
Informational Social Power in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

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Abstract

*This paper establishes how Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in **Purple Hibiscus** (Fourth Estate, 2004) depicts the use of informational social power as an alternative hegemonic trope that characters rely on in the negotiation for social power. The study is justified by the fact that studies on **Purple Hibiscus** have tended to deal with the gender-based portrayal of patriarchal power while ignoring a sociological approach to the study of power in the text. The gap addressed by the paper is hence an elucidation of how manipulation of knowledge as provided, supported, and underscored by the discourses of one's orientation and background, is responsible for the tragic twist of the text under study. The theoretical lens used in the paper is Michel Foucault's idea of power and discourse. This study is 'interpretivist' with primary data on informational power collected through a reading of the primary text while secondary data is acquired from a reading of related print and electronic sources. The conclusion reached is that the author uses different aspects of traditions to entrench informational social power and by so doing contest influence that hinges on modernity and its attendant indifference.*

Key Words: Life Writing, Bildungsroman, Fundamentalism, Influence, Traditions, Matriarchy, Informational Social Power

Introduction

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born in Nigeria in 1977. She has authored three novels, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) and *Americanah*

(2013). She also has a short story collection, *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009). This paper isolates *Purple Hibiscus* as a study text due to the realization that Adichie is passionate about the exercise of informational social power ensconced in the family set-up, politics and religion. Ouma (2007) avers that Adichie is concerned with the family, religion and politics. These are matters that the author experienced in her own life when growing up in the university town of Nsukka. It is therefore the position in this paper that *Purple Hibiscus* provides a rich ground for querying how informational social power affects characters in a literary text.

Purple Hibiscus is a bildungsroman fictional text in which the protagonist, a young girl known as Kambili gradually comes to the realization that her father's brand of religion is obtrusive and couched in oppressive fundamentalism. With her mother, Beatrice and her brother, Jaja, she seeks to unyoke herself from religious hegemony represented by her father's adherence to the letter and spirit of Catholicism but the story ends tragically when Beatrice insidiously poisons her husband, Eugene Achike and Jaja takes the blame and faces justice.

Papa Eugene Achike's death in the hands of his wife, Beatrice, raises fundamental questions about the extent to which a woman in a traditional African marital setting should go in an effort to keep her marriage (or a semblance of it) intact. Commenting on this issue, Cherlin (1996:288) writes that:

'... the investments of time and effort that a wife typically makes in a home - raising the children, providing emotional support to her husband, keeping in touch with her husband's relatives and so forth - cannot easily be transferred to a new marriage. Rather, they are relationship-specific investments, efforts that are valuable only in a person's current relationship ... Husbands, in contrast, tend to invest their time and effort in their jobs, accruing, if they are fortunate, seniority, promotions and wage and salary increases. These job investments can more easily be transferred to another marriage...'

Cherlin (1996) suggests that women invest too much of their effort in the non-economic supportive roles in the family. The mentioned effort is borne out of the fact that informational social power ensconced within gender discourses encourage women to embrace domesticity as a condition *sine qua non* to marital suitability. In contrast, men establish emotional affection towards their children on the plane of provision of material things to the children, more than spending time with them at home. Hence, while a man can transfer his impersonal financial input from one family to another in divorce and

remarriage, a woman who remarries would take time to forge amiable relations with the new extended family while having to contend with severing links with the former family. A failure of marriage is therefore interpretable as being due to a woman's inadequacy in the playing of the foregoing unquantifiable duty. This contrasts with a man's economic role, which he can keep altering as he changes jobs or ascends in rank. It is this variability of a man's economic role in his family that he can easily transpose to the family milieu by leaving one marriage and settling in another without a very big feeling of itinerancy. By killing Achike, Beatrice, relying on informational social power, goes against the thesis by Cherlin (1996). It is therefore necessary to put informational social power into perspective before reviewing literature that touch on *Purple Hibiscus* and the operations of informational social power in familial settings.

Informational Social Power in Perspective

Informational social power is one of the six bases of social power. The other five bases are coercive, referent, reward, legitimate and expert power. Informational social power stems from the contents of what one character tells another and the extent to which the first character's words succeed in changing the second character (French & Raven cited in Lamanna & Riedmann, 1985). Referent social power relies on the degree to which one party identifies with another. One determinant of identification between an influencer and a target is the need for consensual validation. Secord and Backman (1974:249) own that 'a target compares his or her feelings and experiences with those of other individuals similar to himself or herself'. Where such a target identifies a party whose feelings and/or experiences are similar to his or her own, then the second party becomes an influencing agent. The continued display of the required behaviour by the target does not require the agent's surveillance.

