

# PEOPLES & CULTURES OF NIGERIA

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Edited by:

A. S. Jegede, O. A. Olutayo, O. O. Omololu & B. E. Owumi

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## CHAPTER THIRTY

### YOUTH CULTURE IN NIGERIA: AN EPOCH CHANGE IN MORES AND BEHAVIOUR

Nwokocho, E.E.

#### Introduction

As a recurring concept in Sociology, Youth Culture is gaining increasing recognition in social science discourse in view of the changing lifestyle pervading this sub-group globally. Ordinarily, culture is ascribed to a spatially-definite community of humans with distinctive characteristics that separate it and its members from all other communities. As man-made, it is embedded in complexity that finds expression in both social and physical traits that ultimately impact the perception, goals and actions of a group (Oke 2009; Herskovit 1955). These traits culminate in norms, values, beliefs, practices and other capabilities and habits acquired by individuals as society members (Tylor, 1871). This presupposes that culture is people-specific to the extent that we talk about Igbo, Yoruba, Tiv and Hausa cultures, among others, in Nigeria. In the latter sense, notwithstanding an individual's age or status s/he is expected to conform with community's expectations as a member of the group.

By contrast, youth culture transcends ethnic, religious, socio-economic and spatial boundaries and covers young people that identify with, almost simultaneously, the evolving attitudinal and behavioural values in, virtually, all locations of the world. This paper views this global sub-culture as a kind of social movement whereby actors are locked-up in perceptual and attitudinal consensus that promotes deviation from established community folkways and values. We note here that the development of such sub-culture is not only an indication of knowledge explosion that derives from information technology, but also the readiness of youths to contest the relevance of existing values. The locus of such contest is at the point where extant cultural traits, for whatever reasons, are classified as obsolete and/or burdensome to contemporary social reality. We are persuaded by the quantum of events around and consequences of youth culture to regard this era, of polar values, as an epoch in the evolution of society. Indeed, Peter Ekeh's conceptualisation of epochs is instructive:

*Perhaps the most outstanding characteristics of epochs is that they represent changes in kind, not simply in degree. A corollary of this attribute is that epochs represent crises in human experience... with epochs the central parameters of society, the central value assumptions on which society rests, are never the same again with those whose times and regions are captured by epochal movements ... There are hardly times or periods in the history of nations in which there are no elements of social change. Change is eternal. But ordinary, non-epochal, change is episodic and its direction cannot be fully predicted (Ekeh, 1980:7).*

The enormous amount of change in youth culture is perceived by some as contradictor to age-long traditions and by implication antithetical to normal human development. A disproportionate number of young Nigerians are embedded in this epochal movement and this creates tension and conflict between the youth and the parent generation. Thus, the purpose of this paper is five-fold: (1) examine the changing sexual values among youth, (2) understand the juggernaut of change that has

swept across the country and beyond, (3) discover how some youth have been able to cope with non-traditional lifestyle choices, and (4) how these choices have affected the family and community, and (5) explore the possibility that some youth might revert to conventional community norms and values in Nigeria.

### **Selected Aspects of Youth Culture and Changing Values**

The consensus in literature is that culture is dynamic as well as relative to times and places essentially because it is human-made and also due to, the persistently, inherent quest for change among individuals. Culture relativity supposes that even when values change, such occurs only within a specific group and necessitated by social and physical contexts in the environment. Indeed, youth culture defies the logic of both relativity and specificity, in culture discourse, given its globalized posture wherein youth values are becoming increasingly universalised. In what follows, we examine some aspects of attitudes and behaviour that reveal these changing values among Nigerian youths.

#### **Prostitution/Multiple Sex Partners**

In traditional Nigerian society, prostitution/commercial sex or multiple-sex partnership was regarded as an atrocity committed against the individual, society and the gods and it attracted collective community condemnation. The prostitute was stigmatised and discriminated against, and in some cases treated like an outcaste, and sacrifices were needed for cleansing against inexplicable consequences on the actor and her people. The severity of these sanctions was paramount as well as constant reminders to parents and guardians of the need to undertake their socialisation functions assiduously. For the most part, children belonged to the community to the extent that any elder could confidently correct an erring child without confrontation from biological parents who would rather amplify the sanctions.

