



Social Construct of Nollywood Films and Ethnocentrism in Southern Nigeria

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Abstract

In this paper, the study engages the post nationality of Nollywood, which is manifest in its traveling patterns and its transgression of cartographic boundaries to engage diasporic communities around the world. Of particular interest of the study are how Nollywood has emerged as the third biggest film industry in the world, after Hollywood and Bollywood, from its humble Nigerian beginnings and how this post national character has been acquired and sustained.

Keywords: Ethnocentrism; Nigeria; Nollywood, Social construct; Southern State



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Introduction

Nigeria is divided into multiple areas as a result of Lord Lugard's 1914 union of the Northern and Southern protectorates. These regions are also home to a variety of tribes that differ from one another in a wide range of ways, including religion, language, customs, traditional jobs, attitudes, values, and a lot of other areas. However, despite these disagreements, there is agreement on several things that they respect highly, like the ideas of Nigerian nationhood and togetherness (Ellerson, 2023). It is well known that these tribes have evolved their value systems throughout time and are resilient. However, like most modern cultures worldwide, modern Nigerian society is unwittingly swept away by the powerful current of socio-cultural representation brought about by the contents of Western media, particularly filmmaking.

Nigerians have the chance to narrate their own story in their own unique ways thanks to Nollywood¹. Without a question, film takes on a strategic role as a means of delivering messages to a sizable and diverse audience (Chalaby, 2023). Films appear capable of setting up both peace and conflict in society going by its ability to set agenda. Film has also been viewed as a potent

medium of communication through which messages ranging from indoctrination, education, entertainment, integration, information, mobilization, etc., can be relayed to people to achieve certain objectives. They have the power to re-direct and reposition the psyche of an average man. Films have an inexplicable bond with their audiences who may have to willingly suspend their disbelief when viewing a film. The power of films on its audience makes it a viable tool for preserving culture.

Basically, Nollywood video-films are produced in many cities including Enugu, Lagos and Kano. The ethno-religious categories of Nollywood are not rigid categories but, in the industry, there are common references to Igbo films, Yorùbá films and Hausa films, or Christian films and Muslim films. Christian films are generally attributed to filmmakers working in the south and south-eastern cities such as Lagos and Enugu while Muslim films are attributed to filmmakers working in Kano – a city that lies in northern Nigeria. The films made in Kano are referred to as Kannywood. However, the thesis of this paper focuses on Southern Nigeria.

Nigeria, the most populous nation in Africa, has recently received good international attention thanks to the phenomenon of its thriving film industry, Nollywood. Nollywood is the world's largest film maker, surpassing Hollywood in the United States and coming in second only to Bollywood in India. Approximately one million people are employed by this \$11 million business, making it the second largest employer in Nigeria. The popular film "Living in

Bondage," which tells the story of a man who acquires fortune and power by killing his wife and then repenting after her ghost haunts him, was the first release in 1992. Many of these films, which have gone viral throughout Africa and its diaspora, from Kinshasa to Kingston, explore themes of ritual murder and redemption, human cravings, shattering social taboos, and the malevolent pursuit of wealth and luxury (Iwowo & Iwowo, 2023).

However, ethnocentrism has been among humans since the time of the primitive tribes, and early philosophers acknowledged it. Nevertheless, the term was not included in the social sciences until the second quarter of the 20th century. Subsequently, the word has been adopted by social scientists and numerous other scholars (Cobo-Piñero, 2023). Ethnocentrism is also associated with mental closure, racism, bigotry, and an oppressive personality system. It is frequently employed in social and political research because it shows a powerful and easily identifiable mindset that can be legally assessed in a population, such as a state or area.

The idea that one's group is the center of the universe and that perception matters greatly for a specific group of people is known as ethnocentrism. It is also viewed as an attitude that centers on the belief and has significant emotional and behavioral components because it is an attitude (Musa, 2022). Though to varied degrees, it is most frequently present in all ethnic groupings and is deeply ingrained in the human experience. Nollywood is firmly rooted in Nigeria's cultural heritage.

