

**COMMUNICATING CHANGE AND SOCIETAL VALUES IN SELECT NIGERIAN  
HOME MOVIES**

**BY**

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**DECEMBER, 2015.**

## DECLARATION

I, declare that this dissertation entitled, *Communicating Change and Societal Values in Select Nigerian Home Movies*, was written by me, Oluoma Stella of the Department of Theatre and Performing Arts, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria under the supervision of Professor EmmyIkanaba UnujaIdegu and Dr. (Mrs) Victoria Lagwampa. The information derived from the sources of this study has been duly acknowledged in the text and a list of references provided. No part of this dissertation was previously presented for another degree or diploma at any university.

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Name of student

Signature

Date

## CERTIFICATION

This dissertation entitled *Communicating Change and Societal Values in Select Nigerian Home Movies*, by Oluoma Stella, meets the regulations governing the award of the degree of Masters of Arts (Development Communication), Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentations.

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Date

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my late supervisor Professor Jenkeri Zakari Okwori. In spite of the slight variation in our chosen topic, your zeal, commitment and attention to see me through as well as your passion for the department will not be forgotten. Continue to rest in peace.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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To my boss, Barrister Ibrahim Maigari, I offer my sincere appreciation for your understanding and patience through the period of my studies.

Fondly remembered are my colleagues, those who fell off the way and those who made it, it was fun being with you all; I wish us God's guidance as we journey to the top.

To my family a million thanks for always being there. I will choose you all over and over again.

## ABSTRACT

It is a widely accepted notion that Nollywood movies contain negative content such as drug addiction, armed robbery, sexual immorality, women and child abuse amongst others, which in effect elicit negative reaction from its viewers. These negative reactions often result in negative societal consequences. This research work explores the positive values projected in Nollywood movies as it relates to different facets of the society and how it by extension promotes societal change. To achieve this, literary materials and select movies were critically analysed against the cultural norm theory of De fleur and Gerbner's cultivation theory. On the basis of the theories proposition, the prolonged exposure of viewers to these positive contents will begin to impact positively on such viewers and an adoption of the values will translate into positive societal change. The research attempts to establish that irrespective of the negative content of Nigerian movies, some positive values and norms which when adopted will project positively in different facets of the society also exists in some movies. To reflect this, three (3) movies; *The Meeting, Mr. And Mrs, and Half of a Yellow Sun* reflecting political, social and historical aspects will be analysed. Qualitative research will be used in other to gain a deep understanding of the values and norms inherent in the select movies. In the course of this research, certain issues were made evident, prominent amongst which is that Nollywood producers are giving more attention to details to ensure they tell the Nigerian story professionally. The researcher recommends among others that Nigerian home movies be maximally explored as a development communication medium.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

The word change has so many meanings depending on the context in which it is used. However, one major point that keeps reoccurring is the move from one state to another. Change in a society refers to an alteration in the social order of the society, it may include changes in nature, social institutions, social behaviours, or social relations. Thus change can refer to any significant alteration over a period of time in behaviour patterns, cultural values and norms. The world today is changing so fast economically, socially, politically and even physically. The argument however is whether the change is for the better or for the worse. This change is made rapid by the increasing new ways of communication especially the media which has increased accessibility to knowledge. This has changed the ways individuals, groups, and societies think, feel, behave, and interact.

In spite of the seeming objectives of the new communication mediums, a great deal of fear and outrageous optimism permeates opinions about its attendant negative consequences. This is so because the inundation of too much information is a potential threat to the ability to process which information is actually needed. Film has over the years become a pervasive and ever present entity in our lives, as well as a strong influence for constructing meaning in our everyday live. Social Comparison Theory posits that “people will [at some point in their lives] compare themselves and significant others to people and images whom they perceive to represent realistic goals to attain” (Botta, 1999: 26).

With the passage of time, we have unconsciously looked up to the media to help us define, explain, and shape the world around us; we make automatic comparisons of ourselves, those close to us, and situations in our lives after seeing images in the media. The result of these comparison is that we are motivated to strive for, and achieve, new found goals and expectations as perceived by us in the films. Films now preside over many daily decisions on the sense of our world and exposes human beings to completely new perspective. It has over time reduced the world to a global village sharing cultures, beliefs, values and history. With our lives influenced by the culture around us, it is impossible for it not to either be positive or negative. However, this is dependent on what we listen to or watch, whichever way, what we do has direct impact on our lives because everything has a direct link to some part of us be it music, media, celebrities, fashion, and even literature.

Films when positively constructed have a way of introducing us to creative outlets that can help us better ourselves in different ways, be it in our personal or work lives. It can change our perspective and push us to do more than what we limit ourselves to. It can also help us engage with other people around the world, and be more open and understanding towards other cultures. On the other hand, films can influence us to do things that are not moral, like getting into substance abuse, adopting violent or immoral habits and developing wrong perception of issues. This goes to show that film can be used for or against us, depending on how we use it individually. With these points we see just how powerful a tool the movie is in our present day and age, and also its impact on our perception.

Changes yielding profound social consequences over time affect behaviour patterns and cultural values and norms. Change occurrences summarily occur in major factors of politics,

economy and culture. Changes can also occur in less – tangible factors such as personal dignity, personal safety, freedom from fear of physical harm, and the extent of participation in civil society. Change in the society can be caused by so many factors; technology, social institutions, population, modernization and the environment. However, this research work will concentrate on the changes that occur via the media with particular emphasis on video films. Our society has undergone radical shifts in everything from family structure to demographics. We have witnessed a massive shift in societal and lifestyle changes; youths and adults alike. Technology now dominates modern urban living resulting in increasingly structured activities. Changes have occurred in social roles, culture, ideologies and beliefs. Values and beliefs once formed by family and institutions are increasingly being influenced by what we see in films. The conclusion that ‘art is society and society is art’ (which has somewhat become a cliché) applies with double emphasis to film- ‘a powerful visual medium with extraordinary ability to influence the thinking and behaviour of its audience’ (Ukadike, 2009:31). This owes much to the visual bias of film. It should be stated that the film medium has become so central to human existence that no nation can afford to ignore the power of the screen any longer. The film maker knows only too well that he can use his works to impact on and attempt to influence the world around him. The question then is how true this assertion is when weighed against the realities of the peculiar nature of Nollywood.

Over the years there has been propagation on the indigenous films in Nigeria. Nigeria home videos capture our actual lifestyle and reflect it through various themes. These movies have the ability to reflect goings on in the society and this determines the influence they have. Some movies are based on myths, legends, folktales and other traditional forms which bring about the synergy that is required for better message reception (Akpabio, 2004:8).

Nollywood occupies and performs a crucial social role and position in assisting viewers to interpret their experiences and society. According to Tom Odhiambo (2004:33), Nollywood “borrows its subject matter from the public on issues of contemporary importance to that public in particular contexts” and it strives to be of “immediate relevance to the people’s worries, questions, experiences and lives”. Such issues are rebroadcast to that same audience for the purpose of educating, informing, instructing and entertaining. Thus watching videos together in the homes, streets or in video parlours create “uncontrolled sites of consumption” That “render spectatorship in Nollywood as a fluid field of reading culture”, and one which also “privileges the presence of an absence as we know it in the production of culture that had been tightly controlled by the ruling and intellectual elite in Nigeria until the emergence of Nollywood in Nigeria.”(Okome: 2007:6)

Since its emergence at the turn of the twenty-first century, the Nigerian movie industry “Nollywood” has had a profound influence on African culture. The Nigerian accents, style of dress, and behavioural idiosyncrasies, all of which are distinctly Nigeria, through the combination of songs, oral literature, festivals, rituals, the traditional religion, performing arts, music, dance, and indeed the entire range of artefacts constituting traditional oral performance of Nigerian culture are now being transmitted as images around the globe.

Nollywood is one that has blossomed over a relatively short period of time and while it impacts on individuals home and abroad, it also has been impacted upon violently by alien cultures of the world, dressing, values, beliefs, lifestyle etc. Thus the industry has since the 1990’s emerged as a fast growing cultural force all over the continent spreading and influencing both our culture and acquired western lifestyle. The effect of these movies on the

Nigerian society is the manifestation of the issues that abound in the community. Considering the impact of movies on social values and human behaviour, the quest for qualitative movie production is inevitable. There appears to be a consensus among Nigerian researchers and observers that many traditional values are changing rapidly and replaced by film projected values. When films become an avenue to address, comment and attack authorities and societal ills cum vices, it becomes a thing of interest and takes a critical position in order to further discover the strength it possesses in contemporary times.

Indeed our society has changed and is still undergoing changes. Therefore, it is pertinent that we make the change for the better by communicating messages that will help correct or stimulate the perception of the people and gear them towards making or taking decisions that promote long – term sustainability, economic prosperity, a healthy community and social well- being. Nollywood movies speak to every facet of our life, in this study, through an analysis of select movies; the researcher would explore the societal values expounded with emphasis on culture, history, political and moral values.

### **1.1. Background to the Study**

Over time, viewers have been influenced by images projected in films and in recent times, the family ideals, beliefs and culture are being influenced by what is seen outside the home and the movies which sometimes contradict what is known to be true? The character, personality, and identity of a person are shaped through many different means, and with the unlimited access to anything and everything through films, identities are being skewed. These negative impacts of films however, do not dissuade the fact that some movies project positive themes, depict reality and advocate the triumph of good over evil which in the long run have the

capacity to result in positive outlook of the viewer. Film images today, both positively and negatively influence the viewers' identity and this impact has been said to be more on the youth in our society. Payne (2008:31) puts it thus, 'Film and television have, long been feared for being capable of transmitting socially objectionable messages.... With easier access and quicker results, audiences of film content are exposed to a tremendous amount of information fed to them. This influences and shapes their identities. The good thing, however is, not all of it is negative and if well projected and managed these content can be used positively to help mould the future of our society.

Exposure to information around us has an impact on the formulation of our ideals, opinions, and outlook on life. Viewers today, especially children, take on personality traits of artistes whom they idolize and consider role models. This goes to show that if they are overly exposed to such movie content, some part of their newly formed identity will be based on this medium. Films have become a significant force in modern culture especially in developing countries such as Nigeria. Viewers are bombarded with messages which reflect the culture and beliefs of the producing society and these are spread nationally and internationally.

The movie projects a complex of mutually interdependent perspectives and values that influence a society and its institutions in various ways. In Nigeria, For example, certain currents of popular culture may originate from, (or diverge into) a subculture representing perspectives with which the mainstream popular culture has limited familiarity or does not accept. The culture of Nigeria is shaped by its multiple ethnic groups; the variety of customs, languages, and traditions among all of Nigeria's ethnic groups gives the country a great deal of cultural diversity. This cultural diversity has driven the nation's innovative popular culture which is basically classified as good morals, obedience, humility, respect for elders etc.In

recent times however, there has been a general outcry as regards the 'imported' popular culture which is gradually enveloping all facets of the Nigerian society, with maximum influence on the Nigerian movie industry- which is believed to propagate to the world the Nigerian culture and values. The incursion of this alien ways over our 'traditional way of live' has become a source of concern as it is seen as a diversion from the morally upright well behaved, sensitive and responsible Nigerian.

The common belief in Nigeria is that home movies negatively project the culture of Nigeria.

That is why Frank Aig-Imoukahuede in Opubor (1995:47) confirms that

Many Nigerians have complained of the poisonous content of films shown on the screens in Nigeria a great number of people have criticized the nation's television for featuring materials which contradict or erode the quality of life and undermines the people's values and norms. What is needed are films for self projection, for presenting the fact of life in Nigeria.

Indeed in recent times films being produced feature contemporary real life stories, history and events; however, this is not to say that in the recent past produced movies do not reflect life as we can hardly say that these movies were created in a vacuum though they sometimes may be exaggerated. Nigerian movies now reflect diverse issues as it affects us from culture to history, politics to values.

Nigerian video films reflect the way of life of Nigerians, as much as it tells stories of our past and present. Consequently making Nigerian movies socially rooted. The movies produced by persons sharing same cultural milieu as the audience depict the culture of its audience; the village scenes, political and traditional justice systems, land tenure, costumes, hair-dos, tattoos, drumming, singing, dancing, indigenous foods and drinks, as well as religious beliefs all culminating into telling the history of Nigeria and its unity in diversity. For instance, the

first Nigerian video film, "Living in Bondage", projected socio-cultural traits and propensity of the average Igbo trader, who will stop at nothing to have a breakthrough in business. Thus, Nigerian video films are not only rebuilding such cultural values but playing a very significant role in Nigeria's socio-politico-cultural influence in Africa, and by extension the Western world. It is pertinent to note that in its two decades of existence, Nollywood has gone through some generic and developmental trends.

Values refer to appropriate courses of action or outcome; they reflect a person's sense of right and wrong or what "ought" to be. Values tend to influence attitudes and behaviour as it identifies what should be judged as good or evil. They help solve common human problems for survival and are responsible for why people do what they do and in what order they choose to do them. Values was summarized by Professor Moemeka in his article titled: "Communalism As A Fundamental Dimension Of Culture," as follows: (i) The Supremacy of the Community (ii) The Sanctity of Authority, (iii) Respect for Old Age or the Elderly (iv) The Usefulness of the Individual v Religion as a Way of Life. In addition to those mentioned by Moemeka, it can be deduced that warmth of human relationship, resilience and love of country are embodiments of the serial values. People's perception about the universe makes for the basis for the formation of their scales of values. Therefore, a people's attitudes are explainable against the backdrop of their cosmology. Various values found in our society will be made explicit through an analysis of selected movie.

There is no denying the fact that some values are held dear to us and these values took different dimension by the incursion of Western values which were and are still being communicated largely through the medium of films. One would then be compelled to ask,



“Do these negative influences of home movies bring about cultural and behavioural change?”

Opubor et al (1995:1) answers this thus,

Of all the media of communication, the motion picture has perhaps the most universal appeal and impact; a film can rise above the limitations of language, and cultural barriers by the power of its visual images, its use of music and sound effects and can succeed in conveying much the same message to audience of heterogeneous background.

The ability of film to transcend beyond diverse cultures is obvious in the consumption of movies around the world. In Nigeria for example, Indian and Chinese movies amongst others are consumed by a large number of the population irrespective of the fact that they hardly understand these languages. Viewers can on the average understand and describe the subject matter of such movies, on the other hand, Nigerian movies; Yoruba, Ibo, pidgin etc are consumed not only within the shores of Africa but in parts of the Western world and such viewers also recognize the themes of the movies.

If indeed as it has been proved that these negative influences bring about cultural and behavioural change it wouldn't be wrong then to say that positive influences when portrayed would elicit positive changes. Thus this study is an attempt to analyse the positive societal values; cultural, political and social value content of Nollywood movies which has been so accused of projecting negative vices, as Nollywood's impact and transformation of Nigeria's culture, politics, society and economy cannot be underestimated, and neither can its influence on viewers.

## **1.2.Statement of the Research Problem**

Critics have argued that Nigerian movies reflect negative ways of life which is often imbibed by its viewers and this in turn result in their display of negative behaviours, attitude and

values. This argument is valid in the light of the earlier produced movies. However, with the commendable development of the industry in thematic expressions and production, the statement becomes questionable. This research will serve to prove that the statement has become obsolete by analysing recent Nigerian movies.

### **1.3.Aim and Objectives of the Study.**

The aim of this research work is to establish that, Nollywood movies communicate positive values in all ramifications of the society and thus has positive influence on its viewers.

The study will seek;

1. To demonstrate the various positive trends projected by Nollywood movies
2. To correct the notion that Nollywood movies only reflect materials which contradict or erode the quality of life and undermine the people's values and norms.
3. To show how Nollywood can be improved as a medium of transformative communication for the nation.

### **1.4.Research Questions**

2. What are the positive trends projected by Nollywood movies?
3. Do Nollywood movies reflect only materials that contradict or erode the quality of life and undermine the people's values and norms?
4. How can Nollywood be improved as a medium of transformative communication?

### **1.5. Scope of the Study**

A lot of recent Nollywood movies today are enriched with imitable values which will bring about positivity in our actions. However, for the purpose of this research three movies will be used to analyse the social, historical and political issues in our society.

## **1.6. Justification of the Study**

The general conception in most quarters is that Nollywood movies encourage illicit behaviour in viewers especially the youths in various aspects; violence, sex, robbery, organized crime, prostitution, murder, occultism, treachery, infidelity, etc. while for some, Nollywood movies impact positively in minimal areas of culture, triumph of good over evil, love, serves as a medium of talent development, entertainment, communication and a few others. Thus, conducting this research will establish that Nollywood movies contain projections which bring about desired attitudinal change on its viewers. The study also explored and reviewed the societal-values as found in Nollywood movies.

## **1.7. Research Methodology**

This section describes and explains the methodology deployed in this study and what informed my choice of methods. The study is a qualitative research conducted in order to explore the various societal values that are being projected in Nollywood movies. This is with an intention to bring to the fore, the significant contributions of Nollywood to the developmental growth of our nation and Africa at large. This choice of research method is ideal considering that a qualitative research is aimed at gaining a deep understanding of an event, rather than a surface description of a large sample of a population it generates data about.

Research methodology is a systematic way to solve a problem. It is a science of studying how research is to be carried out and the procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena (Chinnathambi, et al, 2013)

### **1.7.1. Selecting the Research Method/Instrument**

The research method is a “crucial element” in the research process as it determines the response gotten which will in effect confirm the answers being sought. For the purpose of this study, the descriptive method of research was used. Creswell (1994) in an attempt to define the descriptive type of research said it is to gather information about the present existing condition. Emphasis is here placed on describing rather than on judging or interpreting.

Descriptive research is mainly concerned with describing the detailed nature or condition of a given situation as it exists at the time of the study. In terms of finance, the descriptive approach is quick and less expensive. Here judgement is mostly subjective however; it is flexible in that during the duration of the study, further investigation may be conducted.

In this study, the descriptive research method will be employed so as to assess the various societal values being projected in Nollywood movies and establish how they impact positively on viewers and how this positive impact can manifest into national development. I chose to use this method considering the objective to explore available literatures and the object (movies) in question to obtain first hand data. The flexibility of the descriptive method is quite advantageous for me. Qualitative approach generates verbal information rather than numerical values (Polgar & Thomas, 1995:9). That is to say that qualitative research provides rich and well-grounded descriptions and explanations as well as unforeseen findings for new theory construction. Unlike the quantitative which makes use of statistical analysis, qualitative data

gathering methods are only concerned with understanding the occurring phenomena in their naturally occurring states. It is worthy to note that qualitative instruments evoke a more realistic feeling of the research setting which cannot be obtained from statistical analysis and numerical data utilized through quantitative means.

For this research, two types of data will be gathered; primary and secondary data. The primary data will be derived from an analysis of select movies. While the secondary data on the other hand, will be obtained from published documents and literatures relevant to the subject matter.

### **1.7.2. Analysis of Movies**

A total of 3 Nigerian movies spanning political, social and historical themes were analysed to establish their content of societal values. For each movie, different values were identified and critically assessed.

### **1.7.3. Library Research/Internet Sources**

To achieve a communication research of this nature may be very difficult without the use of library and internet materials. The diverse literatures drawn from these sources will greatly enrich this study and make room for an understanding of theories used as well as the analysis made.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2.0.LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Significantly, films are exponents of the social, political, economic, cultural, and technological developments of the producing country. Thus, their contact with a viewer from a different cultural background has some implications. The film could arouse the interest of such audiences positively towards the situations so portrayed. That is to say that the films would then be transmitting, promoting and preserving the culture of the producing nation and have the likelihood of influencing the audiences' culture through development of what is projected. This further buttresses the view that, "what movies offer society, the manner in which it is offered, and its content are inextricably bound up with the condition of industrialization" (Ekwuazi 1991). Also affected by industrialisation is the social, economic, political, philosophical, cultural, and artistic development of the society. This is obvious in the borrowed lifestyle of our youths and adults alike as the culture imbibed today, ranging from music, thoughts, ideology, clothes, hairstyles, foods and drinks are mostly conceived through their contact with various foreign media content. This apparently explains why the then apartheid government of South Africa did not allow television broadcasting in its enclave until the repressive regime was dismantled. This decision is a pointer to the realization that films have universal appeal and impact.

Film has the power to rise above language limitations and cultural barriers because through “the powers of its visual images, its use of music and sound effects,” a film will succeed in “conveying much the same message to audiences of heterogeneous background” (Opubor et al 1995:1). This explains why in his analysis, (Rotha 1958) observes that good films are dangerous. He captures the powerful nature of film thus:

They are dangerous because of their instantaneous impact on the minds and emotions of the world’s citizenry. Educationalists have proved that the visual image makes a deeper impression than the verbal or aural image. In this small country, 30,000,000 people see films every week. They see eighty American films to twenty British or other films. They absorb a large amount of the message or propaganda behind them.