However, in the spirit of Westernisation and Americanisation of Nigerian peoples and cultures parents not only hold back on hitherto appropriate sanctions for wrong doing but also condemn, in strong terms, efforts at correcting their wards by other individuals. This attitude of silence in the face of social deviation has accounted for the despicable level of dangerous mischief among Nigerian youth. Consequently, cultural constraints have been eroded by characteristic permissiveness inherent, mainly, in sexual expression (Williams 1985; Oloko & Omoboye 1993), including prostitution. Nwokocha (2007) has noted that notwithstanding the devastating consequences of transactional sex on practitioners, this activity has remained persistently common among young people.

The outcome of this *prostitution revolution* is that labels are designed to trivialise the stigma hitherto associated with the behaviour. For instance, Nwokocha (2007) and Machel (2001) observed that sex for money and/or gifts, from older men referred to as *Aristo*, is seen in some quarters as a coping strategy for dealing with economic handicap rather than perceived as commercial sex. Moreover, Nwokocha's (2007: 68-69) study of youth transactional sex workers in two universities in Southwest Nigeria revealed that unlike previous generations of prostitutes that engaged in commercial sex, strictly, for financial reasons, some present day girls join the prostitute sub-culture just to 'belong'; others, to hurt their parents for failure to

meet their frivolous demands such as a trip abroad, posh car to be used in school, some designer outfits, among others.

Bankole, Singh, Woog & Wulf (2004) have also found that young men at the pressure of proving their manhood not only engage prostitutes in sexual intercourse but also many partners, at times, without condoms, thereby increasing their vulnerability to STDs, unwanted pregnancy and abortion (Elmore-Meegan, Conroy & Agala, 2004). These, among other factors, explain mounting evidence that youths are uniquely vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS (Munthali & Zulu, 2007). For several reasons, adolescents in Nigeria constitute the bulk of unrestrained youth as well as the most vulnerable to negative social, economic and health outcomes (Nwokocha, 2011). Thus, in finding justification for increasing academic focus on adolescence Munthali and Zulu (2007: 151) stated:

*Adolescents' exposure to out-of-wedlock sex has been increasing over time because they are maturing earlier and marrying later than previous generations did. Globally, the ages of first menstruation for girls and the experience of first pubertal body changes/wet dreams are dropping mostly as a result of better nutrition and socio-economic status.*

The NDHS (2008) indicate that 30% of young Nigerians age 15-24 had sexual intercourse during the 12 months preceding the survey; this may well explain the increasing number of induced abortions, which, according to Otoide, Orosanya & Okonofua (2001), accounted for 20,000 of the estimated 50,000 maternal deaths in Nigeria. As Oye-Adeniran, Umoh & Nnatu (2002) observed, an annual estimate of 610,000 Nigerian females engaged in illegally induced abortions which are among the proximate determinants of morbidity and mortality in the country. Although it could be argued that these data are about a decade old, however, maternal situation in the country has remained virtually unchanged if not worse in present-day Nigeria.

### **Early Sex and Stigmatisation of Virginity**

Ilesanmi and Lewis (1997) have noted that prior to colonisation, community elders were charged with the responsibility of preparing young adults for manhood and womanhood not only to emphasize group solidarity but also to ensure that high morality was sustained. Essentially, misbehaviour of a community member translated to an act of irresponsibility by the entire group. Such attitude towards collective responsibility presupposed internal behaviour control mechanisms for which heavy sanctions were meted out on deviating individuals and sub-groups. Clearly, in most Nigerian societies, female chastity before marriage was a norm that spoke directly to the extent to which parents were able to raise their wards in line with prescribed values. Olutayo (1997) observed, for instance, that adolescents in Nigeria were expected to repress their sexual desires until marriage. Virginity before nuptiality was rewarded, and incest taboo was created around premarital sex. The attitude and behaviour of young people in Nigeria towards virginity have indeed changed, and as Nwokocha (2007: 60) stated:

*Virginity which was hitherto cherished as virtuous and perceived to facilitate pregnancy and safe-delivery after marriage is rather viewed presently as an anti-socialist status.*

