership styles. This analysis delves deeper into the similarities and differences in their upbringing, educational experiences, and socio-political environments, highlighting how these factors contributed to their development as leaders.

#### **2.5.1 Early Upbringing and Cultural Contexts**

Nelson Mandela was born into the Thembu royal family in Mvezo, South Africa, in 1918. His early life was steeped in the customs and traditions of the Xhosa people. The communal values of his upbringing were reinforced by the collective experiences of his family and community. Nelson Mandela's father, a chief, imparted lessons of leadership and responsibility before his untimely death. Following his father's passing, Nelson Mandela was raised by his mother and later by the Regent Jongintaba, who became a father figure. This royal lineage instilled in Nelson Mandela a sense of duty and obligation to his people, embedding a narrative of leadership that was intertwined with tribal customs.

In contrast, Barack Obama was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, in 1961 to a Kenyan father and an American mother. His multicultural background provided him with a rich tapestry of experiences. Barack Obama's early life was marked by the absence of his father, who left when he was very young, leading to a predominantly maternal influence during his formative years. His mother, Stanley Ann Dunham, encouraged

him to embrace education and cultural diversity, which instilled in him adaptability and resilience. Growing up in Hawaii, a place known for its ethnic diversity, Barack Obama was exposed to various cultures, fostering an early appreciation for multiculturalism and inclusivity. Hence this exposure prompted him to develop a more self-aware and reflective form of masculinity, one that acknowledges the complexities of identity and power.

### **2.5.2 Educational Experiences**

Nelson Mandela's educational journey began informally within his community, where he absorbed the oral traditions of the Xhosa culture. His time at mission schools was pivotal; here, he encountered Western education that included English literature and Christian teachings. At Healdtown Methodist Mission School, Nelson Mandela experienced a duality in education, one that valued traditional African narratives alongside colonial ideologies. This exposure to English ideals was both empowering and limiting, as it instilled in him a sense of aspiration toward a Western model of success while simultaneously fostering a conflict with his cultural identity.

Nelson Mandela's education was deeply influenced by the missionary work of the church, which he later recognized as a critical vehicle for African advancement. Despite the colonial underpinnings, the mission schools trained individuals who would become the clerks, interpreters, and leaders of the African community. This training shaped his understanding of civic responsibility and the importance of education as a tool for empowerment.

Barack Obama's educational path was marked by a series of prestigious institutions, beginning with private schools in Hawaii, followed by Occidental College and then Columbia University in New York City. His education emphasized critical thinking and debate, allowing him to engage with diverse political and social ideologies. This

exposure was essential in shaping his worldview as he navigated complex issues of race, class, and identity.

At Harvard Law School, Barack Obama became the first Black president of the Harvard Law Review, an achievement that underscored his academic prowess and leadership potential. His experiences in law school, where he engaged with issues of social justice and civil rights, further solidified his commitment to public service. Unlike Nelson Mandela, who initially perceived education as a means to civil service, Barack Obama viewed it as a foundation for advocacy and activism, understanding that education could empower him to address systemic inequalities. The experiences at Harvard Law School are seen as a transformative period, where he grappled with identity, belonging, and representation. As the first black president of the Harvard Law School, he reflected on his purpose. His experiences at Harvard shaped his understanding of his role in society and authority. He demonstrated leadership and authority.

### **2.5.3 Political Awakening and Ideological Formation**

Nelson Mandela's political awakening was deeply tied to his cultural identity and the oppressive realities faced by Black South Africans under apartheid. His initiation into manhood through circumcision marked a significant point in his life, highlighting the intersection of personal identity and political consciousness. The ceremony, while a traditional rite of passage, also served as a stark reminder of the colonial oppression experienced by his people. Chief Meligqili's remarks during this ceremony galvanized Nelson Mandela's understanding of the systemic injustices faced by Black South Africans, prompting him to reflect on the meaning of manhood in a context of subjugation (Winter, 2011).

Nelson Mandela's involvement with the African National Congress (ANC) emerged

from this growing awareness. Influential figures, such as Krune Mqhayi, inspired him to embrace his heritage while simultaneously recognizing the need for African unity. His experiences in the ANC allowed him to channel his understanding of collective struggle into organized activism, where he began to advocate for equality and justice.

Barack Obama's political consciousness developed as he navigated his multicultural identity and sought to understand the complexities of race in America. His experiences as a community organizer in Chicago were pivotal, exposing him to the struggles faced by marginalized communities. This work allowed him to engage directly with issues of social justice, economic inequality, and the importance of grassroots activism.

Barack Obama's interactions with diverse communities reinforced his belief in inclusivity and the necessity of building coalitions across racial and cultural lines. His experiences in law and politics led him to advocate for comprehensive reforms that addressed systemic inequalities. This understanding was further honed during his time in the Illinois State Senate, where he championed initiatives aimed at improving healthcare access and education for underserved populations.

#### **2.5.4 Leadership Styles and Philosophies**

Nelson Mandela's leadership was characterized by resilience, moral integrity, and a deep commitment to reconciliation. He emerged as a symbol of hope for a fractured nation, emphasizing the importance of forgiveness and unity after his release from prison. His ability to navigate the complexities of tribal identity while advocating for a national identity exemplified his understanding of the importance of collective action. Nelson Mandela's leadership style was rooted in his cultural heritage, which emphasized community and collective responsibility.

Nelson Mandela's strategic use of negotiation and dialogue during the transition from apartheid to democracy showcased his belief in the power of inclusivity. Nelson Mandela understood that true leadership extended beyond personal ambition; it involved uplifting the collective spirit of the people he represented. His emphasis on reconciliation rather than retribution after decades of oppression demonstrated a profound understanding of the need for healing in a divided society.

Barack Obama's leadership style is marked by eloquence, pragmatism, and a focus on inclusivity. His ability to articulate a vision of hope and change resonated with many Americans, particularly during his presidential campaigns. Barack Obama's approach to leadership emphasized dialogue and collaboration, seeking to bridge divides across political and social spectrums. His multicultural background informed his commitment to social justice and equality, advocating for policies that addressed systemic inequalities.

Barack Obama's presidency was characterized by his efforts to implement comprehensive healthcare reform, promote civil rights, and address climate change. His ability to communicate effectively and inspire grassroots movements was a hallmark of his leadership. Unlike Nelson Mandela, who had to navigate the complexities of tribal loyalties and national identity, Barack Obama operated primarily within a multi-ethnic democracy, which required him to balance his identity as a Black leader with his role as a president representing a diverse nation.

### **2.5.5 Chapter Conclusion**

In conclusion, both Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama experienced formative years that profoundly shaped their identities and leadership styles. While Nelson Mandela's conditioning was deeply rooted in the traditions of the Xhosa people and the struggle against apartheid, Barack Obama's upbringing was characterized by a multicultural

environment that fostered adaptability and inclusivity. Both leaders emerged as champions of justice, yet their paths were influenced by distinct cultural and historical contexts.

Nelson Mandela's leadership was shaped by his commitment to reconciliation and collective responsibility, while Barack Obama's was characterized by eloquence and a focus on inclusivity. Their shared commitment to equality and social justice, despite their differing backgrounds, underscores the universal struggle for human dignity and the transformative power of leadership. Ultimately, their journeys illustrate how personal experiences, cultural heritage, and socio-political environments interplay to shape not only individual identities but also collective movements for change.

The findings of this chapter contribute to our understanding of the construction of masculinity in political leadership. By examining the conditioning of Barack Obama's and Nelson Mandela's political masculinities, we gain insight into the ways in which masculinity is constructed, performed and negotiated in the public spheres. This chapter's analysis of the conditioning of Nelson Mandela's and Barack Obama's political masculinities provides a foundation for further exploration of the public marking of masculinities in their autobiographies. The next chapter will examine the public making of the two leaders as icons.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PUBLIC MAKING OF BARACK OBAMA AND NELSON MANDELA AS ICONS.

#### 3.1 Introduction.

In their autobiographies, *Long Walk to Freedom* and *Dreams from My Father*, Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama carefully craft their public personas, presenting themselves to the world in ways that are both personal and strategic. Through their narratives, they shape their public images, conveying messages about their values, experiences, and identities. This chapter explores how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama use their autobiographies to construct and present their public personas, examining how these personas contribute to their iconic status.

Autobiography is a unique genre that allows authors to present themselves to the world in their own words. Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama leverage this genre to shape their public images, using narrative techniques and rhetorical strategies to convey their messages and values. By analyzing their autobiographies, this chapter examines how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama use self-presentation to construct their iconic status and shape public perceptions of themselves.

This chapter explores the intersection of masculinity and public personas, examining how Nelson Mandela's and Barack Obama's masculine identities are constructed and performed in their autobiographies. By analyzing the ways in which they present themselves as men, leaders, and icons, this chapter aims to shed light on the complex and nuanced ways in which masculinity is constructed and performed in the public sphere.

### **3.2 Public making of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama as Icons**

Both Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama have been elevated to iconic status, significantly shaped by their narrative's public personas in their autobiographies. These texts recount their personal journeys while simultaneously reflecting broader societal struggles for justice, equality, and human rights.

The concept of iconography involves the formation of perspectives about political figures, where certain politicians actively shape their public images through the authorial voice, self-presentation, narrative selection and reflection and introspection.

Using the autobiographical writing as a public narrative, the two writers deliberately shape their public images choosing to present themselves by highlighting their strength, weaknesses and experiences. Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama also present themselves to the public via the authorial voice through the tone, language and narrative style which conveys their personality and values thereby intentionally shaping their public persona to convey specific themes and messages. Ultimately, the two writers introspectively and reflectively, reflect on their experiences, thoughts and emotions providing insight into their personality, growth, the historical events and cultural context thereby shaping the readers perception of their public persona.

The narratives surrounding Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama's masculinities are closely tied to their iconography. Here, iconography refers to how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama are constructed by the narratives as icons, often creating idealized images that diverge from their true selves (Read, 2010). Part of what makes Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama compelling figures for their followers, viewed as moral beacons, political rhetoricians, or exemplars of effective governance, is their ability to present multifaceted images of themselves while simultaneously leading very human lives (Rowland & Jones, 2007; Baillie, 2011; Hyslop, 2008).