The impact of film on the viewer is a resultant effect of the critical thinking and analysis caused by the movie. Today, most directors, producers, and script writers try to make a statement in the course of film production. The statement projected could be addressing an ongoing issue in the society, or making a philosophical claim. While watching a film, viewers come up with individual interpretation of the story. For instance, there have been many different interpretations of the film ‘Half of a Yellow Sun’ directed by Biyi Bandele which is an adaptation of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s 2006 novel, Half of a Yellow Sun. For some, it is about lives in Nigeria torn apart by the 1960s Biafran war: the attempt to create a secessionist state whose flag showed the top half of a hopeful rising sun. For others the heartfelt quality makes the movie a valuable reminder of a piece of history that once dominated discussion both nationally and internationally revealing the toxicity of Britain’s post-imperial legacy, while for some it is the twisted biased story of the author.

The Nigerian government also revealed its extent of interpretation as it through the Nigeria Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) delayed the release of the film. Chimamanda

Adichie author of the book wrote in *The New Yorker*, an American literary magazine. “Nigerian government censors delayed the release of the film adaptation of “Half of a Yellow Sun” because, according to them, it might incite violence in the country; at issue in particular is a scene based on a historically documented massacre at a northern Nigerian airport.” The various interpretations notwithstanding, the engagement in the film stimulates the viewer throughout the whole film as he is enlightened not just on the history of the society but also on the ills of violence. Movies not only address issues of violence but also challenge social and political issues that abound in the society. As earlier mentioned, filmmakers tend to strategically culminate these issues and problems into the narrative of their films as their way of speaking their mind and getting the audience to think on that matter when issues are raised in movies, it causes people to start thinking and talking and maybe even arguing, when opinions differ, this could prompt those involved to begin to question what they truly believe in. Movies also increase the awareness of international presence in projected communities or societies. For instance, films which project the slum like societies; poverty and degraded lives of members of such community, broaden viewers understanding of the plight of some parts of the world. This can awaken our sense of responsibility and empathy towards such situations and help us try to do our bit in order to be of some help to humanity. It can also spur international assistance.

In a 1963 report for the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization assessing Indian Cinema and Culture, the author (*Balduon Dhingra*) quoted a speech by the then Prime Minister of India, Nehru who stated, “...the influence in India of films is greater than newspapers and books combined.” Film has become a powerful vehicle for culture, education, leisure and propaganda. To further buttress this fact are the views of Tom Sherak,



President of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (*best known for their Academy Awards, also referred to as "Oscars"*) on film. To Sherak, film is a reflection of society, both present and past. He says:

I think the film and its innovations sometimes have to catch up to society but sometimes it leads society too. Movies are stories; movies are people who come out with ideas about something they want to say, something they want to tell someone.

Movies are thus a form of communication and the stories communicated, come from societies- not just where society is presently and what it's doing now- but where society has been. He goes further to say that 'Movies can educate too. They tell us things we never could have known. They tell us things we might not know, and they give us a way to explore the past, the present and the future'

Every country has stories to tell, about their past, their present, culture and views of what the future will look like through their eyes, as told in the movies. Movies allow people to get to places they cannot get to on their own- be it travel, culture, or learning. Sherak's views explain the power of movies and how they can create a powerful sense of emotion and engagement. They communicate concepts, ideas and stories. They allow us to be cognitively transported to a different time or place, and experience life through different eyes – gaining new perspectives, inspiration and understanding. Anthony Minghella (1954-2008), an accomplished film director, and ex Chairman of the British Film Institute) states in this regard;

...fiction becomes this sort of cultural bank balance that we can draw from. We can momentarily be a young woman, an old woman, a black person, an Asian person, a Chinese person, and look at the world and argue a position that is not our own for a while-inhabit a position that is not our own.

Film is unquestionably a powerful and significant art form; it is important and influential such that its absence from the life of our contemporary society could almost probably constitute a social catastrophe. In the words of the art historian and critic Erwin Panofsky as cited in Quart and Auster:

If all serious lyrical poets, composers, painters and sculptors were forced by law to stop their activities, a rather small faction of the general public would seriously regret it. If the same was to happen with the movies, the social consequence would be catastrophic.

## **2.1.Communication**

Communication is the act of conveying information, exchange of ideas, feelings, intentions, attitudes, expectations, perceptions or commands from one person to another. It is also referred to as the imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or signs. In all human societies, communication is the main stream of their existence James, et al, (1990) posits that for communication to take place there must be a message. This may take the form of ideas, thoughts, opinions or attitudes; they must respond in a manner that shows that they understood what has been passed on to them. The process of communication involves actions, reactions and interactions. Thus, communication requires a sender, a message, a medium and a recipient. In a society, there exist a group of people who have lived together long enough to evolve common culture, norms and values. Though culture varies among societies, it gives shape and meaning to existence. It is through culture that knowledge, morals, beliefs, arts, custom, technology, etc, are shared and transmitted through the media from generation to generation. Mass media is communication in written form, broadcast, or verbal that reaches a

large audience. This includes the use of television, radio, advertising, movies, the Internet, newspapers and magazines.

Effective communication occurs when a desired effect is the result of intentional or unintentional information sharing, which is interpreted amongst target audience and acted on in a desired way. When communication generates the desired effect it is termed effective. Therefore, effective communication serves the purpose for which it was planned or designed. The degree of communication achieved is a function of the relevance of the topic to a particular audience and the appropriateness of the treatment/ presentation of the information. Communication is the transferring of a message to another party so that it can be understood and acted upon (James et,al 1990). This is necessary because information not properly communicated may lead to a breakdown in communication and misunderstanding of intended message. When this happens, chances are that community cohesion and or disharmony would occur. Yadava (1993:13) captures it thus; ‘the content and mutuality of communication determines its usefulness, quite apart from the question of access to it.’ Possible purposes for communication might be to elicit change, generate action, create understanding, inform or communicate a certain idea or point of view. Yahaya (2008:9) posits that, ‘communication is the process of creating and stimulating understanding as a basis for development.’ Communication occurs in both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication such as body language, eye contact, sign and body language. Other forms include media content; pictures, graphics, sound and writing. This research work is hinged on this form of communication. Our society today is filled with turbulence; there are more uncertainties than before. Environmental, economical, technical, political and societal risks are nowadays a major part of life creating tension and abnormalities.

To correct these ills and prevent a total breakdown it is necessary to communicate the dangers of such acts or project them as they are. Therefore the importance of communication in development cannot be overlooked. This is confirmed by (Akinbile 2008:22) as he says ‘since the beginning of man’s inherent being, the survival of mankind was due to their ability to communicate. (Soola, 2002:18) opines that ‘communication and information are interwoven with the process of satisfying human needs’. Communicating for sustainable social change and development, involves the use of various communication techniques to address inefficient systems, processes, values and beliefs.

The use of different mediums and approaches help individuals in a targeted society to acquire new knowledge, this will allow communities not only to experience change but to guide it as well. The importance of human communication necessitated the establishment of media technology to bridge geographical distances between message senders and message receivers who are physically separated from each other. The use of technology would guarantee that people would begin to live better as a result of information distributed expeditiously through the various communication channels. Prominent amongst these channels is the film which has over time become a very effective means of communication. Films do not only project life as it is but also proffer solutions to problems raised, as it stimulates emotions and prompts reaction for change. Even though people’s interpretation of the world depends on previous experiences in life, the ultimate is that people interpret what their eyes see all the time.

The film communicates a lot of information into people’s head; even if they do not see it as information and even if they are not really paying much attention, people get affected by the experiences somehow. Nelmes (2005) opines that “the media re –presents information to its audience, who are encouraged by the mainstream media to see its output as ‘a window on the

world“, as reflecting reality.” Films combine sound and vision to produce media contents used in communicating ideas and issues. Over the years, there has been a propagation of indigenous films and home videos in Nigeria, through these films and videos, the cultural background and identity of the nation is exhibited to the outside world. In view of this we could say that our home video have the capacity to inform, educate, advertise, market, sell and rebrand our society and all its concerns while also providing entertainment to its viewers. In view of this, the home video provides exciting appeal and aesthetics which can attract people from all over. Akangbe (2008:60) on his part informs us that ‘drama is a recreation of society and a megaphone for projecting sentiments, aspirations, failings, attainments, history, changes, etc, of a society’. This assertion, points to the fact that, film is a veritable medium of picturing a society with a view to educating, informing and entertaining the audience. Following Akangbe’s definition of drama, home video can indeed be pivotal as a megaphone for projecting sentiments, aspirations, failings, attainments, history, changes, etc. Nigerian can truly be effectively pictured through the home videos and based on the message being projected, bring about behavioural and attitudinal change.

### **2.1.1. Change**

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus is famous for noting that the only permanent thing in the universe is change. Change occur in various facets of society from cultural, political, religion, ethics, values, and morals to social roles, the law, ideologies and economics. The Nigerian society has had its own fair share of change in these areas. At one time, families once exerted enormous influence on their children, however, today values and beliefs once formed by family and religious institutions are more influenced by the media. Film now plays a major role in defining its viewer’s perception. It can be used to create enthusiasm as it personalizes

issues. Darlene (2004) explains it thus while speaking on the effectiveness of an anti- death penalty film:

Well the films had actors in it... it made me cry. Although reading has made me cry too, in a film you put a face with the name because you see a person up there ... as opposed to reading where you don't.

Darlene's opinion buttresses the fact that a cinematic experience effectively elicits feelings with its unique visual presence. It has immediacy due to the temporal illusion of witness (emanating from the viewer). Video has the capacity to personalize the position of the advocate on an issue which most times results in viewer empathy. In Nigeria, home videos have been used to exhibit the desirable aspects of Nigeria's culture internally and to the outside world. The films are exported to propagate and educate on our norms, values and traditions while socializing and playing a therapeutic and entertainment function. These home movies also serve as agents of change as societal ills and challenges faced are captured through drama scenes. Also reflected are the consequences of such acts, and most times the expected reactions from the viewers (society). These expected reactions are often with an intention to bring about attitudinal and behavioural change.

Psychologists define attitudes as a learned tendency to evaluate things in a certain way; an attitude can be a positive or negative evaluation of people, objects, event, activities, ideas, or anything in a given environment. However, they can also be uncertain at times. For example, one may have mixed feelings about a particular person or issue. Researchers also suggest that there are several different components that make up attitudes; an emotional component - How the object, person, issue or event makes one feel, a cognitive component- the individuals thoughts and beliefs about the subject and a behavioural component – how the attitude

influences individuals behaviour. Eagly et al (2004:35), define an attitude as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour." This definition of attitude allows for the individuals evaluation of the object in question to vary from extremely negative to extremely positive.

It also admits that people can be conflicted or ambivalent toward an object that is to say that they might at different times express both positive and negative attitude toward the same object. Attitudes can also be explicit and implicit. Explicit attitudes are those that we are consciously aware of and that clearly influence our behaviours and beliefs, while implicit attitudes are unconscious, but still have an effect on our beliefs and behaviours. Attitudes form directly as a result of experience; they may emerge due to direct personal experience, or may result from observation. Social roles and social norms can have a strong influence on attitudes. Social roles relate to how people are expected to behave in a particular role or context. Social norms involve society's rules for what behaviours are considered appropriate. People are expected to behave in certain ways in particular situations. Each social situation entails its own particular set of expectations about the "proper" way to behave. Such expectations can vary from group to group and society to society. These expectations become apparent when we consider the roles that people play in society. According to (McLeod 2008), 'social roles are the part people play as members of a social group'. Therefore, with each social role we adopt our behaviour changes to fit the expectations that come with such role within the institutions we find ourselves.

Social Norms on the other hand are unwritten rules about how to behave; they provide an expected idea of how to behave in a particular social group or culture. Thus social norms are

the accepted standards of behaviour of social groups. There are norms defining appropriate behaviour for every social group. As individuals' move from one group to another, their behaviour changes accordingly. Norms provide order in society, human beings need norms to guide and direct their behaviour, to provide order and predictability in social relationships and to make sense of and understand each other's actions. The norms culminate into our values. Regular exposure to messages conveyed by mass communications is believed to have a cumulative effect upon moral values and behaviour, with particular influence role on young children and adolescents during their formative years as they transition to adulthood (Buerkel-Rothfuss 1981:26). Movies are a good medium through which our values are conveyed.

### **2.1.2. Nollywood**

Nollywood is the name given to the Nigerian film industry which was twelve years ago reputed to be the third most prolific industry, after Hollywood and Bollywood,(Onishi 2002). This was confirmed three years later by Mbamara who says Nollywood is the name given to the Nigeria film industry and it is the highest grossing movie-making industry behind Hollywood and the Indian film industry, "Bollywood," respectively (Mbamara, 2005). It has achieved this feat by virtue of the volume of production. By conventional wisdom, high volume of trade is evidence of audience approval of the products and evidence of success in any industry. Today, Nollywood is the second-largest film industry in the world, officially overtaking Hollywood in 2009, Bollywood, retains first position. (UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) survey).



Though no one could claim exactly how and when the name Nollywood was conceptualized, it first wasn't coined by a Nigerian. According to Haynes (2005), the name 'Nollywood' was invented by a non-Nigerian, first appearing in an article by Matt Steinglas in the New York Times in 2002. One may begin to foresee a form of hybridization from the name of the movie industry itself which is modeled like the American Hollywood little wonder the massive incursion of American culture into the industry. This incursion notwithstanding, some movies are shot in Ibo, Hausa, Yoruba and other Nigerian languages. Prior to the emergence of Nollywood in the early nineties, theatre and television stations were primarily the medium used by a lot of theatre artists. The popular view is that the Nigerian movie industry actually started with the production of 'Living in bondage' by Ken Nnebue. The movie features characters such as Kenneth Okonkwo, Kanayo O. Kanayo, Bob Manuel Udokwu, Francis Agu, Ngozi Nwosu and Nnenna Nwabueze. It also marked a turning point in the Nigerian movie industry and heralded the trend in modern day movie making in Nigeria.

The term movie seems to be associated with a lot of controversy when it comes to its definition and what it really is, especially in our country Nigeria. The general understanding for many is that a movie is the recorded show we watch at home, or go to see at the cinema. Movie however, is a collection of still images, which when played back in the frame rate it was recorded in, gives the illusion of motion. It is produced by recording photographic images with the camera, animated techniques or visual effects. Thus we can say that news and documentaries are movies as well as television commercials. The Nigerian film industry popularly called Nollywood, has been narrowed down to productions in home video and the term "film" is used generally in reference to Home Entertainment movies in Nigeria. (McCall 2004:103) noted that 'Nigerian popular videos are nothing like films canonized in African

cinema studies...., Nigeria's video industry is profitable and self sufficient. It is now one of the fastest growing sectors of the Nigeria economy'.

There is ample evidence in the critical review of Nollywood that by professional standards all is not well in the industry, even to those who are key players within it. The formula for film making in Nigeria defies those patterns familiar elsewhere, especially in the West for failing to produce in 35 mm format, nollywood is not acknowledged as film, even at the largest African film festival, the Pan-African Film and Television Festival (FESPACO) in Ouagadougou (Fafona 2007). The orientation to scripting, the themes, narrative style, the duration of (production) projects, and its marketing may appear alien. Nick Moran (2004) in his BBC sponsored participant observation of the industry was bewildered at these and the fact that a film project could be completed in a week to ten days. However, practitioners of Nollywood remain optimistic that if given the space, the Nigerian industry will evolve to what is acceptable practice for its market. Speaking in an interview with the press, Amaka Igwe, one of Nollywoods' producers, noted that each industry has had its own difficult path to success and Nollywood is equally going through its own share of challenges which it would hopefully overcome:

In Nigeria, who says the technique we develop is not really good, it does not have to meet their [Western] standards but it meets our own standards and the people are watching it, no matter how bad they are, and it is speaking to the people. (Igwe, 2007)

Nollywood movies were made for the viewing pleasure of Nigerians with messages to inspire, motivate, reprove and correct some anomalies particularly in the political, social and cultural sphere. Films produced encompass different genres from political to social, cultural to religious and comedy to tragedy. The use of the English Language as the main communication

tool and the marketing strategies employed facilitated its expansion beyond the shores of the African continent. Today, Nigeria's Nollywood is counted among the major business centres' of film making in the world. Alamu (2010:163) remarks that Nigeria's Nollywood has been viewed as cultural products of the Nation, and the global attention currently enjoyed by it is due to efforts by producers to create a distinct film tradition. Nollywood films are popular in Nigeria because they have indigenous content and address issues relevant to the mass audience. Pearson (2001), notes that Nigeria is one of only three countries, alongside India and the U.S., where domestically produced movies dominate local viewing.

Through the combination of its unique narrative techniques (African storylines) and Western technology, these films document and re-create socio political as well as cultural events that occur[ed] within and beyond the country's borders. Upon inception, Nollywood's acclaim was initially restricted to Nigerian and African audiences, but today, it has progressively made its way to the global scene. It is now a regular feature on channels which specialize in the black and African audiences via satellite or cable (Multichoice Nigeria, BEN TV- Sky channel 194). Since January 2008, Nollywood has a dedicated channel offering 24 hour movies on Sky digital platform to audiences in the UK and Ireland. There are a range of websites which also support the circulation of Nollywood movies.

The industry has been accused of over emphasizing negative themes by critics and this over emphasis on negative themes which is feared to have negative impact on viewers is becoming national concern. This is because the violence projected is believed to have adverse effect on the behaviour of viewers which could be devastating to the society at large. Hornby (2000) contends that some violent materials in movies include: sex scenes, nudity, obscenity, vulgar language, indecent dressing, killings, murder, rape, beating up women, smoking, molestation

and harassment. These are self-injurious in nature. Some critics argue that it is obvious that Nollywood to a large extent contributes to violence in Nigeria. For Folarin (1999), the implication is that such films rather than ameliorating violent acts in the society tend to aggravate them.

It is believed that violence has become a regular feature in Nigerian movies and has continued to gain more acceptances by producers and directors and in recent time viewers. In reaction to these allegations the producers and directors claim they portray their messages in the easiest and most convincing manner since these stories are most times associated with real life situations. To critics, Nigerian Home movie producers have failed to make any strong comment against social ills in our society, instead they use them in their messages without realizing that arts can be viewed as having therapeutic effect that can both mirror and heal the society of its perceived ills. The qualities of Nigerian home movies, which these critics have failed to reflect is captured in the words of Kafewo (2011)

What are the intrinsic qualities of the Nigerian Home video drama? How do the videos and their makers attempt to help the common man to cope with his condition? Whose agenda do the home video dramas serve? What is their overall relevance to the man on the street?

Nigerian movies in spite of the negative themes projected, attempt to mirror the society bringing to the viewer the challenges being faced with an intention to open the eyes and mind and stimulate thoughts. The viewer sees himself in the movies projected either as a victim or a villain. This summarily answers Kafewo's question and basically sums up the positive contributions of Nollywood. It can be argued that the Nigerian video film industry is a product of the ingenuity of the Nigerian in the face of debilitating obstacles to social development. Thus Nollywood's projection of genres should not be appraised in a vacuum. An analysis of it needs to be anchored in the socio-historical and cultural experiences of Nigerians which

nurtured such genres. The ritual film, the epic, the crime story, the Christian video, the comic genre, the romance, and the others, are products of what we desire, fear, or are anxious about as a people. Nollywood grew out of these peculiar needs and aspirations of Nigerians and has been largely sustained by them. Thus, Nollywood is a prototype of our situations, the inconsistencies of the industry's changes arise from its attempts to incorporate what needs to be borrowed locally or globally to enrich its artistic nature.

Nigerian movies are a representation of Nigerian culture and in order to be a great representation, it is necessary that the good and bad aspects of Nigerian culture be portrayed from diverse perspective. These videos / films are known to explore the conflicts between the traditional ways and the challenges of contemporary living. They feature variations in lifestyles to be found in urban and rural areas. In all, they offer contrasting sets of values that the viewer may have to choose from in the attempt to correct societal ills.

Nigerian home movies have become the cynosure of all eyes in Africa and the world with the social commentary status it has garnered over the years remaining its strongest point. The fact that, Nollywood tries to portray the Nigerian society as objectively as possible to remind the people of the societal ills inherent in it and in some cases how to solve some of these vices make the industry a commendable and laudable one. Over the past two decades Nollywood has become a cultural phenomenon attracting millions of viewer's right across Africa and the wider Diaspora. Nollywood films we now can say have defined the parameters of African home videos and are distinguished by their popularity and ability to cut through every social stratum and ethnic divide, thus powerfully influencing African culture. The fact that they are internationally dismissed for their low production quality is hardly consequential, this is

because Nollywood films embody 'Africanism'; reflecting ethnicity, historical traditions, customs, and heritage- something that foreign films struggle to achieve. These films hold a very prominent place in the minds of Africans, captivating curiosity and imagination.

Nigerian movies are greatly patronised in other parts of Africa and its non-Nigerian viewing audience is increasing by the day. In the article, Hollywood, *Who really Needs It?* Faris (2002), Chico Ejiro in his remark says that in eight years he has directed 80 'home videos' and declares that Nigeria also exports its videos, with particular success in Ghana. The names of the actors and actresses, as well as the roles that they play, are well known. Norimitsu Onishi(2002:10) of the *New York Times* in his article "Step aside, L.A. and Bombay, for Nollywood", captured that popular Nigerian actress, Kate Henshaw- Nettal, said that when she visited Ghana, she was surprised about her popularity outside Nigeria and she said, "I was shocked. People came up to me and said. Aren't you the Nigerian actress?" This is evidence of the diverse African audience who patronize Nigerian movies. This goes to show the impact and influence of Nollywood on Africans and their culture.

