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A Filmic Comparative Analysis of Surrogacy Using Afam Okereke's *Divided Kingdom* and Adrian Wills' *The Surrogacy Trap*

ABSTRACT. This paper explores cultural interpretations of surrogacy through a comparative analysis of *Divided Kingdom* (2005), a Nigerian film directed by Afam Okereke, and *The Surrogacy Trap* (2013), a Western television production directed by Adrian Wills. Using Antonio Gramsci's theory of Cultural Hegemony and Immanuel Wallerstein's World-Systems Theory as the theoretical framework, the study examines how these films reflect societal values, religious beliefs and psychological impacts of surrogacy. It integrates real-life stories of prominent figures like Ini Edo and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie who opted for surrogacy, highlighting cultural resistance, evolving motherhood attitudes, and gender dynamics. By contrasting the representation of surrogacy in Nigerian and Western cinematic contexts, the study unpacks the broader global discourse on reproduction, identity, and power structures. The paper argues that while surrogacy is increasingly accepted in Western contexts as an expression of reproductive autonomy, it remains controversial and often stigmatized in African settings, where lineage and traditional motherhood are deeply valued. Ultimately, this research reveals how cultural and systemic power relations shape the cinematic portrayal of surrogacy, contributing to the ongoing negotiation of motherhood and reproductive justice in diverse cultural landscapes.

KEYWORDS: surrogacy, culture, social implications, emotional impact

Introduction

The film industry has long served as a powerful medium for storytelling and social commentary, offering filmmakers a dynamic platform to explore and critique pressing cultural, ethical, and political issues. Among these, surrogacy has emerged as a poignant theme that encapsulates contemporary debates around motherhood, reproductive autonomy, and

societal norms. As advancements in reproductive technologies challenge traditional concepts of family and parenthood, cinema has become instrumental in portraying the emotional complexities, moral dilemmas, and cultural negotiations inherent in surrogacy arrangements.

Surrogacy is broadly categorized into traditional, where the surrogate is genetically related to the child and gestational, where the surrogate carries a genetically unrelated embryo, is both a medical and social phenomenon (Field, 1990). While it has provided an invaluable solution for individuals and couples facing infertility or health complications, its practice remains ethically charged and culturally contested. Legal recognition, societal acceptance, and ethical interpretation of surrogacy vary significantly across the globe, reflecting the diverse moral landscapes and cultural value systems in which it is practiced.

This paper undertakes a comparative analysis of two films: *Divided Kingdom* (2005), set in Nigeria and *The Surrogacy Trap* (2013), produced in Canada. These films, though originating from vastly different socio-cultural milieus, offer insightful portrayals of surrogacy as they grapple with gender roles, family expectations, class divisions, and the interplay between tradition and modernity. While *Divided Kingdom* is deeply rooted in Nigerian cultural and religious frameworks, *The Surrogacy Trap* reflects a Western, liberal approach to surrogacy marked by legal structures, individual autonomy, and bioethical debates.

The inclusion of real-life narratives, such as those of Nigerian actress Ini Edo and renowned author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who both openly embraced surrogacy, adds depth and immediacy to the discussion. These stories not only exemplify the socio-cultural tensions surrounding non-traditional motherhood but also highlight the courage required to challenge societal norms. This analysis, therefore, interrogates how surrogacy is interpreted and represented across different cultural and cinematic spaces, while situating the discourse within broader theoretical frameworks that consider power, identity, and social structure.

Conceptual Review

Surrogacy, derived from the Latin word *subrogare* meaning “to substitute,” refers to a reproductive arrangement in which a woman agrees to carry and give birth to a child for another individual or couple, known as the “intended parents.” In essence, surrogacy replaces or supplements the

natural reproductive process by involving a third party in the gestation of a child. The surrogate mother, therefore, stands in as a substitute in the biological and/or gestational processes of childbearing. This practice, while modern in its medical sophistication, is deeply rooted in historical, cultural, and even scriptural precedents. In the Bible, for instance, surrogacy is alluded to in the accounts of Sarah and Hagar (Genesis 16), and Rachel and Bilhah (Genesis 30), where maidservants were used to bear children for barren wives. Thus, the concept of surrogacy, while evolving in technical terms, is not entirely new in the human story.

There are two primary classifications of surrogacy: Traditional Surrogacy and Gestational Surrogacy, both of which differ significantly in biological, legal, and ethical considerations.