The concept of public construction pertains to the autobiographical texts as undertaking the construction of a public self. The autobiographies of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama serve as an invitation into the author's private life, allowing them to define themselves and reveal their characters through direct narration or action. An autobiography, particularly that of a political figure, becomes a platform through which the author can creatively select and arrange his life events choosing experiences aligned with their intent purpose. Thus, in the process of writing these texts, the author(s) create a persona, an icon, who is perceived as worthy of emulation.

In the two autobiographies, the author's narratives construct them as icons whereby they are seen as symbols of resistance, moral authority, humility and empathy, leadership and vision, personal growth and transformation. For Nelson Mandela, his narrative portrays him as a symbol of resistance against apartheid, highlighting his courage and determination in the face of oppression. His commitment to justice, equality and human rights establishes him as a moral authority earning him respect and admiration. Likewise, by sharing his struggles and vulnerabilities, Barack Obama humanizes himself, making him more relatable and accessible to readers. His narrative offers insight into his leadership approach, emphasizing empathy, collaboration and community engagement. Furthermore, Barack Obama's text showcases his personal growth and development, as he navigates his identity, relationship and career. Nelson Mandela's narrative on the other hand highlights his personal growth and transformation from young lawyer to a global statesman, inspiring readers with his journey alongside his political masculinity development.

The public construction of political masculinities intersects with global recognition, exemplified by the Nobel Peace Prize. Nelson Mandela's and Barack Obama's iconic status has been maintained through this global recognition. This international

recognition and accolades have cemented their iconic status. Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama emerged as prominent political figures in contexts defined by racial divisiveness. They represented societies fractured by apartheid, colonialism, and segregation. By virtue of their identities as Black leaders, they cultivated iconography that resonated with a conciliatory public seeking unity. Their roles as men and political figures generated a gravitas that made them icons worthy of emulation.

Both Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela came from humble beginnings, raised in environments where they witnessed firsthand the poverty, discrimination, and exploitation faced by their communities. From a young age, they recognized that these challenges were products of oppressive systems designed to subjugate their people. Motivated by the injustices surrounding them, both leaders were inspired to combat social inequalities and foster harmonious, peaceful societies. While the struggles they faced were unique to their respective contexts, the pursuit of justice they championed was universally applicable.

Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama guided their people toward a renewed assertion of humanity and a rekindled sense of hope. In their respective nations, they emerged as saviors capable of addressing the social injustices perpetrated by oppressive regimes. By instilling a belief in the possibility of freedom, they became icons of selfhood and empowerment. Nelson Mandela was revered as the “father of the nation,” while Barack Obama became a “symbol of Black freedom,” both eventually earning prestigious accolades and leadership positions.

Through their autobiographical texts, Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama illuminate experiences that resonate with many non-white individuals in South Africa and

America. By inviting their people to confront and address the social injustices they faced, they not only fostered a sense of hope but also galvanized collective action toward social justice. In doing so, they solidified their status as enduring icons, figures whose legacies continue to inspire movements for equality and justice around the world.

Nelson Mandela's names, his official name, "Nelson Rolihlahla Dalibunga Madiba Mandela," and his affectionate titles like "Tata" (father) and "The Black Pimpernel", play a crucial role in constructing his public persona. His name Rolihlahla, meaning "troublemaker," foreshadows his future struggles against apartheid, creating a narrative that positions him as a destined leader for change. This narrative constructs him as an icon of freedom and liberation. Highlighting on his masculinities of resilience and determination, Nelson Mandela's narrative showcases his unwavering commitment to fight against apartheid, demonstrating his strength and perseverance in the face of adversity. His name Rolihlahla is therefore an emblematic of his fight against oppression. Nelson Mandela's fight against apartheid and his leadership in transitioning South Africa to democracy makes him a symbol of freedom and liberation. Nelson Mandela reflects on the complexities of this personality, noting that "I was named for trouble, and trouble would follow" (Mandela, 1994, p. 3). This expectation creates a compelling narrative for his followers, who look to him to fulfill this symbolic destiny.

Nelson Mandela's baptismal name, "Nelson," represents an imposition of Western culture, given by a white teacher who could not pronounce his Xhosa name. While the narrative often romanticizes this transformation as a complete acceptance of his role, Nelson Mandela describes it as a moment that deepened his connection to his cultural roots: "I had never been prouder" (Mandela, 1994, p. 13). This connects his pride in

his heritage and the realities of colonial influence in the public narrative, which sometimes oversimplifies his masculinity as that of a noble freedom fighter.

Nelson Mandela's circumcision name, "Dalibunga," meaning "founder of parliaments," highlights his predestined role in political participation. This name signifies his leadership and responsibility to his community. Nelson Mandela's narrative constructs him as a global icon of moral leadership built on integrity and principles. His unwavering commitment to fighting against apartheid showcases his strong moral compass. His leadership is guided by a strong sense of justice, compassion and integrity.

During his underground activities, Nelson Mandela adopted the name "The Black Pimpernel," symbolizing his self-sacrificial leadership and defiance against colonial oppression. He notes, "I had become a public symbol of rebellion and struggle" (Mandela, 1994, p. 308). This narrative's public persona constructs him as an icon of freedom and liberation through the element of vision and leadership. Nelson Mandela emphasizes his leadership style, which prioritizes empathy, collaboration and community engagement, inspiring a nation to strive for freedom and equality hence constructing him as an iconic symbol of hope.

Nelson Mandela's imprisonment at Robben Island further solidified his status as an icon. The narrative often frames him as an anti-colonial hero, embodying the fight against racial oppression. Lodge (2006) notes that "Mandela became the spiritual heir of all the heroic chieftains who had resisted this inexorable force of colonialism" (p. 40). This portrayal elevates Nelson Mandela to a symbolic figure of hope, unity and reconciliation. His ability to forgive his former oppressors and promote reconciliation demonstrates his capacity for healing and unity, solidifying his iconic status of unity and reconciliation. These demonstrated Nelson Mandela's commitment to healing and

building a more inclusive society. His narrative conveys a powerful message of hope encouraging readers to work towards healing and unity.

The narrative's construction of Nelson Mandela as an icon of hope and inspiration highlights his complex masculinities. Alongside the above masculinities he embodies masculinities of resilience and moral integrity which showcases the internal conflicts he faced. His assertion that "deep down in every human heart, there was mercy and generosity" (Mandela, 1994, p. 609) reveals a leader who understood the complexities of human nature. His story of overcoming adversity, imprisonment and persecution inspires hope and resilience. By sharing his struggles and vulnerability, Nelson Mandela humanizes himself making his achievements and legacy more relatable and inspiring. Through his unwavering optimism, his commitment to a better future for South Africa and humanity shines through; motivating readers to strive for positive change.

In *Dreams from My Father*, Barack Obama adopts a public narrative style that explores his quest for identity. The narrative often constructs him as an emblem of hope, inspiration and change, articulating the internal struggles he articulates. Barack Obama writes, "I often felt like an outsider" (Obama, 1995, p. 119), indicating complexities in his masculinity that showcases him as a unifying figure. Barack Obama's text is a public narrative that highlights his personal journey of self-discovery. His narrative of searching for his identity and roots inspiring self-reflection. Through this narrative Barack Obama narrates his experiences with racism, family struggles and personal doubts shading light on how he overcomes adversity. Barack Obama's exploration of his biracial heritage is central to his narrative. He reflects on the challenges of navigating different cultural identities: "I was the son of a black man from Kenya, a white woman from Kansas" (Obama, 1995, p. 3). Barack Obama's

multicultural background, his diverse heritage and experiences bridge cultural divides, promoting understanding and inclusivity. This makes his achievements more relatable and inspiring.

Barack Obama's portrayal as an icon of hope and inspiration is also rooted in his vision for change. His narrative emphasizes empowerment and community engagement demonstrated in his text through his commitment as a community organizer. His work in Chicago's South side showcases his commitment to empowering others; demonstrating the impact one person can have. This commitment to community organizing further demonstrates the value of collective action. His story conveys a powerful message of hope encouraging readers to strive for their dreams despite obstacles.

Barack Obama's narrative constructs him as an icon of leadership and public service. Obama's narrative shades light on personal responsibility. His narrative emphasizes the importance of individual agency and responsibility in creating positive change. His observation that "a degree was not in itself a guarantee of leadership" (Obama, 1995, p. 74) reflects a critical understanding of leadership. In this regard the change he is narrating is the visionary change. His story conveys a sense of purpose and vision for creating a more just and equitable society. Therefore, Barack Obama's narrative inspires readers to become involved in public service and create positive change.

Barack Obama's narrative's public persona in his autobiography constructs him as an icon of social justice and equality by narrating his experience with racism and inequality. His narrative highlights the systemic injustices he witnessed and experienced, fueling his passion for change. Barack Obama's yes we can slogan conveys a sense of purpose and vision for creating a more just and equal society. His

narrative inspires readers to become involved in addressing social issues thereby establishing him as a symbol of social justice and equality, inspiring readers to work towards positive change.

### **3.3 Public making of Barack Obama**

In *Dreams From my Father*, Barack Obama shares in anecdotal way the idea that an inviting temperament was an ideal masculine quality for a black leader in United States of America. Barack Obama (1995) notes that "[s]uch a pleasant surprise to find a well-mannered young black man who didn't seem angry all the time" (p. 71). Barack Obama highlights about his experiences within family life for example through his white maternal grandmother's fear about black men whom she views as threatening. Barack Obama had to learn to be a calm black man earlier in his life. These early masculine accomplishments rose Barack Obama to iconic status of being electable as a USA president. Jewel Woods (2008) notes that:

For African-American men, Obama has accomplished something even more extraordinary. He has arguably single-handedly transformed the black public sphere. In their eyes, it is no longer 'easy' to view black men solely through the lens of deficiencies, bad behavior, their bodies or even their relationships to black women (p. 25)

Barack Obama's iconography also stems from his black identity which he saw as an inspirational inheritance. Having been raised in a white family, Barack Obama meaningfully used his family paradox to understand himself better. His ability to blend-in in his cultural inheritance and identity become an important black narrative to many Americans. In Barack Obama (1995) maintains that: "[m]y identity might begin with the fact of my race, but it didn't, couldn't end there" (p. 111). In so saying Barack Obama underscored a new identity of change and hope: that "Yes" we can change the world around us and be able to fit in it. Quoting Carlson, Holly and Miskovic (2009) maintain that:

Heroes are always their own creation, which is to say the creation of those who would use them to change the present in some way. They represent and embody certain ideals, certain virtues, and certain ways of acting and being in the world that support one set of interests or another. This means that there is no such a thing as progressive or radical democratic heroes, as such. Even those whose words and deeds represented a radical challenge to the dominant or hegemonic social order can be - and have been - incorporated within conservative narratives of national identity and progress (p. 24)

Having been brought up in a multi-racial society and championing for a society where everyone could enjoy democracy, equality, common humanity bond and freedom, common views shared by his followers, elevated Barack Obama to iconic status. Barack Obama's family and multiracial background, just like many American citizens formed an integral portion of Barack Obama's values and world views which were also admired by his followers. World views that all races should harmoniously co-exist in the society, should be equal, peacefully and mutually be respected. In his text Barack Obama narrates for example how he advocated for the administration of Occidental college (where he was a student) to be part of disinvestment in the South African regime concerning its apartheid policy.