Furthermore, Ofe Motiki (2006:1) of *In Mwegi*, Botswana's only independent daily newspaper says that many people love Nigerian video films and find them irresistible mostly because of their familiar story lines. He says that Nigerian movies are a household name all over Botswana. He further notes that the common incorrect use of adjectives, nouns and verbs are ignored and serves as part of the entertainment as in most homes people remain glued to their television sets when these movies are showing. Some say that the reason they love them is that they can easily relate to them. Motiki writes:

Although the whole cinematography of the movies is not of the best quality, a lot of people are in love with them... All the movies that are aired on Mnet Africa can be found in various shops in Francistown [Botswana, a country in Africa] and are so in demand that even the street hawkers at the bus ranks [bus stations] are cashing in.

This confirms the popularity of Nollywood movies beyond Nigerian shores. Motiki goes further to emphasize on the positive impact of Nollywood stories on Africans in Diaspora. 'These English-language Nigerian movies are gaining popularity among the nation's fast growing African immigrant population, offering their very Americanized children a glimpse of African life, particularly the clash of modernity and traditionalism'.

This goes to show that Africans and the Diaspora are embracing Nigerian cultural heritage through watching Nigerian video films. The movies create awareness to Africans abroad so that they don't lose touch with their heritage. There is interest in watching Nigerian movies by Nigerians and other Africans both within Africa and outside the African continent and that these Nigerian movies are capable of influencing Africans, thus impacting their lives. Onuzulike in his paper, *Nollywood: The Influence of the Nigerian Movie Industry on African Culture* observes that Nollywood provides talking points on various aspects of social life. It helps people engage with the Nigerian society even while away from home thus connecting by proxy. In view of this, it serves as a medium for discussing current affairs both by the subjects it covered and the pattern of viewing that it tends to generate in certain quarters. In the article *Appreciating Nollywood: Audiences and Nigerian Films* through a report of the empirical inquiry with audiences in London it was observed that Nollywood as a basis for moral instruction ranked high amongst audience responses of what they regarded as viewing pleasure. Viewers expected to learn from stories, as is typical with traditional story telling. In

this way the aspiration of transmitting cultural heritage is achieved but people also watched to learn contemporary life skills.

In reconciling the two, the question of identity becomes apparent. People want to learn culturally appropriate positions to adopt or negotiate though this may be a universal pleasure, from the article it can be deduced that it appears to be more central to audiences in Diaspora who seek assistance for instructing the younger generation- those who have greater need to be realigned with their home cultures lest they become subsumed in the culture of their host community, as they adopt less appropriate aspects of the Western culture. The concerns of the audiences were mostly about cultural definitions regarding respect for age, relationships, and priorities within social values, problem- resolution strategies, and self pride. In all, the issues of identity, preservation of cultural heritage and resistance of dominate western influences are clear factors contributing to the success of the industry.

The UK- based charity - Stepping Stones Nigeria (SSN) has used this cultural connection and in collaboration with renowned Nollywood film director, Teco Benson, produced the Nollywood film “The Fake Prophet”. The film was produced in an attempt to stimulate debate and pioneer positive change by challenging issues such as child trafficking and labelling of children as ‘witches’. Teco says:

Film, with its subtle messaging approach remains the best medium for encouraging change in behaviour within the society and Nollywood has an important role to play in this. I believe that ‘The Fake Prophet’ is the first truly socially responsible Nollywood film to be made and I am delighted that we have been able to set the bench for future productions. As well as having a positive impact on society

The movie powerfully encapsulates many major social and political issues that affect our society today, including the dangers faced by children following witchcraft accusations, the



problem of child trafficking and the vulnerability of children living on the streets. Gary Foxcroft, Stepping Stones Nigeria's Programme Director states that 'Given the projected reach of 'The Fake Prophet' and *the power of the Nollywood film industry* (emphasis mine)' we anticipate that this film will go a long way to help challenge deeply held attitudes, values and beliefs and will ultimately prevent the further abuse of children. As such we are enormously excited about the films potential'.

The informative elements in Nigerian films are somewhat similar to the moral and cultural belief of the Nigerian people. This parallel is consistent with Parson's sociological theory of structural—functionalism, which centres on cultural systems and the overall integration of societies (Pearson, 1964: 22). The thrust of Pearson's theory is that culture and the social actions of individuals, which result in social institutions, involve choices based on values and norms that are specified within the cultural system of a society. In other words, people behave as they are expected to behave in a given situation because they have adopted the norms and values that comprise the culture of their society. Durkheim (1971: 15) also referred to this phenomenon as "morality," which ensures the stability of both the individual and the society. Thus, Nigerian films are therefore responses to the change needs of Nigerian society offered through the aesthetic possibilities of film technology.

The use of this approach by Nigerian filmmakers underlies the creation of films conveying the intense feeling that urbanization and industrialization have created an excessively volatile and unstable Nigerian society. Films present the crimes and tragic events that have resulted from these changes and that should be repressed through the power of the medium of film. They use their films to rescue contemporary Nigerian society from the erosion of its value systems

caused by decadence. The complex relation between creative representation and projected desired reactions, attitude and values for positive change reflected in the lives of viewers, created the interest for this project. Constant viewership of video may create a realisation and awakening in the viewer, leading to a desire for positive change. This is possible in the proposition of (Gerbner et al 1979:82) that there will be a commonality of outlook which will result if everybody watches the same programme across social and cultural boundaries.

Nollywood's ability to resonate with the beliefs and values of its audience makes it an integral part of Nigeria's cultural identity today. However, some of the movies try to create awareness about the socio-economic and political state of affairs of the nation. It spreads awareness about the evils of drug abuse, alcoholism, HIV and the evils of having many sexual partners. Movies create awareness about the importance of education, medicine, art and politics. It can be argued that Nollywood has become highly engaging, contributing immensely to the positive image of Nigeria in global arena. Today, youths and adults identify with the 'stars' it has created, so much so that these stars have become cultural ambassadors.

## **2.2.0. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.2.1. Social Learning Theory (Change theory)**

A wide array of theories, are invoked to promote behavioral change and learning prominent amongst which is the Modeling and Social Learning theory. Most programmes draw implicitly from Social Learning Theory in emphasising the importance of modeling and imitation in behaviour change.

Diverse opinions on change exist; some perceive change as reformation or adaptation of basically effective social, economic and political systems, or as the transformation of existing systems of relations into something very different. Others believe the starting point for change is with individual attitudes and behaviours, or with social structures such as institutions, laws, and policies. However, the popular assumption is that awareness and attitude change lead to behavioural change in individuals. Thus when people become aware of a problem and can understand its causes and dynamics, they can make choices to change their behaviour or situation.

Social Learning Theory also known as Social Cognitive Theory is a change theory theorised by Canadian psychologist Albert Bandura. The theory integrated behavioural and cognitive theories of learning in order to provide a comprehensive model that could account for the wide range of learning experiences that occur in the real world. Social Learning Theory draws heavily on the concept of modeling, or learning by observing behaviour. Bandura outlined three types of modeling stimuli thus; Live model: in which an actual person is demonstrating the desired behaviour, Verbal instruction (in which an individual describes the desired behaviour in detail and instructs the participant in how to engage in the behavior), and Symbolic: in which modeling occurs by means of the media, including movies, television, Internet, literature, and radio. Stimuli can be either real or fictional characters).

An important factor in Social Learning Theory is the concept of reciprocal determinism. This notion states that just as an individual's behaviour is influenced by the environment, the environment is also influenced by the individual's behaviour. In other words, a person's behaviour, environment, and personal qualities all reciprocally influence each other. Social

change can be created with the media as it can help viewers learn socially desired behaviours in a positive way from models portrayed in the programs. The programs incorporate elements that can bring a desired response. Positive social behaviors are reinforced with rewards and negative social behaviours are reinforced with punishment.

In social Learning Theory, Bandura states that behaviour is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning. Through observational learning, a model can bring forth new ways of thinking and behaving. With a modeled emotional experience, the observer shows an affinity towards people, places and objects. They dislike what the models do not like and like what the models care about. For Bandura, humans are active information processors and think about the relationship between their behavior and its consequences. Observational learning could not occur unless cognitive processes were at work. Individuals that are observed are called models. In society, children are surrounded by a number of models with whom they identify. These may be people in their immediate world, such as parents or older siblings, or could be fantasy characters or people in the media. These models provide examples of behaviour to observe and imitate. Children pay attention to some of these models and encode their behaviour, values, beliefs and attitudes. At a later time they may imitate the behaviour they have observed. They may do this regardless of whether the behaviour is 'gender appropriate' or not, however, it is more likely that a child will reproduce the behaviour that its society deems appropriate for its sex.

Bandura's point of view is elaborated in the famous Bobo Doll experiment of 1961, where he illustrates that people learn from watching others. In the experiment, Albert Bandura and his colleagues constructed a series of experiments using a Bobo doll. In the first experiment,

children were exposed to either an aggressive or non-aggressive model of either the same sex or opposite sex as the child. There was also a control group. The aggressive models played with the Bobo doll in an aggressive manner, while the non-aggressive models played with other toys. They found that children who were exposed to the aggressive models performed more aggressive actions toward the Bobo doll afterward, and that boys were more likely to do so than girls.

Following that study, Albert Bandura tested whether the same was true for models presented through media by constructing an experiment he called Bobo Doll Behaviour: A Study of Aggression. In this experiment Bandura exposed a group of children to video featuring violent and aggressive actions. After the video he then placed the children in a room with a Bobo doll to see how they behaved with it. Through this experiment, Bandura discovered that children who had watched the violent video subjected the dolls to more aggressive and violent behaviour, while children not exposed to the video did not. This experiment displays the Social Cognitive Theory because it depicts how people reenact behaviours they see in the media. In this case, the children in this experiment reenacted the model of violence they directly learned from the video. Relating the Social Learning Theory to the Cultivation and Social Norms Theory, a case can be made for the power of movie characters to impact on its viewers. Thus the use of these theories in the analyses of the selected movies will go to show that media movie models play a huge role in communicating change in the society as its viewers will eventually imitate what they see. Therefore it is pertinent that movie producers project positive values, beliefs, norms and culture that their viewers may eventually imitate these positive actions.

### 2.2.2. Cultural Norms Theory

The shared, sanctioned, and integrated systems of beliefs and practices that characterize a particular group and are passed down through generations is referred to as cultural norms therefore, a norm which is short for normative or normal, is an acceptable and expected way of behaving in any given social situation. Norms have been described by some scholars as the least visible and most potent form of social control (Bettenhausen et.al 1985:350). Moreover, some scholars argue that human cooperation is a result from norms enforced by socially created rewards and punishments, which allows for a civil society (McElreath et.al 2003:128). For (Sherif, 1936:3) norms are “the customs, traditions, standards, rules, values, fashion and all other criteria of conduct which are standardized as a consequence of contact with individuals”. However, similar it is to the associated concept of values; norms differ from individual to individual and society to society. Values are general guidelines for behaviour, while norms represent very specific rules that govern behaviour in particular situations. Goddard et al (2004:153) captures it thus:

Norms cultivate reliable guidelines for daily living and contribute to the health and well-being of a culture. They act as prescriptions for correct and moral behavior, lend meaning and coherence to life, and provide a means to achieve a sense of integrity, safety and belonging. These normative beliefs, together with related cultural values and rituals, presents a sense of order and control upon aspects of life that might otherwise appear chaotic or unpredictable.

This is to say that norms are very important in a society and lack of them is an anomie; breakdown of standards and values, lack of purpose and ideals which will bring about instability in the society. Norms are either implicit or explicit. Implicit norms are rules for governing behaviour that are implied, but not bound by the law. (Rugimbana et.al 1990) are of the view that ‘These laws underlie values and social representations and are less easily

observable than languages, customs or institutions. Implicit norms are generally unconscious and require no formal declaration; however, violation of these unstated rules may result negative within society.’ Explicit norms on the other hand are written and formally communicated rules enforced by authority, and have specific sanctions imposed for their violation. They refer to aspects such as observed communication styles and language, cultural habits and practices, all forms of interpersonal and social relationships, types of food and eating habits, dress and appearance, fashion and art amongst others. Failure to conform to these norms results in negative social response from the individual or group to whom one fails to act appropriately.

The cultural norm theory propounded by Melvin Defleur is a communication theory which suggests that the mass media selectively represents and emphasizes certain contemporary ideas or values. The theory posits that the mass media influence norms by reinforcing or changing them. Mass media forms which include television, radio newspapers and movies can convey information and other forms of symbolic communication rapidly and simultaneously over large geographically remote and socially distinct audiences. The mass media has shown great influence on politics, social and even economic issues.

Melvin Defleur,(1970) discussing on cultural norms theory suggests that;

The mass media selectively presents and emphasizes certain contemporary ideas or values and influences norms by reinforcing or changing them. For example, cultural norm theorists argue that television programmes presenting an active lifestyle for older people can change the attitudes of viewers in that direction.

DeFleur also posits that the cultural norms theory provides the foundation for the more comprehensive social learning theory. As cited in (Okenwa, 2000:22), the cultural norms theory postulates that the mass media through selective presentations and emphasis of certain

themes create impressions among the audiences that common cultural norms concerning the emphasised topics are structured or defined in specific ways. According to the theory, the media can: potentially influence behaviour by reinforcing existing norms, creating new norms and modifying existing norms. Thus, mass media reflects and reinforces trends that already exist in a society and over time does act to create and change social norms. Okenwa further asserts that, the media can be adequately utilised for the transmission of culture both internally and externally. According to (Folarin, 1998:69)

The theory charged that, through selective presentation and tendentious emphasis on certain themes, the mass media created the impression among their audience that such themes were part of the culture or clearly defined cultural norms of society. As a result, impressionable members of the public tend to pattern their behaviour along the line of such media presentations.

Based on the above assertions, we can say that the movie plays a major role in defining and shaping the perception, attitudes and behaviour of its viewers. Therefore if the artiste writes with an intention to create change in a particular sector of the society or on a particular issue he can achieve his aim. The role of communication in normative influence can be derived from a number of theoretical perspectives, including cultivation theory.

### **2.2.3. Cultivation Theory**

Theories of powerful media effects assume that, a wide range of social values and behavioural practices are learned from the ideas and images conveyed by popular television entertainment magazines, internet websites, music videos, advertisements, films and news reports.

Cultivation theory is a social theory which examines the long-term effects of television. The basic proposition of the theory is that, the more time people spend 'living' in the television, the more their live is shaped towards what they view. Thus there is a significant influence on



the attitudes, beliefs and judgment of viewers concerning the social world. In view of this, people who watch a lot of television are likely to be more influenced by the ways in which the world is framed by television programmes than are individuals who watch less, especially regarding topics of which the viewer has little first – hand experience. The cultivation theory was developed by George Gerbner and Larry Gross, they assert that the overall concern about the effects of television on audiences stemmed from the unprecedented centrality of television in American culture. He posited that television as a mass medium of communication had formed into a common symbolic environment that bound diverse communities together, socializing people into a standardized roles and behaviours. “Today the TV set is a key member of the household, with virtually unlimited access to every person in the family”. He compared the power of television to the power of religion, saying that television is to modern times what religion once was in earlier times.

Cultivation theory in its most basic form, then, suggests that exposure to television, over time, subtly ‘cultivates’ viewers perceptions of reality. Gerbner and Gross say “television is a medium of the socialization of most people into standardized roles and behaviours. Its functions are in a word, enculturation”. Gerbner was less concerned about the effect of cultivation on aggressive behaviour and more concerned that it affects viewers’ beliefs about the world around them and the feelings connected to those beliefs. Television viewing can have long- term effects that gradually affect the audience, Folarin (1998:2) posits that Cultivation Analysis theory assumes that the more time people spend watching television, the more their world views will be like those they are exposed to on television. He sums it up by concluding that, the media constructs reality for its audiences and so its audiences eventually adopt the symbolic world of the media as a reflection of their reality. Heavy watchers of

television tend to behave differently from light audiences who rely on other factors and influences of reality.

Cultivation theory developed by Gerbner and his colleagues treat the mass media as one of the standard agencies of socialization, rivalling the role of parents and the family, peer groups, teachers and religious authorities and social norms operating within a given society's culture. Socialization is a multidimensional process involving the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes and values. Cultivation theory particularly suggests that frequency of exposure to the mass media, especially television viewing, leads towards the internalization of its messages. Through this process, the media influences moral standard; attitudes towards the family, community, marriage, divorce, beliefs and practices. Regular exposure to messages conveyed by mass communications is believed to have a cumulative effect upon moral values and behaviour.

Mass communication impacts public opinion on moral, ethical, and religious values; as journalists write and producers capture stories of corruption and bribery in public life, history, culture, religion and contemporary issues surrounding the politics of sex and gender. This coverage may shape public perceptions about standards in public life, such as attitude towards transparency and probity, trust in political institutions and leaders, religious values, identities, belief in society as well as basic societal accepted values. The belief that moral values and social norms are shaped by media messages is not just academic; these assumptions underpin many of the fears about the impact of television content on the society, encouraging government agencies to implement policies of protection such as the official rating systems classifying the contents of movies, designed to inform parents and to protect young people. Some societies limit the import of certain types of media content that are considered offensive

to public decency, while some ban such products produced within the local terrain. David (2007:49) buttresses the fact that images viewed can affect the perception of the viewers as viewers may adopt such values when he says:

Self-censorship, government regulation and sometimes pressures from viewers, also limit certain types of television programming from being shown if they are deemed to offend standards of 'decency' and 'good taste', for example in terms of language and offensive speech, violence, or obscenity.

Gerbner, et al (1994:20) argued that while religion or education had previously been greater influences on social trends, now;

Television is the source of the most broadly shared images and messages in history. Television cultivates from infancy the very predispositions and preferences that used to be acquired from other primary sources. The repetitive pattern of television's mass-produced messages and images form the mainstream of a common symbolic environment.

Television as a viewing medium has a highly effective impact on its viewers than other forms of mass media, these results from its combination of aural and visual components. The messages are repetitive following that they can be replayed over and over again; movies can be watched at will whenever desired, advertisements run for a considerable period of time getting the viewer accustomed with the message. Gerbner and his colleagues are saying that due to its accessibility and availability, television has become a major cultural arm of our society, thus, television shapes the way our society thinks and relates.

Gerbner and Gross write that "the substance of the consciousness cultivated by TV is not so much specific attitudes and opinions as more basic assumptions about the facts of life and standards of judgment on which conclusions are based." Simply put, the realities created by television are not based on real facts but on speculations. This assumption is questionable as some television content (movies, drama, soap) mirror society and is drawn from life

experiences of people or events in the society. However this is not to say that television does not include fiction, it is a combination of both facts and fiction with an intention to stabilize agreeable social patterns and to cultivate resistance to presumed negative norms. We live in terms of the stories we tell and television tell these stories through news, movies and advertising to almost everybody most of the time.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **ANALYSIS OF MR.AND MRS**

#### **3.1. MR AND MRS**

##### **Synopsis**

The movie is centred on two families Mr and Mrs Abah and the Charles'. Ken Abah the husband of Susan Abah is from a rich home, his father owns oil blocks and Ken is the managing director of Hills oil and gas, while Susan is a house wife. Ken eats his food fresh and Susan is saddled with the responsibility of cooking, washing and cleaning the home and Ken does not appreciate her efforts. To him she is a mere house wife with no other responsibility as he provides all that is needed in the home and is not doing enough. Failure to serve him his fresh meal when he needs it or clean up as fast as possible elicits insults from him. His wife Susan feels like a slave and is no longer happy. Ken expects her to cater for the home front and also perform her conjugal duties as he demands. Her complains and demands for a house help and better treatment fall on deaf ears.

It is established in the movie that life was pleasurable and near perfect for them until Ken's dad acquired oil blocks and Ken becomes arrogant and full of himself. Eventually Susan's 'whining' according to Ken prompts him to seek a divorce, Susan accepts the divorce and because of his father's political ambition and forthcoming elections Ken's mother suggests they have a quiet divorce and that Susan remains in the house with Ken until the campaign is over. However they owe each other no obligation, they are to live as two separate and independent adults. Susan takes charge of her life, spends more time on herself, gets a good job and a new relationship. While Ken in order to spite her brings in his lover to the house but she is befriended by Susan. Ken is filled with jealousy and has a change of mind concerning the divorce.

Charles and Linda are family friends to the Abahs, Charles is a civil servant and spends more time at home with the kids, dotes on his wife and is supportive of her ambitious dreams to become a regional manager of her bank. A career woman, she seems to play the role of the husband in the relationship and Charles is comfortable with the status of things. Linda believes her husband is not cheating on her when Susan implies it, she is certain her husband wouldn't even think such, for her, he is the most supportive man on earth. She has a housemaid, who does the cleaning, cooking, caters for the children and her husband. For the Charles' conjugal consummation is based on Linda's time table – and she's always too tired after the day's job.

As the story unfolds, Susan gets her husband back as she wants him – loving and considerate and Linda discovers her husband has been cheating on her with their housemaid. He has no regrets and claims she pushed him to it as she doesn't cater for his needs and cares more about her job. Eventually, both families' make a fresh start of life.