Nollywood is associated within this context because Nigeria forms the cynosure of its production. This seems to be clear because Nigeria is an imagined community defined by physical boundaries and enjoys sovereignty as an autonomous geographic entity. However, Nollywood contents shed light on Nigeria's diversity in ways that interrogate the very idea of nationhood. Nollywood, therefore, is a cultural product that shares in Nigeria's multifarious or various heritage. Nollywood films are produced along such ethnic, cultural, and linguistic lines that it is difficult to talk about the industry as truly representative of a coherent and unified Nigerian "national" culture, just as Nigeria does not constitute a coherent nation due to its heterogeneous and disparate cultures (McCain, 2022).

It is therefore nonsensical to envision a national film culture in a "nation" of nations, especially when the films are made in a way that challenges nationhood itself due to ethnic and cultural variety. In light of these circumstances, it is safer to understand Nollywood's "nationality" in terms of ethnic nationalities, or the different ethnic nations and languages in which this process of cultural production takes place. In fact, a lot of these ethnic groups occasionally reject the term "Nollywood" and consider their films to be a part of their own traditions. Films created in indigenous Nigerian languages, such as Bini, Edo, Efik, Hausa, Ibibio, Tiv, Yoruba, etc., are frequently not typically classified as Nollywood as part of the politics of resistance and cultural nationalism.

Despite Port Harcourt's lack of a film industry, the majority of Nollywood films have been filmed in the Nigerian megacities of Lagos, Asaba, Enugu, and Port Harcourt. The major film markets are essentially in Lagos and Asaba, two cities known for their unwavering determination and spirit of entrepreneurship. Rich and poor on the continent as well as in the African Diaspora in Europe, the Caribbean, and North America have easy access to these movies. Additionally, Nollywood has significantly elevated the status and prominence of women in African cinema. Veteran producer Tunde Kelani observed, "Our films are unquestionably African." Their widespread appeal demonstrates the social, cultural, and political similarities between Africans and the southern region of Nigeria. However, Nollywood films have provoked protests against voodoo-mongering and vapid acquisitiveness in Ghana and Tanzania. Even Nigeria's National Film and Video Censors Board accuses and condemns Nollywood films for their "revolting titles," "fetishism," "ritualistic killings," "devilish Spiritism," and "homosexuality" (Alabi, 2022).

Nollywood detractors have also bemoaned the films' perceived low quality and recurrent themes, calling the productions "primitivism" in Africa and supporting Western perceptions of the continent. However, bad movies will undoubtedly be eliminated by the market, and in the end, viewers will determine which movies are profitable. *The Wedding Party*, a romantic comedy starring Kemi Adetiba, became the highest grossing Nigerian film of all time with a \$1.3

million box office haul. The accusation that Hollywood, with its formulaic storylines and sequels, is mass-producing culture based on a recurrent formula is likewise leveled at the Nollywood factory. Regarding unfavorable cultural stereotyping, given that the films only depict what 70% of Africans perceive to be the everyday reality of money, marabouts, and magic, this criticism may be a reflection of the preconceptions of the westernized African urban elite.

Nollywood addresses timely modern concerns such as AIDS and adultery; drugs and dubious politicians; gangsters and godfathers; prostitution, polygamy, and proselytizing; and unexplained ritual killings and military brasshats. As a result, they provide an unflattering image of society for the corrupt elites. In actuality, Nollywood might be paving the path for the first really Pan-African film. Nollywood, according to Nigerian author Odi Ofeimuna, is "a portrayal of ourselves by ourselves! Sometimes it's better to tell your narrative poorly and incompetently than to let others misretell it (Alabi, 2022).

