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**'Ain't I a Woman'?: A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Sojourner Truth's
Resistance to Double Oppression**

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ABSTRACT

This study delves into Sojourner Truth's powerful speech, 'Ain't I a Woman?', delivered at the 1851 Women's Rights Convention, examining it through the lens of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) to uncover how Truth resisted the double oppression faced by Black American women. This research uniquely synthesizes van Dijk's framework for ideological discourse analysis with Lazar's (2007) feminist approach, investigating specific discourse choices and the contextual implications of discursive structures within Truth's feminine discourse. By analyzing Truth's strategic use of language, the study reveals how her speech challenges and subverts dominant ideologies that perpetuate both gender and racial discrimination. Significantly, the

analysis highlights how Truth's discourse constructs agency and empowers marginalized voices by giving expression to the lived experiences of Black women in mid-19th-century America, who faced marginalization by white Americans and, to some extent, by their own Black men. This study's findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersectional nature of oppression, demonstrating the power of strategic language use in feminist activism and challenging patriarchal power structures through a compelling articulation of lived realities.

Keywords: Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, Double Gender Oppression, Black American Women, Ain't I a Woman, Sojourner Truth

1. Introduction

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) seeks to investigate the use of language in real-life situations and its relations to society. CDA situates a written or spoken text within its social context and explores the associated ideologies and underlying meanings from multiple perspectives. Batstone (1995) elaborates on what proponents of CDA try to achieve: "*Critical Discourse Analysts seek to reveal how texts are constructed so that particular perspectives can be expressed delicately and covertly*" (Batstone, 1995, pp. 198-199; cited in Bilal et al., 2021). The relationship is bidirectional as discourse both reflects ideology and actively shapes societal perceptions and reinforces power structures such as patriarchy. The texts encompass a diverse range of social, political, religious, and other types of discourse, which can be analyzed by applying various Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theories. While CDA is an umbrella term that refers to analysis of power and ideology, one of the tenets of CDA-Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis explicitly investigates the role of language in perpetuating gendered hierarchies, naturalizing patriarchal norms and obscuring systemic oppression. Feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) primarily focuses on the ways power relations and gender ideologies are created, promoted, negotiated, and contested. FCDA examines the complex and subtle discursive patterns that exist in discourses on the female gender. The analysis also reveals the underlying ideology, which can be defined as a set of shared beliefs and ideas prevailing in a society and shaping the mental makeup of an individual within the context of their culture and society. The relationship between discourse analysis and ideology is powerful, as CDA's main

focus is to unveil the underlying ideologies represented in various social discourses, which are constructed and promoted through discourse. There is a two-way and reciprocal relationship between discourse and ideology; both depend on each other for their production, propagation, and implementation in a society. Fairclough & Wodak (1997) define ideologies as representations of practices with particular motifs, such as dominance and maintenance of power relations. The concept of ideologies based on power originated in Marxism, but it now has broader implications, referring to power structures in other social and cultural contexts, such as gender.

Feminism regards gender as an ideological structure that places men and women into different hierarchical classes marked by domination and subordination, respectively. The sexual differences have created a social dichotomy where women are always put in inferior positions and narrow contexts. The problem lies in the implicit nature of the power relations that have fostered biased perspectives and gender stereotypes. The inferiority of women and superiority of men seems a natural pattern and allows the patriarchy to exploit, degrade and marginalize women for its own benefit. These are set patterns rooted in the foundations of social structures, such that women have accepted their stereotypical and inferior roles, considering them a natural phenomenon. For instance, Eckert (1989) has noted how gender operates in a more pervasive and complex way than other systems of oppression, "*Whereas the power relations between men and women are similar to those between dominated and subordinated classes and ethnic groups*" (p. 253). He argues that traditional gender ideologies also affect day-to-day interactions and relationships between men and women. The problem does not end here; the female discourses, actions, attitudes and behaviours reflect the patriarchal ideology, and they unconsciously strive to strengthen the already powerful relations of dominance by following the established paths.