This movie basically attempts to tell a truth about some of the conflicts and struggles in marriages.

### **3.1. 1. Representation of Women**

Since African films, rather than allowing viewers to escape the reality of their lives, actually shake viewers up and leave them with deep existential questions to reflect upon, African cinema inevitably ought to be “read” ... also across disciplines, such as history, archaeology, and the likes. Martial Friendethie (2009:1).

The analysis of *Mr. and Mrs.* will explore the stereotypical presentations of women that generally fail to portray Nigerian women in their diversity and complexity in Nigerian movies as it entails in our society and how some movies have tried to represent such portrayals for positive change. Also captured would be the various social values that make and sustain the family institution. The analysis will elaborate my recourse to cultural norms theory posits that through selective presentation and tendentious emphasis on certain themes, the mass media creates the impression among audience that such themes are part of the culture or are clearly defined cultural norms of society.

The Nollywood video industry is a major player across the globe. Given its large viewership and popularity as established in chapter two, it is only fair to surmise that Nollywood videos deserve to be more carefully analyzed and evaluated for their impact on society in general both negatively and positively especially on women and their role within society considering that videos mostly reproduce patriarchal gender relationships in Nigeria and portray women in the negative light. Often Nollywood videos depict women mostly in the traditional roles of house-wives, mothers and cooks. This is as a result of the society's cultural values which

mainly place women within marginal traditional roles. Such a depiction of women in only domestic settings is arguably at variance with the modern-day reality of Nigerian women. Today, in addition to the typical domestic roles that women perform, women are also engaged in a range of activities in virtually every walk of life.

In contemporary Nigerian society for instance, apart from being mothers or house-wives, women are also lawyers, pilots, pharmacists, medical doctors, and engineers, to mention just a few. The crucial question which arises therefore is why do Nollywood videos continue to portray women mostly within traditional roles? Secondly, are women's traditional roles and values better than their changing modern roles and values?

In contrast to African Literature which has been subjected to an appreciable number of feminist appraisals over the years and which, in turn, has created a positive impact on the portrayal of women in African Literature, the same cannot be said about Nollywood and the interrogation of the stereotypes of women in Nollywood videos in the recent past. The issue of the marginalization and the silencing of women in literary works, which denied women their historical roles and social statuses, permeated the works of early canonical writers like Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Wole Soyinka and others. In their foundational texts they tended to ignore women and their socio-economic and political roles in the pre-colonial societies. However, female writers like Buchi Emecheta, Flora Nwapa, Akachie Ezeigbo, amongst others, have for example, used their works to write back at male writer's stereotypical representation of women. The emergence of such African women writers, most of who were influenced by the early African male writers, has also influenced male writers to adopt revisionist strategies in their later texts. For instance Achebe's later text *Anthills of the*

*Savannah* (1987) deviates from his earlier texts to reposition women and acknowledge their contributions to society.

With more Nigerian women being involved in the video industry, as well as more feminist criticism of the representations of women in Nollywood videos, Nollywood videos are beginning to in recent times reconstruct the stereotypical African/Nigerian woman. *Mr. and Mrs* is one of such movies; the movie did not only deconstruct the stereotype but also projected the balancing of the traditional and modern woman to achieve positive change in the family and the nation at large.

*Mr and Mrs*, present most of the general tendencies that are typical of the representation of women in the Nollywood videos - as being either good or evil, fulfilling patriarchal and limiting roles, thieves, home breakers and as incarnations of many forms of evil. Vis- a- vis women in more complex terms and as making solid contributions to the betterment of the lives of their families and societies. The presentation of women on the first level is understandable as I argue that these presentations are made on the background of socio-cultural influences that reproduce gendered bias and stereotypes. Melissa Thackway (2003: 149) contends that African women face a lot of cultural constraints which could be reversed through sensitization programmes.

There is a popular position that tends to assume that traditional practices against women are stronger in the rural areas than in the urban. This argument is buttressed by MacRae (1999: 252) when he affirms that “conditions for women are more especially rigid and harsh within the rural society but to some extent more open to change in the cities.” The reason could be that women in the cities are gradually becoming more apprehensive of certain practices which



they cannot submit themselves to. This is obvious in the select movie as the women involved are city women with certain aspirations and desires.

Since recorded human history, women in Nigeria have been associated with mythical and other societal stigmas which have over time assumed the status of stereotypes that pass as common sense. These stereotypes are eventually used to prescribe and restrict their activities in the society and, in turn, privilege patriarchy. My application of stereotypes here refers to the conventional or formulaic conceptions which, according to Renata Rabichev (1996:104), provide a platform where certain groups in the society are “categorized and represented in a generalized manner.” It is most common to find stereotypes in rumours, stories, legends, myths and folktales among others. M. H. Abrams (1957:111) contends that:

Myth is a system of hereditary stories which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group, and which served to explain...why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, as well as to establish the rationale for social customs and observances and the sanctions for the rules by which people conduct their lives.

Thus it wouldn't be wrong to say that myths is one of the major ways in which stereotypical characters are promoted, and rural societies generally uphold myths which support patriarchal values.

Simon Gikandi (1987:150) contends that in Africa “myths have actually been naturalized by the dominant culture or class to justify its hegemony”. He further notes that through myths and ritual the activities of the ruling class are recycled as the will of the god.” This explains why and how the role of women in the society is rationalised as divine will through myths that reproduce class and gender inequalities. Talking patriarchy and women, Mary Kolawole (1998:7) is of the view that many cultural myths have a negative effect on women because they contribute “significantly to women’s self-devaluation and sense of communal belonging, economic, social and political status.”

The effect of patriarchy is captured in the character of Susan who is dominated by her husband; he refers to her as a house wife and as far as he is concerned it is not hard being one. Since she doesn't work he expects her to be at his beck and call, she cooks, cleans, and attends to his personal needs and that of their children. He says, *'I don't get it I make sure I provide everything we need as a family, you don't work what's so difficult in being a house wife?'* Getting her a house help is a taboo an issue not to be mentioned. He expects her to perform her conjugal obligations irrespective of her personal feelings. Failure to provide his needs elicits aggression from him. His domestic violence reduces her, self value as she says to him *'I have lost my self esteem I am no longer the woman I used to be'*. Ken is allowed to have extra marital affair while Susan is expected to play the role of a faithful wife and mother. When after the divorce Ken insists she shouldn't be dating, *'we have children you shouldn't be dating now'*, she queries him *'it's ok for you to date and bring her home and I can't?'* Similarly, economic power is also considered a male prerogative and big businesses are owned by men who are also the bread winners for their families. This helps to condition women to see themselves as dependants who must rely on men for their upkeep and survival.

Susan is stripped of her economic power as she is not allowed to work, Ken sees himself as the man of the house with the power, resources and means to provide all their needs while she is expected to put it to good use, speedily catering for his needs. She is also not expected to make social appearances as Ken sees her as not befitting of his status as the son of the Minister of petroleum and Managing Director of Hills oil and gas. As a result of this he does not attend social functions with her as it would taint the political status of his family. He confesses to the psychologist *'take for example when I go for a function and they say meet Mr. Williams the son of the Nigerian ambassador to the U.S and his wife the daughter of the*

*senate president or Mr. Jonathan son of the governor and his wife the daughter of the minister and meet Kenneth Abah and his wife ... daughter of who, common wash man?.*

We further see the stereotypical characterization of women as the weaker sex and as evil or wicked in the characters of Susan and Mrs. Ken Abah(Susan's mother –in-law) respectively. Susan in comparison to her husband is the weaker sex; she is desperate to keep her husband and cannot go contrary to what he says. She finds it had to challenge him on his extramarital affair, when she attempts to talk about it, Ken rebuffs her and by his response gives her, the go to hell option; he makes no explanation and rubs it into her face. When she reels out an explanation on how she prepared his lunch since Ken doesn't eat stale food. His meals must be freshly prepared by his wife, he retorts *'stop whining madam wife, if you are not happy being my wife... there are a thousand and one out there who want to be called Mrs. Abah '*.

Kate the house help has no say in how she is treated by her master Mr. Charles she is at his beck and call and cannot resist him. She satisfies his sexual needs, cleans, washes, takes care of his children and at the same time caters for his wife too. He tells his wife *'don't worry about me Kate has taken care of me'* At the end of the day she loses out and is seen as the home breaker. Susan's mother-in-law is the stereotypical elderly woman, mother-in-law who often disturbs her son's marriage because she wants to continually gain her son's attention from his wife and or be in control.

Thus, in most Nigeria movies, mothers-in-law are projected as responsible for most broken homes. Mrs. Abah takes over the situation between Susan and her husband she insists Susan must remain in the house with her son though divorced to protect her husband's political ambition. She continually gives her son moral, physical support and encouragement to go on

with the divorce even when he develops cold feet. Since Ken loves to eat fresh food she hires a cook to attend to that. She also encourages Ken to bring in his lover to the house to spite Susan. She further harasses Susan about living a free lifestyle while still under her son's roof. When Ken decides to rebuild his marriage with Susan she shows her discontent and disapproval till the very end.

What the movie fails to reveal to us however, is the reason for Mrs. Abah's insistence on the divorce, perhaps it is as a result of the negative information fed her by Kenneth her son and typical for all mothers she takes her sons side with an intention to protect his interest. Who would blame a mother for that?

In contrast to the stereotypical role of women, men are projected as the custodians of virtue, strength, competence, leadership and managerial abilities, as well as always being very rational in their thinking. Ken sees himself as competent with leadership and managerial abilities hence his position as Managing Director while his wife remains a house wife, He knows what is best for his family and doesn't want to be questioned. Mr. Charles is also portrayed as full of wisdom, understanding and a caring husband. Also fathers-in-law are seen as peacemakers and well wishers of their daughters-in-law. They are hardly seen as constituting any threat to the peace and tranquility of their son's marriage. Susan's father –in-law is a typical example of this character as he continually pours accolades on Susan at the reunion party '*Susan the most beautiful daughter in-law in the whole universe.*' He recognizes and appreciates her efforts to keep her home together as they celebrate a renewal of their vows and giving a toast says '*... my daughter Susan I call her daughter without the in-law because if you know Susan, she is an embodiment of wisdom*' and further suggests Ken purchases for her the latest range rover sports car.

Women have also been labeled as prostitutes, husband snatchers and adulteresses. This is reflected in the character of Monica Ken's lover and Charles' house maid, they are adulterers and husband snatchers who bring about chaos in Susan and Linda's homes. When Susan realizes that Monica was her husband's lover all the while, she refers to her as a prostitute reaping where she did not sow. Men's role in prostitution, whether as pimps or patrons, is never considered nor turned into stereotypes. Susan gives her husband no blame for committing adultery with his lover neither does she blame Charles for committing adultery with Kate the house maid. Rather she ensures that Kate whom she sees as the trouble maker who wants to break her friend's home is moved out of the picture. Thus, Charles and Ken who are accomplices to the adulterous women receive no publicity at all. Susan tells her friend '*we clean up the mess*'. When women are either labeled as prostitutes or adulterous it points to how unreliable they are, but the male figure has no queries to answer for having illicit affairs with the same women tagged as prostitutes or adulteresses. These double-standards are consistent with the fact that in Nigeria polyandry is not practiced and is a great social taboo while polygamy which gives men the right to marry as many women as they can afford is generally accepted. Women who decide to opt out of marriages that do not cater for their needs, are immediately labeled prostitutes.

One of the reasons identified for the portrayal of negative images of women in Nigerian videos is the male dominance in film production. However, this issue is not peculiar to Nollywood as it can also be traced to Hollywood. Claire Johnston (1999:32— 33) established that women working in Hollywood are not given ample opportunity for self-expression under the sexist ideology which conditions roles for women. As a result, women's position and roles rarely change except for a few modifications in the area of fashion. While commenting on the

development of Nollywood as an industry, Ebele Eko and Imoh Emenyi (2002:170) bemoan the fact that most of the Nollywood producers and directors are male and these male practitioners use the camera to privilege the position of men at the expense of women. They support their contentions by analysing the representation of women in the movies they produce. Some of these movies include *Dark Goddess*, *True Confession*, *Glamour Girls 1&2*, *Without Love*, *Deadly Affairs*, *Disappointment*, *Nneka the Pretty Serpent*, *Flesh and Blood*, *Blackout*, *Most Wanted*, *Visa to Hell*, *Chain Reaction*, *The Price*, *Highway to the Grave*, *Black Power*, amongst others. They, however, note that there are “a few exceptions” amongst which are, *The Tyrant 1&2*, *Masterstrokes 1&2* and *I Was Wrong*. These videos portray women in a positive manner and they celebrate womanhood by giving their heroines identities and agency alongside the male characters in the narratives. The heroines admirable characters engender emulation, and to Eko and Emenyi, (2002: 172), the videos are in contrast to most Nollywood videos that “recount sordid tales of female atrocities against the social system”

Nollywood videos hardly depict career women as successful wives and mothers as being able to both manage successful families and good careers. Instead, the videos only show the reverse that women with careers are unable to have good family relationships because of their professional lives. This is captured in the character of Linda who neglects her family in her bid to be professionally successful. This stereotypical shortcoming is the reason Ken refuses Susan from working and prefers her being a full time house wife.

The question that readily comes to mind is, if Nollywood videos depict women negatively, what negative influences do they have among women who are arguably the greatest consumers of these videos? Afolabi Adesanya (2002:48) and Carmelia Garritano (2002: 167) reveal that women watch Nollywood videos more than their male counterparts. This is

because videos have become more accessible within the confines of individual homes and they continue to be a major source of entertainment for women whose social life is mostly restricted by stereotypical traditional laws to their homes. Even for the elites, visitations to public viewing centers are sort of limited. Suzanne MacRae (1999:252), speaking on African cinema contends that lots of African directors project “urgent social and ethical problems for women” these problems range from polygamy, poverty, heavy domestic responsibilities, deprivation of legal and political rights to physical brutality and dehumanisation. MacRae therefore calls for the use of social realism to document issues pertaining to women rights in Africa. She also identifies African films as a powerful social tool for the emancipation of the woman. According to her, films can empower women and facilitate their ability to undertake social action that will help to eliminate destructive traditional practices on women (MacRae 1999: 247). Similarly, Med Hondo (1996:40) emphasises that films can influence the social behaviour of people and that film can shape people’s characters either positively or negatively. In view of this, it is pertinent that we remain cognizant of the ways in which Nollywood videos replicate pre-existing stereotypes in Nigeria in their representation of women.

Onookome Okome (2004:12) on his part, draws attention to how Nollywood narratives “displace the critical and intellectual voice of women,” even when they try “to reaffirm the beauty of their bodies in this space of being.” He further cautions that attention needs to be paid to how negative depictions play a role in shaping the real language of gender and power relations.” Okome (2002:12) notes that until recently, scholarship and feminist writings and debates are starting to inform people’s responses to the veracity and stereotypes peddled by Nollywood and that practitioners are likely to be concerned with the changes in the traditional

image of women in Nigeria's post-colonial framework." Videos, according to him, have opened new debates for scholars and cultural enthusiasts. According to Chichi Aniagolu-Okoye (2006:1), cinema and the Nigeria videos have replaced the traditional storytelling and are "influencing behaviour, perpetuating stereotypes or re-inventing new ones." Indeed the stereotypical characterization of women is being reinvented as will be seen in the movie *Mr. and Mrs.*

The roles and responsibilities that are religiously and culturally prescribed for men and women in Nigeria have earlier been established. Rewriting the role of women in movies is a compelling way of confronting traditional observations on gender identities. To reflect the possibility that women may perform roles that are different or in opposition to what is socially or culturally expected, is to question the politics that surround the stereotypical representation of women in movies.

*Mr. and Mrs.*, having projected its female characters in the stereotypical way eventually settles for the role of women as perceived from the female eyes and the eyes of those who stand in sympathy for the recasting of women. Susan moves from the socio-cultural role of the domestic woman who is at the mercy of her husband to one who wins her husband's respect and love, while still maintaining respect for her husband and performing her wifely and motherly duties. Linda on the other hand moves from the role of the elite woman who because of her elitism cannot handle her home, treats her husband as the woman in the relationship to that of a humbled woman who balances her work and her domestic responsibilities. Susan is projected as a smart, strong and focused woman who knows what a family should be like and fought to maintain hers and eventually her friends. The counselor says to Susan '*you are a*



*strong woman... you made this happen, you are an institution. Women should come and learn from you'*

The men are not left out as Ken is first portrayed as the wayward husband with no respect for his wife and matrimonial values to one who realizes his mistakes and shortcomings he pleads with Susan '*... I want my love, my friend, my wife, my companion, the mother on my children'* and vows to make amends. He decides to spend more time with his family. *He tells his wife 'am the Managing Director ... I can go to work whenever I wish'* He says to the manager '*henceforth you have to get used to not having me around ... and please no calls whenever am at home'*.

Charles is seen as the slimy, cheating husband who pretends all is well and on the surface pretends to be a loving and understanding husband. His deceptive nature was revealed through the smart idea of a woman, rather than show remorse for his action and find a solution he insists on the housemaid remaining in the house. Sanity was brought to the house through the smart initiatives of Susan, who approximates the finesse and insight that men – whether as heroes or anti-heroes – occupy in thrillers. She is detailed and calculative in her planning. All in all, she is the epitome of wisdom and tact. She cleans up the mess.

The movie *Mr. and Mrs.* having presented the stereotypical position of women places side by side a reversal of these characters and through this reversal captures values that need to be imbibed for healthy homes. This is achieved through a number of issues which will be carefully analysed.

### **3.1.2. Divergence and Convergence of the Female Character**

The number of women portrayed with evil tendencies in Nollywood video films bears out Farida Ayari's (1996:183) view that:

It is worth noting that nine times out of ten, female characters in African films meet a sorry fate. No doubt because the film-makers feel they have a pedagogic and moral mission, the screen presents characters who cannot overcome. There are almost no positive heroines. Film-makers are quick to show us the examples that must be followed, but rarely do they show women with all their qualities as well as faults without judging them. And yet there are exceptions.

The character of Linda is representative of the negative tendencies associated with women in the movies, we see her as the elite wife who neglects her family and subjects them to the care of the housemaid who performs even her conjugal responsibility ( although without her initial knowledge). She assumes the role of the husband; is ambitious, power drunk and non – submissive. When she and Charles go to see the counselor, she takes charge and assumes a dominating role she says *'it's funny because when Susan was talking about rebranding, I never thought I will have to rebrand Charles'*. Charles further expounds her adoption of the husband's role when he tells the counselor *'if there's any issue of rebranding any husband my wife needs rebranding she's the husband.'* Linda goes further *'Charles I provide everything, I gave you everything I even got you the job...'* When she speaks lovingly to her husband, it is to fulfill her selfish intentions .On one occasion she sends her husband to get her phone which she forgot in Susan's house *'ehm baby can you please get my phone I think I left it on the couch or something'* and Susan had to caution her *'Linda he's not your toy boy why do you send him on errands?'*her response was *'please please Susan, I've got Charles where I want him'*

She uses dismissive words to keep her husband away from her and by extension running away from her conjugal obligation. The narrative matches the visuals and their dialogue helps to illustrate the dismissiveness and insensitivity of Linda. When she informs her husband of her

eventual promotion and he excitedly responds *'my love now that you are on top there, I will have more time with you starting from now'* she says *'don't be insensitive baby this calls for more work, more work darling'*, and she rushes back to the office. She never hesitates to tell them she is exhausted from much work at the office and needs to rest to begin again the next day. She does no cooking and eats out when the maid is off. She tells Susan *'the only time I enter the kitchen is on Sundays for breakfast and its strictly bread and tea'*.

As all these happen her husband is supportive and never complains. This we could say is another negative tendency attributed to the woman- not smart. Charles attunes himself to every of her demands and plays along with her, acting the doting, loving and caring husband. He even accompanies her to the Abah's every Sunday to have a good meal because Kate the maid is usually off .While doing all of these he satisfies himself with Kate. After being caught and Susan tries to mediate between him and his wife, he rants out a list to them *'Kate is the reason you had a good husband, Kate is the reason that am still with her, Kate is the reason am a good father, Kate is the reason that am still in this marriage, Kate is the reason I've not lost it, look Kate is not going anywhere'*.

The character of Kate also projects another negative attribute of the woman – a sex object to be used at the whim and desire of the man. In the movie, Kate makes no contribution; she says nothing and she is continually submissive to her Oga, madam and even to Susan. Charles dots on his wife even in her presence of Kate and asks her to attend to his wife and she does so without hesitation. She is at his beck and call and has no opinion. When Charles makes a show after being caught in the act by his wife she stands timidly and follows him as soon as he gave the command. Eventually she is sent packing by Susan and she readily obeys without an iota of resistance. Susan's mother –in-law is not left out of the picture as she assumes the

role of the wicked mother-in-law home breaker who fights tooth and nail to see her son's marriage broken. Rather than advice and proffer solution to the challenges faced by the couple she encourages her son to go ahead with the divorce and completely takes over the course as she strives to remain in power. Not even her son's plea would deter her she remains adamant about the reunion of the couple till the very end. In spite of these negative characters, as Farida observes, 'there are exceptions'. It is true that Nigerian women are also good wives, mothers and sisters. Susan Abah shows and embodies the tolerance, perseverance, submissiveness and long-suffering that most Nigerian women endure in order to make their marriages work.