Like referent social power, informational social power is also socially independent. However, for an influencee to be under its spell, the agent need not apply surveillance. Raven and Rubin (1976) write that informational social power results to changes in the influencee that cannot be reversed even if the agent leaves, loses credibility or becomes unlikable by the target. It is therefore the kind of power exercised by teachers over students, such that even years after an unlikeable and forgotten-about teacher positively affects an individual, the power of such influence becomes permanent.

Informational social power is gender-specific as it affects women in a different manner from men. As it will be demonstrated in this paper, traditions entrench hegemonic tropes that associate women with gender-

specific informational power discourses while the case may be different for men.

Social Power in African Families

Foucault looks at power in terms of relations between power players. According to Deleuze (1986), Foucault sees power as a relation between forces; or rather every relation between forces is a power relation. He notes that power relations work in two ways: a force that provokes or incites a consequence has an active affect while a force which is incited or provoked has a reactive affect. This means that both the originator of an action and the recipient of the action are in possession of power. In this study, the forces on whom the dynamism of power are studied are narrowed down to family members.

Within the family, an exercise of power oscillates around decision-making. Oppong (1981) postulates that decision-making depends to a great extent on the relative power position of the spouses and their respective aspirations. This power position is interpretable as being vested in an individual's ability to alter the partner's behaviour to conform to the desired behaviour. The partner who can sway the other into conformity therefore gets the decision-making power. We develop this argument by looking at how social power possession, manifested through decision-making can also be vested in other members of the family, not just the marital partners.

Different members of the family possess and exercise social power depending on the roles ascribed to them by tradition. Kanyongo-Male & Onyango (1984) write that the father is normally the normative head while the mother is the emotional leader. Other social power domains include those of the supporter and the expert. Even if a man is unemployed, since he is the normative head, culture would still dictate that he be respected and revered by the other family members. The mother's position as the emotional leader is informed by her closeness to the children from birth and her quest to keep a 'happy home'. The supporter, who can be the father, mother or both, provides resources to sustain the family while the expert is the one who has some kind of knowledge that the others do not. In this study, we probe the extent to which characters keep interchanging these different domains of social power.

Purple Hibiscus

The rise against patriarchy in *Purple Hibiscus* is the subject of interrogation by Kivai (2010). He writes that the women in the text have reneged against male domination so that they can create a better world for themselves. In the opening chapters of the story, Eugene assaults his wife and instills fear in his daughter Kambili. Goaded by Auntie Ifeoma, Beatrice later overcomes her

timidity and slays Eugene. This paper augments Kivai (2010) by mapping out how characters use informational social power to defeat other characters' coercive social power. Dissatisfaction of women with the physical structures that typify male domination is a subject of study by Mabura (2008). In *Purple Hibiscus*, the imposing house of papa Achike in Enugu is described as Gothic, a castle that acts as the 'major locus' for use by Achike in subjugating the women in his household. The mansion is therefore a gothic metonymy of doom that Kambili detests. This paper also explores the use of physical barriers in the exercise of coercive social power and further compares them with other spaces where freedom is part of the exercise of informational social power.

While there are many reasons why a family might break down, Hewett (2004) explains that in *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili's family breaks down due to the existence of a domineering father who seeks to control his family through religious dogma. This paper explores further the extent to which informational social power can either be used to strengthen or weaken the institution of the family. Adichie's phraseology is a mental trigger to his audience that she is writing in the tradition of Achebe. Hewett (2004:79) writes that in *Purple Hibiscus*, the very first sentence welcomes the reader into the narrative through use of the readily identifiable phrase 'things fall apart' She also writes that in both *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus*, the societal disintegration is engineered by fathers who are powerful but have tragic flaws. This paper examines this concept of societal disintegration from the narrower field of dissemination of erroneous informational social power.

Theoretical Underpinning and Methodological Approach

This paper uses the theoretical lens of Michel Foucault's ideas on power, language and discourse. Considering that informational social power is an avenue that characters use to contest for relevance through a manipulation of knowledge as provided, supported, and underscored by the discourses of one's orientation and background, then the role of language becomes important. The language attributable to the characters is studied against the Foucauldian understanding of disciplinary power. Such disciplinary power is not necessarily based on pain infliction because as Engelmann (2011) writes, social power based on surveillance is Foucault's synecdoche for modern disciplinary power. Hence, the power of information in *Purple Hibiscus* produces self-regulating behaviour in characters as such characters live under the conviction that they are constantly under observation by their influencers.