Unlike the French-funded FESPACO (Festival Panafricain du Cinéma et de Télévision de Ouagadougou) which is based on a spirit of French benevolent neo-colonialism, Nollywood has been more self-funded, more commercial, and more unabashedly authentic. It has also been more flexible in overcoming challenges of funding and ownership with which FESPACO still struggles after five decades. Respected Malian cultural theorist, Manthia Diawara – a self-described “avid consumer of Nollywood videos” – has urged francophone filmmakers to learn

from Nigeria's film industry about how to use stars and distributors to create a popular cinema. Instead, snooty largely Western-funded filmmakers in festivals in Ouagadougou, Carthage, Durban, and Zanzibar have barred Nollywood movies from participating in these events (Ikpe, 2022).

The most crucial part of Nollywood for Nigeria's "soft power" concerns the impact that these films have had across Africa and its Diaspora. As Krings and Okome referenced in Iwowo, and Iwowo (2023), (whose 2013 edited book, *Global Nollywood*, has substantially inspired my research) noted: "Nollywood...has become the most visible form of cultural machine on the African continent...Nigerian video films connect Africa to its various and dispersed diasporas worldwide, traversing the entire continent." Nollywood offers relatable perspectives on the everyday lives of Africans living both on the continent and in the Diaspora. The sector works with the intricate and varied mosaic of contemporary African urban and rural life. Filmmaking in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and South Africa has been influenced by Nollywood. Local griots in Tanzania give audiences simultaneous interpretation in Kiswahili. Congolese "dubbers," who speak Lingala, behave similarly in Kinshasa. Pastors in the area provide interpretation services in Ewe in Togo. The movies have affected South African students' accents, Congolese pastors, tailors, and architects, as well as politicians in Kenya. Nollywood has allegedly harmed

indigenous film production in Tanzania, Ghana, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

DSTV, with its 11 million subscribers across Africa, is one of the most effective mediums of beaming Nollywood across the continent, with three 24-hour channels devoted to these movies. Nollywood DVDs have also been widely sold across the globe. Southern African audiences have noted how the films promote African values of respect for elders and the importance of family, and produce a nostalgic longing for rural life. Nollywood has also had a massive impact in the Congo's bustling capital of Kinshasa, where Pentecostal pastors have incorporated messages of the triumph of good over evil into their religious repertoire. Many Congolese also praise Nollywood's "Africanity" in providing an authentic medium for resisting Western cultural imperialism.

Nollywood has further impacted Tanzania's film industry, especially in the genre of horror films. For instance, Nollywood's *Karishika* had a big impact on Tanzania's *Shumileta*. Like Nollywood, Tanzanian movies also try to be didactic, pushing viewers to give up on magic and convert to Christianity or Islam. Nollywood's cultural influence has even reached Barbados, where many of the island's Hollywood-obsessed viewers view the films as authentic in portraying real African lives that they were previously unaware of. Many Caribbeans also identify with the Pentecostal religion that is portrayed in Nollywood, and they are drawn to the

attractive actresses since many of them have voluptuous bodies that defy conventional ideas of beauty (Ikpe, 2022).

Nollywood has also expanded internationally in another sense: a large number of its films are directed by Nigerians who are based in the European and American diaspora. Some of these films, which have covered a wide range of topics like the tense relationships between African Americans and Nigerian immigrants, African Americans searching for their African roots, Nigerian prostitutes in Italy, cultural clashes among Nigerians traveling to the West, and African migrants setting out on perilous journeys across the Sahara desert through the Maghreb in an attempt to reach Europe, have starred African-American actors. Even when shot abroad, Nollywood movies are almost always uncompromising in having Nigerian locations at the core of the action. The world is thus consistently viewed from an African perspective, with the continent never a marginal, but a central focus. Nollywood has unquestioningly become one of the few true representations of “Global Africa.”