The movies' use of the binary divide between good and bad creates the nuances through which Susan is presented to the audience. She is shown as being very submissive to her husband Ken as she caters for his needs. She ensures his meals are prompt, the house is neat, and laundry is taken care off as well as every other domestic responsibility. When he returns from work she gives him a warm welcome and picks his suit and shoes while asking how his day went even though he doesn't appreciate it and responds coldly in grumps and one word syllables, she is not deterred. Her dissatisfaction with her husband's decision that she remains a house wife does not result in any rudeness or disobedience on her part. It further reveals the submission to him as she continues to seek his permission to pick up a job and justify her achieved profession as a lawyer. She gently passes across the message that she feels like a slave in her home.

Susan totally understands her roles and obligations as a wife and mother in the family. She declares while having an argument with Ken and his mother '*Ken face it I am a good mother and I was a good wife*'. Neither Ken nor his mother disagrees to this but through their

physical demeanor we see their acceptance. This understanding of her role is further demonstrated through her cooking for her husband just the way he wants it. Ken does not eat stale food, his meals must be fresh he says to his wife in arrogance when she served him Moi moi which he thinks was stale but which she start preparations for as early as 4 .30am, *'do I need to remind you that Ken Abah Managing Director of Hills oil and gas does not eat stale food?'*. She ensures his food and even drinks are freshly made. Her exceptional effort at ensuring she pleases her husband is reflected in Mrs. Abah's words when she surprisingly queries her son *'oh, oh, you mean that woman has been cooking fresh food for you, everyday of her life?'*

The Charles' are also regular visitors at the Abah's not only because they are family friends but because they also enjoy her cooking. After the divorce in which they are freed of every obligations to each other, Ken finds it difficult to cope with the fact that he can no longer have his meals fresh, he is also not satisfied with the efforts of the house help provided by his mother nor his foreigner lover who cannot cook. His constant longing shows his wife is exceptional at that and he resorts to drooling while she eats and sneaking into the kitchen to eat her left over. Thus when he regains his senses he confesses to her *'please forgive me, you are irreplaceable, I took advantage of your love and submission.'* Her sensitivity to her husband's food preferences illustrates her traditional obligation to her family when Linda queries why she does not travel to Paris with the children for a breath of fresh air she selflessly thinks first of her husband *'who will take care of Ken he doesn't eat out'*. She further chastises her husband's lover *'are you even a woman? You can't cook, you cannot keep a home, you don't even have manners'*. Susan does not see Monica as woman enough for her husband as she cannot perform any of the traditional roles of a woman.

Through the character of Susan the character of an ideal woman is projected; humble, peaceful, loving, warm, resilient and providing an atmosphere for happiness. The love and attention followed by the eventual renewal of vows by Ken and Susan chronicles the harmony that will exist between the husband and wife as a result of the woman's determination and commitment. Susan achieved this, won admiration and became the envy of many represented by her friend Linda who with her husband looks on and says '*oh Charles... acting just like newlyweds*' and when Charles assures her '*our family is gonna be perfect you know ...*' she responds '*I want that too*' - Susan and Ken are full of laughter and holding hands at every opportunity; at the party, before their parents and around the house.

All of this helps to sum up the totality of harmony and love that radiates from a nurtured relationship especially from the efforts of the woman. They serve to emphasise the importance of maintaining the traditional rules of marriage; with the man as the head of the family so that unnecessary conflicts in marriage can be avoided. It also reveals that being a modern woman - having a job should not be a reason to abandon the responsibilities of the woman to her family rather there should be a balancing of both. Susan tells Linda '*a woman who has a home and a career has to learn to marry them both: that is success*' Women can still keep their jobs and maintain their families. The exploration of the character of Linda and her husband also suggests that long lasting marriages come about when women allow the pre-existing social order inherent in the society to remain as it is. Charles tells the counselor '*look madam if she still wants this marriage, then I have to have a say in this home. I just want her to be close to the home so she can take care of the home*'. This further validates the fact that women need to maintain the hierarchical positioning which sees men as the head of the family.

Popular genres like romance have been important forms for writers whose works do not belong to mainstream or canonical works and Newell (2002:4) posits that such popular texts are “capable of conveying messages about gender and society which are saturated with new meanings.” She further opines that the reading of romance in West Africa aids men’s understanding of women’s behaviour. Women writers and film makers delight in the exploration of the romance genre and constantly use it to their advantage to project their views. The romance formula serves to license projected attitudes and opinions which are challenging to existing social practices that are not favourable to women, such as arranged marriage, polygamy, loss of self, domination etc. Through the romances intense, personalised commitment to individuals, authors express criticisms and protests that might otherwise have been censored by their society. By providing alternatives to characters, romance writers are not only expressing their personal ideals but they are also “promoting alternative social models for the community at large” (Newell, 2002:3). This arguably explains why women as writers, filmmakers, or as audiences, read and like romances that often present melodramatic resolutions to the problems those characters face in a story. Women work more with romances as it provides them the space to re-write the existing gender relations and ideologies. Newell (2002: 3) captures it thus:

Rather than overthrowing existing gender ideologies, these writers work within them and rewrite the most rigid beliefs about the moral qualities that make women into good wives, spiritual mentors, or good - time girls. Positioned thus, they might problematise the figures of the ideal wife, the rural mother or the good- time girl, but they do not necessarily reject these popular constrictions of femininity.

Worthy of note is the fact that popular fiction use storylines and themes drawn from the every-day experiences of characters. Emphasising this, Newell (2002:4) is of the view that even recurring character types, such as the good-time girl and the gangster, can be of

importance as they provide later generations with the opportunity to “glimpse the kinds of didactic, historically specific commentaries that have been composed by Africans in the distant and more recent past.”

The families of the Abah’s and Charles’ represent many families in Nigeria going through similar challenges, not knowing how and where to find solutions. A lot of families have broken up leading to high divorces rate, while some have resigned themselves to fate and have continued to endure in such challenging situations. This eventually results in malfunctioned children who constitute a nuisance to their families and the society at large.

In showing how romance can present contending meanings that audiences are meant to filter, through her reading of the Radio theatre play *Immoral Network*, Dina Ligaga (2008:82) opines that, “Romance provide spaces that encourage audiences to engage with the message being given in the texts for purposes of self development.” She argues that in a bid to “emphasise a developmental lesson,” the binaries of good and evil “have to be made clear”. She goes further to say this happens because the play seeks to “encourage a particular kind of reading among listeners.” Thus in a bid to achieve that purpose, different strategies are employed like “multiple storylines, exaggeration and misrepresentation” to emphasis different lessons in the play.” So also, most Nollywood videos that depict women within the dichotomies of good versus evil employ such strategies. We see this play out in the characters of Susan, Linda, Ken, Charles, Kate the house help as well as Susan’s’ mother –in –law. Viewers are given the chance to choose between what the producers impress as good and the characters that make wrong choices in life and are eventually, punished.

Another angle through which romance is explored in the movie is in the act itself- romance keeps relationships alive and when absent results in a break down. Susan’s marriage goes



through hard times because he husband no longer shows her the love and affection on which their relationship was founded. He gets carried away with the political and societal status which his family has come to achieve. Susan keeps lamenting this to Ken himself *'we were not like this before your father owned oil blocks'* and she confides in the counselor *'I have lost him to political and social status'*. Charles Linda's husband is pushed to having an extra marital affair with their house help because he has been deprived of romance by his wife. He tells Susan *'how do I stick to her time table of love making, am starved for month's she's either tired or busy'*.

Susan's father in- law emphasises the importance of love in the home and as a recipe for positive change *'love must begin from home, our children must be taught and brought up well, that way our country and indeed the homes will be a better place and like heaven'*. Also speaking to Ken, Susan captures the whole essence of love *'if love is life, you feed it, you nourish it, you cherish it. When you don't do these three things it gets malnourished. When you kill it, it dies'*. Mr. and Mrs. thus projects the necessity of keeping romance alive in the family continually; this eventually reflects in the society – as we breed healthy relationships.

Nollywood movies are constructed around a complex mix of religious, traditional and modern ideologies. For the most part, the videos often suggest that there is an ideal society founded on the principle of virtue as described in the Holy Books. For instance (Ephesians 5 and 6 of the Holy Bible) clearly defines the place of individuals and the relationships between genders. The deviation from the distinct role of the man and woman results in crisis and most Nollywood video storylines thrive on this. The defined roles presuppose that the family is a metaphor for the wider society and, at its smallest and closest unit, it comprises of father, mother and children. It is an indivisible unit where every member tries to maintain their roles

within the traditional and religious designation. In the context of all these ideologies, the husband is the head and bread winner of the family; he is also expected to provide protection for his family.

In *Mr. and Mrs.*, Ken clearly states this when he says to Susan '*I provide everything we need as a family.*' Charles even though it seems is relinquishing his role to his wife, still provides and protects his family and ensures everything works fine. While discussing with the counselor he makes it known that he desires to take up and maintain his position as the husband of the home. The mother in the family echelon comes directly next to the father and is supposed to provide care for the family and support for her husband, in addition to being submissive to him. Susan perfectly fulfils this role as she submits to her husband and provides for her family.

The structuring of family relationships in line with gender is expressed thus by Coppock, Haydon and Richter (1995: 154)

Constructions of masculinity and femininity operate in the home, where family arrangements are often based on dominant gender-based ideologies. Traditionally, it is expected that men will be the providers for dependent women and children with women's role defined as homemaker, child bearer and nurturer of both men and children.

Identifying family structure reveals to us how families are organised, as well as the resultant effect of deviating from the traditional family organisational structure. This is captured in *Mr. and Mrs.*, we see the resultant effect of Ken not performing his role of providing his wife Susan with emotional affection, the result - an unhappy, dissatisfied and broken hearted wife and by extension a broken relationship. Likewise Charles whose wife abandons her traditional role of caring for her family – seeks satisfaction from the maid. This brings about pain and

heart break for Linda his wife and break down of trust. The future of the maid is also jeopardized as a result of the event.

Irrespective of the traditional roles, *Mr. and Mrs.* strives to capture the modern roles for women in Nigeria and Africa in general which see women sharing some of the traditional roles that hitherto were exclusive to men and vice versa. For example, women now have to contribute to provide food for the family by taking-up jobs especially within the modern day capitalistic economy. Linda takes up a well paying job and provides most of the family needs. They take up employment that would take them outside their homes and indeed some jobs require that they travel long distances away from homes in order to contribute to the maintenance of a viable and stable family. These developments complicate the articulation between domesticity and masculinity in Nigeria. Uchendu (2007: 293-4) notes:

Contemporary Nigerian masculinities have a domestic side. This emerged in response to unfavourable economic changes. Domesticity by men within the family set up is a post – colonial development but with its beginnings in the colonial period, when wage labor was instituted and men joined the labor market as domestics to colonial officers. They did not however, share domestic duties with their wives at home. Male participation in household jobs became obvious following the economic crisis that hit Nigeria, requiring the adoption in the 1980s of International Monetary Fund’s Structural Adjustment Programme... Under a distressing economic situation, the concept of the male breadwinner whose masculinity hinges on his sole ability to financially provide for his family ...

This goes to show that colonial and post-colonial economies, to an extent generated additional gendered roles and also did alter some early traditional functions which were strictly for women and men as well. As women take up jobs, they earn salaries, sometimes more than their husbands and are obligated to contribute to the up-keep of their families. This position ordinarily should be seen as an additional benefit in the battle to strengthen family ties as it assists in improving the quality of life of the family. However, if not properly managed could

lead to a breakdown of the family. This is reflected in the Charles' family; Linda is a banker holding a reasonable position and aspires for a promotion which she gets. Her husband assumes the domestic role of taking care of the home front and catering for the children. She gets carried away with the fame and power, abandons her roles and neglects her family, resulting in dire consequences. The movie therefore projects that women need to in addition to their tremendous economic contributions, maintain their traditional roles as mothers and wives.

Having explained the roles of the members of the family which exists to maintain the organizational structure, it is pertinent to note that the movie *Mr. and Mrs.* projects the sanctity of the family as an institution through its characters. Susan is aware of this sanctity and strives to maintain it. She says to Linda '*... there you go again my friend, our home is the most important thing in our lives*'. In spite of her husband's lack of appreciation, insensitivity to her needs and extra marital affair, she still continues to do her best. She tries communicating her needs and frustration even though it all fell on deaf ears. When Ken insisted on a divorce she is shattered but quickly pulls herself together. We see her metamorphose from the helpless, dominated wife to the bold, strong woman. She accepts the divorce with her plan in mind and confides in the counselor her determination to restore her marriage, '*I do not know, there's something, somewhere, and I want to tweak that thing and make my man come back home*'. She further emphasises the importance of the family when she tells Ken's lover '*...if you push me I will make sure that this man here chooses between you and his kids and you know and I know exactly what his choice will be*'. When Ken had a change of mind and appeals to her she retorts '*I want my love and my family back.*' She also does not take it kindly with her husband's lover when she realises she is the same person he

had been dating all the while. Susan fought hard and eventually got her husband back- a man who loves and respects her.

Mrs. Abah, Susan's mother in-law is equally willing to prevent any stigma or taint on her family, she insists Susan remains in the house with her son and act like everything is normal irrespective of the divorce until her husband's governorship election was over. This is to project to the public eye that all is well; it also reflects the fact that a healthy home is very important to the society and those in leadership positions are expected to have such homes. Failure to do so could communicate negatively to the public and in this situation can lead to her husband losing the election. Ken is also eager to have a perfect home as he agrees to his mother's suggestion and further insists like his mother that Susan spare their children details of the divorce. He would rather they know nothing of the friction between them. Linda prides herself of having a perfect home and acts out self righteous to Susan, she reminds her at every point she has the best husband and never fails to tell her things are working fine in her home, she extols Charles *'he has never and will never cheat on me'*. Charles on his part deceptively toasts to *'the most perfect loving and peaceful family'* hers is a typical example of pride comes before a fall, when she realises her husband has been cheating on her; she is devastated and asks *'will I ever forgive him'*. However, we can say that her desire to have the perfect home she thought she had could be a reason she stayed on and strived to reconcile and rebuild her home, as Susan also tells her *'any woman who cannot keep a home has failed'*. Women in the traditional society count it joy to be married and sustain their homes, they see themselves and to a large extent, society also sees them as failures if they end up with a broken home. This explains why most women would rather endure their marriages than ship out.

Charles also appreciates having a perfect home and thus is comfortable finding the stability in Kate the maid; he desires not to have his family disintegrate. This is probably why he played along with his wife to avoid a confrontation that would result in grave consequences. He confesses Kate is the reason he is a good husband and still in the marriage. For him Kate's departure would result in a rupture and the tearing apart of his family. This is also a pointer to the fact that he cannot handle the responsibility of keeping the home by performing the traditional role of the woman. When Susan suggested Kate leaves the house immediately he says to her *'you don't understand what's going on here, who is going to do the cooking, wash and iron for me and my children'*. Thus the movie projects that the traditional role of the woman is very relevant to maintaining a stable home. While speaking to the counselor he emphasised on both he and his wife adopting their traditional role for the purpose of peace and cohesion he says *'I have to have a say...'* The counselor by virtue of her profession and adopted role in the movie already takes a position favourable to the institution of the family. Her disposition is reflected in the efforts she makes to see that Susan, Ken, Linda and Charles restore their marriages. For her that is enough payment she reveals to Susan *'your home is a success story and that is my currency'*.

Susan's father-in-law also shows his appreciation of a happy home as he congratulates and praises his son for the initiative of having a renewal of vows. He also showers accolades on Susan for her ability to maintain her home ten years running. As further appreciation he instructs Ken to procure for her the latest range rover sport.

*Mr. and Mrs.* successfully project the values of maintaining the family in a chaotic world, and the need for all to play their various roles. The family needs to be cherished and protected irrespective of challenges faced. This is embodied in the words of Mrs. Brown the counselor

to Susan '*we all face challenges in our homes but only the strong stay and fight. The cowards just leave their homes and run away*'.

The character of the house help is one that features prominently in not just Nollywood movies but soap operas, and as usual it is a projection of societal norm. Most house helps are women and usually teenagers who are sent out by their parents because they cannot cater for them adequately. These house helps are sometimes used by their parents as money making machines or are sent out as a means to become responsible for their selves and cater for their needs. The character of Kate the Charles' maid embodies the disadvantages and dehumanisation most house helps go through. Kate the teenage help is left at the mercy of her Oga to do with her as he pleases. Even though he showers her with same gifts which he presents to his wife, '*she did not steal from you, I bought two of that*' she is not able to maximise their usage as she is confined within the house. This act reflects Charles bid to suppress her to submission with material gifts. The young girl is unable to reason out things for herself, at the end of the day she loses out on both sides as Susan arranges for her immediate departure from the house to save her friends marriage. Charles insistence on Kate not leaving the house is for his selfish aim- to maintain his sanity in his wife's failure to perform her obligatory role. He makes no concrete offer to her neither does he indicate marriage, for him she is a means to an end.

The plight of Kate in *Mr. and Mrs* is a wakeup call to parents who send their children off to homes to perform the functions of house help. Considering what they usually go through it is necessary to minimise the giving out of children or where not possible monitor their activities and well being in these homes.

For Aniagolu-Okoye, (2006:4-5) Nollywood depicts women as each other's worst enemies. She however debunks this position and suggests that such woman to woman enmity is overblown and does not conform to the life experiences of women. Aniagolu-Okoye argues that, in reality, women have always cultivated good friendships among themselves and often serve as "each other's companions, confidantes, protectors and advocates." In her summation, she advises that:

While cinema is said to be in many ways a depiction of reality, it is also an excellent vehicle for projecting society into the future and giving it a glimpse of what it could aspire to be. The censors board should pay more attention to the message of Nigerian films instead of being solely concerned with nudity or lack thereof. Cinema is the window through which others view a people... an excellent vehicle for giving Nigeria and indeed African woman a new image of self worth, pride, values and aspirations.

*Mr and Mrs* thoroughly buttress Aniagolu's position, the characters of Susan, Linda and Mrs. Brown the counselor portray that women become strong holds for themselves in times of need. Linda stands by her friend Susan as she struggles in futility to restore joy to her home and also when she struggles to come to terms with her divorce. She often accompanied her to see the counselor/psychologist. The counselor is also sympathetic to Susan and when Ken was acting indecisive she seems displeased as she captures his action thus in her words '*men ...pride, indecision, let go, no they'll always want to be in charge all the time*' She stands by Susan and tries to mediate between her and Ken as well as make Mrs Abah see reasons. When her efforts fail and Susan acts suspiciously pleased with the idea of a divorce and the conditions given, and asks for an opportunity to bring her man back, she plays along with her, and was there till the end when Susan gets her husband back. Susan appreciates her effort when she says '*this would not have been possible without you*'. We eventually realize that the counselor acted out the 'imaginary' lover who kept calling and chatting up Susan, while her husband kept picking and dropping off Susan at odd hours. These acts culminated into



infuriating and getting Ken jealous and eventually resulted in his change of mind. He could not stand seeing Susan moving on with her life without caring if he was there or not. He says to her *'when I asked for the divorce it was just in a bid to humble you. I expected you to beg to protect the family, the children you love so much'*. The counselor also agreed to destroy the divorce paper which was speedily processed to make room for a fresh start between Ken and Susan. Whenever the counselor, Susan and Linda meet, they make efforts to analyse their homes and discuss ways in which to make their families better.

However, Linda always plays the role of the self righteous wife with a perfect family who needs neither advice nor suggestion to improve her home, she keeps insisting she has a perfect home and the most loving husband. She says *'you guys are great but I don't need this I've got Charles in my palm'*. Even when Susan, suggests that, *'when a man is not getting his due, he's definitely tapping it somewhere else'*. Linda always disagrees with this and reels out her husband's routine *'He leaves the house at 7.45, takes the children to school and resumes his office at 8am... he closes work at 3pm, goes straight to pick the kids from school and then back home. So tell me, where's the time?'* On one of such occasions, the counselor suggests she sparks up her relationship by paying her husband a surprise visit at home. She agrees to this and goes ahead with the plan. On arrival home she discovers her husband and the housemaid in the act right on their matrimonial bed. This devastates her as she struggles to maintain her sanity and love for her husband. Susan stands by her offering words of encouragement; she steps in to mediate between them and eventually comes up with a plan without the knowledge of her friend and husband to send the house help packing and succeeds.

At the discovery of her successful plan, Linda gives her a suspicious questioning look filled with admiration and Susan slyly says *'I stopped by to clean up the mess, a mess my friend was too distraught to clean.* When filled with pain and grief Linda wonders if she be able to forgive Charles, Susan says *'what's there not to forgive ..., forgive, forget and stand by your man... these men are babies and when they mess up, we clean up the mess'*. This reflects the strength that exudes from the woman and their major role in sustaining the family. The counselor also offers her friend support as she mediates between her and her husband and offers positive advice to Linda, she works towards rebuilding the family. Julia T. Wood (1994:187) summarizes women's friendship thus:

Women's friendships tend to develop out of the central role accorded to communication, which allows disclosures, expressiveness, depth and breadth of knowledge, and attentiveness to the evolving nature of the relationships. Because they know the basic rhythms of each other's life, women friends often feel interconnected even when not physically together.

