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'What a man can do, a woman can do better': Unmasking gender stereotypes and culture in 'Coming 2 America'

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Abstract

This study investigates how gender is constructed in Eddie Murphy's 2021 film 'Coming 2 America', the purpose of which is to unearth whether or not characters are projected stereotypically by assigning 'male roles' only to male characters and 'female roles' only to female characters. 'Coming 2 America' is chosen for this study because of its popularity and its being a most current film released in a COVID-19 world of 2021. Four major female and three major male characters are purposively sampled for the study. These characters are among the most prominent whose presence is felt throughout the film. Employing the literary process of characterisation, explicit and implicit ways these characters project themselves are analysed with gender construction as the focus. Findings reveal that gender construction in 'Coming 2 America' does not project characters stereotypically by assigning only 'masculine' roles and traits to male characters nor 'feminine' roles and traits to female characters. The study has implications for film industries, drama groups and social media content producers such as YouTubers and TikTokers to be cognisant of their consciousness or lack thereof as their construction of gender can contribute to the gender equality struggle or defeat it.

Keywords: Coming 2 America, characterisation, culture, film studies, gender studies, films

Public Interest Statement

Gender construction pervades not only linguistic and literary studies, but also physics, psychology, social studies, and cinema studies. While not all films portray girls negatively in comparison to guys, it appears to be the norm. This study investigates how gender is constructed in Eddie Murphy's 2021 film 'Coming 2 America', the purpose of which is to unearth whether or not characters are projected stereotypically.

Introduction

Gender construction permeates both linguistic and literary studies as well as other fields of study such as science, psychology, social studies and film studies. It is a key variable through which many films are studied. For example, studies such Batool et al (2017), Sheikh et al (2019) and Tello Díaz (2021) have shown that in the construction of gender in films of whatever type, females are projected somewhat negatively while males have the upper hand as they are usually the heroes and the main characters around which plots revolve. While the negative projection of females vis a vis males is not the case in all films, this seems to be the general case.

One new film that has got the attention of the world in a covid19 2021 is the sequel to Eddie Murphy's 1988 film 'Coming to America'. The new film is called 'Coming 2 America'. The 1988 film 'Coming to America' introduced to the world the fictional African monarchy of Zamunda and its royal family of King Joffer, Queen Aoleon and their only son Prince Akeem. Akeem takes an iconoclastic stand by refusing to marry a woman he has never met and one arranged for him by his father. Akeem stands firm and travels to America to look for a bride for himself. After many adventures and by his mother's help, love has won over tradition and Akeem is married to a woman of his choice.

Is this instance the beginning of the breaking of Zamunda's traditions such as a man's decision cannot be contested and that women, no matter their status in the society, have no say and cannot be ruler? After thirty physical and fictional years, Akeem is now ready to be king as his father lies moribund in bed. Will King Akeem bring more changes as he has started by breaking tradition and choosing a wife for himself? Would the voice of women be heard and their efforts recognised now that Akeem has become king? The sequel to 'Coming to America', which is 'Coming 2 America' provides answers to these questions in the way gender is constructed to define culture in this literary piece of work.

The construction of gender in 'Coming 2 America' is conveyed through the literary process of characterisation, which is basically the detailed presentation of a character in a literary piece of work. 'Coming 2 America' has presented certain characters, both males and females, in such a way that their presence, roles, and contributions have revolutionised the Zamunda the world has known from 1988 to a new Zamunda struggling to be born with new changes in 2021 onwards.

Being just a year old, 'Coming 2 America' has attracted a few studies so far, some of which are Ariyani & Khamidan (2022), Bonsu & Godefroit-Winkel (2021) and Bowles (2021). Of these, Ariyani & Khamidan (2022) have investigated how female characters are marginalised in the film; Bowles (2021) has shown how black cultures of Africans and African-Americans are mixed into a unique one in the film; Bonsu & Godefroit-Winkel (2021) unearth the negative images the film has perhaps unconsciously painted of Africa and how this portrayal echoes the persistent negative view of the continent and its people. While Ariyani & Khamidan (2022) perceive that female characters are marginalised in 'Coming 2 America' and Bowles (2021) and Bonsu and Godefroit-Winkel (2021) have discussed the portrayal of Africa and its culture, none of these have focused on gender construction through the process of characterisation. This is the gap the present study seeks to fill.