The campaign slogan "Yes We Can" affirmed Barack Obama's commitment to his belief in humanity sharing beneficial ties in a common bond. In his text Barack Obama narrates in an emotional soulful way how he wept when he visited his Kenyan ancestors' graves when he finally realized the beneficial ties of humanity:

When my tears were finally spent, I felt a calmness wash over me. I felt the circle finally close. I realized that who I was, what I cared about, was no longer just a matter of intellect or obligation, no longer a construct of words. I saw that my life in America... all of it was connected with this small plot of earth an ocean away, connected by more than the accident of a name or the colour of my skin. The pain I felt was my father's pain. My questions were my brothers' questions. Their struggle, my birthright (p. 430).

Commending about these humanity common bonds Georgiana Banita (2010) notes:

"[t]he self is propped up from both sides by unwavering hope and the possibility of action, comfortable in the knowledge that worries and responsibilities can be shouldered collectively" (p. 37). These cultural and social values and beliefs were also shared by his followers.

From Barack Obama's earliest community organizer work, which he cites in his text, Obama shares to the public his inspirational values, believes alongside his political philosophies of action, faith, hope ideas, argument, reason, discipline, sheer will, love and persistence. Obama (1995) explains: "Once i found an issue people cared about, I could take them into action. With enough actions, I could start to build power. Issues, actions, power, self-interest. I liked these concepts " (p. 155). These are the same inspirational model of values and beliefs which he shares with his followers. Values and beliefs which bind and tie humanity together through sharing and caring for one another as one universal family.

In sharing to the public his values and beliefs, Obama established his identity and political image which he earlier lacked. Quoting Kendall, David Mastey (2010) comments that: "Votes are far more interested in candidate characteristics than in party identification or specific issues and are more likely to vote on the basis of the candidate's image" (p. 489). Barack Obama authenticated himself to his followers through his text which established his personal and political appeal image.

Part of what makes Barack Obama as a political magnet or allegorical figure for his followers as moral beacon, political rhetorician or icon of how politics should be run is because he managed to create certain faded images of himself in other deferent ways and yet he also lived a very normal human life (Rowland & Jones, 2007; Baillie, 2011 & Hyslop, 2008). The personification of Barack Obama in moral courage won the admiration of his followers. His admiration by his followers emanated from his

simplicity (Rowland & Jones, 2007). He is a moral icon because he lived a normal ordinary life that everybody admires (Rowland & Jones, 2007). In this world where morality is always a question in everybody's character, Barack Obama, because of his many self-identities, managed to win the admiration of his followers by upholding the shared societal morals and values (Hyslop, 2008; Davis, 2014 and Rowland & Jones, 2007). Smith Zadie (2009) looking at Barack Obama's autobiography *Dreams from My Father* describes the many self-identities of Obama as:

The tale he tells is all about addition. His is the story of a genuinely many-voiced man. If it has a moral, it is that each man must be true to his selves, plural (p. 4).

As a liminal symbol of political symbol of politics, Barack Obama stood on the thresholds of racial divides in the United States. Barack Obama having been exposed and experienced racial identity conflicts born out of past colonial order, had to adjust the past by inventing a belief in an American Dream to reconcile and transform racial equality in United States. Speaking of his liminality in his racial inheritance. Obama (1994) notes:

Even as that spell was broken and the world's that they thought they'd left behind reclaimed each of them, I occupied the place where their dreams had been (p. 27).

Barack Obama used the autobiographical narrative to narrate his growing up into a black identity. The identity that formed the foundation on which his political aspirations were grounded. Barack Obama represented a society that was broken down by a past colonial order, hence by virtue of him being black, he created some iconography around himself.

Barack Obama as a political agent uses the American Dream narrative to unsettle the dominant hegemonic masculinities of the conservative proponents to restore the American lost glory of democracy (Rowland & Jones, 2007). Barack Obama uses the personal narrative of a more perfect union to restore the American dream as a symbol unity and democratic change that was suppressed by domination (Rowland & Jones,

2007 and Jucan, 2013)

### 3.4 Public making of Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela's autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom* speaks of his consistent legendary active national and universal search for harmony, liberation and peace.

Mandela (1994) adds:

It was during those long and lonely years that my hunger for freedom of my people became a hunger for the freedom of all people, white and black. I knew as well as I know anything that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. A man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred; he is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. I am not truly free if I am taking away someone else's freedom, just as I am not free when my freedom is taken away from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity (p. 611).

Quoting Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka, Ihuah (2022), notes that Nelson Mandela had virtues

of "[H]umanistic will and political vision...a symbol of culture and dialogue backed by an unparalleled generosity of spirit" (p. 15). These were Nelson Mandela's most important humane personalities that guided him all through his political and social life. Writing in his 1988 collection of poems, titled 'The Mandela's Earth' Soyinka pens:

*Your bounty threatens me, Mandela that taut Drumskin of your heart on which our millions Dance. I dear we latch fat leeches on your veins... What will be felt of you Mandela?*

Nelson Mandela's rise to iconic status was as a result of his ability to rise beyond the dictates of history. A history that had subjected South African blacks to racial discrimination among other dehumanizing deeds. In rising above these dictates of power, Nelson Mandela was able to successfully unite and transition his country into a rainbow nation.

Nelson Mandela's global admiration and respect was attributed to his ability to seek

knowledge for wise leadership and governance of his citizens. Nelson Mandela's quest for knowledge was his driving force for proper leadership. Nelson Mandela knew that leadership was only entrusted to those who were wise and knowledgeable and had proper values for the betterment of the common citizen and the society at large. Quoting Nobel Peace Laureate and former United Nations (UN) Secretary General Kofi Annan, Ihuah (2022) notes that “[t]o this day, Madiba remains probably the single most admired, most respected international figure in the entire world (p. 17).” It was this proper use of wisdom and knowledge that enabled Nelson Mandela to liberate and with a call of peace unite all races of South Africa and therefore become a global inspirational model of what good leadership entails.

Nelson Mandela preached the need for justice to prevail to all humanity in all human sphere regardless of racial, political or religious difference. It is this call for a just society that made Nelson Mandela to be admired as a global inspirational model.

In Johnson's (2013) film "Mandela: Son of Africa, Father of a Nation" Mandela says:

Death is something inevitable. When a man has done what he considers to be his duty to his people in the country he can rest in peace. I believe I have made that effort and that is therefore why I will sleep in for the eternity.

The oratory skills of Nelson Mandela are also what make him an excellent icon (Flores, 2003). Nelson Mandela was ahead of his time in terms of how he could say things that made universal meaning to almost every fabric of human society. Nelson Mandela for example spoke about human rights and democracy long before these narratives become international discourses (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Ngcaweni, 2018).

Nelson Mandela is often regarded as the symbol of gentlemanly behavior and good leadership (Lodge, 2006). He has become an icon of proper leadership following his advancement of the idea of a rainbow nation (Lodge, 2006). Nelson Mandela in his autobiographical text has been represented as a symbol of ideal political masculinity. His leadership represents a coherent, stable and admirable political figure that functions as a normative expectation of a political masculinity (Mtenje, 2016). In relation to the post-colonial realities seen in South Africa at interregnum period (the political change from apartheid to multiracial democracy) that the nation existed in since the advent of colonialism, Nelson Mandela became a benchmark against which his personality acquired iconography. Okaka Okuyande (2011) observes that from the late 1970s, the majority of African countries began to experience dramatic transformations in political rule. Most African citizens by this time were already disillusioned with nationalism and its proponents since dictatorship was the probable means of leadership in post-colonial Africa. According to Walonen (2016) the post-colonial African dictator was invariably a product of the related social instability and state of economic underdevelopment that

reigned in the wake of the vast colonial pullout. Most of these figures rose to power either via coup d'états or overthrowing the fragile democracies that had succeeded colonial rule. Tiyambe (2014) argues:

Set against many of his fellow founding fathers, Mandela stands out for his singular contribution to democratic politics; he relinquished power after only one five-year term in office. This is attributed to his "remarkable understanding of the nature of politics and the performance of power (p. 131).

### **3.5 Chapter Conclusion**

In conclusion, the autobiographies of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama serve as powerful texts that illuminate how both figures are perceived and revered globally. Through their leadership, values, and legacies, Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama have become symbols of hope, freedom, and inspiration, transcending national boundaries. Their narratives reveal not only personal journeys marked by resilience and determination but also broader themes of justice, equality, and hope. By analyzing the public personas constructed in these texts, we gain insight into how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama shape their images and messages, and how these contribute to their iconic status.

The analysis reveals that Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama use their autobiographies to present themselves as complex, multifaceted individuals, showcasing their experiences, values, and leadership styles. Through their narratives, they construct public personas that embody hope, resilience, and determination, inspiring readers and cementing their iconic status. The chapter highlights the intersection of masculinity and iconicity, demonstrating how Nelson Mandela's and Barack Obama's masculine identities are constructed and performed in their autobiographies. Their narratives show how traditional notions of masculinity are both

reinforced and challenged, reflecting the complexities of masculinity in the public sphere.