The friendship that exists amongst the women, who maintain the necessary secrecy in their handling of Susan and Linda's marital challenges, exemplifies the trust, strength and support which good friendship can bring to women. Friendship, ultimately, becomes a crucial factor in the building of the women's marriages. Susan gets her husband back and Linda is set on the path of rebuilding her relationship. *Mr. and Mrs.* projects that women should protect the interest of their fellow women and encourage each other, in the building and sustaining of their homes.

The major characters in *Mr. and Mrs.* can be said to all have committed a crime in one way or the other, as is the norm in Nollywood movies offenders are ultimately punished for the various crimes that they commit and this is a reflection of the society. For example in the

movie *Omata Women*, Chinasa pays with her life for killing her husband and the character Dozie as well for embezzling money, her refusal to confess, translating into daring the village deity, Ogwugwu. Upon realization of her contravention of human laws she begs the deity for forgiveness. But the deity punishes her for transgressing against the society's moral code and swearing falsely to it. The deity spews a white substance from its mouth which penetrates into her stomach and she falls down and dies. Here we see how society traditionally reveals and punishes offenders weighing their principles upon its appeal; approval and disapproval to tradition John Ladd (1957: 268) captures it thus:

The right way is the way which the ancestors used and which has been handed down. The tradition is its own warrant. We should therefore inquire whether the moral code we are investigating is justified on the grounds that it is the way the old people used to do it

In the same movie, the duo of Nkechi and Ijele are not punished by Ogwugwu but they still pay for their various crimes. Ijele's, punishment was the reversal of the spell which she cast on her husband, Nduka, in order to emasculate him, while Nkechi is destroyed by Ifeoma who pours chemicals on her for divulging her secret, adulterous affair with her Landlord Chidi. The narratives point to the fact that however rewarding, in terms of the gains that the criminals derive from it, criminals will definitely have to pay for their crimes. The video films, in that way, make a larger statement that society would be a better place if people stop crime, and if criminals are made to face the law for their crimes.

However, in *Mr. and Mrs.*, the need for forgiveness is expounded as a virtue for peace and stability in the home and society at large. Susan tells Linda '*...you do know that the only thing you have to do is learn to forgive, forget and stand by your man*'. In spite of what Susan goes through in the hands of her husband; his dehumanization, extra –marital affairs etc she looks upon him with tenderness and never did she genuinely despise him. She believes there was

something wrong somewhere and her husband Ken was still a good man and sets out on a mission to 'tweak the wrong'. She tells Linda *'it's our responsibility to clean up the mess, I cleaned mine up'*. Even when Ken brings her rival home and she insisted on Susan making them a meal she succumbs to it. When Ken had a change of mind and came begging, she readily accepted him even though she made her desires clear, she constantly says *'I love my family and I love my husband'*, they make a smooth transition back to normalcy and Susan never held it against him.' Ken on the other hand also forgives Susan for putting up false acts to make him believe she was having an affair; from the frequent nights out, to the illusionary lover. On the contrary he appreciates the resultant effect and he says *'alright fine its official, I accept am the biggest fool alive'*. Furthermore, Susan holds nothing against her mother-in-law, neither for the role she played in the divorce nor the insults she received from her.

Linda also forgives her husband even though it was initially difficult for her as she confided in Susan. They embark on the path of reconciliation and rebuilding. Charles also forgives Linda's shortcomings as soon as she accepts to perform her obligatory roles and strive to build a better home. Through his actions he pledges his commitment to make Linda happy and tells her they too can have a blissful marriage like Susan and Ken. Kate even though it may seem got the worse of treatment we can still say that she was forgiven as no harm that we see comes to her; Susan only threatens her to ensure she leaves the house so Linda and Charles can rebuild their home and sets her off with a handsome sum.

*Mr. and Mrs.* performs an educational role in society, as it depicts forgiveness as a method of overcoming the everyday battles, trials and tribulations of marriages; it ends with the eventual victory of virtue...

The cultural norm theory suggests that movies selectively represent and emphasize certain contemporary ideas or values and influences norms by reinforcing or changing them. *Mr. and Mrs.* Has successfully represented and emphasized relevant values as the entail in our society.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **ANALYSES OF HALF OF A YELLOW SUN AND THE MEETING**

#### **4.1. HALF OF A YELLOW SUN**

##### **Synopsis**

Half of a Yellow Sun narrative is structured around the social, family and love life of two privileged sisters Kainene and Olanna who upon their return to Nigeria after completing their studies in the United Kingdom make decisions which surprise their parents. Kainene moves to Port Harcourt to oversee her father's business and falls in love with a white writer Richard while Olanna goes to lecture at the University of Nigeria Nsukka and moves in with her professor lover Odenigbo. Life goes on for them with few challenges here and there; Odenigbo's mother brings him a girl from the village to marry, she keeps frustrating Olanna and Olanna decides to take a vacation. While she was away Odenigbo's mother gets him drunk and he eventually sleeps with Amala his supposed wife. Olanna returns and discovers, Odenigbo's fling, out of anger and hurt she runs to her aunty in Kano who encourages her to

take control of her life and not act like the world has ended. She advises her to move into her own apartment and move on with her life. Olanna returns and moves out of Odenigbo's flat and into hers, still feeling betrayed, she eventually sleeps with Richard her twin sister Kainene's boyfriend.

This act brings about animosity between Odenigbo and Richard. Kainene also learns of the act and animosity brews between her and Richard as well as her and Olanna. Events keep occurring building tension amongst the major ethnic groups in the country as things grow worst, the republic of Biafra is declared with jubilation in Eastern Nigeria. Olanna and Kainene's mother offers Olanna a ticket to leave the country with the progressing war; she refuses and chooses to remain with her family –Odenigbo, Ugwu the house help and baby. Baby is the fruit of the union between Odenigbo and Amala, however she is rejected by her mother Amala. Kainene on the other hand also remained, overseeing her business and with a full blown war runs a refugee home. In the midst of the war, the sisters spend some time together talking and sharing memories. This breaks the ice between them as Kainene forgives Olanna and they rekindle their familial love.

As the war progresses Odenigbo and his family flee Nsukka, he loses his mother this starts him off on the dark path of alcoholism and depression and he and they eventually end up in a refugee camp. Kainene who becomes a war profiteer manages the refugee camp and is involved in trading at enemy border and disappears at one of such trades. Richard is distraught and spends his days searching for her a few days after her departure the war comes to an end.

#### **4.1.1. Revisiting History**

History, as the necessary enquiry into the past events of human; whether in the area of politics, economy or society, generally, has remained a reference point in the evaluation of the activities of man both in the present and in the future. It has continued to serve as a guide in man's quest to understand the present and its challenges, in order to face the future successfully. By so doing, it does checkmate the repetition of the mistakes of the past for a better future. There is a lot which can be learnt from history especially as we continue in the struggle for societal change.

Esedebe (2003:18) was right when he stated that history "is the only means whereby we may understand the present (and) ... a man who loses memory of what went before will be a man adrift". In order not to be adrift, Nigerians need to be abreast of their historical past. The famous Abraham Lincoln said "If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do and how to do it". Furthermore, Renee Sanders (2009:4) points out that 'It is vital to remember the past is never far from us, and if we deny its existence, value, and impact on our lives then we miss not only living honestly, but also not contributing to the future'.

Moreover, history helps us to make a sincere and an honest evaluation of events in the past in relation to their present and future relevance. This is one key role among others that the teaching of history plays in societal change. It reminds us of the experience(s) of other nations that have passed through similar or related challenges and how they were able to scale through, in nation building. History has been recognized all over the world as a source of enlightenment and development. As a collective memory of the past of a nation, history attempts to bring to the fore the salient and significant part of events that occurred in the past,

which could be utilized in building a prosperous national future. This is why every human society, no matter the level of advancement, has placed optimum priority to the bequeathing of a "useable past" from generation to generation. For instance, in ancient cultures, kingdoms had a history laureate who is saddled with the task to remember the past and communicate same to generations after generations.

I would argue that a major reason why so much violence (physical and psychological), aggression, hatred, poverty, et cetera, dominate the day to day existence of the people in Nigeria is that, collectively, they lack historical consciousness. They tend, indeed, to act or react based on present situations and care little about the past. To escape from this seemingly inescapable quagmire, there is an urgent need to imbue Nigerians with an enduring sense of history. As Ajayi (2004:240) once submitted:

The nation suffers which has no sense of history. Its values remain superficial and ephemeral unless imbued with a deep sense of continuity and perception of success and achievement that transcends acquisition of temporary power or transient wealth. Such a nation cannot achieve a sense of purpose or direction or stability and without them the future is bleak

It is in the light of this that a study of this nature becomes absolutely imperative as part of the ongoing efforts towards the historical awakening of Nigerians. Also writing on the intimating interaction between Nation and History, Ajayi stressed that:

... History interacts with the nation. For the nation is a product of history in the sense of historical circumstances and events; and therefore the nation cannot escape from its past. At the same time, the nation is shaped by the effort of historians, among others, who try to establish the history of the nation, influence its group memory and seek to define its nationality-that is, the essence of what binds its people together, what constitutes their identity, what makes them a people distinct from other peoples.



Indeed, what historical understanding does essentially for any nation is to place its developmental predicament within rational time perspectives of human evolution. This is the utility value of history. History also helps people not to undervalue what they are and overvalue what they are not. It in turn provides confidence building strategy to any prostrate nation that is striving to grapple with present problems in its efforts to bring about positive change.

Nigerian producers have in recent times begun to look back at our history for inspiration. Over the years, our history has been told by others particularly the white man and as a result of this, contemporary Africans and Nigerians have come to believe and accept the western version of things as the whole truth. The retelling of our history through movies will not only project what has been but also will help change perceptions. This reinforces the capacity of film as a propaganda tool and a vehicle for mass reorientation. Films help influence people's perception of themselves and the world. The narrative in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is the Nigerian story told from the eye of a Nigerian.

The 111 minute film *Half of a yellow sun* (HOAYS) is an adaptation of award winning author Chimamanda Adichie's 400+ page novel *Half of a Yellow sun*. The movie was produced by Bayi Bandele with approval from Chimamanda who says the movie did capture her intention in the novel which is- 'to write about love and war, ... to engage with my history in order to make sense of my present'.

The movie is introduced with the historical visit of Queen Elizabeth II for Nigeria's independence on 1st October 1960. This is captured with real footages as joyful Nigerians line up the streets carrying miniature Nigerian flags and cheering not just the Queen but

themselves. Background music used as well as props – from vehicles to buildings reflect the 60's, Ugwu the faithful house help of the arrogant professor of mathematics (Olanna's lover) is dressed in a typical outfit of a house help in that era. The general outfits of the entire artists reflect the fashion of the 60's. The unity that exists at the period is captured in the city of Kano when Olanna goes to visit her aunt who lives there with her family. We see Hausas and Igbo's live together without animosity. This is also reflected in the company Odenigbo keeps back in Nsukka, his friends include the Yoruba Miss Adebayo, Richard the white writer, Dr. Patel the Indian Professor amongst others. The 1963 coup and the issues therein are also captured through real footage and the characters of Odenigbo's friends as they analyse the coup. Miss Adebayo reiterates the conclusion of the news that the coup was an Igbo coup, while another explains it seems so – an Igbo coup- because the Northerners were mostly in power.

The unified disposition of them all was that of disenchantment in the government of that time and a general agreement of the prevalent corruption of those in power. From their remarks we can hardly say that they were sympathetic to the victims as reflected by one of Odenigbo's friends, he says '*the finance minister, they said he shit in his pants before he was shot*' this elicited a general satisfactory laughter from them all with the exception of Olanna whose bourgeois father was a friend to the victim. We can also relate her disapproval to her being away and not having knowledge of the existing corruption in the country like Odenigbo and his friends, it is also pertinent to note the allusion to neo-colonialism and Odenigbo's antipathy which he never ceases to express. He says '*the BBC should ask her people who put the northerners in power*'; Odenigbo has always blamed the colonialists for the problems of Nigeria. We are further told the coup did not succeed in Lagos as the army took over

governance under the leadership of General Aguiyi Ironsi, who cut down the power of the region. The commentary projects that with the change in power, the Igbo's were starting to run the affairs of the country and this did not go down well with the other ethnic groups especially the Northerners. The antagonism towards the Igbo's in 1963 is seen in the character of the man at the Kano airport who hands over a newspaper to Olanna, he refers her specifically to the article at the back page which contains the story of the removal of an Igbo Vice Chancellor in the University of Lagos. He goes further to emphasise that the Igbo's want to dominate everything as he says:

The problem with the Igbo's is that they want to control everything in this country. They own all the shops; they control the civil service, even the police. If you are arrested for a crime as long as you can say 'keda' (wrongly pronounced kedu meaning 'how do you do') they will let you go and now with this coup, they control the army.

The security officer at the airport revealed the Igbo affiliation when he speaks excitedly and happily to Richard upon the realization that Richards's fiancée was Igbo and that Richard also understands and speaks the language. Tribalism one major factor that continues to severe and affect our relationship as a nation has been with us from way back. Odenigbo's tribalistic nature is displayed as he insists he is first Igbo before being Nigerian which to him is a British created identity. Miss Adebayo confirms this when she says '*Odenigbo is a hopeless tribalist*'. The man at the airport also misjudged Olanna to be of Fulani extraction and thus felt an affiliation towards her until she proved him wrong.

As revealed in the movie, the abolition of the regions by a decree led to the massacre of the Igbo's in Ibadan a fall back in the North and the disintegration of the Ironsi regime after he was killed among northern troops. Northerners worked out their pent up anger at the economic success of the Igbo's who migrated into their own region. The Northern soldiers embarked on

a killing spree as they invade the airport brutally killing Nigerians of Igbo extraction, the brutal killing in Kano results in the death of Olanna's aunty and her entire family. The extermination of Olanna's aunty and her family reflect the thousands of Igbo's who lost their lives and or families in Kano and surrounding Northern cities.

The movie *Half of a Yellow Sun* captures the excessive cruelty and violence of the Nigerian civil war sparked by the massacres of Igbo people, soldiers and citizens in 1966 as retribution for a government coup. The peace and optimism of the nation after independence is captured in the dinner parties at Odenigbos house, Olanna's father's house and general air of celebration amongst citizens. However, this placed side by side and in contrast with scenes of violence, fear and uncertainty as the nation during the war becomes a place of danger and casual violence as lives are lost sporadically. The war affects all of its characters in different ways; Odenigbo the outspoken, confident and arrogant professor retreats into his shell, loses his self confidence, becomes quiet, reserved and sad after the death of his mother. Olanna on the other hand becomes more stern, rational and sad, she loses her happy and carefree self. When she visited her aunt in Kano, she was chased by a blood hungry mob as she struggled to reach her aunty who was being dragged away to death. In spite of the animosity towards the Igbos some kind hearted northerners existed as Olanna is saved by one of such who drives her to safety and she returns to Nsukka physically ok but psychologically traumatized. She represents the tens of thousands who lost lives, families and or friends as a result of the violence that ensued.

Nwandu, a Nigerian civil war survivor who was about the age of sixteen when the war began and successfully struggled to be conscripted as a child soldier, lost friends and family in Kano

and felt an affiliation to the Igbo's massacred he says while reliving his childhood soldier memories:

I joined the militia to avenge the atrocities on the Igbo in Northern Nigeria but particularly the deaths of my relations in Kano where we lived until October 1966. I would have been killed myself. I was among those pursued by a mob. I was able to reach my father's house on time. I climbed into the ceiling and hid myself there. That was how I escaped death

Using historical footages of Ojukwu's speech, we are told the speculated figure of Igbo casualties in the North; in Zaria 670 in Kano over 1,500. Also revealed is the presumed support of the Yorubas in the massacre of the Igbos, Odenigbo laments in grief, anger and pain to Miss Adebayo. He says *'is it not your own people that are killing the Igbos in Lagos, didn't your chiefs go north to thank the emir for sparing the Yorubas?'*

Ugwu returns broken formerly a boy but now a man who has committed the atrocities of war as a Biafran soldier. The victims of the war are not left out as their lives change as a result of the violence and dehumanisation meted out to them not only by the Nigerian soldiers but the Biafran soldiers as well.

The creation of the Republic of Biafra at that time was a time of hope for the battered Igbo and thus it was greeted with jubilation in Eastern Nigeria as the flag with the symbol of the half of a rising sun was raised and paraded. Odenigbo, Olanna and Ugwu all reflect the joy and acceptance of the new nation. The war began and with the advancement of the federal troops into Nsukka began the race for life by Odenigbo and his family. For him the race will be short but as it turned out it took 3 years of their life.

Their experiences mirror the race for life and challenges faced in the midst of terror for millions of Igbo's as they fled their homes became refugees in their land and spent the better part of the 3 years running for their lives. Odenigbo's mother chose not to flee and when she got killed, Odenigbo like millions of other refugees did not have the privilege of giving her a proper burial nor seeing her corpse as a result of the raging war which continued to claim the lives of friends and families. The footage of Michael Nicholson ITN correspondent shot during a live air raid states that the air raids took place every day at half past one. Fredrick Forsyth BBC correspondent reports on the war as air raids relive what had happened some 47 years ago.

The war takes its toll as, feeding becomes a problem and accommodation beyond reach, in a failing desperate bid to manage their dwindling resources Olanna becomes highly agitated as she chastises Ugwu when he attempts to make a meal for baby with the kerosene stove. The lack of balanced meals or no meals at all takes its toll on children caught in the midst of the war, leaving them with the dreadful kwashiorkor. This is reflected in the character of baby as Olanna observes to Richard when he visited '*baby has grown wiser but she hasn't grown taller since the war started*'. During the Biafra war, there was a deliberate attempt to end the war by causing untold sufferings to civilians comprising mainly women and children. Starvation became a key strategy in bringing about an end to the war; this led to the tragic death of millions of Biafrans. Some argue that the Biafra war was like any war and it is normal to expect casualties. Also some personalities on the Nigerian side made vitriolic statements like (quoted from remembering grim quotes [www.biafraland.com/grim\\_reminder.htm](http://www.biafraland.com/grim_reminder.htm)):

I want to see no Red Cross, no Caritas, no World Council of Churches, no Pope, no missionary and no UN delegation. I want to prevent even one Ibo from having even one

piece to eat before their capitulation. We shoot at everything that moves and when our troops march into the centre of Ibo territory, we shoot at everything even at things that do not move. (Benjamin Adekunle, a.k.a. "Black Scorpion," Commander, 3rd Marine Commando Division, Nigerian Army)

“All is fair in war, and starvation is one of the weapons of war. I don’t see why we should feed our enemies fat in order for them to fight harder” (Chief Obafemi Awolowo (Nigerian Minister of Finance)

“Mass starvation is a legitimate aspect of war”(Anthony Enahoro, Nigerian Commissioner for Information at a press conference in (New York, July 1968)

" ...the Ibos must be considerably reduced in number" (Lagos Policeman quoted in New York Review, 21 December, 1967)

In spite of these statements, some yet have argued that the policy of the use of starvation as a weapon during the Biafra war is just a myth, however the millions of children starved to death during the war speaks for itself. Even though there were casualties on both sides of the conflict, Igbos not only lost the war, but they also bore the brunt of the casualties. It is estimated that over three million Igbos died during the war out of which two million (mainly children) died from starvation resulting from the air blockade.

There is no justification for supporting or denying genocide most especially as the use of starvation as a war strategy is a breach of the Geneva Convention. It is pertinent therefore that as a means of achieving positive change, it is important we revisit as a nation the tragic story of the millions of people (majority children) who died as a result of man’s cruelty to man, and try to make amends by means of acceptance and apologies. This we may see as a not to necessary act but talking about the situation, acknowledging mistakes and showing sympathy would go a long way in soothing long frayed nerves and harboured hurts.

From May to October 1967 enlistment into the Biafran army was by choice and depended on the recruit’s age and potential abilities. Recruiting officers rejected volunteers under the age of

eighteen following the established practice at independence of recruiting persons eighteen years and above. However, with the progression of the war and the possession of antiquated weapons by the Biafran side, they lost a lot of territories to the Nigerian soldiers. The call for voluntary conscription to adults and children with a desire to defeat the Nigerian troops and save their land was not positively responded to as the men knew Biafra possessed antiquated weapons which were even of limited numbers. Even the consignment of 'Mars' weapons received from Haiti in 1967 though efficient were few. As a result of this, Biafra became desperate for man power and thus began the conscription of boy soldiers - a war crime according to the Geneva Conventions and the International Criminal Court.

The humiliation and physical abuse to which unwilling draftees were subjected made conscription unpleasant for child soldiers. Resistance could result in serious beating, after which the victim was sent to a training centre where he remained under strict observation in case he attempted to abscond. Boys above fourteen years of age knew that it was better to volunteer than to be caught and forced to take up arms. Thoughts of military service evoked different reactions in young soldiers. The most commonly reported feeling was fear.