Problem Statement

The Nigeria film industry (Nollywood) commands a household name, and a very large and active audience and it covers every aspect of the Nigerian society. Its impact on the areas of the culture, religion and morality has generated a lot of uneasiness. Fear looms heavily in the mind of conservatives about the possible results of the incursion into the traditional value of culture

and morality (Ikpe, 2022). For many years Nollywood contents have been accused of being a congenital part of the issues of racism and racial stereotyping. On the other hand, there has also been this accusation and argument concerning the executive film makers' (cinematographers and directors) wrong use of the communicative devices of film equipment which has resulted in wrong projection.

Again there's this alleged general perception about Nollywood film themes/tittles which ranges from poverty, corruption, religion, prostitution, violence against women and children, romance, cultism, love, premarital relationship, extra marital relationship, witches and wizard. Projecting a particular state or region to be good in any of this titles triggers stereotyping (Moore, 2022). Communication or conversations shape our mind and determine our perception of the world around us. The popular culture such as films and media often generate many conversations about our society and its cultural heritage and subtly reinforce pre-existing stereotypes or create new forms of discursive identity. These discourses have developed along race, culture, ethnicity, class and gender lines. This has created a knowledge gap in the literature because the media which is a powerful tool for growth exposes its audience to ideas that negatively affects their perception of things.

Objectives of the Study

Based on the problem statement and the lacuna in the literature, the following objectives are set:

1. To interrogate movie directing and cultural value in Nigeria.
2. To examine Nollywood directors and African indigenous film narratives.
3. To explore Southern region cultural elements in Nollywood films.
4. To study language, culture, gendered ideology and ethnocentrism.

Methodology

The study makes use of secondary data from significant books, periodicals, newspapers, government publications, historical records, and the Internet. Nonetheless, the study was limited to information that was recorded, currently accessible, or documented regarding the topic of inquiry (Sabiu & Aondover, 2023). The study employs content analysis as its analysis approach, which considers the corpus of existing literature.

Theoretical Framework

This paper employs the Arthurs Theory, Reflective-Projective Theory and Cultivation Theory as theoretical frames to examine social construct of Nollywood films and ethnocentrism in Southern Nigeria.

Arthurs Theory

It is clear that a film's director serves as its main creative visionary. This hypothesis is based on the premise that the greatest movies are directed and written by individual filmmakers who have a distinct, personal vision. The auteur theory asserts that the director, who is in charge of all the audio and visual components of the film and is more appropriately regarded as the "author" of the work than the screenwriter, is based on the notion of *caméra-stylo*, or "camera-pen," which was largely drawn from Astruc's theories. The theoretical postulations is apt because a movie director is the overall boss in a movie production, he or she calls shot, approves film or shooting angle of every scene before it is shot, directs artist, set how each line should be taken, ensures the props and set and approves, etc. Therefore, film director have 95% question where a particular culture is misrepresented and accolade where it is perfectly done (Musa, 2022).

Reflective-Projective Theory

In the context of this study, Lee Leovinger's Reflective Projective Theory of Mass Communication is equally significant. This theory, which was put up in 1979, claimed that the media served as a social mirror. It implies that while concurrently projecting idealized images of a society, the media represents the attitudes and values of that culture. People interpret these reflections, recognizing in them aspects of society as well as their own perceptions. The theory was put forth by former Federal Communication (FCC) Commissioner Lee Loevinger. According to Loevinger, the mass media "mirrors" society, but it's an unclear reflect. Although

the mass media itself portrays society as a cohesive entity, each viewer projects their own unique reflections onto the visuals that are displayed. This is how the media mirror is interpreted differently by different audiences. For instance, depending on their individual experiences, attitudes, and moods, viewers of the same TV show may interpret it differently. Furthermore, these specific audience members typically relate more to fictional characters on television and in movies than to their real-life self (Onyinye, 2021).

According to Loevinger, intellectuals typically view TV shows as a reflection of themselves, with few or no characters or values that they can relate to. Loevinger also brought out the media mirror's ambiguity. This is presumably a reference to the distortion that results from the "slant" that is specific to each media outlet as well as from the distortion that occurs throughout the whole gatekeeping process, starting with the news selection phase. The media's ambiguity as a mirror and the audience's varied perceptions reinforce and strengthen one another.