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to explore the construction of gender in 'Coming 2 America' via the literary process of characterisation and the significance of the constructions to both the world of the film and the real world. The paper continues with the following segments: research questions, literature review, methodology, discussion of findings, conclusion and implication.

Research Questions

This paper answers the following questions:

1. How is gender constructed to define culture in 'Coming 2 America'?
2. What is the significance of how gender is constructed in 'Coming 2 America'?

Literature Review

This section discusses some current studies in the area of gender with specific focus on how this construct is employed in films or in the media, the goal of which is to contextualise the present study in order to corroborate or contest already existing literature on gender and its use in films.

Philips (2005) and Subrahmanian (2005) point to the usefulness of distinguishing the term 'gender' from such parallels like 'sex', 'male', and 'female'. According to Philips (2005, p.1), "sociologists describe sex as the relatively unchanging biology of being male and female, while gender refers to roles and expectations attributed to men and women in a given society." Key thoughts projected from Philips (2005) are that sex is biological, that is being either born male or female, while gender is rather a social construct than a biological one. Besides, gender concerns roles and expectations assigned to either sex in a given society. It follows that such things as this is how a man behaves and that is the way a woman thinks can be classified as gender, and it reveals the significant role society plays in constructing gender. Philips (2005) also mentions that the society which is the foundation of the construction of gender is a dynamic one and is susceptible to change. That being the case, what is attributed to masculinity in a given period could be considered feminine or even neutral in another period and vice versa in the same society. For example, in youth cultures, the tradition of wearing earrings is now an androgynous phenomenon such that both boys and girls wear earrings for their own specific meanings.

In order to avoid the complexity that the terms 'gender' and 'sex' pose, in this paper the two terms are used interchangeably. In that regard, how female and male characters are projected in 'Coming 2 America' will be discussed to unearth how the society of the film, which is the fictional African patriarchal Zamundan monarchy, portrays males and females and the significance of such portrayals.

Iranmanesh and Darani (2018) investigated effects of films and gender on learning English idiomatic and everyday expressions among Iranian EFL learners. Thirty male and female English major Iranian students were purposively sampled for the study. The results were that films had significant effects on students because the films had helped the students to acquire and improve on their use of English expressions. On the other hand, gender had no effects on their learning of English from the films. It follows that whether characters in the English films are males or females does not affect the learning process of the Iranian EFL students. They successfully learned from both male and female characters no matter who uses an idiom.

Iranmanesh and Darani's (2018) study has shown that films are a very reliable source of language teaching and learning, apart from serving as a source of entertainment and to correct societal ills. The focus of this paper is Eddie Murphy's 2021 'Coming 2 America'. The construction of gender in 'Coming 2 America' will not only be a source of entertainment for its viewers. It will also

have implications for lessons the society can learn and to make the world a better place. That is the goal this paper seeks to achieve. However, let us discuss some studies on the construction of gender in films.

Gender Construction in Films

Let us now turn our attention to how gender is constructed in films. Batool, Naeem and Batool (2017) investigated how femininity and masculinity have been constructed in films as regards roles assigned to males and females and which identities are emphasised. They focused on Time Warner and Walt Disney animated films from 2008 to 2013. Findings of this five-year longitudinal study have implications for the present paper. Batool et al (2017, p. 199) argue that “the study concluded that there are stereotypical representations of gender in the films. The women are underrepresented and usually negatively portrayed while the men have shown with more societal powers.” We can make a number of points from Batool et al’s (2017) study. First, the five-year period in studying these animated films reveals that their data is large and that findings will have binding results. Second, animated films are loved by children and young adults and even some older ones all over the world (Sultan & Masood, 2020; Martin & Kazyak, 2009). And as the findings have revealed, exposure of children and adults to the stereotypical ways females are presented in these films is a recipe for misconception on the part of viewers and invariably could affect their view of and treatment of females in the society. With these in mind, it is imperative to educate film industries to present female characters in positive ways and to blur the line of gender border in the minds of people.

In discussing the characterisation of characters in ‘Coming 2 America’, attention will be paid to how males and females are portrayed as to whether the gender border is blurred in the roles assigned to males vis a vis females. Equal attention will also be given to the implications these portrayals have for the society.