The findings of this chapter contribute to our understanding of the public making of masculinities and the construction of iconic leaders. By examining the public personas of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama, the study gain insight into the ways in which leaders can shape their images and messages and how these contribute to their enduring legacies. The study uncovers that the power of storytelling lies not only in its ability to inspire change but also in its potential to reveal the contradictions inherent in our ideals. Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama reveal that icons are shaped by both their triumphs and their trials, and that our understanding of their legacies must embrace the full spectrum of their experiences. Ultimately, their study shades light on the realities of leadership and the aspirations of humanity, encouraging future generations to draw inspiration from their lives while remaining critically aware of the complexities that define them.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES CHALLENGING ICONOGRAPHIC EXPECTATIONS

#### 4.1 Introduction

The iconic figures of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama have been meticulously crafted through their narrative's public personas, embodying ideals of leadership, resilience, and hope. However, beneath the surface of this revered image lies a complex web of narrative techniques employed by the men themselves to shape and subvert expectations.

This chapter addresses the third objective of the study which seeks to look at the modes of narration that are used by Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama to deconstruct the narrative expectation of their iconography. The chapter undertakes a critical examination of the narrative strategies used by Nelson Mandela in *Long Walk to Freedom* and Barack Obama in *Dreams from My Father* to challenge and redefine the iconography surrounding their public personas. Through a nuanced analysis of their autobiographical narratives, this study reveals how these two leaders deliberately constructed and deconstructed traditional notions of masculinity, leveraging their stories to humanize themselves and redefine the terms of their public images. By exploring the tension between their public personas and the autobiographical narratives, this chapter demonstrates how Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama actively participated in the crafting of their own iconography, while subverting also the expectations imposed upon them.

#### 4.2 Deconstruction of Barack Obama's and Nelson Mandela's Iconography

The study at hand undertakes a critical deconstruction of the iconic representation of

Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela, analyzing how their public images are constructed, contested and complicated by the various cultural, social and political forces. By probing the gaps between their public personas and private selves, this research challenges the dominant narratives surrounding these figures, highlighting the complexities and contradictions that underlie their iconic status.

The narratives of iconic leaders often shape public perception and create enduring legacies that transcend their individual experiences. In the case of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama, both figures are celebrated not only for their political achievements but also for the powerful stories they tell about their lives. However, the ways in which these narratives are constructed reveal complexities that challenge commonly accepted understandings of their iconography as perceived by cultural discourse.

Nelson Mandela's autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, and Obama's *Dreams From my father* serve as rich texts for the exploration of deconstruction of the two leaders. Through personal anecdotes, self-reflection, historical intertextuality, and the subversion of traditional masculinity, both leaders navigate the intricate landscapes of their identities and experiences. These storytelling techniques not only humanize them but also invite readers to engage with the multifaceted realities of their lives.

Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama utilize personal anecdotes to foster vulnerability, thereby complicating the heroic narratives often associated with their lives. They also utilize their critical self-reflection, which reveals the moral dilemmas and contradictions inherent in their leadership journeys. Furthermore, by situating their experiences within broader historical contexts, both leaders underscore the interconnectedness of their individual stories with collective struggles for justice and equality.

Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama subvert traditional masculinity through their

narratives, presenting alternative models of strength and leadership that prioritize empathy and collaboration over dominance. Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama not only construct their own identities but also challenge societal iconography, inviting a more nuanced understanding of what it means to be an icon in the contemporary world. Through this exploration, the research appreciates the complexities of their legacies and the ongoing dialogues about leadership, identity, and social justice that their stories inspire.

A postmodern lens is applied to analyze the iconography of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama, revealing how their identities as male politicians are shaped by knowledge and language. Nelson Mandela is often portrayed as the "father of the nation," while Barack Obama is celebrated as a symbol of black freedom; these representations are, in essence, discursive constructions. The public images of both leaders as "great freedom fighters" can be seen as unrealistic, and both Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama actively deconstruct and reshape these narratives through various narrative strategies, including the titles of their autobiographies, slogans like "Yes We Can," and the concept of a "rainbow nation," among others.

Language plays a crucial role in shaping our understanding of the world. Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama are significantly influenced by the language of hegemonic power structures, which frames their identities and actions. The study deconstructs the simplified narratives that the narratives have imposed on Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama, allowing for a more authentic representation of their selves. Through their autobiographies, they rearticulate their experiences as black men, particularly within the context of racial hegemonic power dynamics.

Both *Dreams from My Father* and *Long Walk to Freedom* serve as powerful modes of narration that challenge the normative expectations surrounding Nelson Mandela's

and Barack Obama's iconography. For instance, when Nelson Mandela states that he was not born with a hunger for freedom but was instead compelled to fight for it due to his circumstances, he is actively deconstructing the iconic image that has been assigned to him. In doing so, both leaders invite readers to reconsider their narratives and recognize the complexities and realities behind their public personas.

In examining the autobiographies of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama, the research uncovers a rich tapestry of narration that reveals how both figures are constructed as icons by their narratives. Their use of various modes of narration, whether deliberate or unconscious, serves to deconstruct normative expectations surrounding their iconography. By employing storytelling techniques that reveal the complexities of their experiences, identities, and socio-political landscapes, they challenge the simplified images in their texts.

#### **4.2.1 The use of the Narrative Technique of Personal Anecdotes and Vulnerability in Challenging Expectations Surrounding Iconography.**

Both Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama utilize personal anecdotes as a primary mode of narration, grounding their larger political narratives in intimate experiences that humanize them and foster empathy. In *Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela recounts the profound emotional impact of his imprisonment, sharing poignant stories of family separation, the loss of loved ones, and the psychological toll of years spent in confinement. For example, in chapter 55, he vividly describes the moment he learned of the death of his mother while in prison on Robben Island, illustrating the deep emotional scars that accompanied his political struggle (Mandela, 1994, pp. 360-370). This vulnerability disrupts the portrayal of Nelson Mandela as an infallible hero, suggesting that his greatness is intertwined with personal sacrifice and emotional pain.

By revealing these intimate moments, Nelson Mandela invites readers to see him not only as a historical figure but as a man who endured significant personal challenges, thus complicating the normative expectations of his iconography.

Similarly, in *Dreams from My Father*, Barack Obama shares stories from his youth, his struggles with identity, the pressures of being biracial, and his experiences as a community organizer in Chicago. In chapter 7, he reflects on formative moments when he first runs for office, where he grappled with self-doubt and the weight of expectations (Obama, 1995, pp. 90-100). His candidness about feeling like an outsider in both the white and black communities add depth to his narrative. By embracing vulnerability, Barack Obama challenges the notion that leaders must project an image of unwavering confidence, suggesting that true leadership is rooted in authenticity and self-awareness. By using vulnerability and anecdotes, Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela redefine masculinity. They present alternative forms of masculinity, emphasizing emotional intelligence, empathy, and resilience. Their stories also humanize themselves. They show vulnerability, emotions, and imperfections, challenging expectations surrounding their public personas. The use of the Narrative Technique of Self-Reflection and Critical Examination in Challenging Expectations Surrounding Iconography

Both leaders engage in self-reflection, critically examining their decisions and actions throughout their lives. This introspective mode of narration allows them to address the complexities of their roles and the contradictions inherent in their positions. Nelson Mandela's narrative includes moments of introspection regarding his strategies and decisions, particularly during the transition from apartheid to democracy. He candidly discusses his initial support for armed resistance through *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, acknowledging the moral dilemmas involved (Mandela, 1994, pp. 240-250). Here he

describes the formation of MK and the decision to take up armed resistance against the apartheid regime. By reflecting on these choices, Nelson Mandela complicates the heroic narrative surrounding him, illustrating that leadership often involves navigating difficult ethical landscapes. He expresses regret over certain tactics and emphasizes the importance of dialogue and negotiation, thereby presenting a more nuanced view of leadership that contrasts with the simplistic image of a revolutionary fighter.

In *Dreams from My Father*, Barack Obama engages in a process of introspection that lays the groundwork for his later reflections on leadership. He grapples with his identity, often feeling caught between different worlds, African American and white, urban and suburban (Obama, 1995, pp. 50-70). This exploration fosters a critical understanding of the societal structures that shape individual experiences. His acknowledgment of the limitations of his policies, as mentioned in the passage, can be seen as an extension of this early self-examination (Obama, 1995, pp. 250-270). By recognizing the complexities of race and identity, he sets the stage for a more nuanced view of leadership that acknowledges the challenges inherent in governance.

Barack Obama's candid reflections about systemic racism in *Dreams from My Father* are foundational to his understanding of the political landscape he later navigates as president. He recounts personal experiences that highlight the struggles faced by his community, which informs his later political ambitions (Obama, 1995, pp. 100-120). His recognition of the systemic barriers that persist throughout American society allows him to confront the limitations of his presidency more thoughtfully. This is significant because it illustrates that his engagement with issues of race is not merely political rhetoric; it is a deeply personal journey that influences his approach to leadership.

The backdrop of political polarization, including the rise of the Tea Party, is a theme

that resonates with the divisions Barack Obama explores in *Dreams from My Father*. In chapter 1-3 (early reflections) and in chapter 6-7 (exploring black identity), he examines the fractures within American society, particularly concerning race, class, and identity. By reflecting on these societal rifts during his early years, Barack Obama provides context for the challenges he faces as a leader. His understanding of these complexities deepens his perspective on the limitations of political power, suggesting that real change requires more than just policy; it necessitates a cultural shift and a commitment to empathy and understanding across divides. Through his reflective narrative, Barack Obama invites readers to engage with the complexities of leadership and governance.

In *Dreams from My Father*, he emphasizes the importance of personal stories and lived experiences in shaping one's understanding of broader societal issues. This approach encourages readers to see leadership not as a linear path of success but as a multifaceted journey filled with setbacks, failures, and learning opportunities. By fostering this nuanced understanding, he encourages a more empathetic and informed discourse on the nature of progress.

#### **4.2.2 The use of the Narrative Technique of Intertextuality and Historical Context in Challenging Expectations Surrounding Iconography**

Both Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama weave intertextual references and historical contexts into their narratives, situating their personal stories within larger socio-political frameworks. This mode of narration enriches their iconography by connecting individual experiences to collective histories. In *Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela situates his personal journey within the broader context of the anti-apartheid struggle and the legacy of colonialism. He references key historical events, figures, and movements, such as the Sharpeville Massacre and the global anti-

apartheid movement (Mandela,1994, pp. 200-220) and (Mandela,1994, pp. 260-280).