The Reflective Projective Theory is crucial to this research because it clarifies the reflections and projections upon which the study is based—namely, that films serve as a confusing reflection of society. The link between the movie offerings and audience members is understood in this study via the lens of this idea.

Cultivation Theory

Gerbner's "cultivation hypothesis," which states that "people will come to believe that the real world is like the one they observe, the more they are exposed to the mass media, especially television, (in this case, movie)," is the foundation of the cultivation theory. According to this theory of media effects, Nollywood films, in this instance, shape society. It contends that although the message of the film deviates from reality on a number of important areas, repeated exposure to it causes it to become accepted as the consensus view of society (McQuail, 2005). In other words, people accept the reality that Nollywood films depict more and more as they watch more of them. Studies by Barlet and Forest (2021) have repeatedly discovered empirical evidence for the cultivation hypothesis, despite the fact that other academics have questioned the validity of this idea, noting weakness of the hypothetical link. "This study provides evidence that cultivation effects do exist," writes McQuail (2005) in his conclusion. McQuail (2005) noted in a piece regarding the idea's viability that the primary data supporting the cultivation theory comes from a methodical, multi-year study of American television's content. The theory's second primary source of evidence is derived from opinion and attitude surveys, which appear to corroborate the idea that a higher level of television exposure correlates with the kind of worldview reflected in the content of television or movies. It's still true that every movie aims to advocate, entertain, and educate when needed. Each projection carries a specific message that mirrors a portion of the culture projection, and so on, with the hope that a lesson will be learned.

Conceptualizing Movie Directing and Cultural Value in Nigeria

In order to produce a picture, a movie director must visualize the script and direct the performers and technical team to realize the vision for the screen. This essentially indicates that directing a film is an extremely creative and cerebral procedure that calls for intelligence and creative abilities. In order to delight the audience, it blends role-interpreting abilities with artistic and technical usage of lighting, sound, and space. In addition to using innovative camera manipulation to interpret roles, movie directing also entails using the surrounding surroundings to visually express stories. The diverse cultural components and materials that distinguish Nigeria and Southern Nigeria are suggested by both Nigerian indigenous culture and Southern Nigerian culture. The social values, religion, morals, political and economic traditions, as well as the creative values of music, theater, art and craft, folktales, songs, myths, and legends, are some of the characteristics that set Southern Nigeria apart from other parts of the country. These all add to the culture of the Southern region. The Southern Region of Nigeria is home to a variety of tribes, yet there are some slight cultural similarities (Onyinye, 2021).

Cultural production benefits greatly from the director's role as principal interpretation of the screenplay and artistic coordinator of the entire production. This is due to the fact that any error on the other hand will negatively impact not only the crew as a whole but also inaccurately portray the culture or image of the people (Aondover et al., 2022). The director's main

responsibility in audio-visual creations, such movies or videos, is to interpret the screenplay and convey it visually to amuse the audience. In certain cases, the director can interpret the script in more detail than just that. To fit his or her authorial vision, he or she can rewrite the text, reorganize the scenes, or change the story structure of the screenplay.

Because of the screen director's creative power, the auteur theory—named after the French word for author—was born, explaining how a director's work represents their own unique creative vision. The term "auteur theory" describes a style of filmmaking where the filmmaker is seen as the primary creative force. The American film critic Andrew Sarris first identified the cinematic directing techniques of Andre Bazin and Alexandre Astruc as the new wave of director-as-author in France in the late 1940s, which is when this notion first emerged (Onyinye, 2021).

Nollywood Directors and African Indigenous Film Narratives

Over the years, Nollywood filmmakers have succeeded in creating works that are highly regarded both domestically and internationally. Few filmmakers have the audacity to be really African in their interpretative positions, and some who received their training overseas or were influenced by foreign directors have frequently been accused of adhering to Eurocentric filmmaking techniques. There have also been accusations against certain southern directors and cinematographers for allegedly fusing cultures that don't appear to exist in their positions of

interpretation. Film editors are also included in this finger-pointing because of an affect they added when editing that is considered foreign (Padva, 2022).