A study that contests the foregoing is one conducted by Sharma and Malhotra (2018). They examined a paradigm shift in the stereotypical gender roles in two Bollywood films. One of the films NH10 exposes a woman who assumes responsibility after her husband’s death. She avenges her husband and seeks to bring justice in that highly patriarchal society. In the other film, a father breaks the gender stereotype by training his daughters as wrestlers, which is reserved for males in the society. One of the daughters, Geeta, has grown into a strong wrestler and has beaten many males in wrestling competitions. The implications are clear – films such as the ones studied by Sharma and Malhotra (2018) are excellent educational tools for teaching gender equality. Children and adults’ exposure to these films would put it into their subconsciousness that there is no border between the sexes as regards the rigid societal roles assigned to males and females.

Still on films, Tsotsou and Stamou (2018) have investigated an older and contemporary Disney animated films with gender in focus. They report that “the analysis of the older film has shown a clear reproduction of traditional gendered stereotypes. The contemporary film, it is observed that attempts are made to eliminate traditional patriarchal stereotypes.” (Tsotsou and Stamou, 2018:76). These findings reveal that film industries like Disney have a great role to play in educating people on gender issues. The contemporary films have shown that there is a lot of progress made in this regard. This use of the film industries as in the case of Bollywood and Disney as a vehicle to teach gender equality is a step in the right direction. In the film of focus in this paper, ‘Coming to America’, critical analysis of how females are presented will reveal whether ‘Coming 2 America’ has followed the trends of some of the contemporary films that advocate gender equality.

We can see the progress Disney is making in changing the trend from the stereotypical

presentations of gender in its films when we consider Justice's (2014) of Disney's fairytale view of gender in old films like Snow White (1937), Cinderella (1952) and Sleeping Beauty (1959). Justice (2014, p.194) says that "the female protagonists were morally (and sexually) pure young princess fresh out of puberty, with lives defined by longing for a prince". In these films, it is obvious that the very existence of a woman is to long for a man without which life is considered worthless. Such films inadvertently teach that females are subordinate to males who must dominate them. It is really relieving that such trends have changed in the film industries over the years. These changes have manifested in contemporary films as we have seen. To corroborate this trend, Hine, England, Lapreore, Horgan and Hartwell (2018) have shown that Disney's released films from 2009 to 2016 have shown balanced gender representations. Princess characters have shown both feminine and masculine characteristics. On the backdrop that films have been one of the most misleading and also one of the most educative sources of teaching gender equality, we must acknowledge and encourage film industries to keep this trend up.

This review has shown that films are and have been a reliable source of materials for educative purposes. Besides, films are also a key way of teaching gender equality as the stereotypical presentation of males and females in the film industries have assumed a more openminded, positive and androgynous approach, which is excellent for the progress of gender equality. The present paper, therefore, seeks to explore how gender is constructed in 'Coming 2 America' as well as the implications of such constructions to the film world and the general society.

Methodology

The film 'Coming 2 America' is purposively chosen for this study because of the high interest this sequel to 'Coming to America' had generated in the world. It is also one of the most current films released in a covid19 world of 2021 after more than thirty years of its part one. Second, this is an American film with its focus on an African monarchy, a paradox that interests the researcher as most of the film's cast as well as its dramatis personae are Africans or African Americans. The study has further purposively sampled four female characters, namely, Meeka, Bopoto, Queens Aoleon and Lisa, and three male characters, namely, Akeem, Lavelle and Cleo as the target of the construction of gender and culture in 'Coming 2 America'. Employing the literary process of characterisation, "the cartography of identity as defined by changing conditions in a character's life" (Schwarz, 1990, p.10), the researcher has viewed the film 'Coming 2 America' more than twenty times and critically assessed the roles of the characters sampled for analysis. With the issue of gender construction in mind, he paid attention to explicit ways the characters expose themselves by what they say and what others say about them as well as implicit ways such as the characters' actions, inactions, reactions and how they respond to changing conditions. At the end of it all the analysis of each character is that character's gender construction 'biography'.

Discussions of findings

This section discusses the answers to the research questions. The first sought to unearth how gender is constructed in 'Coming 2 America'. The second question, which dovetails into the first, sought to show how the Zamundan culture has evolved and its effects on the people of Zamunda. The following subheading provides response to the first research question.

Characterization of women

One striking way gender is constructed in coming 2 America is by the characterization of women in

the Zamundan culture. This paper presents and discusses three of these characters, namely, Meeka, Mirembe and Bopoto.