The patriarch in *Purple Hibiscus* subjects the members of his family through a stringent application of social and religious laws, which he expects his children to adhere to once they mature and take over familial leadership roles from him. He thereby elevates himself to a monarchical status, evoking sentiments by Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982), who, in their study of Foucault's *College De France* lectures on power, write that the law and its attendant language is what gives a monarch the power to exercise control over the subjects. They further aver that leadership in social institutions relies on acceptable laws and their concomitant language for it to attain acceptability. In this paper, laws anchored on religious and social circumscriptions as found in *Purple Hibiscus* provide a locus for determination of how informational social power contests the ingrained power of patriarchal ascendancy associated with the monarchical inclinations of Papa Eugene Achike.

Text subversion is a sub-set of the Foucauldian ideas on language, power and discourse. In this paper, subversion of texts is of import because a probe is made on why a character or characters might want to re-render what other characters have said and by so doing use informational social power to contest other forms of power. Discourse subversion was of interest to Foucault because as Artieres (2013) writes, Foucault himself subverted a text in a conference, so that what speakers planned to give as a speech was turned into a question and answer forum, with the original speakers being the ones answering the questions. In *Purple Hibiscus*, discourse subversion involves but is not limited to negation of traditionalism, information that is given to Jaja and Kambili from their father's Christian orientation. In retrospect, informational social power that aims at correcting subverted discourses is given by such characters as Aunt Ifeoma and Papa-Nnukwu, the two main characters who champion the *Igbo* mores in *Purple Hibiscus*.

The data collected from *Purple Hibiscus* and other secondary sources is of a qualitative type and not subject to scientific tests and measurements. No hypothesis was therefore formulated in advance before formulating this paper, a fact that disqualified the deductive approach to the study as there was no hypothesis validity to be tested. Similarly, in the absence of surprising facts or puzzles at the start of the conception of this paper, which would have imposed a need for explanations, the abductive research approach was deemed to be unnecessary. Instead, *Purple Hibiscus*, a literary text, provided raw qualitative data which was in turn used to derive concepts, ideas and themes. The point of departure was therefore the raw data, which eventually shaped the final research findings. The appropriate research approach used was the inductive research approach.

In this approach, without the restraints and constraints of structured methodologies and rules on empiricism, raw data from *Purple Hibiscus*, buttressed by opinions from secondary critical sources was analyzed subjectively in such a manner that frequent, dominant or significant patterns finally emerged and from them, research findings were arrived at. Commenting on data reduction by use of the inductive approach, Thomas (2006) explains that the approach is used to clarify data through creation of a set of procedures that makes complex raw data fit into summary themes or categories. Buttressing Thomas (2006) on the interface between qualitative research and the inductive approach, Cresswell and Cresswell (2018) own that:

Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. The final written report has a flexible structure (Cresswell & Cresswell 2018:43).

This paper deals with the problem of informational social power exercise but since the topic is not discussed in labeled sections in *Purple Hibiscus*, it was the work of the researchers to sort the raw data and look for similarities in themes and characterization. Hence, in agreement with Cresswell and Cresswell (2018), in this paper, informational social power exercise therefore formed the bulk of the raw data that was reduced into categories for purposes of analysis.

Findings and Discussions

In *Purple Hibiscus*, it is animadverted that the context under which informational social power is acquired and exercised is partly in a traditional African lifestyle. This paper then analogizes and contrasts traditional African lifestyle with aspects of modernity as found in Papa Achike's household in Enugu. A traditional lifestyle is seen as accommodative as contrasted to Papa Achike's coercive Catholicism, the latter religion being an offshoot of modernity. In this paper, a contrast is established between those aspects of African traditions that characters cherish with those that contribute to an exercise of unlikeable forms of influence.