Traditional or Genetic Surrogacy

Traditional surrogacy, sometimes referred to as genetic surrogacy, involves a surrogate who uses her own egg and is therefore biologically related to the child. Fertilization is achieved through artificial insemination using the sperm of either the intended father or a sperm donor. In this form of surrogacy, the surrogate is both the genetic and gestational mother of the child, leading to complex emotional and legal implications.

This form of surrogacy was predominant in the early years of assisted reproductive technology and is still practiced today, albeit less commonly, due to the legal and emotional complications that arise from the surrogate's genetic tie to the child. For example, in the landmark American case of Baby M, the surrogate, Mary Beth Whitehead, who had been inseminated with the sperm of the intended father, later refused to relinquish custody of the child insisting that "she would not feel whole if she gives up the child" (Field, 1990, p. 4). This triggered a protracted legal battle. The court eventually ruled that the surrogacy contract was invalid, citing that "paid surrogate contracts are illegal in New Jersey" (Field, 1990, p. 4). Though the intended father was granted custody, the case underscored the fraught legal terrain surrounding traditional surrogacy and contributed to shifting preference towards gestational alternatives.

In Africa, particularly in traditional societies such as among the Igbo and Yoruba tribes, a form of traditional surrogacy has existed for centuries. Among the Igbo, a woman who is unable to bear children or lacks a male heir may marry another woman who will bear children on her be-

half an arrangement rooted in lineage preservation and cultural expectations (Agugua & Agu, 2025). Similarly, among the Yoruba, the senior wife may encourage her husband to take a younger wife to bear children, with the offspring considered children of the senior wife (Alabi, 2021). These practices demonstrate how surrogacy, in various cultural adaptations, is often a communal response to infertility, aligned with traditional values regarding procreation, inheritance, and social status.

Gestational Surrogacy

Gestational surrogacy is a more technologically advanced form of assisted reproduction. In this process, the surrogate mother carries an embryo created through In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) using the egg and sperm of the intended parents or donors. In other words, it's not in all occasions that the ova from the intending mother is used. There are situations where the sperm of the intending father is fertilized with an ovum not directly from the intending mother but from a donor (Ragone, 2003). The surrogate thus has no genetic link to the child. This method, often preferred over traditional surrogacy, offers several advantages, notably minimizing legal complications regarding parental rights.

Gestational surrogacy is particularly recommended in medical scenarios where a woman may have healthy eggs but an unviable uterus, or where carrying a pregnancy would pose health risks. Conditions that may necessitate gestational surrogacy include uterine cancer resulting in hysterectomy, congenital absence of the uterus, repeated miscarriages, or systemic illnesses like severe diabetes and cardiovascular diseases incompatible with pregnancy (Ajayi & Ajayi, 2016; Gibson & Wilkerson, 2023).

This form of surrogacy has also become the standard in many jurisdictions due to its clarity in legal parentage and reduced emotional complexities for the surrogate. It is seen in many parts of the Western world as the ethical and legal compromise between the needs of the intending parents and the rights of the surrogate.

The Surrogate Mother as a Symbol of Duality

In both traditional and gestational surrogacy, the surrogate woman embodies a duality; she is simultaneously revered for her reproductive

gift and vilified for the implications of commodifying the maternal process. While traditional African societies may view surrogacy as a communal solution to infertility, modern bioethics interrogates whether the surrogate's consent is fully informed or influenced by economic desperation. The surrogate's role thus becomes a reflection of societal values whether communal, capitalistic, altruistic, or exploitative.

Conceptual Dilemmas and the Nature of Parenthood

The conceptual implications of surrogacy challenge conventional definitions of motherhood and parenthood. Is a mother one who carries the child, one who contributes the genetic material, or one who nurtures the child after birth? These questions are central to both legal discourse and cultural perspectives. In gestational surrogacy, the disconnection between genetic, gestational, and social motherhood often raises dilemmas about identity, emotional attachment, and legal rights (Ragone, 2000).

Moreover, surrogacy reframes procreation from a natural biological process into a contractual arrangement involving legal, financial, and medical institutions. This medicalization and commodification of reproduction may lead some critics to argue that surrogacy objectifies the female body and reduces children to products of contractual agreements (Elfers, 2022; Williams-Jones, 2002). Supporters, however, emphasize the autonomy of the surrogate and the rights of individuals to form families by alternative means, especially in cases of infertility, same-sex partnerships, or single parenthood.