Meeka

Meeka is the first daughter of Prince Akeem. But for the Zamundan law that a female cannot rule, she is the heiress to the throne of Zamunda. Meeka appears as one elegantly beautiful, tall and has a majestic gait. Meeka's first appearance in 'Coming 2 America' is leading her two other female siblings to greet Prince Akeem and his wife and to wish them well on their 30th anniversary of marriage. Being their daughter, it suggests that Meeka is less than 30 years old.

Meeka comes to life in terms of personality first in her determination not to be looked down on as a weakling. She trains as a fighter together with her siblings as would a male Zamundan heir whose duty is to defend the country. Meeka does not hesitate to bring her father to the floor when he engages her and her sisters in a fight. In fact, throughout the entire 'Coming 2 America', no other females fight to defend Zamunda than Meeka and her sisters. This clearly shows that Meeka and her siblings are according to Zamundan culture, performing roles concretely reserved for males. This reveals the iconoclastic personality of Meeka. What makes Meeka stand out in this personality is that she is even a princess, raised from a home where it is made clear that a woman cannot be ruler in Zamunda. Meeka has made her intention known clearly to her father about her desire to be queen of Zamunda. This is made clear when Semmi approaches Akeem and informs Akeem that King Jaffe wants to have audience with Akeem. Meeka readily asks Semmi whether the conversation is about her suitor who would one day sit on the Zamundan throne. She is even ready to go along with her father to see King Jaffe offer but she is turned down by her father.

Not only could we conclude that Meeka is iconoclastic; she is equally brave and courageous. King Jaffe, although unwell and likely to die soon, is a ruthless king who still wields a lot of power, particularly in making sure that Akeem is succeeded by a male. The sheer eagerness on the part of Meeka to see King Jaffe herself as regards this delicate issue only emphasizes her fearless personality.

The striking moment of Meeka's toughness, fearlessness and bravery is when she leads Semmi and her sisters to defeat General Izzi and his henchmen who have been Zamunda's vicious enemies for a long time. It is almost unbelievable to see ruthless General Izzi on the ground, ready to solve issues 'diplomatically rather than resort to violence. All these being the case, thanks to Meeka's, as we could say according to Zamundan culture, 'manly' qualities.

Notwithstanding the foregoing traits of Meeka's, she is also projected in different lights, unveiling the dynamism of personality Meeka possesses. When Meeka realises that her dream of becoming queen is shattered by Lavelle's presence, she does not hide her displeasure. However, after sometime, Meeka reasons that it is not Lavelle's fault to be her father's bastard son. She cooperates and even supports him to succeed in the princely test of cutting a lion's whiskers. She is happy that Lavelle has succeeded in that regard. What does this tell us about another personality of Meeka? Not only tough, iconoclastic and courageous, Meeka is also a very reasonable person who has the insight of her grandmother Queen Aoleon, who Cleo describes as the "wisest of all the Joffers". This dynamism of Meeka does not go unnoticed by her father, who decides finally that Meeka would become queen after him and Lavelle would rather be an ambassador to the United States of America.

Mirembe

The next character under the radar of characterization in the construction of gender in 'Coming 2 America' is Mirembe. Mirembe is a royal groomer and barber who later becomes Lavelle's love

interest. She is beautiful and simple in appearance and is naturally a happy person. Mirembe's words to Lavelle weather she could trim his hairs and Lavelle's holding of his cover cloth and her replies of "the one on top of your head", suggests her quick wit and sense of humour. This is confirmed when she tells Lavelle that the smile on his face suggests the royal bathers might have bathed him thoroughly, indirectly referring to the likelihood that Lavelle might have had sex with his bathers. On the surface, Mirembe is an ordinary palace servant whose life is governed by the culture of obedience. However, Mirembe's deep personality, imprisoned by palace culture, comes to the fore in her love life with Prince Lavelle.

First, Mirembe does not hide her feelings from Prince Lavelle. She shows by words and actions that she has romantic interest in Lavelle. On the background that Zamundan culture usually prefers royals to choose their spouses from other royals as was the case between Prince Akeem and Imani before Akeem travelled to America to look for a queen of his choice shows that Mirembe has self-esteem or positive self-image. It is natural for any palace servant, according to Zamundan culture, to know that marriage liaison with a prince is impossible and that a servant girl is not fit for a prince. The very thought of the possibility of a palace servant entertaining a marriage to a Zamundan prince by itself unearths the quality of bravery in Mirembe insofar as she has no fear whatsoever for this iron clad system that is solidly against such a liaison.