A Walk-back Through the Path of Traditions

In *Purple Hibiscus*, the characters who use informational social power are Ifeoma, Amaka, Papa-Nnukwu and the Abba *umunna* wives. Ifeoma is

Kambili's aunt, Amaka a young Catholic priest, Papa-Nnukwu Kambili's grandfather and *umunna* wives are local *Igbo* women who lead a collective lifestyle in the village of Abba. Their informational social power exercise is directed towards Beatrice, Jaja and Kambili and challenges the coercive social power exercised over the trio by Papa Eugene and Father Benedict. Father Benedict is the local priest in charge of St. Agnes church, where Eugene Achike worships. It is avowed that tradition is used to persuade Kambili and Jaja into seeing the folly with the Eurocentric way of life dictated upon them by their father. We argue that Catholicism is a metropolitan religion that has been used to undermine Kambili and Jaja's lives. We posit that Eugene's attempt to dissociate his family from forces of tradition have been countered by Ifeoma and Papa-Nnukwu's pastoral lifestyles in which Jaja and Kambili find more spiritual nourishment in than they do with the mechanical incantations associated with Catholic prayer rituals. Aunt Ifeoma and Beatrice are the matriarchal sources of informational social power used to counter masculinist hegemony associated with Papa Eugene Achike. Benokraitis (2005:114) writes that 'in matriarchy, women control cultural, political and economic resources and, consequently, have more power than men'. Hence Ifeoma and Beatrice seek to use informational social power to reverse the cultural and religious indoctrination perpetuated by Achike on his children.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, the town referred to as Enugu is the seat of Catholicism, modernity and their attendant limitations on Kambili and Jaja. The village named Abba is on the other hand associated with traditionalism. It is then in Nsukka that an acceptable compromise between modernity and traditionalism is struck. Traditional African values that are deficient in Enugu are to be found in Abba while with Nsukka, Adichie shows how religious extremism can be mitigated with the affability of traditions. We read Nsukka as typifying a realistic African milieu, complete with modern trends but also replete with the aesthetics of African culture that rival modernity. Economic problems faced by Ifeoma, while not really constituting a state of squalor, are nevertheless important in honing Kambili and Jaja's skills at survival. The undercurrent that runs through Nsukka is that though postcolonial Africa has problems of cultural hybridism, an acceptable settlement can still be reached between modernity and/or religion and traditions.

In Abba, the individualism and self-centeredness associated with urban life in Enugu is affronted by the *umunna* concept where clan members come together to collectively celebrate the Christmas festivities. *Umunna* is a way in which members of a clan or village cohere so that they can achieve *esprit de corps*. In his studies on *Igbo* culture and beliefs, Obiego (1984:43) explains that:

'At the higher level than the compound units, we have the *umunna* units. "Umunna" is a fluid term in *Igbo* language. Its narrowest referent is the children of the same father but of a different mother i.e., in contradiction to *umunne* (Children of the same father and mother or of the same mother but not of the same father). Its widest referent is the group of localized patrilineal members, real or putative, whom one cannot marry... Sometimes it is very loosely applied to members of a village or village-group in contradiction to all other like villages or village groups'.

In this study, we conclude that Adichie has used the word 'umunna' in the second sense, that of village members who regard themselves as distinct from other villages. These are the people who congregate in Papa Eugene's Abba residence. Their communality and commonality contrasts with the individualism of Catholicism, the latter which purports to bind members of Eugene's family together while in reality it alienates them. Traditionalism is therefore cast as a factor that joins the inhabitants of Abba together. In Enugu, worshippers at St. Agnes congregate but save for the few hours that they are in church, the rest of the time they retreat to their homes to lead a secluded lifestyle. In Eugene's Enugu home, religious rituals perfected in church are replayed in a totalitarian manner that stifles the personal growth of Beatrice and her children. The Abba collectivity therefore supersedes the Enugu particularism.

Confronting the Impersonality of Christianity

In Enugu, Sisi is charged with the duties of making food for the family. She is a domestic servant of a low social standing. Papa Eugene, despite his Catholicism, has failed to elevate her to an echelon where she can fully enjoy her liberty as a human being. Adichie has chastised the metropolitan religion that stratifies the society into those who are rich and deserving of adoration and the poor, who are relegated into the servant status. Rampant materialism associated with Christianity is intimated, a covetous attitude that is veiled as a form of generosity. The well-to-do feign benevolence towards the needy while secretly relishing their prosperity and associating it with "blessings". Papa Eugene for instance uses a master-servant narrative in an ironical manner when he eulogizes his poor past as a priest's houseboy. He draws on his needy past to push his children towards the pursuit of richness and fame, rather than personal satisfaction. While justifying avarice to his children, he asks them:

"Why do you think I work so hard to give you and Jaja the best? You have to do something with all these privileges. *Because God has given you much, he expects much from you.* He expects perfection. I didn't have

a father who sent me to the best schools. My father spent his time worshipping gods of wood and stone (*sic*). I would be nothing today but for the priests and sisters at the mission. I was a houseboy for the parish priest for two years. Yes, a houseboy. Nobody dropped me off at school. I walked eight miles every day to Nimo until I finished elementary school. I was a gardener for the priests while I attended St. Gregory's Secondary School'' (*Purple Hibiscus*, p. 47, emphasis added).