By embedding his personal narrative within this rich historical tapestry, Nelson Mandela emphasizes that his life is not an isolated story but rather part of a collective struggle for freedom. This framing challenges the notion that his iconography is solely about individual heroism, suggesting instead that it is a reflection of the collective aspirations of a nation yearning for justice.

In *Dreams from My Father*, Barack Obama skillfully weaves intertextual references and historical contexts throughout his narrative, situating his personal story within broader socio-political frameworks. This approach not only enriches his autobiography but also connects his individual experiences to collective histories, particularly concerning race and identity in America.

One notable example occurs in chapter 4 when Barack Obama reflects on his experience studying in Indonesia and his interactions with diverse cultures (Obama,1995, pp30-50). He discusses how these experiences shaped his understanding of race and identity, allowing him to develop a nuanced perspective on the complexities of being a biracial individual in America. He writes about the impact of historical racial dynamics in the United States, drawing connections between his personal struggles and the larger civil rights movement. For instance, he describes the influence of figures like Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr., acknowledging their roles in shaping the discourse around race and justice (Obama, 1995, pp. 100-120).

Additionally, in Part II: “Chicago”, Barack Obama’s reflections on his time as a community organizer in Chicago serve as another critical intertextual moment (Obama,1995, pp. 130-230). He describes the socio-economic challenges faced by the communities he worked with, linking them to broader historical injustices rooted in systemic inequality. His engagement with these communities not only grounds his

narrative in a specific historical context but also highlights the ongoing struggles for social justice, thereby connecting his personal journey to a larger collective fight for equality.

Through these intertextual references and historical contexts, Barack Obama enriches his narrative by framing his life story as part of a continuum of experiences that reflect the broader American landscape. This mode of narration allows readers to see the interconnectedness of individual and collective histories, emphasizing that personal identity is shaped by and contributes to larger socio-political realities.

#### **4.2.3 The use of the Narrative Technique of Subversion of Traditional Masculinity in Challenging Expectations Surrounding Iconography**

Both leaders subtly challenge normative expectations of masculinity through their narratives, presenting alternative models of strength and leadership that defy traditional stereotypes.

Nelson Mandela's portrayal of strength is intricately tied to his capacity for empathy, forgiveness, and compassion. His willingness to engage with former oppressors and advocate for reconciliation, most notably during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, contrasts sharply with conventional notions of masculinity that prioritize aggression and dominance (Mandela, 1994, pp. 750-760). By embodying a more nuanced version of masculinity that values emotional strength, he redefines what it means to be a leader. Nelson Mandela's emphasis on healing and unity suggests that true strength lies in understanding and compassion rather than in conflict, thus providing a broader framework for leadership that transcends traditional gender norms.

Barack Obama similarly subverts traditional masculine norms by emphasizing

qualities such as emotional strength, collaboration, and vulnerability. He frequently highlights the importance of listening and community engagement in his leadership style. For instance, he discusses the role of his family and his wife, Michelle, in shaping his values and decisions, presenting a model of masculinity that embraces partnership and shared responsibility (Obama, 1995, pp. 400-430). By framing these traits as essential to his identity, Barack Obama challenges the stereotype of the solitary, authoritative male leader and promotes a vision of leadership that values inclusivity and dialogue.

Through their deliberate and unconscious modes of narration, Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama effectively deconstruct the normative expectations surrounding their iconography. By sharing personal anecdotes, engaging in self-reflection, situating their experiences within historical contexts, and subverting traditional notions of masculinity, both leaders invite readers to reconsider the complexities of their journeys. They reveal that the construction of an icon is not simply a matter of public perception; it involves navigating the intricate interplay of personal experience, societal expectations, and historical narratives.

Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama remind us that icons are shaped by both their triumphs and their trials. Their stories prompt us to engage more deeply with the realities of leadership and the aspirations of humanity, encouraging future generations to draw inspiration from their lives while remaining critically aware of the complexities that define them. Ultimately, their narratives challenge us to embrace a more nuanced understanding of what it means to be a leader and an icon, one that encompasses vulnerability, reflection, and a deep commitment to social justice.

In both Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* and Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father*, the authors engage in a nuanced exploration of masculinity, challenging

normative expectations and presenting alternative models of strength and leadership. Through their narratives, both leaders redefine what it means to be a man in positions of power, emphasizing qualities such as empathy, resilience, and collaboration rather than traditional notions of dominance and aggression.

In *Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela presents a vision of masculinity that is intricately tied to compassion and emotional intelligence. He recounts the personal sacrifices he made for the struggle against apartheid, including the pain of being separated from his family (Mandela, 1994, pp. 340-400). Nelson Mandela's willingness to express vulnerability, such as sharing his fears and doubts during imprisonment, subverts the traditional image of a stoic, unyielding leader (Mandela, 1994, pp. 500-550). He emphasizes that true strength lies not in physical power or aggression, but in the capacity to forgive and unite a fractured nation. His role in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission exemplifies this approach, as he advocates for healing over retribution, illustrating that leadership involves nurturing relationships and fostering understanding, rather than exerting control.

Similarly, in *Dreams from My Father*, Barack Obama challenges conventional masculinity by reflecting on his own insecurities and vulnerabilities as a biracial man. He openly discusses the complexities of his identity, navigating between different cultures and communities. His narrative reveals a sensitivity to the experiences of others, emphasizing the importance of listening and understanding. Barack Obama portrays strength as the ability to confront one's internal struggles, as he grapples with feelings of alienation and the pressures of expectation. By sharing these personal insights, he redefines masculine leadership as being rooted in empathy and self-reflection, rather than in the traditional archetype of the dominant male figure.

### **4.3 Models of Leadership that Challenge Expectations Surrounding Iconography**

Nelson Mandela's narrative showcases a collaborative approach to leadership, grounded in the principles of inclusivity and dialogue. His commitment to reconciliation post-apartheid

illustrates his belief that effective leadership must prioritize the collective over the individual. Nelson Mandela's ability to engage with former adversaries and to seek common ground illustrates a model of masculinity that values cooperation and mutual respect (Mandela, 1994, pp. 750-760). He embodies the idea that true leaders are those who uplift others and build bridges rather than walls, presenting a more holistic understanding of what it means to be a man in a position of power.

In *Dreams from My Father*, Barack Obama highlights his experiences as a community organizer in Chicago, where he learns the value of grassroots activism and collective action (Obama, 1995, pp. 130-230). His leadership is characterized by an emphasis on community involvement and collaboration, as he seeks to empower those around him. This focus on service and connection challenges the normative expectation that leaders must be solitary figures wielding authority. Instead, Barack Obama frames leadership as a shared endeavor, where strength is derived from the ability to inspire and mobilize others for a common purpose.

### **4.4 The use of the Narrative Technique of Subversion of Resilience and Vulnerability in Challenging Expectations Surrounding Iconography**

Nelson Mandela's narrative of resilience in the face of oppression is central to his personal story. However, he articulates this resilience through the lens of community and support rather than individual heroism. His reflections on enduring years of imprisonment reveal not just his tenacity, but also the emotional toll of such experiences (Mandela, 1994, pp. 500-550). By acknowledging the psychological

challenges he faced, Nelson Mandela presents a model of masculinity that embraces vulnerability as a strength, suggesting that true resilience involves confronting one's pain and using it to foster greater understanding and unity.

Barack Obama's journey in *Dreams from My Father* is marked by moments of self-doubt and introspection. He candidly describes his struggles with identity and belonging, illustrating that vulnerability is an integral part of personal growth (Obama, 1995, pp. 50-70). This self-reflection not only enriches his character but also offers a model of leadership that values authenticity and openness. By sharing his vulnerabilities, Barack Obama invites others to recognize their own, fostering an environment where emotional expression is seen as a strength rather than a weakness.

Both Nelson Mandela in *Long Walk to Freedom* and Barack Obama in *Dreams from My Father* effectively challenge normative expectations of masculinity through their narratives. By presenting alternative models of strength and leadership that emphasize empathy, resilience, and collaboration, they redefine what it means to be a man in positions of power. Through their personal stories, they reinvent their narratives of traditional stereotypes, advocating for a more nuanced understanding of masculinity that values emotional strength and community engagement. In doing so, Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama not only reshape their own iconic images but also contribute to broader conversations about leadership and identity in contemporary society.

#### **4.5 Deconstruction of Barack Obama as an Icon of Hope and Change**

In *Dreams from My Father*, Barack Obama employs a reflective narrative style that explores his quest for identity. While narratives frequently construct him as an emblem of hope and change, they often overlook the internal struggles he articulates. Obama writes, "I often felt like an outsider" (Obama, 1995, p. 119), highlighting a complexity

that contrasts with the public's idealized vision of him as a unifying figure.

Barack Obama's exploration of his biracial heritage is a central theme, yet his narrative's public persona perception often simplifies this narrative into a singular story of racial reconciliation. His nuanced

examination of race reveals the challenges he faced in navigating different cultural identities. He reflects on this conflict: "I was the son of a black man from Kenya, a white woman from Kansas" (Obama, 1995, p. 3), emphasizing the complexity of his identity that the public sometimes reduces to a binary struggle.

Barack Obama's relatable narrative, is marked by vulnerability, fosters a deep relatable narrative. However, his narrative's public persona portrayal frequently emphasizes his charisma and oratory skills, overshadowing the personal doubts and challenges he faced. For instance, when he states, "I had to make my way on the basis of my ability, not my heritage" (Obama, 1995, p. 31), it reveals a struggle for self-identification that contrasts with the simple narrative of success that many attribute to him.

Barack Obama's narrative portrayal as an icon of hope is rooted in his vision for change. While he emphasizes empowerment and community engagement, the narrative often elevates him to a status of unattainable ideals. His observation that "a degree was not in itself a guarantee of leadership" (Obama, 1995, p. 74) reflects a more realistic understanding of leadership, which is frequently overlooked in favor of a more sanitized narrative of his rise to the presidency.

Obama's narrative reveals the complexities of his racial identity as he strives to define himself in a society that often categorizes him based on his skin color. He acknowledges that others define him through the lens of race, yet he actively claims his African American identity by titling his autobiography *Dreams from My Father*. This title signifies a reclamation of his heritage and an assertion of his place within the African

American narrative.