Onyinye (2021) observed that a large number of Nollywood filmmakers, screenwriters, and cinematographers in the southern region are unable to accurately reflect their culture because they are unwilling to conduct historical research on their native cultural heritage. Given that everything that is displayed on screens serves as a direct representation of the people and their culture. It is crucial that filmmakers—especially directors, writers, and cinematographers—always utilize their creations to highlight the positive facets of their own cultures. People perceive things differently, so what one person perceives as positive may be detrimental to another, but the important thing is to allow it to be an accurate representation of the people. It is acceptable to project both the positive and negative aspects of the populace's culture because, although an individual may act improperly at times without realizing it, it will eventually become apparent to others that such an act is incorrect once it is projected and examined by multiple individuals. It's crucial that it accurately represents the culture—rather than being made up or appropriated from another source.

As a result, before projecting, it is appropriate to conduct cultural research and determine the actual and authentic culture. In addition to ignoring studies on the culture and legacy of the South, the majority of Nollywood directors have not yet completely updated their repertoire to

match the demands of the rapidly expanding film business. They have been charged with advancing foreign cultures at the expense of their own, which perpetuates the marginalization of African culture. According to Barlet and Forest (2021, p. 80), "the failure of Nigerian scriptwriters to extol the virtues of Nigerians and Africans, in general, is a sacrilege," and there has been a disconnect between the content of many indigenous (Nigerian) films and the cultural values of Nigerian society that they should promote."

Southern Region Cultural Elements in Nollywood Films

There are various ethnic groups in the Southern region, and many of them have a variety of material and nonmaterial values. Language, religion, food, crafts, music, folktales, dances, festivals, and rituals are a few of them. The language of the Southern Region of Nigeria continues to be the most efficient carrier and means of promoting and preserving culture among all the noteworthy parts of that culture. In contrast to Hollywood movies, where the action is emphasized more, Southern culture thrives on dialogue and places a strong emphasis on language proficiency and verbal expressiveness. For this reason, language is regarded as being essential to comprehending and enjoying traditional Southern drama in the Southern Region. Nollywood filmmakers have long been "finding traditional Southern Region language increasingly important and necessary in the conveyance of meaning and thematic construction," (Sestito, 2023, p. 6)."

This explains why the language and dialogue in the majority of video films with stories based in the history and heritage of the Southern Region are relevant. The three components of music—songs, dance, and instrumentals—are closely related to language use and consistently support the artistic ideals of Southern Region play and video films. In addition to being technically employed to represent emotions, atmosphere, or bridge scenes, songs and music are frequently utilized as signature tunes, soundtracks, or transitions. In the storylines of video films, they can also be imaginatively employed by filmmakers to praise, critique, lament, mock, or instruct. In theater, dance, mime, and choreography can all be employed to convey a feeling, an action, or a mood. According to Soyinka, the inventive fusion of song, music, and dance might be useful in the development and performance of drama in the Southern Region.

It is unmusical, in his opinion, to divorce Yoruba music from myth and poetry as songs, music, and dance all serve purposeful purposes in communicating ideas and meaning. Festivals and rituals are other well-liked and imaginative components that can improve the production of drama and video films in Africa. Events that highlight Olusola Kayode Balogun and Adefolaji Eben Adeseke's cultural heritage comprise these two components. In addition to providing unique entertainment and fostering unity, festivals and ceremonies also function as social venues for group or ritual activity. This is due to the fact that they offer venues for people to come together in celebration, merriment, and felicitation. In the meantime, some of the well-known

Nigerian celebrations are the new yam, Boat regatta, Calabar (Eastern and Southern states), Argungu (competition) in Kebbi State, Durbar (Northern states), Ogun, Osun, Olojo, Ojude Oba, Egungun, Gelede, Sangbeto (Southwestern states), and others (Madu & Nworie, 2022).