The conscription of young boy soldiers into battle field, without any military training or food is captured in the character of Ugwu as he is bundled away when he stepped out on an errand. The accompanied fear in these young people is reflected in the actions and facial demeanour of Ugwu as he was bundled up, kicked, slapped and thrown into the back of the vehicle. This method is captured in the story of Okosi now a sixty –four year old medical doctor who was conscripted at the age of sixteen. He relives his story:

During a visit to Umuahia, to see my mother, in October 1967, she warned me to move carefully. I did not take her serious. One day I strolled out and what I heard was: Hey! Hey!! Don't move. If you move, I shoot!!! ...They took me to where other boys they



caught were. That was how I joined the army. My friend Obiesie was also conscripted ... We were hastily trained for three weeks ... One night three trucks pulled into our camp and took us to Biafran tactical headquarters where we received our uniforms and rifles (the same rifles we used during the training). I received my uniform but without a belt or helmet. From there we were driven straight to the front ...

The trauma, physical and psychological experiences of these conscripted child soldiers is also seen as Ugwu returns from the war, battered, hurt and terribly shaken, he is no longer the innocent house boy but a boy soldier who has contributed to the horrors of the war through his participation. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, as the war rages on, Odenigbo's animosity towards the white man increases and his dislike for Richard further deepens. His opinion that the white man is responsible for the many political upheavals experienced in the country and his subsequent dislike for him, projects the opinion of many Nigerians. A good number of Nigerians are of the view that the white man is the architect of our problems by bringing us together – different nations to form a common entity. Rather than look deep into ourselves to make the best of our major strength, our diversity, to bring about positive change in our existing society, we over flog ourselves sulk and lament our woes. Ironically, the brutality of the war reignites the bond between Olanna and her Sister. Kainene comments, *'there are some things that are so unforgivable that they make other things easily forgivable'*. This sums up the spirit of compromise that must be faced between the idealism of the past and the realities of our future.

The industrious nature of the Igbo man; to survive in spite of all odds is reflected in the character of Kainene Olanna's twin sister who in the midst of war runs a refugee camp, trading needed food items, purchased from 'Nigerians' across the border. Odenigbo and his family eventually move into this refugee camp and Olanna isn't happy with her sister's choice of business as she sees it as an exploitation but Kainene defends her action by saying

*'someone has got to do the job'*. She insists against the advice of Olanna, Richard and Odenigbo to go trading across enemy borders and on such a trip did not return. The war ends a day after Kainene's disappearance, Odumegwu Ojukwu the leader of the separatist Biafra republic seeks asylum in Sierra Leone and the Republic of Biafra ceases to exist. The people rejoice as the war ends with the surrender of the Republic by Philip Effiong, but did it signify the end of the troubles? Odenigbo, Olanna, baby and Ugwu return to Nsukka to begin life afresh.

Kainene who is portrayed as a very strong character and of them all has the most disconnect with the war and seemed not to have suffered same hardship as Odenigbo, Olanna and Kainene disappears without a trace. We are left with an uncertainty about what becomes of her. She symbolically represents the re-united Nigeria, yes the war has ended yet there are needs yet to be met, loose ends begging to be tied, so much unsaid. These issues culminate into the internal political rumblings of Nigeria forty- seven years after the war.

Today at a time when war and famine is resurfacing around our world, and in our country, tension, uncertainty and fear of the unknown creeps in as a result of political and social events, *Half of a Yellow Sun* serves as a vivid reminder of the true cost of warfare – the collateral damage.

#### **4.1.2. Politics of Identity**

The opinion in most quarters is that the colonial masters are responsible for the problems in our country resulting from the racist, oppressive colonisation of the British Empire. Colonialism exacerbated cultural conflicts among Nigerians as the country's borders are

unified bringing together over 300 different cultural groups as one entity with the Hausa enjoying more government control.

Much of the conflict in Nigerian politics today and as captured in *Half of a Yellow Sun* has to do with ethnicism and the battle for greater control. The civil war itself was hinged on the background of ethnicism- between the Muslim, autocratic Hausa and the mostly-Christian, republican Igbo with the Yoruba's and other minority tribes taking sides favourable to their existence. Nigerians are more loyal to their ethnic groups than they are to their nation, for them they must first exist and succeed in their ethnic microcosm before they think of Nigeria. Ethnicism /tribalism is reflected in the character of the young officer at the airport who develops an affiliation towards Richard simply because he understands Igbo and is engaged to an Igbo lady. Miss Adebayo one of Odenigbo's friends constantly expresses her animosity towards the Igbos' and often refers to Odenigbo as a hopeless tribalist because they both hardly agree when it comes to tribal matters. Odenigbo crowns it all. He says *'the only authentic identity for the African is the tribe... I am Nigerian because the white man constructed black to be as different as possible from his white. But I was Igbo before the white man came'*. Ethnicism remains a major problem or how do we explain the public outcry on the appointments of the present administration of Muhammadu Buhari as coming from a particular region of the country. How else do we explain the concept of Federal Character or the constant battle for regions to produce the president of the country?

#### **4.1.3. Elements of Culture**

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* we see in Odenigbo's mother, the character of a typical mother with strong affiliation to "homely" things. She desires that her son marries a true home woman

from the village and forces on him Amara who to her is a true and well brought up Ibo woman fit for her elite professor son. She is antagonistic to Olanna whom she sees as a too educated woman, not schooled in domestic life and thus not good enough for her son. As she challenges Olanna she says to her '*I hear you did not suck your mother's breast*'. This is an expression with the underlying meaning that Olanna is not fully human, her level of education further making her abnormal. For Odenigbo's mother an educated woman is a witch. Olanna confronts Odenigbo on why he chooses to overlook his mother's antagonism towards her. He insists she overlooks his mum because '*she is a village woman*'. The failure of the relationship between Amara and Odenigbo projects a positive rejection of such act. This is further buttressed by his mothers later acceptance of Olanna as a daughter –in-law. The regular meetings and discussions by Odenigbo and his friends over bottles of various drinks remain a social culture amongst Nigerians; political, social and economical discussions over bottles of drinks still pervade tables at social gatherings and outings, at such outings Nigerians pour out their opinion on issues about the polity that bother them especially the political.

#### **4.1.4. Love as an Instrument of Change**

Nollywood tends to use the romance genre to pass across messages subtly to its audience, letting them decipher what is being projected. Romance can present contending meanings that audiences are meant to filter. Ligaga (2008:82) opines that romance provides “spaces that encourage audiences to engage with the message being given in the texts for purposes of self development.” She argues that in a bid to “emphasise a developmental lesson,” the binaries of good and evil “have to be made clear”. Nollywood videos on romance are used to communicate cultures, beliefs, attitude and challenges in the society. Through romance, some

movies depict the benefits of unity, trust and love as people stick together to overcome challenges. After

Odenigbo's infidelity Ugwu mediates for his master as he urges Olanna to '*forgive master, mama used bad medicine on master ma*'. Ugwu who is only a house help shows so much love and loyalty to his master and mistress. They all stick together through the war as a result of love in spite of Olanna and Richard's unfaithfulness. Odenigbo and Olanna's resilience and love makes Odenigbo's mother relent and agree to their marriage and the wedding holds in the midst of the war. Olanna rejects her mother's offer to leave for London away from the war and to safety, but she decides to remain and support Odenigbo. Her love for him brings her into his world of radical politics, as the war progresses we see her transform from an upper class society lady to a ranching domestic woman. Richard's love for Kainene causes him to cross racial and political boundaries. Emphasis is placed on love: the unreasonable, resilient thing that holds people together and makes us human, which perhaps if we had, we may not have witnessed the war.

Half of a Yellow Sun tells the Nigerian history through a human story, capturing the emotion, thoughts and actions of the 'victims' of the war; the emotional truth. A good number of the present majority of the Nigerian population grew up in the shadow of Biafra. Not getting a full grip of events but living in the 'before the war' and 'after the war' stories. Therefore the movie Half of a Yellow Sun opens our eyes to the numerous problems pervading our society today just as it was before and during the war. Problems which make our hearts bleed, problems which today are responsible for our economic, social, and security challenges. Today, people are still divided along religious and ethnic lines. The average Nigerian blames

everything that is wrong with the country on some other ethnic group other than his. The civil war leaves a scar on the moral fibre of Nigeria. According to Frederick Forsyth, the British novelist “the Biafra war was one of the first occasions when western consciences were awakened and deeply affronted by the level of suffering and the scale of atrocity being played out in the African continent”.

The war is still talked about, still a potent political issue; however, it is mostly talked about in uninformed and unimaginative ways. Generations after generation repeat the same things they have been told without having a full grasp of the complex nature of the war, or they hold militant positions lacking in nuance. This position is also ethnically divisive: the (brave enough) Igbo talk about it and the non-Igbo think the Igbos’ should get over it. These divide in perception could be the reason for Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra(MASSOB), which in the past few years has captured the imagination of some Igbo people. MASSOB even though controversially reported to engage in violence with its leaders routinely arrested and harassed by the government, its followers believe they give voice to many issues that have been officially swept aside by the country but which continue to resonate for the Igbo people.

The movie *Half of a Yellow Sun* can be seen as a step towards promoting discourse in this dark period in Nigeria’s history for positive change in attitude. There is much to be learned from history. Movies like this, which bare our history and enlighten the younger generations on the origins of modern conflicts, should be encouraged, if only for the sake of progress. The then Eastern Regional government of Lieutenant-Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu’s reason for the desired secession was his conclusion that the lives and property of Igbo’s could not be

guaranteed within Nigeria taking into consideration happening events of that time. Today in Nigeria in the light of post civil war events can we confidently say that Ojukwu's conclusion was a mere illusion?

Silence over what needs to be discussed will never bring the much needed progress and change. Many of the errors we are making today are simply because we have not faced our past and have ignored our history.

According to Genocide Watch, the anti-genocide organization, there are eight stages of genocide. The first seven stages include: classification, symbolisation, dehumanisation, organisation, polarisation, preparation and extermination. In the case of Biafra, all these seven stages were completed, however in today's Nigeria, the final stage of the Biafran genocide has been completed i.e. **DENIAL**. Unfortunately, as time has passed by, the denial of the genocide that took place during the war is in full force. The Genocide Watch says:

**DENIAL** is the eighth stage that always follows genocide. It is among the surest indicators of further genocidal massacres....The perpetrators of genocide dig up the mass graves, burn the bodies, try to cover up the evidence and intimidate the witnesses. They deny that they committed any crimes, and often blame what happened on the victims.

It appears that there has been a deliberate attempt to cover up and deny the events leading to, during and after the Biafra war. As we go to school and our foundational education comprises of knowledge of Mungo Park, David Livingstone, Lord Lugard, and the Queen of England amongst others. We are not taught about the Biafra war, and when it is mentioned in later years we only see the phrase: "1967-1970: Civil War in Nigeria" with minimal information in some history books. Furthermore, Gowon's "no victor, no vanquished" approach simply reinforced the denial of the genocides committed during the war.

Little wonder the release of Chinua Achebe's book titled There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra and his article published in the Guardian on 2 October 2012, generated so much debate about the Biafra war. Some have accused Achebe of stirring up old wounds which they have comfortably shifted to the subconscious, by resurrecting the "B" question, while others are appalled at his comment about Awolowo's policies, which Achebe claims resulted in the starvation of millions of people. Others still have suggested that rather than heap the blame on Nigerian officials, Achebe should have heaped the blame on the Biafran leaders who embarked on a war knowing that their army was ill equipped to take on the Nigerian forces. One of the major problems of Nigeria-tribalism- did not escape the tread of words as the debate has also taken a tribal dimension with many Igbo's rallying behind Professor Achebe, while many Yoruba's have taken to the opposite side by expressing their displeasure at Achebe, while defending Awolowo's legacy.

As Gerbner and Gross observed about cultivation theory, that television is a combination of both facts and fiction, with an intention to stabilize agreeable social patterns and to cultivate resistance to presumed negative norms. HOAYS through facts and fiction presents the challenges facing us as a nation with the intention of creating awareness and subsequent resistance.

## **4.2. THE MEETING**

### **Synopsis**

The film opens with a phone conversation between Mr. Makinde Esho and his Managing director as he landed at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja from Lagos. His MD emphasises the importance of Makinde getting an authorisation for their proposed



project- erecting of communication masts in the Federal Capital Territory, from the Ministry of Lands, before his return to Lagos. As Makinde is about to board a Taxi, he is interrupted by Ejura a female Youth Corp member who pleads for a Lift, as she is short on cash and couldn't wait for the long queue at the ATM. Makinde reluctantly agrees after much persuasion from Ejura, even though Ejura had promised to keep mute during the ride, she pressurises him into a conversation.

Mr Makinde arrives at the Ministry of lands and is met with a scenario involving a Mr. Ugo protesting his harsh treatment as he us being forced out of the building by security operatives. Awed, Makinde manages to find his way to the reception desk where he meets the minister's discourteous secretary, Clara Ikemba, who unapologetically informs him his meeting, which was originally scheduled for 9:30 am, has been moved to 4:30 pm. Makinde joins the other appointees who are all seated to see the minister. While waiting, Clara informs the appointees that she sells recharge cards and cold drinks to cater for their needs as they wait to see the minister. Meanwhile, Ejura calls Mr Makinde to thank him for the earlier ride. Several hours go past and Makinde is yet to get a word from the secretary about his re-scheduled meeting. He inquires about it from her, but to his surprise, she informs him rudely that the minister has already left the office. Makinde argues that she could have told him and the others rather than leave them waiting. The secretary is offended at this and replies rudely to him "OYO (meaning *On Your Own*) is their case". His meeting is eventually rescheduled for the following day. Makinde checks into a hotel. While trying to fight boredom, Ejura calls and eventually joins Makinde in the hotel in a bid to keep him company. Returning the next day, Makinde still had his appointment rescheduled as a result of interruptions from the minister's kinsmen, political associates and mistress's visitations. Makinde was due to be back in Lagos

to attend his daughter's graduation ceremony. He didn't get to see the minister until Friday morning after plotting a mini coup against the secretary with the other waiting visitors who have been hoping to see the minister two weeks running. Makinde and Ejura enjoy a healthy relationship and eventually fall in love; he makes it back for his daughter's graduation and also gets a positive authorisation from the minister.

#### **4.2.1. Reflecting Society: Change versus Values**

Some Nollywood movies have served as a channel for the masses to air their grievances against the government even if it is just to criticize the leadership passively as a form of resistance. Okome (2007:9) explains that:

If political and economic powers are lost to this category of the popular audience, narrative power is not. Powerlessness in the roughly organized political and cultural spheres is converted into a peculiar narrative power in the realm of this existential disorder.

He further notes that "what comes out of the various narrative acts of this ironic chorus is what we may refer to as popular narratives. This is to say that Proximity to scarce national resources is resoundingly absent to members of this audience, yet members always seek to attain that status. They seek to replace or even come to the same economic status as the political ruling class, which is perceived as the stumbling block to its common welfare.

Nollywood occupies and performs a crucial social role and position in assisting viewers to interpret their experiences and society, for Tom Odhiambo (2004:33), Nollywood, "borrows its subject matter from the public on issues of contemporary importance to that public in

particular contexts” and it strives to be of “immediate relevance to the people’s worries, questions, experiences and lives.” Such issues are rebroadcast to that same audience for the purpose of educating, informing, instructing, and entertaining.

Every film is a representation of the economic, social, political, religious, cultural, and technological developments of the producing country. In analysing the relation between film and politics, Noel King (1992:2) states that in a broad sense, a cinema of political experience can be expected to deploy realistic characterisation and narrative structure, and that there is need to conceive of politics as an element of the world waiting to be pictured or represented:

The cinema of political experience understands politics as “subject-matter” and makes its calculations in terms of how accurately and persuasively it pictures political events or adequates a subject’s political experience. One consequence of such a cinematic practice is that the viewer is conceived as an experiencing subject... a subject awaiting politicisation by empathy

Taking Hollywood movies for example, there is no arguing the fact that over the years, they have continued to reflect American way of life – politically, economically, socially, culturally, technologically, and so forth. Douglas Kellner aptly posits that popular films intervene in the political struggles of the day, according to him, the Hollywood film, like the American society, should be seen as, “a contested terrain and that films can be interpreted as a struggle of representation over how to construct a social world and everyday life” . Taking a cue from this perspective, undertaking an ideological critique of a film involves analysing images, symbols, myths, and narratives as well as propositions and systems of belief.

In an analysis of the political imperative of cinema in Nigeria, Okome acknowledges the relative successes of Latin American filmmakers like Julio Garcia Espinosa and Miguel Littin in using the film medium to make incisive political statements, noting with dismay that the

Nigerian filmmaker fights shy of his political self, not taking advantage of the medium's potency as a tool for enhancing national growth and cohesion. Unlike the significant role played by the print media, the film medium did not help in the political struggle for Nigeria's independence, and nor contribute meaningfully to the political history of the country.

According to Okome, (1995:73):

Still suffering from the vestiges of colonialism and saddled with a festering political situation, the Nigerian filmmaker vacillates between the mere glamorisation of aspects of Nigerian culture and the uncritical portrayal of some dim historical past, producing in the final analysis films that are politically innocuous and culturally patronising

In the light of the foregoing, a critical study will be undertaken on how some Nigerian filmmakers have directed their creative imaginations toward portraying the country's political climate in films. This is of interest because the political genre did not receive serious attention by film producers in the past, probably because of the economic considerations and the exigencies of the political landscape. Stories reflecting political issues appeared to offer no success formula, until the demise of the maximum ruler, Gen. Sani Abacha; that was when *The Stubborn Grasshopper* was released. The success of this work seemed to have provided the impetus for the foray into political themes which consequently followed as seen in *The Incumbent*, *His Majesty*, *King Makers*, *Queen of Hasso Rock*, *Executive Crime*, *The Senator* and many more.

Emphasis will however be on the civil service system which is the code that must be deciphered and interpreted to forecast the path of change -for Nigeria. The civil service system in Nigeria is the only institution that has the badge of continuity linking us to the past and the future. Apart from being the best that could be salvaged from the ambivalent legacies

of the colonialists, the civil service system constitutes the focal point of any attempt to redeem the next hundred years of postcolonial and post-independence existence for Nigeria.

The Nigerian civil service was born in tentative hope that it would eventually acquire the capacities and competencies to drive the engine of socioeconomic growth in Nigeria as long as the state endures. In a century, Nigeria has made valiant effort at evolving a good governance paradigm that would bring the people into a democratic relationship with the state. However, in a century, it looks like we have not yet arrived. According to Henry Hampton, 'What drive people to the public service is a sense of possibility.' The possibility here as implied by Henry, is that of making an impact that would last a century and beyond. Herein lay the mandate of the Nigerian Government: the belief in the possibility of building an impactful civil service that would endure for centuries and the political will to lay its foundation.

In the early to mid 90s, when Nollywood industry began to thrive, Nigeria was under a defiant military regime (Abacha) that was intolerant of the news media. At the time, Nollywood was largely ignored and neither its political nor its economic potential had been acknowledged. Most videos then were not overtly political in spite of the political upheavals that framed the regime. The political tensions evident in society which could not be directly addressed on mainstream television may have contributed to the opportunities available for the video/film industry

Back then, videos produced were often social commentaries, reflecting social reality and by so doing, they take swipes at those in authority, be it in the dialogue or by inferences in the subtext. They may not rock the boat by avoiding direct confrontation with those in authority,

but they were still potentially subversive in the relationships presented, and the strategies they explored for living under the prevalent harsh conditions. Even though Nollywood did not overtly address such issues; it is by no means apolitical as some productions are clever satires, which were tolerated or ignored by the authorities. The analysis of the movie *'The meeting'* explores the representation of political corruption as consistent with our social reality irrespective of the narrative approach in Nigerian video films. The story interrogates the political strata of society; the civil service, and is told in a compelling narrative that allows for empathy and audience identification and association with the subject matter.

Arguably, one of the key manifestations of Nollywood's popular disposition and interest in foregrounding the experiences, of ordinary people, is its preoccupation with the representations of the trials and tribulations of city life and dwellers. In the recent past, Lagos the then capital of Nigeria played the role of the quintessential location and metaphor through which many videos negotiate their explorations. Lagos was the political and economic hub of the country, today, its political relevance is gradually declining as attention is shifted to Abuja the capital of Nigeria since the 1990's with Nigeria moving most of its political activities to the city, with most countries relocating their embassies to Abuja, while maintaining their former embassies as consulates in Lagos. This explains why Makinde had to travel down to Abuja to seal a deal. Abuja is a city built with an intention of being a 'no man's land', thus it embodies a hybridised form of cultures and identities. It is a city where people from the rural areas and neighbouring countries migrate to in pursuit of happiness and wealth. The city of Abuja, the city of power has gradually superseded the city of Lagos and its numerous eye catching sky –crappers, with its show of opulence; breathtaking sites, imposing buildings and creative plan. This beauty masks the stark reality of the rot of urban decay, traffic holdups, the

maddening crowd, urban crimes which daily confronts Abuja citizens especially at the satellite towns and political bureaucracy as people troop in en mass in search of better life in the city where they believe will take the close to the seat of power- and its population continues to grow.