As he states, “I had come to understand myself as a black American, and was understood as such, that understanding remained unanchored to place” (Obama,1995, p. 115). This highlights the disconnect he feels between his identity and a sense of belonging. Although he associates with Black friends, he expresses a profound sense of dislocation, describing his interactions as “running around in circles” (Obama,1995, p. 102). This metaphor indicates that his relationships, while significant, do not provide the grounding he seeks. His lamentation to a friend that he had no “business speaking for black folks” (Obama,1995, p. 108) reflects his internal struggle with authenticity and representation, revealing a deeper inquiry into what it means to embody Blackness.

Barack Obama's journey into adulthood involves a performance of his Black identity shaped by his multicultural upbringing in Hawaii. He learns to navigate between different cultural landscapes, recognizing that “each possessed its own language and customs and structures of meaning” (Obama,1995, p. 82). This ability to "slip back and forth" between his Black and white worlds prepares him for the complexities of political life, allowing him to connect with a diverse audience.

However, this performance is not without its challenges. Barack Obama grapples with the expectations placed upon him as a Black man, often feeling the need to justify his identity to others. His experiences illustrate how he must navigate societal perceptions while also forging his own understanding of what it means to be Black in America. His mixed-race background serves as both a gift and a burden, complicating his relationships within the Black community as he seeks to establish himself as a legitimate voice.

Central to Barack Obama’s narrative is his quest for community—a place where he

can “put down stakes and test my commitments” (Obama,1995, p. 115). His membership in the Trinity United Church of Christ, led by Reverend Jeremiah Wright, becomes a pivotal moment in his quest for belonging. Here, he engages with the cultural and spiritual dimensions of the African American experience. He describes the powerful atmosphere of the church, where “people began to shout, to rise from their seats and cry out” (Obama,1995, p. 294). This experience connects him to a collective history of struggle, resilience, and hope, allowing him to embrace a fuller understanding of his identity.

Through his engagement with this community, Barack Obama reshapes the discourse of race and identity, positioning himself as an advocate for the African American experience. His participation in the church signifies a conscious decision to align himself with a history and community that he feels deeply connected to, even as he continues to navigate the complexities of his mixed-race heritage.

#### **4.6 Narrative Techniques of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama**

Both Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama employ various modes of narration, deliberate and unconscious, to deconstruct the normative expectations surrounding their iconography.

Both leaders use personal stories to humanize their experiences, allowing their narratives to connect with their larger struggles and triumphs. Nelson Mandela’s recounting of his imprisonment and the emotional toll it took on him serves to evoke empathy, while Barack Obama’s reflections on his childhood and identity crisis speaks on the complexities of his racial heritage.

Both narratives are marked by deep self-reflection. Nelson Mandela often examines his decisions and the moral dilemmas he faced during the anti-apartheid struggle,

while Barack Obama contemplates his identity, relationships, and the implications of his mixed race. This introspection invites a more nuanced view of leadership that challenges the notion of the infallible hero.

Both leaders reference historical events and figures that have shaped their identities. Nelson Mandela's reflections on the anti-apartheid struggle and Barack Obama's engagement with the civil rights movement contextualize their personal journeys within broader socio-political frameworks, enriching their narratives and reinforcing their roles as transformative leaders.

Through his introspective journey, Barack Obama not only confronts the societal expectations imposed upon him but also reclaims his narrative as a multifaceted individual. His ability to articulate the complexities of his identity allows him to connect with a broad discourse, forging a political persona that resonates with many. Ultimately, Barack Obama's autobiography serves as a powerful testament to the ongoing negotiation of identity within the frameworks of race and culture, inviting readers to reflect on their own understandings of belonging and representation in an increasingly diverse society. Similarly, Nelson Mandela's narrative in *Long Walk to Freedom* complements this exploration by emphasizing the power of personal stories in shaping collective histories and challenging normative expectations. Together, these narratives enrich the discourse on leadership, identity, and the intricate interplay between personal experience and public perception.

To Barack Obama, organizing and putting together these experiences meant owning his racial identity. An identity that he had to learn how to control its representation and meaning. Barack Obama (2004) writes "[M]y identity might begin with the fact of my race, but it didn't, couldn't end there (Obama,1995, p. 111). In stating so Barack Obama was aware of the racial hegemony of the present and past historical realities

that were presented to him. Despite these present and past historical realities Barack Obama reinvent himself through his affirmative 'Yes We Can' slogan which in itself carries his materialization of change and hope. His dreams. His personal dreams which have now become more than the American Dream. Dreams which he now uses to mobilize everyone around him for social action and ultimately for his political expedition.

Barack Obama's middle name Hussein had always been the talk of many controversies and therefore when he managed to clinch the United States presidency propelled him to iconic status. Elected as an American president and having a non-English name Barack Obama challenged the normalcy of the presidency of the United States which carried in itself the positional power of what a real American ought to be. Barack Obama looked far beyond his single black identity political base for electability. As a result of his cultural and genealogical inheritance born of a black man and a white woman, Barack Obama created a past version where he laid bare his middle name Hussein from negative associations which many of his political contiguity believed it to have. In his text *Audacity of Hope* Barack Obama narrates of how his political contiguity could ask him "[w]here'd get that funny name?" ... [h]ell of a thing, Isn't it? ...[r]eally bad luck. You can't change your name of of course. Voters are suspicious of that kind of a thing" (Obama,1995, pp. 1-3). In trying to strongly relink himself intellectually from 'extremist' tag labels and associate himself in solidarity with fellow Americans, Obama (2004) commending on the 9/11 terrorist attacks explained that he did not "pretend to understand the stark nihilism that drove the terrorists that day and that drives their brethren still" (Obama,1995, p. x). Barack Obama using the word 'their' suggests that he delink himself from the actions of the terrorists.

Barack Obama's father played a key role in his son's political maturation. It was from

his father that Barack Obama was bestowed upon his name Hussein, therefore, in his narratives Barack Obama emphasizes on recasting his father in a way that could make the electorate see his father as a father of one that can be electable. In recasting his father's unweaving African identity bond demonstrated for example by Barack Obama's father when he arrived at an official function at Phi Beta Kappa where he was a member clad in "his favorite outfit- jeans and an old knit shirt with a leopard-print pattern. "Barack Obama reshaped his father's unweaving African identity by recasting his father as having a British accent, his fondness in driving on the left-hand lane all these connoted that Barack Obama senior had some Britishness in him (Obama,1995, pp. 8-6).

As a liminal subject, a political figure who happened to have a background that was non-white, Barack Obama used the historical knowledge he got from reading library books alongside those given to him by his mother to write a historical past narrative that was presentably usable to the public of the American society worthy electable for United States presidency and also as one who had real American personality. As a result, Barack Obama reshaped his race discourses of blackness by choosing carefully on his reading materials. During his late college years Obama placed more time on doing library studies than going out with his friends. Hard work, focus and dedication become his central values. These are important values and virtues that were easily identifiable with every American. Barack Obama consciously choose what to read and actively took upon himself to carefully organize and use written knowledge to rewrite a narrative in a certain perspective in relation to his own cultural, political and historical racial past.

Barack Obama constructed and deployed selectively and carefully authoritative American historical and political figures to retell his own story. These authoritative

figures like Mayor Harold Washington, the true Malcolm X (the intellectual, less confrontational one with a Ph.D.), Du Bois, Hughes, Baldwin, Ellison and Wright, had cultural and national appeal and some like Jimi Hendrix had mostly white audience appeal (Obama,1995, pp. 86-148). From his mother's stories he wrote about Harry Belafonte, Mahalia Jackson, John Lewis, Fannie Lou Hamer, Lena Horne, Sidney Poitier, Rosa Parks, and Thurgood Marshall all of whom had appeal that went beyond a race-specific African American base (Obama,1995, p. 51). These authoritative personalities inspired Barack Obama intellectually and impacted in him reconciliatory ideals.

Certain ideas of political man seem to be confounded by the narrators (autobiographers) but at the same time when they are trying to do that, they are also dismantling the same. In *Dreams from My Father* one of the things that stand out is the idea of fatherhood. The absence of Barack Obama senior and the fact that the father was not actually present in Barack Obama's life made him to have foggy images of what life would be like if the father would be there. The absence of fatherhood in Barack Obama's life actually created a fatherhood in Barack Obama's life. These imaginations of a father created a certain aspect about what a father should be like and as he yearned for a real father who was absent it created a fantastical image of what a good father who was not there.

The presence and absence are already deconstruction in itself. The presence of fatherhood means there is an absence of a father figure. The absence of a real physical father in Barack Obama's life created a fantastical image of a father in him which probably inspired him as he grew up as a man to define himself in a certain way. Barack Obama's journey to be a political man was actually in search of a missing father. The story of his dreams of a father was actually what inspired him to physically come to

his father's grave in Kenya even after the father had died. He was searching for a biological father in order to achieve political fatherhood. The absence of a real father in his life pushed him to do certain things and shaped him to feel that for what he never had in terms of a father figure in his life these was what he had to do to make it up for. He shaped himself into a political father to others who never had their fathers like him and became the father of America.

The Reverend Wright's sermons, infused with imagery and the everyday experiences of the Black community, serve as a backdrop for Barack Obama's journey. As Barack Obama articulates, "Like Hannah, that harpist is looking upwards, a few faint notes floating upwards to the heavens. She dares to hope... She has the audacity... to make music... and praise God... on the one string... she has left" (Obama,1995, p. 294). This powerful imagery of a suffering harpist, dressed in torn, blood-stained clothing, symbolizes the mass suffering and injustices faced by the Black community throughout U.S. history. However, the harpist's upward gaze signifies hope—a hope that Barack Obama, too, can embrace as he acknowledges his cultural, historical, and spiritual inheritance, despite the absence of his father.

The complex emotions Barack Obama experienced as a community organizer—anger, courage, pride, and fear—echo his internal struggles to reconcile his divided identity. He writes, "And in that single note—hope—I heard something else; at the foot of the cross, inside the thousands of churches across the city, I imagined the stories of ordinary Black people merging with the stories of David and Goliath, Moses and Pharaoh, the Christians in the lion's den..." (Obama,1995, p. 294). Here, Barack Obama connects personal and collective narratives, asserting that the trials and triumphs of the Black community are both unique and universal. This blending of narratives allows him to reclaim a history that is not only significant to his identity but

also resonates with a broader narrative.