The immediate consequence of stigmatising virginity is that undue pressure is exerted on young people by their peers to join the *bandwagon of iniquity*. As a result, virgins are labelled naive, uncivilised, antisocial, among others, as a way of sustaining the characteristic falsehood and deception that pervade the youth community. Incidentally, several young people are deceived by such delusiveness that is expressed in acts that speak directly to exuberance and risky behaviours. Population related surveys, in different societies, reveal decreasing age at first coital experience. Although the Demographic Health Survey (DHS) of various African countries indicate minor differences in age at first sexual intercourse, generally, the ages are low relative to what obtained in past generations that emphasised strong sexual restraints (Nwokocha 2007). For instance, in both Nigeria and Kenya, the median age at first sexual intercourse for women age 15-49 is 16.9 years and men of the same age, 21.3 and 17.6 years for Nigeria and Kenya respectively (NDHS 2008; KDHS 2003). Using the latest DHS, National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) and HIV/AIDS and Malaria Indicator Survey data, Table 1 shows the median age at first sexual intercourse for men and women in seven African countries and India.

**Table 1: mean age at first sexual intercourse for both sex in seven African countries and India**

S/N	Country	Median age at first intercourse (women age 15-49 years)	Median age at first intercourse (men age 15-49 years)
1.	Ethiopia	15.7	20.8
2.	Ghana	17.9	20.2
3.	Kenya	16.9	17.6
4.	Liberia	16.3	18.4
5.	Nigeria	16.9	21.3
6.	Sierra Leone	16.3	19.7
7.	Tanzania	16.7	18.6
8.	India	17.4	22.6

Similar trends obtain in Ghana, Tanzania, Ethiopia, India, among others. Ghana (DHS 2008), Tanzania (HIV/AIDS and Malaria Indicator Survey 2007-08), Ethiopia (DHS 2005) and India (NFHS 2005-06) show that the median ages at first sexual intercourse for women age 15-49 are 17.9 years, 16.7 years, 15.7 years and 17.4 years respectively. These statistics indicate clearly that young people are increasingly engaging in sexual intercourse quite early notwithstanding inherent multidimensional consequences. We observe that the figures could be worse in some locations within and outside Nigeria where sexual permissiveness is more profound and also due to phenomenal under-reporting of reproductive health issues, particularly, among young people. We note here that despite the huge resources committed to campaigns against adolescent/youth sexual and reproductive health challenges and mishaps by governments and agencies, over the years, negligible success has been recorded. For instance, while Nigeria's DHS (2008) reported the median age at first intercourse of 16.9 years for women age 15-49 years, Isiugo-Abanihe (1994), close to a decade and half before the survey also reported the median age of 16.3 years for first sexual experience among unmarried women aged 15-24.

### Sexuality Education and Exposure to Multiple Sources of Information

Sex education remains a contentious issue in Nigeria notwithstanding the consequences of lack of awareness about human sexuality. Perhaps, the present generation has fared better than past generations due to a combination of factors such as higher literacy rate, migration, cross-cultural networking and exposure to mass-media. It was obvious that sexuality issues, conceived as purely exclusive for adults to deliberate upon, were never discussed in families and households either in the open or in seclusion (Buckley, Barrett and Arminkin, 2004). In fact, it was mystified in some settings to the extent that young people themselves were personally persuaded to avoid such discourse even when adults inadvertently engaged in sex-related discussions close to where these young people are. Yet, even in the midst of such pervasive ignorance and silence, ignoble number of high risk sex behaviours was recorded probably as a result of community sanctions against premarital sexual intercourse (Ilesanmi and Lewis, 1997).

This paper argues quite forcefully that lack of sexuality awareness should not be condoned and that recourse to strong behavioural norms as a basis for irresponsibility is not tenable. It has been observed that young people with little or no knowledge of sexuality usually engage in dangerous premarital sex (Sauvain-Dugerdil *et al.*, 2008) and face different dilemmas that relate to Sexually Transmitted Infections, unwanted pregnancies and others. As Bankole *et al.* (2007:29) summarized, the consequences of failure at sex education for young persons are enormous, considering that:

*An estimated 4.3% of young women and 1.5% of young men aged 15-24 years in sub-Saharan Africa were living with HIV at the end of 2005 and 9-13% of young women had given birth by age 16. Clearly, young people need access to protective information and skills before they become sexually-active in order to reduce their risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and of experiencing unintended pregnancies and very early childbearing. The key challenge is to determine what specific information to give very young adolescents, from what sources, at what ages and in what ways.*

We note that intra-generational ignorance about a particular phenomenon, in this case sex education, may eventually create an inter-generational lacuna or the missing part that may be difficult to fill. For instance, considering that most parents were not educated on sexuality by their own parents, they lack the requisite knowledge, confidence and capability to transmit relevant awareness to young people (Utomo and McDonald, 2009). Incidentally, the burden of consequence, such as diseases, including HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancies and abortion on the present generation, is more alarming and requires greater openness and commitment by stakeholders (Madunagu, 2007).