However, these ideological constructions are not static; they are sustained through hegemonic practices. As Gramsci (1971) notes, "*the winning of consent and the perpetuation of the otherwise tenuous relation of dominance are largely accomplished through discursive means*" (p. 103). He argues that ideological assumptions are created and re-enacted through discourse; they circulate throughout society as commonsensical and natural concepts.

Furthermore, Gramsci argues that the taken-for-grantedness and normalcy of such knowledge are what mystify or obscure the power differential and inequality at work. Society is an institution that enacts and renews gender ideology, which manifests in social practices at both individual and collective levels. However, asymmetrical relations are not merely attributed to individual perspectives, even though agents of oppression are individuals. Because individuals are part of a broader social context, their personal ideologies and mental models are not shaped independently but rather by social and cultural knowledge. Connell (2013) argues that gender ideology underlies the substantive structuring of institutions. Gender is not represented as the most significant aspect, but it becomes a driving force in most cases. FCDA thus accounts for the pervasiveness of tacit androcentrism in many institutional cultures and discourses, in which men and women are complicit through their habitual, differential participation in their particular communities of practice. Discursive enactment of gender ideology in various institutions such as government, media, education, and professional settings has been a topic of great interest for research scholars, the gap exists in the analysis of the historical speech by Truth to examine how it subverts the power structures.

Therefore, the researchers chose feminist CDA, which explores the gendered power play from various aspects, considering the impact of all factors within the context of the particular discourse. When conducting a feminist critical discourse analysis of a specific text, it is necessary to identify the most dominant features of the gender-power relationship that contribute to ultimate oppression. Truth's 1851 speech 'Ain't I a Woman?' provides a compelling case study, as it challenges dual marginalization (race and gender) through rhetorical innovation, making it a pivotal text for analyzing resistance to patriarchal and racial ideologies. Hence, the current study is a Critical feminist discourse Analysis and seeks to unveil the ideology of gender power and gender discrimination conveyed by the discursive structures and lexical items used in Sojourner Truth's speech, 'Ain't I a Woman'. Gender discrimination is the primary concern of the speaker, and she also talks about power relations between men and women. The researchers analyze and investigate the feminist ideologies as implied by the speaker's choice of words. Sojourner Truth spoke to the Women's Convention about her experiences and tribulations as a Black person and then as an inferior creature- a woman. This moving speech is one of the most

prominent women's rights speeches in American history and was delivered at the Women's Convention held in Akron, Ohio, in 1851. This study highlights the discrimination faced by Black African American women in the mid-19th century. They faced double gender discrimination based on their colour and race by the White Americans and also by the Black men of their community. The study also reveals how these Black Women recognized their rights and stood up for themselves. The current study aims to unveil the specific ideology behind particular discursive structures and word choices.

2. Research Objectives

The main objectives of the present research are:

- To examine the effectiveness of discursive structures employed by the speaker in addressing the intersectional oppression faced by Black American women.
- To explore how the speaker utilizes language and feminine discourse to highlight the dual experience of gender and racial discrimination.

3. Research Questions

1. How does the speaker employ discursive structures to emphasize and challenge the double-gender oppression of Black American women?
2. How effective are the speaker's discursive strategies in highlighting and resisting dual oppression of gender and race?

4. Significance of the Study

The current study analyzes Sojourner Truth's speech 'Ain't I a Woman' through the lens of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) to examine the dual gender oppression faced by Black American women. The analysis focuses on the discursive strategies and how they reinforce and challenge gender and racial oppression. Moreover, the study is significant because it highlights patriarchal power structures and the role of discourse in resistance. By identifying Truth's linguistic strategies, this research contributes to understanding power dynamics, intersectionality, and gender activism. It also highlights the broader significance of discourse in challenging oppression and amplifying the voices of marginalized individuals.