Another episode that corroborates Mirembe's courage is her not only willing to elope but actually eloping with Prince Lavelle by the royal jet which is a sacred property of the Zamundan Royal Family. Such a 'crime', which is a potential treason, could cost not only the life of Mirembe but also that of Prince Lavelle. Besides, the seriousness of this matter, revealing the fearlessness of Mirembe, Mirembe is willing to sacrifice her close familial relationship with friends and family to be with Lavelle in Queens, America. This no doubt reveals the depth of love she has for Lavelle and the sacrifices she is willing to make to have him.

When Lavelle opens up to Mirembe about his inability to blend into the Zamundan culture and to please his father, Mirembe cuts off his princely tail and tells him to be "Prince of Queen" and be himself rather trying to fit into Zamundan royal culture which includes even such subtle things about life as one's gait. She refers to Prince Akeem's earlier journey to America in search of a wife as a foundation for Lavelle to live according his own desires rather than to be remote-controlled by others. Cutting off the princely tail without any order from a higher authority also shows the iconoclastic nature of Mirembe. She once refers to an aspect of the Zamundan culture that forbids a woman to set up her own business as 'baboonda', a play on words with 'Zamunda' and 'baboon' in mind.

Another episode which unearths another aspect of Mirembe's personality is her willingness to suspend their wedding in Queens and bring it home to Zamunda even though the now King Akeem is willing to support their wedding in Queens. She reasons with Lavelle who is very angry about his father's 'betrayal' of him that he needs his family and the whole of Zamunda behind them. Not only has Mirembe shown her iconoclastic view of things, she has also shown that she is willing to give way to reason, if need be, revealing her sense of balance and personality, a sign of dynamism.

Bopoto

Bopoto is a daughter of the military ruler of Zamunda's neighbor Nexdoria. Coming from a military family would suggest a few things about her. Bopoto's first appearance is her father, General Izzi's introduction of her to Akeem, Lavelle, the royal family and the Zamundan people. As part of her elaborate orchestrated introduction, Bopoto engages in seductive dance that eventually brings Lavelle to join her and accepts to marry her. This sensual introduction may confuse onlookers to

assume that Bopoto is a sensual easy-going super-feminine person. She might have been coerced into this display as her father is a well-known ruthless leader. The foregoing, notwithstanding, Bopoto does something that should not be taken lightly. She holds Lavelle by the neck the way one who is in a fight holds one by the neck to which Lavelle asks: "What's up?". Moreover, when General Izzi learns that the wedding cannot come off but in a week's time, Bopoto speaks to Lavelle in a very commanding way that she would see him in 'one week' as though to say that the one week cannot be flouted. This could be the reality of Bopoto's core personality.

Then the one week arrives and there is a drastic change in the Bopoto a week ago. Of course, it is very debatable for one to have such a drastic change of core personality within one week. While the sensuality remains, the Bopoto a week ago is replaced by what was Imani thirty years ago before Prince Akeem. Bopoto has no desire, need, feelings whatsoever but only the things Lavelle feels, needs, desires and wants. In the light of this, it is not difficult to really tell the character of the females of Zamunda and Nexdoria as their culture exerts a lot of pressure on them to completely submit to males, particularly in marriage. It is as though the woman in the marriage exists only for the man. When Lavelle asks Bopoto what she wants she replied that everything Lavelle wants and that "I am only a wife". As few as these words are, they reecho Imani thirty years ago hopping and barking like a dog because she has to please Prince Akeem by doing whatever he wants. The neck-holding Bopoto a week ago cannot be this Bopoto who could hardly open her mouth to speak. It is undebatable that the traditional Zamundan culture does not have regard for women at all and thus a woman's readily submission to man without question whether or not she gains from it is looked upon a sign of respect for men rather than cultural oppression. On that backdrop, we can confidently say that Bopoto's real personality is the military-like one she might have inherited or copied from her father and demonstrated a week ago.