Social and Cultural Context of Surrogacy

One of the primary socio-cultural implications of surrogacy is the changing understanding of motherhood and family. The traditional notion of motherhood as biological and innate is challenged by surrogacy, as it involves the transfer of the biological role of motherhood to a woman who may not have a genetic connection to the child. This can raise questions about the importance of biological relatedness in parenting, and the potential impact on the child's identity and sense of belonging within the family (Jadva et al., 2003).

Moreover, surrogacy challenges traditional gender roles and expectations, as it is primarily women who are involved in the practice. Surrogacy can be seen as empowering for women, as it provides them with a means

to earn money and make decisions about their own bodies. However, it can also be seen as a form of exploitation, as women are often paid for their reproductive labour and may be subject to emotional and physical risks associated with pregnancy and childbirth. Surrogacy also raises issues related to social inequality and access to reproductive technology. The cost of surrogacy is often prohibitive for many individuals and couples, making it accessible primarily to those who have the financial means to pursue it. This can create a divide between those who can afford to have a child through surrogacy and those who cannot, reinforcing existing social and economic inequalities (Daniels, 1989).

Global Perspectives on Surrogacy

Internationally, surrogacy presents a patchwork of norms, laws, and cultural acceptances. Western countries like the USA, UK, and Canada have legalized and regulated forms of surrogacy, often differentiating between altruistic and commercial arrangements. Surrogacy in these contexts is seen as a legitimate path to parenthood, though still accompanied by ethical debates about commodification (Smith & Johnson, 2020). Cross-border surrogacy has created complex global legal scenarios where a child born in one country may not be recognized as the legal child of the intended parents in another, leading to citizenship and custody issues (Brown & Lee, 2019). Both *Divided Kingdom* and *The Surrogacy Trap* reflect this global dissonance. The Western film aligns with a system where legal and medical institutions mediate surrogacy, while the African film portrays a struggle for legitimacy, privacy, and emotional safety in a context where cultural norms dominate over legal clarity.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs Antonio Gramsci's theory of Cultural Hegemony and Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Theory to provide a critical lens through which to examine the cultural and ideological constructs surrounding surrogacy as represented in *Divided Kingdom* and *The Surrogacy Trap*. These theoretical tools help unpack the deeper power dynamics embedded in the films' narratives and their portrayal of reproductive technologies within varying socio-economic and cultural contexts.

Gramsci's theory of Cultural Hegemony posits that dominant ideologies within a society are maintained through cultural institutions that normalize the values and beliefs of the ruling class (Hoare & Smith, 1971). This framework is especially relevant in analyzing *Divided Kingdom*, which reflects how Nigerian society, through traditional institutions such as family and religion, upholds patriarchal norms and resists alternative forms of family creation like surrogacy. The film depicts a hegemonic culture where the female body is seen as property for lineage continuation, reinforcing a system in which women's reproductive roles are controlled by male authority figures. Surrogacy, in this context, becomes not just a medical or reproductive decision, but a subversive act that challenges entrenched power relations and cultural norms.

On the other hand, *The Surrogacy Trap* reflects the liberal, capitalist driven logic of Western societies, making Wallerstein's World Systems Theory an appropriate tool for analysis. Wallerstein's theory examines global inequalities by categorizing nations into core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral zones (Wallerstein, 2011). In Western capitalist cores, surrogacy has evolved into a regulated industry supported by legal frameworks and medical infrastructure. The film reveals how surrogacy, while legal and increasingly normalized, is still entangled in class, gender, and emotional dynamics. The commodification of reproduction in the West echoes Wallerstein's argument that the core exploits peripheral regions and even individuals such as surrogate mothers within its own system for capital gain and social order.

Together, these theories illuminate how surrogacy is interpreted and represented differently in global cinema. Gramsci helps highlight how African cinema challenges or upholds cultural authority and gendered expectations, while Wallerstein offers a macro-sociological lens to critique the global commodification and regulation of women's bodies in the West.

Literature Review

Surrogacy has sparked intense academic debate across disciplines such as bioethics, sociology, law, gender studies, and economics. The growing body of scholarly work reflects the complexity of surrogacy as both a deeply personal and politically charged practice. This literature review synthesizes key scholarly contributions and highlights recurring themes in the ethical, legal, economic, and psychological dimensions of surrogacy.