5. Literature Review

CDA encompasses several key tenets and employs a range of techniques to analyze various types of discourse. In fact, any social instance of communication is a discourse within its specific context and can be analyzed through the lens of the relevant Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach. Because discourses are produced, negotiated and interpreted in the social contexts, they have implicit or explicit ideologies. Therefore, CDA aims to identify and criticize sociocultural and sociopolitical inequalities as Fairclough (1995) defines, “*CDA is the study of often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes*”. (p. 132-133). According to Fairclough, CDA seeks to investigate how ideologies create and reinforce power practices, thereby strengthening existing power patterns. Fairclough (1995) regards CDA as a distinct approach from other forms of discourse analysis, in that it is ‘critical’. The term ‘critical’ requires much attention; it reveals hidden connections and causes and is also a tool for intervention that contributes to social justice by analyzing and changing the discourses that promote inequality. Until the hidden agendas are brought to light, the people involved and affected by discourses cannot recognize and fight against the processes of oppression. The pioneer of CDA is Fairclough, who has contributed many articles and books that establish CDA as a direction of research, school of thought, model for analysis, and tool for investigation for various dimensions of power. In *Language and Power*, Norman Fairclough (1989) sets out to examine “how the ways in which we communicate are constrained by the structures and forces of those social institutions within which we live and function” (Fairclough, 1989, p. vi). His view highlights how social institutions shape language and reinforce dominant power structures. In Sojourner Truth’s speech, this dynamic is evident as her discourse both reflects and resists institutionalized oppression, making language a tool for both constraint and transformation.

Moreover, Fairclough (1989) has proposed a three-dimensional framework for analyzing texts and discourse. First, he considers the social conditions of production and interpretation, which focus on the social factors that stimulate discourse production and affect its interpretation. The next level examines the discourse production and interpretation process, which involves

analyzing how discourses are produced and how they affect interpretation. Thirdly, Fairclough's framework focuses on the product of the two stages, the text itself. He proposes that power plays a significant role in producing texts and influencing the text production process in various ways. The term "power" refers to the control exerted by members of one group over another group or its members. Control affects actions and cognition; a powerful group attempts to establish boundaries around the freedom of a less powerful group, influencing their thought processes so that they can mentally submit to the power. The direct power actions are explicit and recognizable, for example, physical violence or abuse by men against women or practical strategies of police to control an outraged mob. However, cognitive power attempts are more effective, implicit and difficult to recognize because they are interwoven in the social fabric and accepted as a reality. Cognitive control is achieved through various discursive strategies, such as dissimulation, persuasion, and language manipulation, which are powerful enough to influence people's minds in one's personal interests. It is at this crucial point that discourse and critical discourse analysis come into play, as managing the minds of others is essentially a function of text and talk. Sojourner Truth performs this function through her speech. Fairclough's framework thus reveals how discourse operates as both a mechanism of control and a means of resistance, particularly in shaping ideological structures. This understanding aligns with Lazar's (2007) feminist perspective, which further explores how discourse sustains gendered power hierarchies and reinforces institutionalized inequalities.

Michelle M. Lazar (2007) outlines a feminist critical discourse analysis at the nexus of critical discourse analysis and feminist studies. She aims to advance rich and nuanced analyses of the complex workings of power and ideology in discourse, which sustain hierarchically gendered social orders. She states, *"It is recognized that operations of gender ideology and institutionalized power asymmetries between (and among) groups of women and men are complexly intertwined with other social identities and are variable across cultures"* (Lazar, 2007, p. 141). Furthermore, Lazar explains that modern society has become more nuanced in its understanding of power asymmetries and gender ideology. The counterattacks on feminism have highlighted gender ideologies, and they have emerged with a new force. The primary interest of the FCDA is in examining the process of producing and negotiating gender ideology and

gendered relations. This approach is curious about revealing how these concepts get the power to represent and dominate social relationships and practices between people. These ideologies shape personal and social identities, determining the course of text and talk. Lazar (2007) defines 'gender relationality' as the implicit and explicit principle underlying this phenomenon.