Queen Aoleon

The Zamundan culture has evolved gradually into a culture that recognizes the place of women in the society. The most intriguing part of this evolution is that its source is right from the Royal Zamundan family. King Akeem literally apologises to Meeka and calls himself an 'old fool' and promises that after his death, Meeka will be queen, and Lavelle will rather become ambassador to the United States. This evolution of the Zamundan culture is the case because of the struggle of many characters. One of them who has not appeared in 'Coming 2 America' at all is Queen Aoleon, who lies at the root of the cultural revolution of Zamunda where everything revolved around men. It was Queen Aoleon who supported the then Prince Akeem to pursue the dream of his own by choosing a bride for himself. Even when it seems impossible especially when King Joffer informed Lisa that Akeem already has a wife, Queen Aoleon did all she could to bring Lisa to Zamunda for Akeem. Akeem only discovered her bride to be Lisa on the wedding day. Without Aoleon's effort, Akeem would have married Imani, one he did not love as long as that was the desire of the King whose words could not be questioned.

When Lavelle runs away with Mirembe and Zamunda is vulnerable before Nexdoria, Cleo encourages King Akeem to do things right by asking what Queen Aoleon would have wanted him (Akeem) to do. Cleo goes on to refer to Queen Aoleon as 'the wisest of the Joffers'. Let us take note that wives in the manner of Zamundan culture have absolutely no say. For Cleo to refer to Aoleon as the wisest of the Joffers reveals clearly that her contributions behind the scene have aided the eventual turning of the Zamundan cultural page as regards the recognition of women. We can also contrast Cleo's present statement with what he said about Aoleon thirty years ago when he referred to her as 'alien', a wordplay with the name Aoleon. Even in the eyes of Cleo, Aoleon has been phenomenal in

the history of Zamunda. We can thus conclude that Aoleon is the mother of the Zamundan cultural revolution.

Queen Lisa

Another character who plays a significant role in revolutionising the Zamundan culture and raising the voice of women is Queen Lisa, King Akeem's wife. Queen Lisa's outspokenness about her husband's holding onto the only-men-rule culture has played a great role in Akeem's working towards a culture that balances the equation between men and women. Queen Lisa expresses her displeasure to the King about not allowing Meeka to be queen. And in one of their arguments, she openly tells Akeem that Akeem's words are those of his father King Joffer. This 'tormenting' of the King has contributed to opening the eyes of the King to consider his stance on the issue of gender as regards Zamundan rulership. Lisa's fight for equality of women eventually leads to the day King Akeem confirms to her daughter Meeka that she will be queen and that more changes will come during her reign.

We cannot not forget the roles of Mirembe, a servant whose boldness has contributed to Akeem's change of stance on the issue of rulership in Zamunda. King Akeem finds his moral likeness in Mirembe and admires her for her strength, which King Akeem might have thought could only be done by a male. Such iconoclasm shown by a woman and such fearlessness in Mirembe's coaching of Lavelle to be a prince of his own are remarkable qualities that have not gone unnoticed by King Akeem. Mirembe's astuteness has been part of 'storms' that pushed King Akeem to the moral wall to reconsider his position of the gender question in Zamunda. All of this has helped Akeem to affirm that giving women their rightful place in the society is not a sign of weakness as Baba has said but actually a demonstration of moral courage in doing what is right.

Not to forget is the role that Meeka and her siblings have played in the Zamunda gender revolution. Meeka's leadership in organizing her siblings and Semmi to defeat General Izzi and his henchmen both physically and mentally speak volumes of what a woman, when given the opportunity, can accomplish. This 'foolishness' of not recognising this earlier is seen in King Akeem calling himself an 'old fool' and asking for forgiveness from Meeka.

King Akeem, Cleo and Lavelle

Apart from the females, some males have fought for the equality of gender in Zamunda, notable among them being Akeem himself, Cleo and Lavelle. First, Akeem is the first King in the line of all the Joffers to decide that man-only-rule should end. Notwithstanding the pressure from the characters discussed so far, King Akeem is going to do something that has no precedence in the history of Zamunda. This decision, which is more difficult than deciding which woman to marry, must take a lot of courage to make. And King Akeem has made it. Without him as the final authority on this issue, every struggle of gender equality in Zamunda could have been unfruitful.

Cleo, Akeem's father-in-law, has been phenomenal in encouraging King Akeem towards this milestone. His asking Akeem as to what his mother would have done and referring to Queen Aoleon as the "wisest of all the Joffers" has reassured King Akeem that he is making the right decision and that such a change is good for not only the royal family but also for the entire country. Akeem might have seen the words of Cleo as an opportunity to honour the memory of Queen Aoleon by giving woman a hand at rulership of the country.