Indeed, many young people access sexually explicit materials through internet, peers and entertainment and print media (Utomo and McDonald, 2009) notwithstanding cultural or religious injunctions against their exposure to damaging information. Experience shows that emails, facebook, twitters and blog among other internet facilities instead of bridging sexuality knowledge-gaps are currently employed by most young people, especially in urban centres, to encourage promiscuity in a manner that heightens their vulnerability to risky behaviours. Thus, rather than getting



deterred from initiating sexual activities early as a result of the knowledge, about the risk of HIV/AIDS and other negative outcomes, gained through exposure to multiple sources of information, many young people are embedded in exuberance that is usually catalysed by peer pressure.

### **Dressing Patterns and Pornography**

Ill-mannered behaviour among Nigerian youths manifests clearly in their mode of dressing and growing interest in pornography. It is common to sight young people of both sexes in dresses that defy community expectations, notwithstanding places and occasions. For instance, girls and boys wear *spaghetti-handed* blouses and *sagged* trousers respectively to churches and for events such as wedding, naming ceremonies, birthday parties, lectures, funerals, among others. The solemnity of some of the occasions makes little or no meaning to these young people. Some of our campuses have gradually become disguised theatres of anatomical displays wherein female students flaunt their bodies without restraint. Perhaps, these expositions are perceived as acquaintance with contemporary expectations in the fashion world. We contend that while nudity is not sufficient justification for sexual violence against females in particular, it could however be implicated in the rising cases of rape among many young people, who are already lovers of pornography.

Experience shows that a large number of urban youths in Nigeria spend far more time on the internet browsing through pornographic materials than on documents and sites that contribute to their academic advancement. Indeed, mass media and other information sources have led to the globalisation of pornography for which Nigerian youths are strong partakers. As Malamuth, Addison & Koss (2000) stated, and in line with the revelation of *Forbes* Magazine, companies that produce sexually explicit depictions constituted a 56 Billion dollar Pornography industry, to the extent that internet pornography companies were listed on the NASDAQ stock exchange. After a decade, this industry is likely to post higher profits considering that more young people are getting involved, especially in societies that down play the effects of the industry on human development.

### **Homosexuality**

Until recently, lesbian and gay issues were hardly conceptualised and discussed in Nigerian societies. Traditionally, sexual relations were strictly between males and females, and negative attitudes were exhibited toward lesbians and gays in line with community disaffection about roles and behaviour of actors (Simon 1998). Even among more developed societies, up to the early 1970s, homosexuals were perceived as sick, in a way or another, ascribed mainly to "disturbed upbringings or the perverted results of genetic mishaps" (Kitzinger 1987:39). The pathological conception of homosexuality has been described by a clinical psychologist thus:

*Homosexuality is a symptom of neurosis and of a grievous personality disorder. It is an outgrowth of deeply rooted emotional deprivations and disturbances that had their origins in infancy. It is manifested ... by compulsive and destructive behaviour that is the very antithesis of fulfilment and happiness. Buried under the 'gay' exterior of the homosexual is the hurt and rage that crippled his or her capacity for true maturation, for healthy growth and love. (Kronemeyer, 1980: 7).*

However, as societies became more permissive to behaviours, and justifications are adduced for virtually all actions and inactions, the pathological explanation of homosexuality caved in. As with other aspects of lifestyle adopted almost wholly by African youths, homosexuals in Nigeria may soon become visible as their counterparts in Western societies (Macionis & Plummer, 2005). For the most part, the voices of homosexuals grew stronger with the emergence of the Queer Theory in the 1980s that was championed by Sedgwick (Macionis & Plummer, 2005). By proposing fair and equal treatment for Lesbians and Gays relative to heterosexuals, the theory represents the threshold of de-stigma and de-discrimination against homosexuals in relevant societies.