Teman, in the essay entitled “The Social Construction of Surrogacy Research: An Anthropological Critique of Psychosocial Scholarship on Surrogate Motherhood” critically appraises women who participate in surrogacy, looking at their motivations for entering into such contracts. Using the Social Constructionist approach the writer argues against the narrative that normal women do not undertake ventures like surrogacy; that no normal woman will just agree to be pregnant and willingly give up their child for money for the simple reason that women naturally bond with children that they give birth to. The writer further criticises these Western assumptions in scholarship insisting that people are more swayed by television projections that like to project the narrative quite like the case of Baby M where the mother got emotionally attached to the baby at birth (Teman, 2008).

Gunnarsson Payne, Korolczuk and Mezinska in their research entitled “Surrogacy Relationships: A Critical Interpretative Review” examined a number of studies carried out in a number of countries on Surrogacy. They proposed a typology beyond the existing altruistic versus commercial or the traditional versus the gestational in order to view surrogacy from a “transnational” perspective. They, therefore, proposed four relationships in surrogacy: Open, restricted, structured and enmeshed. The criteria for this typology, according to Gunnarsson Payne et al., are “the frequency and character of contact pre- and post-birth; expectations of both parties; the type of exchange involved in surrogacy arrangements; and cultural and, legal and, economic contexts.” (Gunnarsson Payne, Korolczuk & Mezinska, 2020, p. 183).

Edelmann, in the research “Surrogacy: The Psychological Issues”, examined the limited research on the psychological aspects of surrogacy, a growing yet controversial practice. The study explored potential psychological stressors for both commissioning couples and surrogates, analyses attitudes and motivations of each party, and investigates the dynamics of their relationship, particularly regarding relinquishing the child. The impact on child development was also explored, including how children born through surrogacy are informed about their origins and how their adjustment compares to children conceived through IVF or donor insemination. While the limited research and anecdotal evidence suggest a generally positive picture with surrogates motivated by altruism and minimal difficulty relinquishing the child, well-adjusted parents, and well-developed children, Edelmann emphasizes the crucial need for further systematic research to confirm these initial findings and provide a more conclusive

understanding of the psychological implications of surrogacy for everyone involved (Edelmann, 2004).

Oyekan and Ani, in their work entitled “Surrogacy and the Motherhood Question in Yoruba Culture”, analysed surrogacy and motherhood within Yoruba culture. Exploring the harmful implications often associated with surrogacy, the study raises critical questions about the impact of surrogacy on the maternal bond and the broader concept of motherhood. The research highlighted the evolution of surrogacy from traditional familial arrangements to modern commercialized practices. Central to the analysis is the Yoruba conception of motherhood, which prioritizes nurture and care over biological connections. Drawing on cultural beliefs prevalent among the Yoruba people, predominantly located in South-West Nigeria but also observed in diaspora communities, the study suggests that Yoruba cultural norms align with surrogacy practices, particularly in emphasizing the sociological dimensions of motherhood. The research provides insights into how cultural values shape perceptions of motherhood and surrogacy, suggesting compatibility between Yoruba cultural beliefs and surrogacy practices (Oyekan & Ani, 2017).

This literature collectively underscores the multifaceted nature of surrogacy and its intersection with global inequality, ethical subjectivity, legal pluralism, and individual psychology. These sources set the stage for analyzing how film, as a cultural artifact, reflects and reinforces these debates in varying socio-political contexts. The insights derived from this body of literature serve as a foundation for interpreting how *Divided Kingdom* and *The Surrogacy Trap* construct meaning around surrogacy within African and Western frameworks.

Cultural Representations of Surrogacy in *Divided Kingdom* and *The Surrogacy Trap*

Divided Kingdom reflects the Nigerian cultural perceptions of family, surrogacy, and traditional values. The film highlights how surrogacy is viewed with skepticism and moral ambiguity, shaped by cultural norms that prioritize lineage, bloodlines, and the role of women in reproduction. Rachel's struggle with infertility and her decision to use her friend Lizzy as a surrogate underscores the societal pressure on women to bear children, particularly male heirs. The hierarchical structure of Nigerian families, the influence of patriarchal figures like the *Igwe* (chief), and the subservient

roles women are expected to play within marriage and society form the cultural foundation of the film. Themes such as polygamy, family loyalty, and the tension between tradition and modern challenges such as infertility are woven throughout the narrative.

In contrast, *The Surrogacy Trap* presents a Western view of surrogacy rooted in legal recognition, acceptance, and individual agency. Surrogacy is portrayed as a viable, regulated option for couples facing infertility, reflecting the American emphasis on personal choice, technological advancement, and legal rights. Characters like Christy Bennet exemplify the drive to overcome reproductive challenges, while Mallory's motivations such as financial need and a longing for emotional connection, highlight how surrogacy can be both a compassionate and complex transaction. The film underscores the emotional and psychological aspects of surrogacy, aligning with broader American values around mental health and emotional well-being in family dynamics.