Barack Obama's use of religious imagery and allusions to Biblical stories serves as a means to bridge the gap between racial discourses and universal themes of struggle and resilience. By invoking figures like David and Goliath, he aligns his community's ongoing struggles with historical narratives that transcend racial boundaries, asserting that these shared experiences provide a foundation for hope and renewal. Religion emerges as a crucial source of strength and support, offering a framework through which he can understand his identity and the collective journey of the African American community.

The Black church operates within this religious framework, acting as a vital connection to the African American journey, the broader American narrative, and Barack Obama's personal experiences. He recognizes that the United States is a nation in constant pursuit of improvement, shaped by a collective belief in divine inspiration and the ideals of equality and justice. Barack Obama's journey parallels that of the nation, as both involve navigating the complexities of race and the pursuit of freedom, equality, and self-actualization.

The African American quest for equality is intricately linked to the American journey and the Old Testament Exodus story, which Martin Luther King Jr. famously promised would culminate in reaching the "promised land." In *Dreams from My Father*, Barack Obama positions his personal narrative alongside this historical struggle, emphasizing the arduous path traveled by both African Americans and the nation as a whole. His reflections on his heritage highlight the improbability of his journey: "My mother was born in the heartland of America, but my father grew up herding goats in Kenya... At the height of the Cold War, my father decided... that his yearning—his dream—required the freedom and opportunity promised by the West" (Obama, 1995, pp. 93-94). This

passage encapsulates the intersection of personal ambition and the broader American narrative, illustrating how Barack Obama's identity is informed by both his lineage and the collective aspirations of his community.

Barack Obama's iconographic status stems from his ability to navigate the historically entrenched racial narratives that have traditionally influenced the American electorate. For much of U.S. history, presidential leadership has been predominantly associated with "white male masculinity." Aware of the challenges posed by his genealogical and cultural inheritance, Barack Obama strategically recasts his past to resonate with American traditions, ensuring his electability within a diverse political landscape. He asserts that his autobiographical narrative is not merely a record of personal exploration but a search for "a workable meaning for his life" (Obama's preface to the 2004 edition, xvi)—a meaning that is directly tied to his role as a public figure.

In *Dreams from My Father*, Barack Obama acknowledges that "nowhere is it ordained that history moves in a straight line" and that the past and present often exist "in constant, noisy collision" (Obama, 1995, p. 309). This understanding reflects his task of organizing and synthesizing diverse life experiences, both personal and familial, to create a narrative that resonates within the public and political spheres. Through this deconstruction of his iconography, Barack Obama not only challenges the normative expectations associated with his identity but also creates a narrative that engages with the complexities of his journey—one that intertwines personal aspirations with the broader narratives of race, culture, and community in America.

#### **4.7 Deconstruction of Nelson Mandela's iconography**

Central to Nelson Mandela's social, cultural, and political life is the concept of gender ordering, particularly in relation to paternalistic, phallic relationships. Nelson Mandela navigates his identity and masculinity through the lens of his absent father,

who passed away when Nelson Mandela was just nine years old. Naidoo Kammila (2018) notes that despite being raised by his mother, Nelson Mandela consistently defined himself in relation to his father. The title *Long Walk to Freedom* symbolizes not only his political achievements but also a lifelong journey of comparison with his father's masculinity, characterized by stubbornness and a strong temperament.

Nelson Mandela's long walk to freedom is closely tied to his unwavering belief in standing for truth. Alloy Ihuah (2022) quotes Nelson Mandela, who asserts, "[H]onor belongs to those who never forsake the truth even when things seem dark and grim, who try over and over again (and) who are never discouraged by insults, humiliation, and defeat" (p. 14). This commitment to truth is a virtue he inherited from his father, instilled in him through Xhosa culture, which emphasized the importance of fighting for justice, even in the face of adversity.

As a child, Nelson Mandela was captivated by his father's tales of heroic Xhosa warriors and the moral lessons embedded in Xhosa legends. These narratives, filled with themes of virtue and generosity, shaped his imagination and instilled the values that would later guide his political life. Nelson Mandela reflects on this foundation, stating, "Mandela grew up listening to his father's stories of heroic battles, and his mother would enchant him with Xhosa legends... such as 'virtue and generosity will be rewarded in ways that one cannot know'" (Mandela, 1994, p. 10). Ultimately, Nelson Mandela would rise to become South Africa's first Black president, celebrated for his commitment to truth and reconciliation among the racially divided communities of his nation. He notes, "[O]n the day of the inauguration (as president) I was overwhelmed with a sense of history... I defined myself through my father... I maintain that nurture, rather than nature, is the primary molder of personality" (Mandela, 1994, p. 541).

However, Nelson Mandela was more than a father figure to the nation or a messianic

symbol of liberation. He was a complex human being imbued with virtues that transcended the iconic labels placed upon him. The title of "icon" was a product of the systemic oppressive structures he confronted, compelling him to engage with humanity's virtues as a means of reconciliation. Without directly quoting Franklin Roosevelt, Nelson Mandela's emphasis on human dignity in his 1994 State of the Nation Address, advocating for the goals of freedom from want, freedom from hunger, freedom from deprivation, freedom from ignorance, freedom from suppression, and freedom from fear.

Nelson Mandela's narrative employs various modes of storytelling that challenge normative expectations of his iconography. For instance, he employs personal anecdotes to humanize his experiences, allowing his narrative to connect with his struggles and triumphs. His reflections on childhood stories serve not only as a means of self-definition but also as a way to establish a collective identity rooted in shared values and cultural heritage. By situating his personal journey within the broader context of Xhosa traditions, Nelson Mandela emphasizes the importance of community and cultural identity.

Nelson Mandela's political journey was marked by moments of great isolation, which contrast sharply with the narrative that often centers on his imprisonment. While Nelson Mandela is celebrated as an iconic figure largely due to his long incarceration, his path to freedom was fraught with challenges, including significant risks and isolation. Henderson (1996) notes that Nelson Mandela faced criticism for what was perceived as "personal diplomacy" as the ANC adapted to a changing political landscape (p. 292). Many within the ANC opposed Nelson Mandela's efforts to include whites in political negotiations, reflecting the tension between his vision and the expectations of his supporters.

To justify his inclusive approach, Nelson Mandela asserts the importance of innovation in leadership: "There are times when a leader must move ahead of the clock, go off in a new direction, confident that he is leading his people the right way" (Mandela,1994, pp. 510-511). He also emphasizes that "to make peace with an enemy, one must work with that enemy, and that enemy becomes your partner" (Mandela,1994, p. 598). These reflections reveal how his early lessons in masculinity—trust, confidence, bravery, and courage—guided him through the complexities of reconciliation and transformation, reinforcing his belief that "majority rules and peace are two sides of a single coin" (Mandels,1994, p. 526).

In contrast, Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father* employs similar modes of narration to deconstruct the normative expectations of his iconography. Barack Obama's narrative is rich with personal anecdotes that explore his identity as a biracial man, often reflecting on his experiences of alienation and belonging. His use of self-reflection allows his narrative to engage with the complexities of his upbringing and the internal struggles he faced in reconciling his racial identity. For example, his discussions about his relationships with Black friends and the feeling of "running around in circles" highlight his quest for authenticity in a society that often defines him by his race (Obama,1995, p.34).

Both Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama utilize historical intertextuality in their narratives to situate their personal experiences within broader socio-political contexts. Nelson Mandela's references to Xhosa culture and history serve to ground his identity in a rich heritage, while Barack Obama's allusions to civil rights figures and movements connect his personal journey to the ongoing struggles for racial equality. Through these intertextual references, both leaders emphasize that their identities are not merely individual but are intertwined with the collective histories of their

communities.

This study seeks to understand how Nelson Mandela's personal history intertwines with larger historical narratives. His traditional Xhosa upbringing and initiation rites shaped him into a conciliatory figure, enabling him to transcend cultural boundaries and emerge as both a South African and a global icon. The interplay of narrative perception and personal experience in Nelson Mandela's narrative highlights how literature constructs or reconstructs history. While the text speaks to Nelson Mandela's experiences, it also sheds light on histories that are often overlooked in cultural discourse.

Thus, the choices made in autobiography become critical in shaping narratives of truth and silence. Nelson Mandela's narrative is crafted as a healing, conciliatory father figure, as he writes, "This is what the ANC is fighting for. The struggle is a truly national one. It is a struggle of the African people, inspired by their own suffering and their own experience" (Mandela, 1994, p. 352). Yet, within his autobiography, he reveals a more complex side, shaped by his military training in Ethiopia and his role as a founding member and commander of the armed wing of the ANC, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*. These experiences not only framed him as an international icon but also illustrated the multifaceted nature of his identity.

During his Rivonia Trial, Nelson Mandela famously stated: "During my lifetime, I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to see realized. But, if need be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die" (Mandels, 1994, p. 352). This declaration encapsulates the duality of Nelson Mandela's iconography: he is both a

symbol of reconciliation and a testament to the struggles against oppression, embodying the complexities of leadership in a divided society. Through this deconstruction, we gain a deeper understanding of how Nelson Mandela's iconography is shaped by his personal journey and the broader historical context in which he operated, paralleling the modes of narration used by Barack Obama to similarly challenge and redefine the expectations associated with his own identity.

The phrase "which I am prepared to die for" signifies not only Nelson Mandela's commitment to the armed struggle but also serves as an invitation to his oppressors to engage in a "return to humanity," as articulated by Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Ngcaweni (2018). This duality underscores the ethical framework guiding the armed wing of the ANC, which aimed at destabilization rather than loss of life. Nelson Mandela's willingness to sacrifice himself for the cause highlights his profound commitment to justice and reconciliation, embodying a complex interplay between violence and humanity in the liberation struggle.

Zezeza (2013) observes that Nelson Mandela encapsulated the key phases and ideologies of African nationalism, evolving from elite nationalism before World War II, which focused on reformist demands, to the era of militant mass nationalism that called for independence and ultimately to armed liberation (p. 10). This historical context enriches our understanding of Nelson Mandela's iconography, illustrating how his life and leadership were shaped by the broader currents of African nationalism.

The title *Long Walk to Freedom* poignantly reflects the arduous journey Nelson Mandela undertook to liberate South Africa from the oppressive apartheid system. He articulates this struggle, stating, "There is no easy walk to freedom. We have to pass through the shadows of death again and again before we reach the mountaintops of our desires" (Mandela, 1994, p. 158). Here, Nelson Mandela positions himself not as an

extraordinary messiah but as a selfless leader willing to endure hardship for the sake of a racially equitable society. His declaration, "During my lifetime, I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society. It is an ideal for which I am prepared to die for" (Mandela,1994, p. 352), underscores his moral conviction and the depth of his commitment to justice.