Although homosexuality is gradually gaining prominence among Nigerian youths, the health and social consequences are enormous. As Diplacido (1998) observed, homosexuals undergo more stress arising from their orientation than heterosexuals and are less likely to seek routine medical care for fear of revealing their sexual status to health care providers. In addition, family members of homosexuals usually react negatively upon disclosure of such sexual orientation, and, in extreme cases, disapproving parents and significant-others may disown such a family member (Muller, 1987). Clearly, disowning a homosexual will hardly lead to reversal of behaviour, but could rather throw up a cycle of psychosocial, emotional, economic, and familial challenges that may even outweigh the burden of seeking sustained reorientation and rehabilitation of the homosexual.

### **Cultism and Human Wastage**

Cultism and human wastage were regular features in Nigerian tertiary institutions especially close to the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although these have dwindled significantly in some schools, reduction has however been quite gradual in others. Perhaps, the difference between cult activities among Nigerian youths and their gangster counterparts in Western countries may be in the modus operandi and particularly initiation processes and rites. Ugwulebo (1999) identified psychological immaturity, exemplified in the problem of crisis of self, as one of the greatest pull factors towards cultism. Such immaturity, consequently, drives the individual to seek recognition and respect, even if through deviant ways. As Ugwulebo (1999) again noted, the 'hard guy' syndrome with its concomitant implications for abusive behaviour is a major manifestation of such psychological problem.

According to Owoeye (1997), violence among young people in society is a reflection of permissive but despicable youth culture that generates impetus in the failure of institutional mechanisms, youth integration schemes in communities, among others. We observe that the history of cult and confraternity activities in Nigeria is embedded in evolution from moderate to extremism in aims and activities. As several scholars have noted, cultism among Nigerian tertiary school students has accounted for unquantifiable loss of lives and property (Adelola, 1997; Owoeye, 1997; Ugwulebo, 1999), even when the initial purpose of establishing pyrates confraternity, which was the first to be founded, in 1953 was far from bloodletting. Quoting Wole Soyinka, who was one of the founding members of the latter confraternity, Adelola (1997: 54) says:

*... the confraternity was not designed to be a secret cult. We sailed in my time on the top of platforms. Our performance which was just*

*singing, telling stories and debating were opened to anybody. We discussed everything including politics and anybody who liked or wanted to loosen up was free to join us.*

Such openness and willingness to universalise membership within the student body are marked differences from what obtains presently. Moreover, the earlier group was characterised by specificity of goal which tended to project African cultures and values against repressive imperialistic and destabilising agents.

### **Fraud and Dishonesty**

Honesty among Africans was a traditional value cherished and upheld by the people probably because sanctions, against dishonesty, were strong and often tied to beliefs and wraths of gods. Perhaps, more than anything else, the supernatural consequences of dishonesty and allied activities kept behaviours in check. However, as Westernisation, Christianity/Islam and formal legal systems crept into Nigerian communal life and existence, traditionalism dwindled into insignificance. The amplification of these non-traditional phenomena has accounted for delays in judgements and, by extension, sanctions. Thus, the time-lag between commission of an act or omission and punishment, either to reflect western permissiveness or Christian/Moslem forgiveness or legal technicality, has created a lacuna that has exacerbated fraudulent activities among individuals and groups.

Fraud among Nigerian youths, it can be argued, is a reflection of general systems decay that manifest clearly in corruption in all facets of the country's life. It has been noted somewhere that the long years of military dictatorship occasioned by economic hardship is largely responsible for the high rate of corruption in Nigeria (Nwokocha, 2007). Thus, although fraudulent activities can be identified among different generations of Nigerians, the present youths are however diversifying the scope of fraud. For instance, Adekunle (2010) noted that the majority of cyber crime perpetrators in Nigeria are youths, and students in particular. He stated further that:

*Yahoo boys proudly claim that their involvement in cyber crime is a way of getting back at an unjust system in a non-violent way... They are eager to show other people that they have arrived. Some hostels in tertiary institutions are known as Yahoo hostels apparently because almost everybody in these hostels gets involved in cyber crime... This has worsened Nigeria's image challenge within the global community. (Adekunle, 2010: 23; 54)*