The complex nature of power and gender relations have been effectively explored by contemporary poststructuralist and feminist theories. Feminist CDA has two significant recognitions: the contingent analyses of sexism and gender based on historical and cultural aspects and the discursive and subtle underpinning of modern power in various social contexts. Gender and sexism are universal and follow almost the same pattern across different cultures. However, they may differ in their basic forms, but they persist throughout history. *“An important goal, then, for feminist CDA is to undertake contingent analyses of the oppression of women, as Rubin has put it, in its ‘endless variety and monotonous similarity’”* (Grim et al., 1990, p. 28). Personal or group interests trigger power plays, which are implemented through various means and manifest in multiple forms. Inequality in gender relations has led to the creation of strict boundaries for women through traditional social practices, ideologies and discourses. The situation was further aggravated when these biased discourses became embedded in social structures and became unrecognizable. So, physical violence, sexual harassment and other ways of abusing and oppressing women are considered everyday phenomena in social contexts. Such overt manifestations of power or threat have been converted into reality in several sociocultural settings despite the existence of legislation against gender discrimination. Foucault (1977) states that this form of power is embedded and dispersed throughout networks of relations, is self-regulating, and produces subjects in both senses of the word. These power relations are almost everywhere, but gendered subjects bear their impact in various ways because the intensity and level of power vary across contexts, relationships, societies, and cultures. Some cultures have more intensive patterns of gender oppression than others. Likewise, women may stand at different levels against oppressive forces depending on their social status, the nature of their relationship with men and the holistic patriarchal system.

Critical Discourse analysis of various texts from a feminist lens has been an area of interest for several researchers. For example, Donaghue (2015) investigated the elements of sexism and misogyny in Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard's speech. The researcher applies the framework of feminist critical discourse analysis. The speech was interpreted differently at national and international levels. The Australian print media represented Julia as "*conniving, weak, and unscrupulous by disingenuously accusing her detractors of sexism for base political purposes*" (Donaghue 2015, p. 26). On the other hand, the international community consider "*Gillard is a powerful hero, standing up to vicious and entrenched sexism, passionately and eloquently striking out at the attitudes and practices that, in thousands of ways, large and small, eat away at women's rights to equality and freedom,*" (ibid). The study investigates this difference of perspectives and interpretations, and the meanings of the speech have been extracted from the context. Similarly, Soomro and Kazemian (2015) applied Van Dijk's approach to analyze a speech delivered by Liaquat Ali Khan, the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, and revealed the role of language in creating socio-political ideologies. Yang (2013) conducted CDA research on Taiwan's national debate regarding economic ties with China. The researcher applied Van Dijk's model to explain the relationship between language and power, concluding that language manifests dominance and power in political texts. Van Dijk's sociocognitive approach is constructive in analyzing various social discourses because they are created within society and the minds of individuals. Society is a whole of individuals who develop discourses informed by their mental models, which are shaped by social knowledge and institutions. Hence, feminist oppressive discourses promoting gender discrimination are also born within social contexts and can be better analyzed through the ideology of power. The framework and methodology for the current research have been adopted from Van Dijk's CDA approach and Lazar's feminist approach.

6. Theoretical Framework

The present study employs a qualitative approach to analyze Sojourner Truth's speech, utilizing Van Dijk's (1996) framework for ideological discourse analysis of media texts in conjunction with Lazar's (2007) feminist perspective. Van Dijk (1996) explores the concept of

ideology construction through a socio-cognitive perspective. He defines ideologies as basic systems that represent themselves in social attitudes: “They are constituted by group-relevant values and organized by categories that reflect the basic interests or identity of its group and a relation to other groups and society as whole” (*Van Dijk, 1996, p. 13*). The ideologies are manifested not only in social practices but also in general discourse. The emphasis is on promoting positive concepts about the in-group and negative notions about the out-group. In terms of gender discrimination, White Americans and men are in-group while Black Americans and women are out-group in the broader African-American context. Within the African context, Black women are further marginalized and are considered as separate beings from their Black men. An in-group is identified by possessing the same properties, beliefs, and traits, and all members of the in-group feel closely associated with each other while being distanced from the members of the out-group. Therefore, the positive traits of the out-group are de-emphasized to further marginalize them.