Prince Lavelle himself has also been phenomenal in his role as to how gender is constructed in 'Coming 2 America'. Lavelle's acceptance of Mirembe's iconoclastic advice to be a 'Prince of Queens' and stop conforming to the cultural princely norms of Zamunda reveals his flexibility and readiness

to receive good advice from whomever it comes. Lavelle's acceptance of this advice which ends him up marrying the very advisor and shaping his whole world of Zamunda is one major way gender is constructed in 'Coming 2 American'.

Significance of Gender Construction

The construction of gender in 'Coming 2 America' has unveiled a lot of significance, four of which are discussed in this section. Arguably the most significant achievement for gender construction in 'Coming 2 America' is that of the change of the spine of Zamundan culture that after King Akeem would come Queen Meeka. That is a very significant change in that once this affects the very rulership of Zamunda and the voice of the woman will be head at the very top of leadership, that will trickle down to every family in the Zamundan Kingdom, ushering in a new Zamundan dawn of equality between both sexes as either gender can have a taste of the rulership of the country.

Such a change could affect the role of women in all aspects of life, namely, economy, education, social life and the likes. Like Mirembe who aspires to own a business in barbering, women will be able to have their own choices and see their dreams fulfilled. They will no longer be objects used to fulfil dreams of males. They will speak for themselves even as to life's major decisions such as whom to accept as a marriage partner, not necessarily what their fathers prefer.

Another significance of the construction of gender in 'Coming 2 America' is that it aborts the looming war that could have erupted between Zamunda and Nexdoria. General Izzi is a ruthless Nexdorian leader who has been threatening Zamunda with war. This he does by even forcing a marriage alliance with King Akeem's son Lavelle, the former obviously forced into this union. However, women like Mirembe, Meeka and her siblings, Queen Lisa and Akeem's late mother Queen Aoleon have fought and General Izzi surrenders in order to solve problems diplomatically. In effect, peace is restored between two countries, thanks to the significant roles women play to bring this about. We cannot begin to enumerate the woes that war brings on people in order to acknowledge the greatness of women in bringing peace to Zamunda and Nexdoria.

What is the justification after the abortion of the war that peace is restored between Zamunda and Nexdoria? We see in the final scene of Mirembe and Lavelle's wedding no difference between friend and enemy. General Izzi is very happy and dances at this wedding that should have been between her daughter and Prince Lavelle. He acknowledges to King Akeem that love has won again. They drink together and make merry. Even Izzi's children Bopoto and Idi who are denied of being accepted into the Zamundan royal family via marriage are happy since they might have been forced by their father at the first place. At the end of the day, everyone from both Nexdoria and Zamunda are happy because love has conquered. Love's conquering means that women, just like men, can choose by themselves whom to marry. In effect, equality of both sexes has won the day.

The most striking significance of 'Coming 2 America' is what it seeks to teach outside the film. The film is set in an imaginary African country. The dress and grooming, music food and the general cultural atmosphere presented is that of the African. The vindication of the construction the female gender in the film only adds to the voice of the woman in Africa and the world. We note that the most significant change to take place after King Akeem is that there will be the first queen on the throne of Zamunda. One of the persons whose hard work contributes to this victory for women is Queen Lisa, who is an American. She cries to her husband and clearly supports Meeka to succeed her husband. Ironically, her country, the United States has not had a female president yet. This is yet another call for America and Western countries who have not yet produced a female president to give the woman the opportunity.

On the part Africa, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf made history of becoming the continent's first elected president. Currently Africa has Samia Suluhu Hasan of Tanzania, Sahel-Work Zewde of Ethiopia, Joyce Banda of Malawi are among female who have held the highest governmental positions in Africa. 'Coming 2 America' seeks to encourage Africa and the world to continue to give females the nod to leadership. In all, the construction of gender in 'Coming 2 America' has educated us once more about the crucial roles women play in our lives and they deserve equality in all spheres of life.

Conclusion and Implication

The study has revealed that the construction of gender in 'Coming 2 America' does not present characters stereotypically by assigning only 'masculine' roles and traits to male characters nor only 'feminine' roles and traits to female characters. Characters of either sex possess and demonstrate masculinity and femininity in their traits and roles they play. The study has implication for film industries, drama groups and social media content producers such as YouTubers, TikTokers etc to be cognisant of their consciousness or lack thereof that their construction of gender can contribute to the gender equality struggle or defeat it.

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