Most of these young cyber criminals, in not conceiving their acts as anti-normative but rather a kind of innovation against poverty, are hardly perturbed by people's perception of their illicit activities. This rebellious attitude whereby individuals feel alienated from both means and goals and strive to reform the social structure by challenging its norms is located within the framework of R.K. Merton's theory of Differential Opportunity (Pföhl, 1994). Moreover, peers may be attracted by cyber criminals' flamboyant lifestyle at halls of residence and other places that may provide opportunities to showcase cars, phones, jewelleryes, among others. Sutherland's Differential Association Theory is anchored on the premise that criminal behaviour develops through frequent and consistent interaction of the individual with

criminal groups (Opara, 1998). The challenge, therefore, is not only in devising effective reorientation and rehabilitation strategies for established cyber criminals but also in ensuring that others are not pulled and eventually immersed in cyber criminality.

### **Theoretical/Conceptual Framework**

Several theories could explain youth culture, unrestrained mischievous behaviour and deviation from community norms in different societies mainly due to the diverse nature of the phenomenon both in content and consequences. However, Functionalist, Diffusion, and Social disorganisation theories have been adopted for this analysis.

The Functionalist Theory sees the society as composed of sub-systems that function separately but cooperatively in maintaining the entire system to the extent that weakness of any of the sub-units not only affects it but also others and the whole (Ritzer 2008). In this wise, such weakness in affecting the functionality of the whole system leads to what is referred in everyday Sociology as, dysfunctionism which is the reverse of the principle of functions. The dysfunctionalist perspective views youth culture as the cumulative effects of weak sub-systems such as family, school, economy, politics and religion. Onyeonoru (2000) had noted that a system is portrayed as an entity made up of interrelated and connected parts. As such, rather than dealing separately with various aspects of attitude-moulding as unrelated entities, the systems approach conceives of youth culture as evolving from the interactions of various deficient parts.

Nigerian youths are victims of general systems decay brought about by decades of leadership insensitivity, rugged individualism, lack of direction, dwindling cultural and primordial sentiments, among others. Family and kinship values are fast disappearing as parents and guardians struggle fiercely for economic survival in a pervasively impoverished country like Nigeria irrespective of her enviable resources. Consequently, young family members are almost absolutely left without necessary socialisation, and given that nature abhors vacuum, the onus of that orientation function is unwittingly undertaken by peers. Yet, these peers may themselves be victims of neglect in their own families and kin-groups.

Diffusion Theory is also adopted in examining youth culture and changing values. Diffusion research began as far back as 1903 when Gabriel Tarde plotted an S-shaped Diffusion curve (University of Twente 2010) and has continued due to its relevance in understanding social change. As Rogers (1995) stated, diffusion is a process of communicating an innovation through some channels, among the members of a social system, over a period of time. Diffusion supposes that a new idea, attitude, or behaviour will be adopted by members of a given culture or sub-culture. Thus, Diffusion of innovation theory predicts that media as well as interpersonal contacts provide information that influences opinion and judgment of relevant individuals (University of Twente, 2010) in a given context. For our analysis, exposure to varied information has accounted for the proliferation of opinion leaders and gatekeepers within the ranks of youths. These change agents adopt different persuasive strategies such as personal contacts, blackmail and positive sanction to influence their target audience.

We note here that in some Nigerian cultures, diffusion of these youth-cultural traits was achieved through the enculturation process whereby these opinion leaders and other relevant individuals prefer cultures other than theirs to the extent of

adoption. In this case, preference for what youths in Western and other non-western societies do and cherish irrespective of the implications for the actor's community norms and values. For instance, through access to mass media, internet and personal contacts, several young people in Nigeria have adopted western lifestyle related to dressing, language, hair-do, alcoholism, drug abuse, gangster activities, clubbing, among others.

The disorganisation theory of the Chicago school in explaining youth culture as deviation that occurs as a natural by-product of rapid social change, observed that high rate of anti-normative behaviour occurs when society experiences much upheaval in too short a time, sufficient, to disrupt the existing order (Pfohl, 1994). The theory suggests that such rapidity fractures the normative organisation of society thus creating different normative frameworks and value dissensus. The discrepancy accounts for weakening of rules of behaviour and the emergence of new values that oppose established traditions. The rapidity of change is exemplified by the internet revolution among young people, in particular those, residing in urban centres across the country. A decade ago, internet was neither hardly known nor used by young Nigerians; presently it is common knowledge, thus, serving as an incentive for computer literacy.