This 'Okwonkwoan' philosophy where a man works hard so as to exorcise the ghost of his father's failure is what Papa Eugene relies on in pressing his children on towards cupidity. He takes religion to be a means through which one ascends to a higher station in life. He therefore imbues his children with rapaciousness that is veiled as an injunction for them to attain academic excellence in school while in reality his wish is to forget about his childhood squalor. This contributes to an exercise of adverse informational social power on the children because they henceforth strive to be unlike him.

We contrast the above attitude with what happens in Abba. Beatrice and Sisi are relieved from the duty of cooking as the wives of the *umunna* take over from them. They do this ostensibly to allow Beatrice to rest after the stress of the city. Helping Beatrice and Sisi in the performance of culinary chores by the wives of the *umunna* is an exercise of informational social power that repudiates the expectation of Eugene's class that menial work is reserved for lowly domestic workers such as Sisi. Their communal cooking symbolically pulls down the walls of socio-economic classism with which Eugene has barricaded his family. Traditions are associated with pecuniary diffidence while Christianity surreptitiously glorifies acquisitiveness. While explaining why indigenous Africans chose to adopt Western religions at the expense of their own traditional beliefs, Beier (1975:12) notes that the so called universal religions were thought to be 'respectable' and compatible with the materialistic ways that had been adopted from the West. We see the *umunna* concept as being an onslaught to this individualism, materialism and classism that is inherent in western religions.

For their work, the *umunna* wives reward themselves with the leftover food and drinks. It is noteworthy that though Eugene does not mind feeding these people at this festive period, his is more of a patronizing attitude than a genuine need to share. His 'generosity' can therefore still be read as an aspect of materialism because by allowing the poor people of Abba to eat and drink in his house, he seeks to elevate himself into praiseworthiness. We draw this conclusion because of the fact that Eugene generally displays aversion towards traditional practices, yet he has taken the title of *omerola*, which

means 'the one who does for the community'. The title *omerola* falls under the social names in the classification of names and titles among the *Igbo* (Obiego, 1984).

We argue that Eugene's generosity is more of patronage than magnanimity because of his adamant insistence that he cannot host a traditionalist in his house and yet Papa-Nnukwu has no aversion towards hosting Eugene's Christian grandchildren. Eugene therefore exercises duplicity when it comes to generosity, a fact that exposes the divisive nature of the brand of Christianity that he professes. The homeliness of Papa-Nnukwu's reception of his grandchildren is foregrounded more in the children's minds when they go back to their father's house and witness the maltreatment of Anikwenwa by their father. Anikwenwa, an old man, who subscribes to traditionalism, has come to visit with other people in Eugene's Abba residence but he is ejected by Eugene. The following exchange between the two men is to Kambili and Jaja a duel between Catholicism and African traditions:

"What is Anikwenwa doing in my house? What is a worshipper of idols doing in my house? Leave my house!"

"Do you know that I am in your father's age group, gbo?" the man asked. The finger he waved in the air was meant for Papa's face, but it only hovered around his chest. "Do you know that I sucked my mother's breast when your father sucked his mother's?"

"Leave my house!" Papa pointed at the gate.

Two men slowly ushered Anikwenwa out of the compound. He did not resist; he was too old to, anyway. But he kept looking back and throwing words at papa. "*Ifukwa gi!* You are like a fly blindly following a corpse into the grave!" (*Purple Hibiscus*, p.70).

We refer to this exchange as a duel because as Eugene relies on religious fundamentalism to eject Anikwenwa from his house, the latter appeals to the reverence and sanctity that African traditions bestow on senior citizens to show Eugene the imprudence of what he does. The curse Anikwenwa hurls at Eugene as he hobbles away is a counterpoint to Eugene's prayer for conversion of Papa-Nnukwu from what he considers to be a heathen lifestyle. As a practicing traditionalist, Anikwenwa expects that his curse will lead to Papa Eugene's punishment. Among traditional Africans, there is a belief that a person is punished for the wrongs he does, not in his next life but in his present one. For that reason, 'misfortunes encountered by an individual are taken to be an indication that such a person has broken some moral or ritual conduct against God, the spirits, the elders or other members of the society'

(Mbiti, 1969:210). In likening Papa-Nnukwu to Anikwenwa, Kambili sees the injustice and sanctimony with which her father deals with traditionalists. Anikwenwa's exchange with Papa Achike is therefore an aspect of informational social power exercise over Kambili.