Lazar's (2007) FCDA framework emphasizes the complex interrelationship of gendered discourse and power asymmetries, acknowledging the fluidity of gender identities and their intersection with other social categories. Gender power relations are manifested differently across various cultural contexts and social identities and can be understood from a nuanced perspective. According to Lazar, gender and power relations are complex as power relations are socially structured and become institutionalized, and, as a result, gender discrimination seems natural. Women behave submissively because they have internalized gender discrimination and feel satisfied in playing their stereotypical roles. Gender is an ideological discourse: language, ideology and gender discrimination are closely interlinked terms. Language, through its discursive structures, creates gender discrimination. For example, the dominance of the male pronoun ‘he’ in the English language leads to the concept of active men and passive women. Lazar's (2007) framework helps deconstruct the gender ideology in feminist and feminine discourses as CDA of language and particular discursive structures reveals the ideology conveyed by the choice of words and also unveils the power relations among genders. Equipped with Van Dijk's framework for unveiling ideological constructs and Lazar's FCDA lens to analyze gendered power dynamics, the subsequent analysis will dissect Sojourner Truth's ‘Ain't

I a Woman?’ speech, revealing how she strategically employs language to challenge dominant ideologies and resist double oppression. Hence, the researchers analyze through an integrated theoretical lens, which examines how language constructs and perpetuates interconnected systems of gender, race, and class oppression through strategic discursive choices within specific socio-historical contexts.

7. Analysis and Discussion

The researchers combine the theoretical framework proposed by Lazar (2007) and Van Dijk (1996) to conduct a Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) of Sojourner Truth’s speech. Van Dijk’s theory has been used to analyze the patterns of double gender oppression inherent and interwoven in the fabric of African-American society. Lazar’s approach explores how the speaker highlights and emphasizes the existence of double oppressive forces imposed by White Americans as well as Black men and the curbing effects of this marginalization on Black women. She utilizes her personal experiences and biblical references to connect with her audience and evoke emotional and individual responses. Sojourner establishes a sense of identity as a victim of discrimination by describing how she faces prejudices being a woman and a member of the Black community. Through these personal anecdotes, Sojourner invites her audience, who are primarily women suffering from their own forms of discrimination, to realize the injustices of which they, too, are victims.

Well, children, where there is so much racket, there must be something out of kilter. I think that 'twixt the Negroes of the South and the women at the North, all talking about rights, the white men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what's all this here talking about? (Truth, 1851).

Sojourner starts her speech by **saying, ‘Well, children’** She presents herself as a **mother to her audience**; these lexical choices show her friendliness and intimacy with her audience. By using the discursive structure of ‘children’, she takes them into confidence, implies her special motherly concern to her audience and also reinforces feminist ideology. Furthermore, she

develops a pretext through a single sentence that states, "Where there is inequality, there must be chaos." In **"Negroes of the South and the Women in the North all talking about Rights"**, the speaker puts Negroes and women in the same category to create a common in-group, as mentioned by Van Dijk (1996). This sentence implies that Negroes (the slaves) and the women have the same status; both are treated with biases and are fighting for their rights. **'South' and 'North'** symbolize the two poles which have come together against a common force. The white men are caught between the South and the North, between two rebellious powers that intend to put them in a difficult position, as predicted by the speaker. **"But what's all this here talking about?"** The interrogation alerts the audience and also explains the speaker's purpose in delivering the speech. After referring to the general condition, she relates this example to the present context of the situation. Sojourner invokes her listeners to rise up for their rights. Also, she indicates that Whites are growing weaker because they are encountering revolts. Hence, it's the best time to rise for your rights.

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ar'n't I a woman? (Truth, 1851)

In the following lines, she refers to a man's saying to narrow down the issue further. The remote reference **'that man over there'** suggests that in this context, men are outgroup for the women, and the speaker identifies them as a distanced gender. She describes the negative traits of the out-group and gives a positive concept of the in-group. Sojourner's discourse aligns with Van Dijk's (1996) concept, which posits that ideologies are reflected in social attitudes. These discursive structures also denote the patriarchal and power ideology; women do not have their personal opinions about themselves; it is the men's right to mention and find their needs. As she says, "that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches," the discursive structure "need" implies that men are the determiners of a woman's necessities; women are frail, dependent, and inferior. **'And to have the best place everywhere.'** This sentence is positive

but carries a negative connotation, implying that women need men's help to be in the best place. They are not powerful enough to achieve their best on their own; without a man, women have no identity of their own and cannot achieve their goals without his assistance. The unveiling of the underlying ideologies reveals Lazar's (2007) concept of the 'institutionalization of gender roles.