A synthesis of the above theoretical triangulation is a conceptual framework that interweaves elements of the three theories adopted for the analysis. Figure 1 shows that the virility of Diffusion and enculturation of culture, in form of adoption of western lifestyle at the expense of domestic patterns, is an indication of failure of individual sub-systems such as family, school, economy, politics, religion and local technology on one hand and the entire system as a whole on the other. Consequently, youths are left with limited attitudinal and behavioural options which include ambivalence and involvement in anti-normative behaviours.

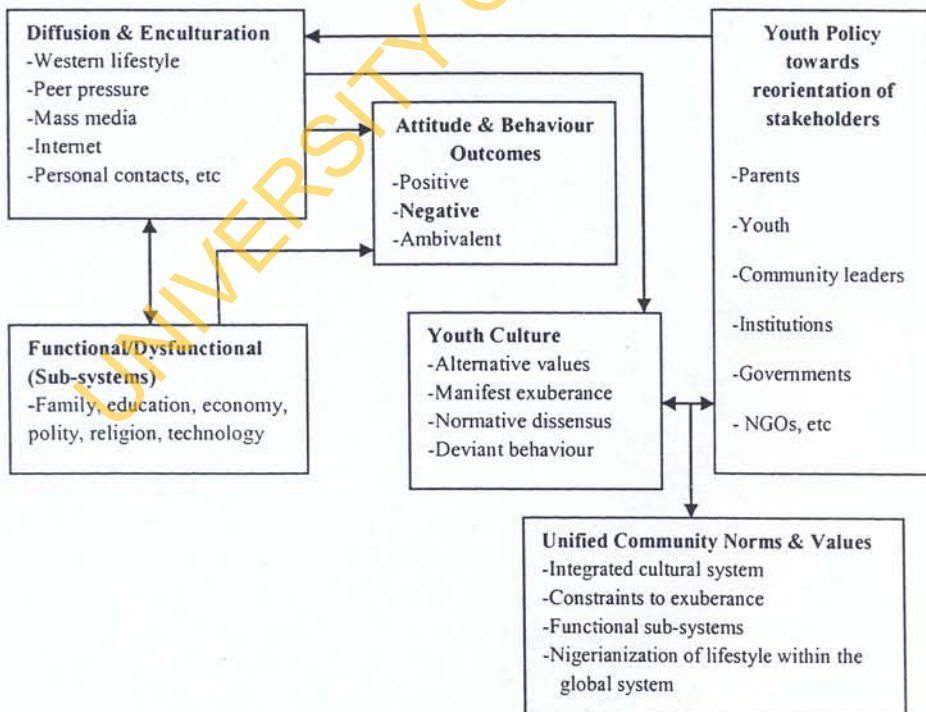


Fig1: Conceptual Framework

Youth culture is conceived in the above framework as the outcome of a dysfunctional system that negatively impacts attitude and behaviour of young people over time. Thus, without a corresponding reaction from a functional system, hardly the case of Nigeria, these negativities are bound to stick to the extent of becoming a way of life. The framework indicates that youth culture could be disaggregated into alternative/contending values, exuberance, normative conflict and deviant behaviour. In addition, exposure to western lifestyle through mass media, internet and others could have a direct effect on the values cherished by youths, exhibition of unrestrained non-normative behaviour in its several manifestations and involvement in deviant behaviours.

Consequent upon the challenges posed by youth culture such as normative conflict and contested values which stand in direct opposition to traditional values, a youth policy designed to re-orientate stakeholders including parents, youths, leaders, governments and agencies is suggested. A well-conceived and implemented policy will unwittingly cushion the effects of unnecessary diffusionism/enculturation usually expressed in negative attitude and behaviour, often, among bemused youths. Ultimately, such a policy should promote unified community norms and values that curb damaging exuberance and inefficiency of sub-systems. Specifically, a youth policy proposed here will not only impact the sensibilities of relevant groups, but will also project a Nigerian lifestyle that takes into cognizance global orientation and currents. That way, Nigerian youths are made to emphasize the essence of home-grown cultural traits even when it becomes necessary to adapt from other peoples and cultures.