Abuja is a city of paradoxes and contradictions from the truly rich elites to the wannabes, the haves and the have not's. The social realities of the city masked by the glamour add to its allure as people strive to survive, yet carry an air of contentment. Ejura welcomes Makinde to Abuja city, one of the waiting visitors also says to Makinde 'welcome to Abuja'

Abuja is basically a civil service state; no factories, no industries, yet like people say the 'money flows in Abuja', and to have a feel of the 'National Cake', people do whatever is necessary from the innocuous to the transgressive in order to get close to power - from ministries to departments and agencies looking for contracts, striving to get documents signed all in a bid to survive. Their behavior reflects the flux of identities and contested moralities they negotiate in a dynamic and difficult city of power like Abuja. The city of Abuja and its control of power have implications in my analysis of the meeting.

The meeting captures the Nigerian Civil Service sector as well as the business sector; the bastardization of the system and pressure at work to deliver irrespective of challenges faced. Mr Makinde Esho goes to Abuja the seat of power for a presentation to secure a business deal for the erection of a telecom mast by the company he works for- Techmast plc. He projects to be in Abuja and return to Lagos that same day. On his way to the airport he runs into Ejura a Civil Engineering graduate youth Corp member who seeks a ride into town having attended a friend's wedding in Benin. As Makinde gets to the Ministry, the first scene we encounter is the

CEO of Arsenal Hotels being escorted out by two policemen as he curses and rants about the way he is being treated. We later come to the realisation that his hotel on a piece of land allocated to him over ten years ago is about to be demolished in an ongoing demolition exercise in the capital city.

This is a subtle referral to the demolition exercise that occurred in the FCT, in which lots of people lost their source of livelihood and or properties long acquired without adequate compensation. Makinde enters the ministry and finds a number of people seated all waiting to see the minister. A heavily made up noisily chewing gum secretary admonishes all seated *'anybody who vexes me today shall be excavated from the premises just like that Ugo'* (Ugo is the CEO of Arsenal Hotels whom we first encountered). Mr. Makinde explains to her he has a 9.30 appointment with the minister, she flips through an appointment book and tells him his appointment has been shifted to 4.30pm and takes offence at his surprised confirmation and disappointment at not being informed about the change despite calling to confirm on the Friday preceding his Monday appointment. We are confronted with the rude attitude of the secretary and lack of respect for etiquette and the inconsistency of the service as she takes offence and informs Him thus *'Today is Monday Sir, a weekend is a longgg time in government Sir'* with emphasis on the long and the Sir said in a mocking tone to drive home her point. We also see her pomposity as she answers her calls. Makinde joins the queue of waiting visitors. As he sits the man next to him initiates a conversation and reveals his appointment has been shifted constantly for two weeks. As the story unfolds we see this as a recurring trend. Makinde observes this as a bad situation; the man sees it as a better situation to being thrown out. The man Mallam Shehu Garba finally makes it to see the minister amidst



admiration from other waiting visitors. A lady visitor reveals that having been waiting to see the minister for about two weeks, she has sought divine intervention.

The level of indiscipline in public offices is also captured as members of staff indulge in petty trading in their various offices. The ministers' secretary announces to the waiting visitors '*excuse me everybody am selling recharge cards, I cater for your needs as you wait thank you*'. When Mr. Makinde seeks to know where he can get something to eat, she refers Mr. Makinde to another floor within the ministry where a staff sells in her words '*designer rice*'. At 5pm, Mr. Makinde is informed the minister has left for the Presidential villa and will not return to the office. She offers to slot him in for 11am the next day. In his dismay he seeks to know the fate of the other visitors and the secretary unconcerned, retorts 'OYO is their case' (OYO is a slang word for on your own/sort yourself out). She rudely announces she will close the office at exactly 5pm.

Inaccessibility to public officers who have become demigods that are mystified by their secretaries and Personal Assistants is confirmed and emphasized by Ejura as she chastises Mr. Makinde for thinking he could come to Abuja and seal a deal the same day. She retorts '*...hian, with a government minister, you would have stood a better chance of seeing the pope*'. She further advises Mr. Makinde to stay on the good side of the receptionist as she is more important than the minister himself, '*if she doesn't want anyone to see him no one does*'. She calls it '*government Abuja style*'.

Mr. Makinde returns to the ministry on Tuesday morning for his rescheduled 11am appointment and is met by the still hostile secretary and same visitors in waiting. The secretary confirms his appointment and just as she prepares to inform the minister of his presence, an entourage of visitors barge in (obviously from the eastern part of the

country). They fill the office with loud burst of greetings as the secretary joins in a charade of salutations, quickly informs the minister about their presence and sends them in immediately with indifference to the already waiting visitors. She informs Mr. Makinde that the entourage is the minister's core constituency. In his dismay he observes the minister is a federal minister and she explains *'the minister took the ministerial slot of their constituency'*. This clearly shows the gimmicks in Nigerian politics. We also realise the reason for boot licking by the secretary – she receives huge tips from such visitors. To see the minister a lot of factors come into play; ethnicism, bribery, favouritism amongst others.

Mrs Ikom bemoans her fate as she recalls her husband's advise against turning in at the ministry in an English outfit as it would prolong her being granted audience to see the minister. On that same day, Mr. Makinde's audience with the minister is further truncated with the arrival of the ministers' mistress and at 5pm the secretary informs him she has to leave as the Minister left the office thirty minutes ago. She lackadaisically informs a furious Makinde *'there is nothing like overtime in the civil service'*. This shows the lack of ownership and lax attitude of Nigerians towards whatever belongs to government. The civil servants do not put in extra hours nor do they go out of their way to ensure effective and efficient service, they are only interested in what they can benefit for themselves. A dejected Makinde asks for the secretary's advice and she rebooks him for 12.30pm the next day. Professor Akpan admonishes the secretary on her behaviour, in response to this she shows no regard for the academic professor and has him bundled out of the office. Mr Makinde returns for his rescheduled 12.30pm appointment and is told to his dismay and that of those present, that the minister had left to inspect some parastatals in Akwalbom and will not be back until the next day, when he insisted he had an appointment she retorts *'so the Honorable minister should*

*keep the whole of AkwaIbom waiting just to keep an appointment with you*', Mr. Makinde is once again rebooked for the next day at 1pm.

Back at the ministry, Mrs. Ikom returns dressed in Igbo attire and is successfully sent in to see the minister. On her way in, she drops a brown envelope for the secretary, a visitor observes *'there's no shortcut to this o'*, he further reveals to Mr. Makinde his plan to appear at his next visit in an Igbo native attire (even though he is an Ikwerre man he tries not to let the secretary know). Mr Makinde's ignorance of the Ikwerre tribe makes him sulk as he insists the Ikwerre people sustain the nation with their oil yet *'you people know nothing about us'*. This discussion reflects how deeply rooted tribalism is in our social, political and economic relations as a nation and the discontentment of some tribes towards others. This is especially true with people from the South South region of the country who feel disenfranchised especially since the oil which sustains the Nation is produced from their own part of the country.

Nigerians hardly respect themselves but give more relevance to people of other nationalities. The representative (Lebanese expatriate) of the rival competitors to Mr. Makinde's company arrives while Mr. Makinde was still waiting to be sent in and is immediately ushered in to see the minister. When Mr. Makinde confronts the secretary she refers to him as *'the oyibo man'*. Once again as Mr. Makinde is about to be shown in, an Oba and his entourage barge in singing and drumming, the secretary literally stoops down in salutation as she showers encomium and without a word uttered by the Oba or his aides, he is ushered in to see the minister as the others look in amazement. The secretary explains she cannot keep the ministers *'paramount leader'* waiting, when Makinde observed the minister is Igbo from Imo state she explains it doesn't matter as the previous year, the minister was given a title. The

entourage re-emerges without the Oba and Makinde is informed the minister has closed for the day and has gone to see the Oba off to the airport. After explanations about his daughter's graduation ceremony, the secretary re-books Makinde for 9am the next day having stated that she would love to partake in the graduation party- her subtle way of asking for a compensation/ bribe. He returns to the ministry the next day with a package for the secretary who in response acts nicely towards him.

In reference to this action the Professor who made his way back to the ministry retorts '*it is not easy being a government consultant, humiliation is part of the equation*'. His statement implies that he has come to the acceptance that humiliation is part of the components of working with the government considering that most visitors succumb to bribery in different forms. He further refers to Makinde's package to the secretary as '*settlement*' while Makinde calls it a '*commemorative gift*' and professor retorts '*welcome to Abuja*'. As soon as the minister arrives, the national party chairman walks in and is ushered in, before he leaves, the ministers mistress walks in with a package for the secretary and is equally ushered in to see the minister. Out of frustration all present commune together and a decision is taken. Eventually a 'mini coup' takes place which relates into Makinde finally meeting the minister. This coup captures the triumph of good over evil it also refers to a possible revolution which is usually a resultant effect of excessive and prolonged corruption in a society. It also translates into the projection for a change in our system of governance.

*The Meeting* projects that there is an urgent need to put in place a system of new professionals who are willing and ready to engage the dynamics and demands of a performance-oriented civil service system. We need to undercut organisational complexity to increase performance and efficient service delivery. As we move into the next century of our existence, we must re-

envision and energise the Nigerian civil service, this is necessary in the light that the civil service is the engine room of governance. An effective civil service will help engineer and sustain the needed societal change. Films, like *The Meeting*, could be used to bring positive change in the country's political system.

#### **4.2.2. The issues of Morality**

Ejura decides to stay of sex until marriage; she does not see the morality of sex before marriage anymore and believes that a relationship needs to be fulfilling, filled with friendship, love and understanding and not just sex and desires thus. As a result of this she walks out of her existing relationship which she sees as unfulfilling. Mr Makinde encourages her on her decision, they develop a healthy friendship. She recognizes the morality streak in Makinde as he insists on not bribing his way through and she exclaims '*you see! you are principled just like me*'

Makinde insists on not bribing his way through to see the minister. He is a lone voice of change, in his opinion, we need to start doing things the right way even though Ejura is disillusioned and does not believe this. She represents the many Nigerians who have lost faith in the country and have resorted to seeing the wrong things being done as a way of life. She explains to Mr. Makinde; '*Abuja is a government town and 'ekunje' is 80% of how business is done.*'

Almost all those who came to see the minister tried to bribe or did bribe their way through, using tribe, money or gifts even Makinde seemed to have fallen for it.

Some of the important values and norms that make us human give us the stability to maintain our human dignity and sanity as projected by the cultural norms theory, have been discerned

and extensively explored in the select movies. If these values can be found in Nigerian movies, then it is only right to come to the conclusion that Nollywood movies indeed project values which play a major role in defining, shaping perception, attitude and behaviour. This is taking into cognisance the impact of television/movies as propounded by the cultivation theory.

Going by the summations of the cultural norms and cultivation theories, that the continued projection of norms and values eventually makes an impact on the viewer and also that the longer viewers spend watching television makes a remarkable impact on them as they begin to imbibe the projected views respectively, it can be deduced that the positive values and culture projected in the select movies will go a long way to impact positively on the viewers. The movies have successfully projected the expected positive responses, values and reactions in tandem with existing negatives. This way the viewer is presented with the consequences of evil and benefits of good. Making the right choice will result in a positive change of attitude and by extension societal change.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECCOMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1. Summary**

It has been established that film is a mass communication medium that can be used to bring about unity and promote cultural heritage through the messages portrayed. By and large, Nigerian films have gone to the far ends of the earth and it should be a medium for showcasing our rich cultural heritage. The unity of this nation can be enhanced through the production of movies with local and international appeal.

The cultural world view of Nigerians is grounded in fundamental beliefs and values which guide and shape life experiences. In spite of our ethnic differences, there are core values that transcend ethnic and regional boundaries. These include: religiosity, love, tradition and culture, communal living, respect for elders, decency, tolerance, hospitality, peace and so on. These values must transcend our national boundary and film or movie is the right path that can help us achieve this aim. M'Bow (1977) warns that "in order to develop, a society must

remain true to itself, draw its strength from its own culture and ways of thought and action and set itself objectives consonant with its values and felt needs".

The emphasis here is that culture is condensed human experience; a set of values, ideas and norms expressed in varying categories which is both rooted in history and tradition; dynamic and changing; past as well as future. Some cultural expressions are passed on from one generation to the other such as traditional dresses, food, and folktales while others are being transformed through encounters with other cultures and through technical developments such as music and dramatic arts as well as through the media, including film.

It can be argued that one of the aims of Nollywood, as it is often claimed during film festivals and conferences, is to help in showcasing and improving the image of Africa in contrast to Hollywood films. Even though most critics have argued that this has not been the case as has been demonstrated in the analysis of numerous movies, it can be deduced that Nigerian films upon inception started well by promoting our rich cultural heritage but somewhere along the line deviated to accommodate financial gains. This became prominent when the viewers of home videos increased drastically thereby giving rise to competition among film producers who were ready to pay heavily to get stories that would move and increase sales. Irrespective of this deviation, it can be asserted that one of the hallmarks of the industry is how video representations often parallel and reflect what is happening in the society.

Haynes, (2005: 132), confirms this when he said 'Nollywood draws on many cultural influences, both domestic and foreign, but it remains fundamentally distinctive'. The Nigerian film industry is defined and sustained by Nigerians. Herein lies the success and fame of Nigerian films; – the audience find the stories, fascinating and in consonant with their expectations. Recurring themes in these films are those with broad appeal based on subjects



such as infidelity, treachery, lust, hypocrisy, armed robbery, marital problems, murder, cultism and occultism, witchcraft, polygamy, corruption, bad governance and so on. The themes are indeed broad and mirror Nigerian society. Due to their status among the society's primary mass media, Nigerian films have become stabilizing forces that contribute to the preservation of social order. Through their themes, they emphasize the collective mentality of Nigerian society, educate large audiences along certain established lines, develop collective memories of the past, maintain a distance from the frightening present, and project life in the future.

The project has examined the various themes raised in select movies and their positive socio-cultural implications for change in viewers and by extension the nation, against the background of Defleur's cultural norms theory and Gerbner's cultivation hypothesis. An analysis of the selected movies, show the exploration of major issues facing Nigerians from individual to the Nation at large.

As a miniature of the society and as an important institution in the life of any country, the family has been a major emphasis of Nollywood films. Matters pertaining to the relationship between husband and wife, mothers-in-law and daughters-in law, children, stepsons and stepdaughters and so on, have been highlighted in Nigerian films. In the movie *Mr. and Mrs.*, the importance of the family and the various relationships that occur is captured. It reflects the sanctity of the family above all other while capturing the responsibility of the woman in maintaining such healthy families.

The video presents the misconception by some educated professional women that their role as wives and mothers can be compromised because of their social standing, while revealing that

both their professionalism and traditional roles can be well balanced so none suffers. To that effect, the movie advocates for social conscientisation of women for creative transformation from the social role reversal that is gradually spreading in our society. The movie also projects that a happy home is achievable and is needed for positive change and stability.

Producers through a handful of movies, retell recent or contemporary political events under the thinnest of disguises. Political themes in Nigerian films however, have not been very tough; the industry does not possess an exciting tradition of political filmmaking. Though it can be argued that contemporary films in Nigeria are beginning to take interest in current political discourse and situations and making positive impact through perceiving socio political realities and by making such perceptions available in their work, they help promote an understanding and preservation of current social norms and values as well as facilitate the criticism and alteration of such norms and values.

Considering the depth of the socio-political misery in Nigeria, the movie *The Meeting* seeks to condemn the inequalities and corruption in the political class with focus on the civil service, that have weakened the ability of democracy to make much difference in the lives of the people.

The movie emphasises on the humanly created bureaucracy in the civil service and mirrors the frustration of Nigerians as they are barred from meeting their representatives and forced to resort to bribery. The social ills that have pervaded our society for long; ethnicity, tribalism, favouritism amongst others and how they are brought to play in our daily lives and have come to define our achievements is also captured in the movie. The desire for change and the victory of change over social ills chronicles the events of the movie as the protagonist triumphs in his mission after what looks like a coup against oppression. The movie expounds

the need for the development of good character and conduct in the society at all levels as well as the need to re-invent the Nigerian civil service which is imperative to maintaining effective leadership and service to the Nation.

It could be surmised that the movie *The Meeting*, produced and directed by Rita Dominic&Mildred Okwo, reveals the kind of political process that is not salutary to the Nations developmental change. It is apparent that the film acts as a warning to nonchalant civil servants who when occupying privileged positions, oppress, intimidate and exploit citizens and also insensitive leaders who do not take the time to ensure that their staff follow standard principles and etiquettes. Re-inventing the civil service means engendering the kind of public service where political officers go into service with a desire to serve and not based on achieving their own personal gain. To have a situation where officers are accountable to the people and are held accountable by the people at every point in time; and where the generality of the people will be happy with the quality of the leadership and would gladly have such officers remain in office. This will bring about the needed change in the lives of Nigerians.

History and its importance in positive change is captured through the movie *Half of a Yellow Sun* which while telling a love story captures the impact of the life changing, historical Nigerian civil war. An analysis of the movie brings to bare the fact that the war is a war with lots of lessons, if only we would look deep. A lot has been said and written about the war however very little has been achieved as it remains an issue only whispered and usually pushed to the background. The fact that there was reconciliation after the war does not mean there was reintegration. The war made manifest the problems of Nigeria, though they remain unsolved till today. These are unfaithfulness to the nation and to each other in particular,

tribalism, nepotism, corruption, unnecessary optimism, power dominances, avarice, irrationalism, and insecurity. Old ethnic and religious tensions remain a constant feature of Nigerian politics; all these dominate present Nigeria's social, political and economic life. As a nation, we are yet to build within our political ethos; honesty, tolerance and patriotism. The future continues to be annulled and mortgaged in the interest of the few and to the detriment of the majority (Okafor, 1995).

For a good number of victims of Igbo extract, the three R's- Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation, declared by the federal government at the end of the war had little or no impact as reconstruction was done by individual families on their own. During the four decades following the end of the Nigerian civil war little attention has been given to neither the children nor victims who lived through the hostilities. Not addressing the civil war issue headlong as a Nation has thus done more harm than good. Little wonder the reaction that greeted Achebe's book 'There was a country'.

Irrespective of what Achebe said or did not say, it does not deny the fact that his new book is timely. For a very long time, the Biafra question keep coming up again and again. On one hand, the Igbo's feel aggrieved by what they experienced during the war, while on the other hand, the rest of the country feel that the Biafra war occurred long ago and that the Igbo's should get over it and move on.

## **5.2. Research Findings**

The study of how Nigerian home movies communicate change and societal values in their content has revealed the following :

1. Nollywood producers are committed to projecting change in the society and have gone the extra mile to ensure quality production by paying more attention to technical details,

research and even funding to ensure they tell the Nigerian story in a matured and detailed way.

2. Nollywood movies irrespective of their exaggerations and misrepresentations project some form of value, which is usually overlooked as a result of stereotypical conventional belief that nothing good can be seen in a Nigerian movie.
3. Finance plays a major role in the content of these movies if properly funded, the industry will witness an upsurge in quality and content rich movies that positively and accurately project our way of life.
4. Over the years, researchers, critics and writers have concentrated their efforts on writing on the negative aspects of Nollywood movies. This is a contributing factor to the belief by some that Nollywood movies contain only negative vices.
5. A number of Nigerians have come to believe this notion about Nollywood movies and now pride western movies which contain more explicit and graphic content above Nigerian movies.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

To maximize the benefits of Nollywood movies, it is recommended that;

1. The media especially movies should be extensively explored as a development communication tool as it has great impact and commands a lot of audience.
2. Script writers and producers' of video films should know that they owe the larger society a duty to promote the greater good of the society, and should realise that the ennobling virtues which the society covets should find expression in their works, since their content affect those that are exposed to it. They should down play morally repugnant themes and produce videos that are of greater good to the larger society, videos with "good morals" and "ennobling virtues.
3. Proper research should be undertaken to ensure accuracy in projected beliefs, values and culture; there should be an analysis and understanding of the Nigerian cultural life, values and cultural needs and expectations of people. This way, the films will be

effectively used as a medium to promote unity among Nigerian communities; to reiterate our oneness in spite of our cultural, religious or ethnic differences. Also, actors and actresses should be compelled to dress and speak like real Nigerians.

4. Relevant censor authorities should ensure they scrutinise films, ensure relevance of their content to the general public before they are sent out for viewing by the larger audience.

#### **5.4. Conclusion**

The popularity of Nollywood attests to the fact that the videos have been able to reflect the social conditions and stratifications that typify the contexts in which the narratives unfold. Nollywood videos, thus, function as the channel through which the aspirations of the people are articulated and where they can critique the socio-economic inadequacy that prevail in the society and is also a way of calling for the desired change in government. Producers of news, reporters, editors and broadcasters contribute to the ways in which reality is shaped. Through the media's agenda setting, viewer's learn not only about a given issue but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position. Since the media is assumed to possess such powers it can be employed as a veritable tool for setting public agenda and giving issues worthy of change top priority this will among other things lead to the elimination of oppressive structures and negative practices. As Gerbner and his team observe that most of what we know or think we know, we have never personally experienced, we know these things because of the stories we see and hear in the media.

This implies that the movies have a way of teaching us things we do not know and should know based on facts. Therefore there is much to be learnt from Nollywood movies. As

agenda setters and gatekeepers, producers should ensure that their movies positively perform the task of shaping realities through changing of negative mindset and attitudes in favour of the positive.

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