Both films are culturally grounded and reveal contrasting societal norms. *Divided Kingdom* is steeped in Nigerian traditions, focusing on family hierarchy, gender roles, and cultural expectations regarding fertility and marriage. In contrast, *The Surrogacy Trap* explores modern American ideals of parenthood, legal accountability, and emotional fulfillment. Together, the films illustrate how cultural values shape perceptions of family, surrogacy, and identity, offering a comparative view of evolving family structures in traditional versus modern societies.

Social Stigma and Emotional Impact

Divided Kingdom explores the emotional and social consequences of surrogacy in Nigerian society, highlighting the psychological toll on surrogates and the social stigma they endure. Lizzy, the surrogate, is treated as an outsider and ultimately suffers emotional rejection, reflecting a society where her role is misunderstood and morally scrutinized. The film captures how deeply ingrained beliefs about biological motherhood influence social acceptance. It also portrays the hierarchical treatment of children based on the mother's marital status, where children of second wives are often seen as lesser. Rachel, the intended mother, carries the burden of guilt and public shame, revealing the intense cultural discomfort surrounding infertility and the use of non-traditional means to bear children.

In contrast, *The Surrogacy Trap* delves into the emotional vulnerabilities experienced by all parties in the surrogacy process. Mallory's emotional isolation and her growing attachment to the unborn child challenge the intended boundaries of the agreement. Her desire for greater involvement, and eventual manipulation of the family, reflect ethical concerns about the commodification of reproduction and the emotional costs often hidden beneath legal contracts. The film asks whether a surrogate can ever truly detach from the child she carries and whether emotional exploitation is an unavoidable risk in such arrangements.

The Bennetts, though legally secure in their parenthood, are emotionally destabilized. Christy's breakdown, marked by the haunting question, "Is it my destiny not to be a mother?" reveals how infertility challenges female identity, even in progressive societies. The film emphasizes the necessity for emotional counseling and post-birth support for both surrogate and parents. It critiques a purely contractual model by portraying its limitations in managing emotional fallout and psychological trauma.

The film portrays the emotional strain on both the surrogate and the intended parents endure. However, the absence of adequate support structures in the narrative reflects the shortcomings of systems that fail to provide mental and emotional safeguards.

In real life, these concerns are echoed in the public stories of women like Ini Edo and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, both of whom have shared their surrogacy journeys. Ini Edo openly discussed her decision to pursue surrogacy after multiple miscarriages and without a husband, revealing that despite the joy of motherhood, she faced judgment and social criticism for her choice (News Leverage, 2025). Her story highlights how surrogacy challenges traditional norms about family and motherhood in Nigerian society, often placing women at the receiving end of moral scrutiny. She noted that "I got tired of not having my own child, and thankfully my eggs are good, and I was able to have my own child" (<https://www.scoopernews.com/2025/04/17/62990146>).

Similarly, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has spoken about the social stigma attached to surrogacy, especially in African communities. She acknowledged the contradiction in how society claims to support bodily autonomy, yet vilifies women who use reproductive technologies to build families. In her interview with Chude Jideonwo, she remarked that "the same people say that a woman can do what she wants with her body, so there's a contradiction there."

Adichie's openness serves as both a personal and political statement, challenging the societal silence and shame often imposed on women who choose non-traditional paths to motherhood.

Another significant ethical issue is the status of the child born through surrogacy. Garcia's empirical study notes that children may face identity questions as they grow up, particularly in contexts where surrogacy is stigmatized or kept secret. Films like *The Surrogacy Trap* often end with the successful handover of the baby but rarely explore the long-term ethical concerns related to the child's psychological well-being or social identity.

Both films studied, though differing in tone and context, shed light on how culture shapes the practice and perception of surrogacy. When viewed alongside real life stories like those of Ini Edo and Chimamanda Adichie, the films underscore the urgent need for inclusive, culturally sensitive frameworks that support rather than shame women for making personal reproductive choices.

Individualism versus Collectivism

The contrasting ideologies of individualism and collectivism play out distinctly in both films. In *Divided Kingdom*, the collectivist values of Nigerian society dominate. Family and community are at the heart of all decisions, and polygamy is culturally acceptable as a means of preserving lineage and social stability. Rachel's decision to have Lizzy serve as a second wife and surrogate is not just a personal choice, it is influenced by extended family expectations and cultural norms. This collectivist outlook emphasizes continuity of the family name and community-based decision making over individual desires.