### **Discussion and Recommendations**

Issues that emerged from the discourse suggest that youth culture poses a challenge to individuals and groups in society probably due to the swiftness that characterised its emergence. Central to the problem is the persistent debasement of the locus of family authority that was traditionally vested on parents and in particular the father-figure. A shift was synonymous with disobedience that suffices in contesting some values hitherto perceived as sacrosanct, and in some contexts transcendental. These intergenerational perceptual differences remain sources of tension in families and communities and have not only threatened intra- and inter-group relations but also led to early socioeconomic independence for youths in relevant communities. The danger in such unceremonious freedom cannot be overemphasized. Certainly, these youths become highly vulnerable to inescapable deviant behaviours in their quest to eke out a living, especially in a harsh economic environment such as Nigeria. Involvement in armed robbery, prostitution, kidnapping, cultism, among others and their individual and collective consequences are explainable by these vulnerabilities.

On the surface, a large majority of citizens, including parents, religious leaders, custodians of culture and youths themselves, are quick to blame Information Technology for the spread of youth culture through mechanisms such as the internet, mass media and migrations. Our position, however, is that these can only take centre stage where agents of socialisation are either weak or moribund. This stand derives from the fact that even in the most morally bereaved societies, some youths are either indifferent to or totally disregard negative aspects of the thematic culture. Thus, wholesome assimilation into the youth culture is a function of protracted failure of institutions such family, school, religious groups, the political class and the economy.

By de-functioning, these sub-systems separately and jointly laid the path to youth vulnerability and by extension adoption of alternative ways of life that seek to fill the vacuum.

We contend here that the failure of these institutions was not purely deliberate but had resulted mainly from the inability to adjust correspondingly to changing times. For instance, it would be foolhardy for a parent in trying to dissuade his/her ward from the negative effects of the media to dispose of a television set in the hope that lack of access in the family will automatically cut the young person off from such medium. Embracing the technology and engaging youths on relevant issues would rather not only make for knowledge acquisition but also demystification of unnecessary misconceptions about mass media. It was argued somewhere that the culture of silence about important family issues such as sexuality, family and reproductive health explains the high rate of moral decadence in Nigeria (Nwokocho 2011).

As the fierce contest between traditional and emerging values rages on, and youths are at the centre of making choices on the path to follow, we recommend a mixture of the two mainly because each has at least a modicum of relevance in shaping the attitude and behaviour of youths. No matter how negative the youth culture may seem, it would be unrealistic to suggest its outright abandonment in view of the magnitude of its adherents among the youth population. However, traditional values can only stem the tide of this fledging culture by being more attractive, to the youths and other relevant groups, through careful modifications that will bridge the value gap between old and new generations of Nigerians.

### **Conclusion**

Youth sub-culture transcends people and cultures of Nigeria. The paper deviates from the conventional cultural discourse wherein specific spatially distinct groups such as Idoma, Ijaw, Ibibio, Efik, among others are each analysed exclusively. This conscious deviation, perhaps, keys into the tradition of contesting values that thrives in yearning for alternative ways of doing things. But more importantly, the paper was motivated by concerns about youth behavioural patterns and processes that have become undeniable aspects of the people's difficult existence.

Although youth culture, for the most part, depicts inadequacies from the point of view of traditional symbols and sentiments, we submit here that there is, at least, something developmental about this way of life. Young people more than ever before are embracing formal education and by implication delayed marriages, are less naive as exemplified by the number of local and international networks formed outside their own immediate socio-cultural environments, and are projecting a conviction that cultural traits and values can be amenable to change as and when necessary. However, these changes are problematic in most Nigerian communities as a result of the non-normative processes of outright disregard to existing rules, through which they are introduced. Community outcry about these threatening transmogrifications relates to agitations among custodians of various Nigerian cultures about the implications of normative and value annihilation for the future of societies.

We re-state here that since youth culture is an established existential reality in Nigeria, policies towards reorientation must take cognisance of its global status. Moderating the attitude and behaviour of young Nigerians through a combination of

the global and local/traditional, rather than an insistence on reverting wholly to old ways, is the surest way of achieving compliance. Moreover, an absolute reversal will translate to journeying backward into a secluded horizon of antiquity when the entire world is striding on the path of progress. Our position is that such reverse-movement will spell greater misery for Nigeria than did slavery and colonialism.

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