Renowned authors and academics including Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, J. P. Clark, Femi Osofisan, Biodun Jeyifo, and Sam Ukala have extensively explored in their plays and films how African ideas might supplant European ones by drawing on African folklore aspects. For example, Ukala's popular Folkism theory, which is demonstrated in his play *Iredi War* and film *Akpakaland*, speaks volumes about how true African models or formats might develop in a dramatic production. According to Eregare, a conscious and constant application of folktales and other indigenous elements, as prescribed by Ukala would lead to the emergence of a true, home-grown Southern Region Nigeria theatre or film production. Other aesthetic elements that could be utilised in the narratives of films are the African traditional costumes, regalia and accessories. When fully deployed by directors and filmmakers, these costumes and accessories depict indigenous cultural materials with aesthetic splendour (Musa, 2022).

These items are frequently utilized in the society to symbolically represent particular personalities and roles. In Yoruba country, for instance, a royal father or monarch is revered for his crown, horsetails, beads, and other accoutrements like sceptres and jewelry. Therefore, when used in video films, these symbolic features provide messages regarding the rank, position, or

titles of characters. Additionally, the kinds of costumes or accessories that are assigned to different segments of society, such as age groups, devotees, hunters, worshippers, farmers, and market women, can effectively depict them in the stories of movies or video films. Filmmakers from the Southern Region of Nigeria are also free to incorporate folktales, stories, riddles, and superstitions as dramatic devices in their films.

The reason African art has traditionally been characterized by drama and cinema critics as utilitarian is because of this. Africans have used artistic creations (plays, paintings, sculptures, carvings, music, etc.) for purposes other than amusement from the beginning of time. Notably, elders in Southern Nigeria employ superstitions as a means of imparting morals and obedience, hence discouraging young people from dabbling in transgressions. Instilling discipline and moral ideals in the younger generation of Southern Nigeria can also be achieved subtly through superstitions. Thus, in order to reduce immorality, dramatists and filmmakers can employ superstition and metaphysical components in their works (Ellerson, 2023).

Language, Culture, Gendered Ideology and Ethnocentrism

McCain (2022) defines culture as an organization of people's shared behaviors, beliefs, values, and ideas. Culture encompasses elements of human existence such as clothing rules, language, ritual norms, religion, conduct, and belief systems. It is the way people act, live, and behave. Therefore, culture is life, and language is the manifestation of that life in form and

function, according to McCain. This demonstrates how different cultural traits are constructed, communicated, and projected through language. Similar to this, culture has a big impact on how people think, speak, and behave. People's views, feelings, and behaviors are shaped and configured by society (Ikpe, 2022). This has implications for the given or assumed social positions that are predicated on the individuals inside the society or the specific region in question—in this example, the southern region community (Yar'Adua et al., 2023).

The relationship between communities and tribes' dominance within the framework of social organization and institutions at all levels of leadership and in all significant roles was clearly spelled out in cultural, political, and religious discourses, among other discourses (Iwowo & Iwowo, 2023). According to this theory, people have been exposed to and comprehended many linguistic behaviors that are culturally connected to gender since they were little children (Fontaine, 2022). These social norms that dictate how individuals ought to act are significant barriers between individuals and are ingrained in patriarchy. As a remnant of the original African community, the southern regional cultures and, generally, Yoruba civilization are patriarchally structured by nature. Males benefit from the patriarchal cultural mindset, but women are not (Onyinye, 2021). As a result, Sestito (2023) characterizes patriarchy as unjust and harmful to women. Comparatively speaking, the mass media and the quest of equal worth are significant factors in today's society.