Of Pastoral Idyll

Papa-Nnukwu's effect on Kambili and Jaja is to make them sharply aware of how their father's relationship with them is impersonal and lacking in empathy. Eugene refers to Papa-Nnukwu as a heathen but Kambili and Jaja sympathize with their grandfather's abject state of squalor. The traditional lifestyle that he leads appeals to the children's imagination. This is so because they have become long accustomed to the ostentatious lifestyle in Enugu that lacks humaneness. The quaint nature of Papa-Nnukwu's dwelling has an emotional appeal that is directed towards the children's sensitive personalities that Eugene has hitherto ignored as they grew up. The following description of Papa-Nnukwu's homestead by Kambili shows her emotional connection with its simplicity:

'The compound was barely a quarter of the size of our backyard in Enugu. Two goats and a few chickens sauntered around, nibbling and pecking at drying stems of grass. The house that stood in the middle of the compound was small, compact like dice, and it was hard to imagine Papa and Auntie Ifeoma growing up here. It looked just like the pictures of houses I used to draw in kindergarten: a square house with a square door at the center and two square windows on each side' (*Purple Hibiscus* p.63).

This description that makes reference to childhood drawings by Kambili shows that the homestead calls to mind the beauty of her childhood experiences. It can be argued that in as much as traditional homesteads are not a match to the modern bungalows and mansions as found in Enugu in terms of grandiose architecture, their simplicity and resonance with nature is an aspect of beauty. Mbiti (1969:108) suggests that traditional homesteads and such beauty is a sign of nature's rhythm, a universe in miniature and a symbol of security comparable to 'a vast vessel into which men, animals and crops enter and are kept secure from outside dangers'. We notice that the children's affluent background has not made them proud. The reality of their father's restrictions on them has annulled what would otherwise be an arrogant predisposition.

It is noteworthy that although Papa-Nnukwu is an old and weak man and that he finally dies, in his old age and even in his death, he is a source of informational social power for Jaja. Among traditional Africans, a man is not

thought to lose his strength as he grows older. Instead, as his body weakens with age, the strength of a man of virtue is transposed and his psychic strength increased. The really old men then become centers of power. Such people might even sit at the same spot at home, doing nothing, not even participating physically in ceremonies. They however become an embodiment of wisdom and knowledge. From them, the younger generation received advice and strength (Beier, 1975). This is the kind of informational social power that Jaja imbibes from his ageing grandfather and continues to draw from even after Papa-Nnukwu dies.

The *mmuo* festival, an element of *Igbo* culture where people gather in the village square to watch masquerades features in *Purple Hibiscus*. This festival that is also to be found as an *egwugwu* gathering in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is a display of a society's heroes and ancestors, who dress in masks and wield weapons. It is a feature of African traditions that Kambili and Jaja are introduced to by Papa-Nnukwu. He invites them to compare Catholic priests with traditional *Igbo* leaders and heroes and challenges them to make a deduction as to which between the two has a more profound effect on their lives. We conclude that with traditions, the children are able to see that worship is done for worship's sake while with Catholicism the worship procedure is a means through which the powerful like Eugene seek to manipulate the less powerful into submission. In this respect, Papa-Nnukwu exercises informational social power over his grandchildren.

Conclusion

The abstract of this paper has offered a summary of the paper while the introduction has been used to introduce Ngozi Adichie and her text, *Purple Hibiscus*. The theoretical framework that overarches the study has been identified as being Michel Foucault's ideas on power in social groups. Review of related literature has dealt with an elucidation of social power exercise in African families with the hiatus being filled by the paper being informational social power exercise. Likewise, literature on *Purple Hibiscus* has been reviewed so that the gap identified by the paper has been exercise of informational social power in *Purple Hibiscus*. The discursive segment of the paper has started with an introduction, followed by three sub-topics while this conclusion is the penultimate section before the references. The paper recommends that informational social power base can form the gamut of study on other literary texts.

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