The speaker incorporates a paradox when she says, '**Nobody ever helps me**'. She points out that men tell women they need assistance, but in reality, they get no support and have to perform their tasks alone. Whatever the man said about her is just words without any practical implication. There is a sharp contrast between man's words and actions. Moreover, the discursive structure '**nobody**' represents a distance between genders. **And ar'n't I a woman?** The speaker adopts a questioning tone to respond to the man's statement. The man spoke about a woman's needs, about giving her the best place, but she received nothing. The question implies that if she is a woman, why is she not helped and given the best place? It means that the women who enjoy the prestige of being helped by men are not like her; instead, they are superior, or she is not like them. *"Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ar'n't I a woman?" (Truth, 1851)*

The imperative utterance "**Look at me!**" has a powerful impact on the audience and presents the speaker as the epitome of marginalization and oppression. It is an effective strategy through which Sojourner draws her audience's attention towards herself. This discursive structure alerts the audience and prompts them to think that she has something important to share. '**Arm**' connotes strength and self-dependence, and 'look' implies the arm has done a lot of work and has now transformed into something worth seeing. After grabbing the attention, she describes all the chores she had accomplished as a woman. She mentions the manly tasks, such as 'ploughed, planted, and gathered into barns,' that require physical force and power. The word '**head**' implies man's superiority, power, and responsibility to lead his family in performing these difficult tasks. He should have headed her if he is the man, the superior creature. On the other hand, the use of '**could**' implies the helplessness or unwillingness of a man to assist her. Again, she repeats the same question to emphasize the importance of her ideology and herself. *"I could*

work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman?" (Truth, 1851)

The first sentence is the hallmark of gender equality. The speaker states that if she can work as much as a man and is not discriminated against in the workplace, she also has the capacity and need to eat as much as a man. Why does she suffer this discrimination when it comes to food? It implies that she, in one sense, is equal to man; why cannot she be in another sense? **'When I could get it'** connotes that she can never eat as much as a man. Her statement presents a binary opposition; she can eat equally with men, but if she can get. It demonstrates the material superiority of humans and their control over their basic needs. The speaker advocates for moral and physical equality for both genders. The discursive utterance, **'and bear the lash as well,'** presents her as an ironically iron lady who is strong enough to bear the physical torture but is still considered a weak creature who has to lean on men. A woman serves as a satisfaction to a man's self-esteem and power position by bearing his lash, submitting herself to his cruelty. It indicates the male gender's dominance and wilderness; despite her equal share in the work, she is treated savagely. These words represent man's ideology of superiority, power and commodification of woman. These behaviours and ideologies are programmed to the extent of normality and have adopted the form of natural habits, as Lazar (2007) noted.

"I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?" (Truth, 1851)

Lazar (2007) argues that women behave submissively because their minds have been programmed to play their stereotypical roles without question. The gender ideology also correlates to class discrimination, which is also an institutionalized concept to suppress the Black community. Sojourner laments over the injury to her motherhood and mentions that she produced thirteen children, and they all were sold off as if they were not human children. She pronounces that only Jesus heard her crying; it highlights gender discrimination as no man consoled her. The lexicon **'none'** implies negation of men and also puts the responsibility on men to ensure gender equality when it comes to affection and gentle emotions.