We are continuously exposed to media content every day. Because rejecting other cultures creates hurdles to cross-cultural engagement, researchers such as Barlet and Forest (2021) have discovered that ethnocentrism is ineffective in communication and related domains. Consequently, the exchange of messages during the communication process is hampered by the existence of ethnocentrism in media material. Due to the Global North's dominance in the media, Western ethnocentrism frequently appears in the media. The overwhelming amount of Western content in TV series, films, and other media is proof of this. Certain television programs frequently depict foreign cultures as less developed or peculiar when compared to their own (Madu & Nworie, 2022).

Since the turn of the 20th century, film has been a part of our culture and is a vital source of entertainment for those in the film business. As a result, content that is based on Western perspectives is frequently encountered. Films frequently feature instances of ethnocentrism, whether on purpose or accidentally. A good illustration of this can be found in the opening song of Disney's 1992 American animated feature *Aladdin*, "Arabian Nights." The song's lyrics, which state that this land "is barbarism, hey, but it's home," sparked discussion among viewers because they might imply that Arab culture is barbaric. Similarly, it's become commonplace in Nollywood films that the elderly residents of the village are witches and that mother-in-laws are evil. The majority of films made in the South have one negative portrayal of some aspect of the

region. There are plenty of these in Hollywood productions. Specialists in the area advise against using stereotypes in movies as a means of combating ethnocentrism. Thus, stereotypes of civilizations other than our own are produced when ethnocentrism is present in movies. You perceive an Igbo man as someone who enjoys wealth, an Ijaw man as someone who enjoys ladies, an Ikwere man as someone who avoids travel, and so on. All of these are components of the media's content that feeds into local prejudices (Sestito, 2023).

An additional instance of a Nollywood film is "My In-law." In that film, there are two main characters: Clems Ohameze, a poor man who is also married to one of Osuofia's daughters, and Amaechi Maduako, a ritualist who is overly wealthy and respected by Osuofia, his in-law, despite having no idea where his money comes from. In this scenario, social networks—whose goal is to promote user interaction—are exposed to a large number of people. Social media platforms are now a dependable way to communicate with people worldwide (Madu & Nworie, 2022). The most widely used social media sites are YouTube, Tiktok, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat. Social media platforms often have a beneficial and helpful impact on society by enlightening, guiding, or entertaining the public and bringing attention to the differences between other civilizations. Social media can help combat ethnocentrism, but there are drawbacks as well, such as the opportunity for conflict and judgment between different

cultural groups. An ethnocentric individual can obstruct communication and discourage desire in interacting with people from different cultures.

Conclusion and Way Forward

If Southern Nigerian filmmakers and directors address the issues presented by technology without sacrificing the priceless cultural legacy of their people, they would be able to make a meaningful contribution to the region's development. They can develop novel approaches and theories that can enhance their works by imaginatively incorporating the centuries-old Southern Nigerian culture that the region has long supported. They should focus a lot of effort on research to ensure that their proposal is accurate and draws in both domestic and foreign investors.

The video film business has become more professional as a result of new technology advancements, but Nollywood producers still have an obligation to retain the value of Nigerian indigenous cultural features in their productions. For this reason, in addition to always improving their craft to satisfy the ever-expanding needs of the film industry, filmmakers would do well to find a means to integrate and advance indigenous cultural values or ethos for both commercial and competitive benefit. Finally, indigenous cultural components should be intentionally incorporated into Nollywood productions by practitioners and producers. They ought to look into using these components for economic values, entertainment marketing, and content creation.

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ENDNOTES:

¹ [Editor's Note]: CINEJ and other journals have published articles on Nollywood previously such as Olaoluwa (2015), Emwinromwankhoe (2023), Endong (2023) and Ojemola (2023). This new contribution by the authors is entirely unique take on the film industry and content in Nigeria. Please cite as: Vitalis, P. O., Amadi, R. N., & Harcourt Whyte, D. Social Construct of Nollywood Films and Ethnocentrism in Southern Nigeria. *CINEJ Cinema Journal*, 12(2), 152–179. <https://doi.org/10.5195/cinej.2024.632>.