Yet, the film also reveals fractures in this structure. As Lizzy gains favor for bearing a male child, jealousy and rivalry emerge, undermining the collective harmony. Rachel's sense of betrayal, Lizzy's loss of agency, and the Igwe's authoritative role expose the fragile balance between communal good and personal pain. The film critiques how collectivist ideals can suppress individual rights, particularly for women, by prioritizing family continuity at the cost of personal autonomy.

In contrast, *The Surrogacy Trap* champions the Western ideology of individualism. The surrogacy arrangement is a private, contractual agreement between Mallory and the Bennetts, free from communal or extended family input. Autonomy and personal ambition drive decisions:

Christy's determination to become a mother, Mallory's choice to accept compensation, and Mitch's legalistic approach to fatherhood all reflect the prioritization of individual goals.

However, this individualism also fosters emotional distance and commodification. Mallory is not embraced as part of the family but is seen as a service provider. The lack of emotional integration ultimately leads to conflict, revealing how transactional relationships can unravel under emotional strain. Thus, while individualism offers freedom, it also creates vulnerabilities in human connection and care.

Gender Roles and Power Dynamics

Both films provide layered examinations of gender roles and reproductive politics. *Divided Kingdom* offers a stark critique of traditional gender hierarchies in Nigeria. Female characters are measured by their reproductive capacity, particularly their ability to bear male heirs. Rachel's waning status is directly tied to her infertility. Her worth as a wife diminishes as her biological limitations come to light, reflecting the societal pressure on women to reproduce as a form of validation. The Igwe's decision to take another wife further emphasizes this imbalance.

Lizzy, initially helping out friend becomes entangled in this gendered power struggle. Her pregnancy elevates her status but reduces her identity to that of a child bearer. The rivalry between co-wives, the imbalance in treatment, and the emotional trauma they endure illustrate how patriarchy fosters competition among women for male approval and inheritance rights. The film critiques this reality by showing the emotional damage and family disintegration caused by such norms (*Divided Kingdom*).

In contrast, *The Surrogacy Trap* places women in ostensibly empowered positions, yet shows that reproductive autonomy is still fraught with manipulation and systemic imbalance. Christy, though financially secure and married, feels incomplete without a child suggesting that social expectations about motherhood remain entrenched. Her desperation affects her emotional health and moral clarity. Mallory, who enters the surrogacy willingly, eventually loses control over the process and becomes emotionally dependent, destabilized by the lack of emotional reciprocity from the Bennetts.

Power remains skewed, despite formal equality. Mitch, although less vocal, retains decision-making influence, and Christy's breakdowns are

dismissed as hysteria. The legal system protects the intended parents, not the surrogate, indicating that systemic structures still reinforce traditional power dynamics, albeit in subtle ways. The tragic conclusion of Mallo-ry's death exposes the psychological cost of reducing surrogates to legal instruments and showcases the ongoing struggle for balanced reproductive agency (*The Surrogacy Trap*).

Conclusion

This paper highlighted the stark contrasts in the portrayal of surrogacy in *Divided Kingdom* and *The Surrogacy Trap*. *Divided Kingdom* reflects traditional Nigerian values that center lineage, patriarchal authority, and collectivist family systems. Surrogacy in this context is fraught with cultural and moral complexities, where legal protections are absent and surrogates lack autonomy. In contrast, *The Surrogacy Trap* illustrates a Western, individualist approach where surrogacy is legalized and contractual but still ethically complicated due to emotional risks, psychological exploitation, and hidden gender power dynamics.

Through the lens of these two films, it becomes clear that surrogacy is more than a reproductive option, it is a deeply cultural phenomenon shaped by beliefs about motherhood, family, gender roles, and identity. While legal and medical advancements may facilitate surrogacy across the globe, the underlying values guiding its acceptance and interpretation vary significantly between societies. Nigeria's surrogacy narratives reflect communal expectations and religious influences, whereas Western portrayals emphasize choice, autonomy, and emotional well-being.

The real-life surrogacy stories of prominent Nigerian women like Ini Edo and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie further enriched this discourse by humanizing the practice and offering alternative perspectives that challenge stigma and promote broader acceptance. As global perspectives continue to evolve, these cultural, ethical, and legal dimensions must be critically engaged to foster a more inclusive and respectful dialogue around assisted reproduction.

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