Then they talk about this thing in the head; what's this they call it? [Member of audience whispers, "intellect"] That's it, honey. What's that got to do with women's rights or Negroes' rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint, and yours holds a quart, wouldn't you be mean not to let me have my little half measure full?
(Truth, 1851)

Sojourner labels the men as ‘**they**’ to show othering of the opposite gender. Both men and women are slaves, but the division of gender also exists in the Black community. She says that men are proud of their intellect and it has nothing to do with women’s rights or Negroes’ rights. She compares women with Negroes as White Americans have enslaved Negroes because of low intelligence and inferiority. Similarly, Negro men have enslaved their women based on low intellect; the power plays from top to bottom. The speaker emphasizes that a low level of intelligence is not a justification for depriving someone of their basic rights. Then, she provides an example to further elaborate on her point and requests support from men in her community. The discursive structure, “**wouldn't you be mean not to let me have my little half measure full?**” is a direct taunt at men who do nothing to elevate their women. The speaker evokes them to create a common in-group of both genders, enabling them to escape slavery through their combined efforts. She suggests that if women lack intellectual capacity, it is men’s obligation to guide and assist them in every walk of life; otherwise, they are mean and selfish. In fact, the speaker challenges the traditional notion of gender discrimination and incorporates a contradictory ideology that may alter the overall system of socio-cultural beliefs and, consequently, institutionalize positive attitudes, as noted by Lazar (2007). Van Dijk states that ideologies are constructed both cognitively and socially, allowing for the adoption of new sets of beliefs by altering thought patterns; thus, Sojourner performs the role of a transformer.

Then that little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman! If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be

*able to turn it back and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it,
the men better let them. Obligated to you for hearing me, and now old Sojourner
ain't got nothing more to say. (Truth, 1851)*

The speaker is pointing to a member of the out-group by using the word **‘that little man’**; this again shows gender detachment. The word little implies that women are more substantial; it indirectly creates a binary opposition that men are petite in thought, character and moral strength if they do not stand by their women and propagate harmful ideals. Then Sojourner says that he says, ‘Women can’t have as many rights as men because Christ was not a woman’, so, to have equal rights, a woman must be Christ's holy creature. Christ was a sacred person and was a man. Therefore, men are liable for fundamental rights but not women. This justification is weak, as evidenced by the speaker’s subsequent sentence, which contradicts the men’s claim and highlights the power of women. She refers to Eve and the incident in heaven when she says, **‘the first woman God ever made’**. She urges her audience by mentioning that Eve transformed the whole world, as her suggestion led to her and Adam being expelled from heaven. This is a negative aspect of women, but she immediately turns this negativity into a strength and says that all women together can transform the world. Her discursive structure also implies that if Eve alone could produce so many children, why can these women together not bring about a revolution? Further, she remarks that women's groups can now fully bring about a revolution by standing up for their rights. Hence, men should not restrict them. Sojourner concludes her speech in simple words and exhibits her affection, intimacy, and politeness by praising her audience.

8. Conclusion

The Black women faced dual marginalization and oppression, belonging to the Black race in American culture and being women in their Black community. Through the use of powerful feminine language, discursive structures, lexical items and repetition of the same rhetorical question, Sojourner Truth challenges the ideology of racial discrimination and

women's oppression. She shatters the traditional image of man as a power holder and superior creature. She represents man's power ironically in relation to that of a woman and evokes her audience to rise against this power play. The speaker's discourse labels men as weak and dependent as they need women's assistance to satisfy their self-esteem- the phenomenon described by Virginia Woolf, "*Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size...Take it away and man may die*" (Woolf, 1929 p. 36). Truth successfully awakens and invokes her audience, who are Black women, to rise for their rights. Her speech is not only relevant to the women of her time but also resonates with contemporary struggles for gender equality, inspiring generations to challenge systemic oppression. Truth's lexical choices and discursive structures perfectly follow the context of the situation. The repeated use of "**Ain't I a Woman**" conveys a powerful feminist philosophy and holds the potential to challenge the institutionalized concepts of female inferiority and male dominance. Truth strategically repeats the phrase to amplify her voice and to emphasize her message so that the call for justice echoes beyond her time. Even today, Sojourner Truth's words serve as a reminder of the ongoing struggle against intersecting forms of oppression, urging societies to dismantle deeply entrenched biases and inequalities.

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