Nelson Mandela's political legacy was further solidified by his receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize, which defined his political masculinity as a global inspirational hero and solidified his place in history as a figure who inspired marginalized groups around the world. The revered title of "father of the nation" is associated not only with his courageous masculinity but also with his wise character, which remained unyielding in the face of formidable adversaries. Nelson Mandela transcends the role of a national leader; he emerges as a universal father figure, imparting vital moral lessons concerning justice, inclusivity, forgiveness, and coexistence for future generations.

As one of the most significant Black leaders, Nelson Mandela demonstrated an exceptional ability to adapt to shifting circumstances, emerging rejuvenated with new insights. His leadership style, molded by his cultural, traditional, and historical background, positioned him as a risk-taker capable of employing diverse strategies to counter the apartheid regime effectively. Ihuah (2022) highlights Nelson Mandela's inclusive leadership approach, noting that "the movement that started as non-violent turned violent and then changed to community advocacy, educating comrades in prison. From diplomacy to military action, he reached out to friends and foes, including the United Nations and the global community, to garner support for the struggle" (p.23).

Nelson Mandela's deconstruction of his iconography is rooted in the complexities of

his identity and leadership. His narrative not only reflects the historical struggles of his people but also challenges the simplistic portrayals of a singular hero. Instead, Nelson Mandela emerges as a multifaceted figure whose life encapsulates the tensions between violence and humanity, struggle and reconciliation, making him a compelling symbol of hope and resilience in the face of adversity.

#### **4.9 Deconstruction of Nelson Mandela as an Icon of Resilience and Reconciliation**

In *Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela meticulously chronicles his life from his early years in the Thembu tribe to his emergence as a global symbol of resistance against apartheid. The chronological structure allows readers to witness his evolution. However, his narrative often emphasizes Nelson Mandela primarily as a martyr and a saint-like figure, overlooking the complexities and nuances of his political journey. Nelson Mandela himself reflects on his imperfections and the missteps he encountered: “I have made missteps along the way” (Mandela, 1994, p. 588). This admission contrasts with the narrative’s idealized image of him as a flawless hero. Nelson Mandela’s portrayal as a martyr enhances his icon status, but the reality of his sacrifices is more complex. While he recounts enduring personal trials, he also emphasizes the collective struggle for justice. He writes, “I knew that I was not a man to be feared; I was a man to be respected” (Mandela, 1994, p. 684). His narrative’s public persona often romanticizes his resilience, portraying him solely through the lens of his imprisonment and subsequent reconciliation efforts. Nelson Mandela’s own reflections reveal a leader grappling with the weight of leadership and the moral dilemmas inherent in political struggle.

Nelson Mandela’s autobiography emphasizes his Xhosa heritage and the cultural narratives of his people, which his narrative frequently portrays him as a call from him for national unity. While he advocates for reconciliation, he is also aware of the

fractures within the African identity. Cultural discourse often simplifies Nelson Mandela's message to an ideal of unity, overlooking his nuanced understanding of the complexities of tribal loyalties and the need for genuine dialogue among diverse groups.

His emphasis on reconciliation post-imprisonment reflects a profound understanding of healing. However, his narrative often elevates him to a quasi-mythical status, projecting him solely as a peacemaker. His narrative includes difficult choices and the acknowledgment that reconciliation required sacrifices on all sides. Nelson Mandela's insistence that "it is in your hands to make a better world for all who live in it" (Mandela, 1994, p. 695) is often overshadowed by the narrative portrayal to portray him as a solitary figure of peace, rather than one who engaged in contentious negotiations.

#### **4.10 Comparative Analysis of the Deconstruction of Barack Obama and Nelson**

##### **Mandela**

Both Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama utilize their autobiographies as tools for political messaging, yet their narratives often construct their identities in ways that oversimplify their messages. Nelson Mandela's portrayal as a noble martyr and Barack Obama as a universally appealing figure of hope can detract from the complexities and imperfections that both leaders acknowledge in their own lives. The narrative construction of icons often leads to a flattening of their multifaceted experiences.

While Nelson Mandela's story emphasizes resilience and sacrifice, the narrative often reduces it to a heroic narrative of unwavering strength. Conversely, Barack Obama's journey highlights personal empowerment, but his public persona can frame him solely as a figure of hope, neglecting the internal conflicts he faced. Both icons are thus

constructed in ways that can overshadow the nuanced realities of their experiences.

Cultural identity plays a significant role in both narratives, yet the public personas often simplify Nelson Mandela's connection to his Xhosa roots and Barack Obama's biracial identity into singular narratives of unity. Nelson Mandela's call for reconciliation and Barack Obama's emphasis on inclusivity is frequently reframed in mainstream discourse, leading to a loss of the deeper complexities they each articulate in their autobiographies.

Nelson Mandela's leadership is characterized by moral integrity and collective responsibility, while Barack Obama's is marked by eloquence and pragmatism. However, their narratives often elevate their images to mythic proportions, overlooking the challenges they faced in their leadership journeys. Nelson Mandela's reflections on the moral dilemmas of leadership and Barack Obama's realization that activism extends beyond formal education are critical insights that can be obscured in such simplified narratives.

Both Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama have been constructed as cultural icons through their autobiographies, which serve as powerful narratives that shape their identities and legacies. While Nelson Mandela is often portrayed as a resilient figure embodying the struggle for liberation and reconciliation, and Barack Obama as a hopeful leader advocating for change and inclusivity, these representations can sometimes diverge from their own complex narratives. The narrative's construction of the two leaders as cultural heroes can lead to oversimplification, overshadowing the nuances of their experiences and the moral dilemmas they navigated. Ultimately, by examining their autobiographies, we gain a more comprehensive understanding of how these leaders view themselves and the broader contexts that shaped their journeys, highlighting the importance of recognizing the complexities inherent in their

iconic status.

#### **4.11 Chapter Conclusion.**

In conclusion, this chapter has critically examined the modes of narration employed by Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama, revealing how both leaders consciously and unconsciously deconstruct the normative expectations surrounding their iconography. Through personal anecdotes, self-reflection, and historical intertextuality, Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama not only share their individual journeys but also address the broader socio-political contexts that shape their identities as leaders. Nelson Mandela's narrative in *Long Walk to Freedom* illustrates his complex relationship with masculinity, authority, and the struggle for justice. By framing his experiences through the lens of personal sacrifice and moral conviction, he challenges the simplistic portrayal of the "father of the nation" as merely a heroic figure. Instead, Mandela emerges as a deeply human leader, whose journey is marked by resilience, empathy, and the relentless pursuit of truth.

Similarly, Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father* highlights his navigation of identity as a biracial man and his quest for belonging in a racially divided society. Through introspective storytelling and engagement with his cultural heritage, Barack Obama complicates the expectations of a Black leader, presenting himself as both a product of his experiences and an advocate for broader social justice. His reflections on race, community, and personal growth serve to dismantle the monolithic representations often associated with his iconography.

Together, Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama demonstrate that iconography is not static; it is a dynamic construct shaped by personal narratives and historical contexts. Their use of various narrative strategies invites readers to engage with the complexities of leadership, identity, and social change. By deconstructing their own

images, both leaders challenge us to reconsider the attributes we associate with heroism and to embrace a more nuanced understanding of what it means to lead in a diverse and multifaceted world. Ultimately, their stories inspire a deeper appreciation for the interplay between personal and collective histories, urging us to recognize the humanity behind the icons we celebrate.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.1 Summary of the Study

This thesis has explored the public making of masculinities in Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father* and Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*. Through a critical analysis of their autobiographies, the study has examined how social, cultural and political contexts shape the masculinities of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama, how they are constructed as icons by the public personas in their texts, and the narrative techniques employed by them to challenge expectations, rhetorical strategies, and selective storytelling.

The study reveals that Nelson Mandela's and Barack Obama's masculinities are shaped by complex interplay of social, cultural and political contests. Their experiences, values, and leadership styles are influenced by their contexts, which in turn shape their masculine identities. The analysis also show that Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama are constructed as icons by the public personas in their texts, using narrative techniques such as self-presentation, rhetorical strategies, and selective storytelling.

The study highlights the ways in which Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama challenge the expectations surrounding their iconography through their narrative techniques. By presenting themselves as complex, multifaceted individuals, they subvert traditional notions masculinity and leadership. Their autobiographies demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the complexities of masculinity, highlighting the impotence of vulnerability, empathy, and humility in leadership.

## 5.1 Conclusion of the Study

This thesis has explored the public making of masculinities in Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father* and Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*. Through a critical analysis of their autobiographies, this study has sought to answer three key research questions: Do Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela have different versions of social, cultural, and political contexts that shape their masculinities in their texts? In what ways are Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela invented as icons by the public personas in their texts? What are the narrative techniques employed by Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama which challenge expectations surrounding their iconography in their texts?

The study reveals that Nelson Mandela's and Barack Obama's masculinities are shaped by distinct social, cultural and political contexts that reflect their unique experiences and historical moments. While both leaders draw on traditional notions of masculinity, they also subvert and redefine these notions in ways that reflect their individual contexts and values.

The analysis also show that Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama are invented as icons by the public personas in their texts through a range of narrative techniques including self-presentation, rhetorical strategies, and selective storytelling. These techniques enable them to shape their images and convey specific messages about their identities, values, and leadership styles.

Furthermore, the study highlights the ways in which Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama challenge the expectations surrounding their iconography through their narrative techniques. By presenting themselves as complex, multifaceted individuals, they subvert traditional notions masculinity and leadership, revealing the complexities and nuanced of their experiences and identities.

### **5.3 Recommendations of the Study**

Based on the findings of this study, the research offers the following recommendations for future research:

**Contextualizing masculinities:** Further studies could explore the public making of masculinities in different contexts, such as social media, popular culture, or other forms of autobiographical writings.

**Comparative analysis:** Comparative studies could be conducted to examine the construction of masculinities in the autobiographies of other leaders or public figures.

**Intersectionality:** Research could investigate the intersection of masculinity with other aspects of identity, such as race, class, or sexuality, in the construction of public personas.

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