

***Namibia's Emergent Transculturalism:
Dissolving Boundaries and Contestation in the African Global Borderlands***

Thomas Fox, University of Namibia, Namibia

The European Conference on Cultural Studies 2014
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

The rapidly growing presence of new media in postcolonial Namibia since the turn of the Millennium has significance for cultural and lifestyle transformations in the country. Earlier entrenched social identities shaped by former colonialism, indigenous tradition and current postcolonial political power relations, are under pressure in the face of cultural globalisation. Anzaldúa's idea of 'borderlands' is regarded here as valuable in establishing a metaphor for the type of negotiated cultural space Namibian youth encounter. This article examines the characteristics of change from the perspective of young Windhoek adults' experiences of Internet social networks, and presents empirical grounded theory evidence of their cultural practices and ambiguous response to what they find at the cultural edges of the global outside. How youth negotiate mediated relations of power emanating from global culture is established through affirming three conceptualisations of actor orientations to media: cultural expropriationist, cultural traditionalist and cultural representationalist. The study concludes that new media is active in identity and cultural change, while in the same instance social tension over matters of culture appear to be emerging in the country.

iafor

The International Academic Forum

www.iafor.org

Introduction

This article focuses on youth cultural interactions in Namibia, made possible through Internet communication, and considers the sociological consequences of new media in terms of recent cultural shifts within Namibian contexts¹. It provides recent evidence on youth linkages and electronic interactive sociability with ‘others’ in distant external global settings. It asks: “what are youth doing” with electronic media, while at the same time wishing to know how youth are changing themselves and their identities in terms of social and cognitive outlooks. In cultural terms, is this new-found and novel means of communication impacting on the identities and outlooks of young people? Is the Internet changing Namibian culture? If the answer is ‘yes’, then through what specific practices is this occurring?² This youth interface with global culture can be argued to represent a ‘borderland’ territory between local and global imaginings. Gloria Anzaldúa (2012) has provided a useful conceptualisation here.

Anzaldúa’s borderland idea represents an ethos or idea about edges of social space which, while initially representing places of isolation from core centres of culture and power, come to be ‘third spaces’ of identity maintenance, opportunity and critique. They emerge as meeting places of negotiation, sites of transformation and new life formation where postcolonial identities are forged and established. This is an idea for a global world in which peripheral nations - formerly isolated or excluded - meet the borderlands of international culture, where actors explore, assess and negotiate the ideas, symbols and power ideologies they find there. I see a borderland somewhat differently to Anzaldúa, and I supplement it with a reflexive negotiative dimension. In her original account (1987), it refers to marginalised people and groups of the oppressed and the exploited, seeking recognition of their existence and rights against power at the core. While I retain this essence, borderlands can also be seen as ‘meeting places’ where people look outward, as well as where others are looking in. Borderlands are places where cultures touch, intermingle, experience fusion; but also represent points of negotiation and reflexivity, and even spaces of resistance toward cultural globalisation. While global culture can potentially flow into borderland spaces, on into present cultural localities and existences, borderlands may become defensive spaces where lines of resistance and rejection of global forces comes into play. More complexly, they are areas where local meets global, where actors seek experiences of the larger world than the one they know, where novelty and knowledge are sought, and where inclusion and visibility are strived for. I would like to use borderlands in this manner. Borderlands can never be just resistance sites and places where traditional or other localised identities fight for prioritisation and exclusivity,

¹ Namibia lies at the south-western Atlantic edge of the African continent just above South Africa, stretching north almost 2000 kilometres to the borders of Angola. It shares a eastern border with Botswana. Namibia has two deserts, the Kalahari and the Namib. Seventy percent of Namibia is arid or semi-arid, agriculture being possible mostly in the most northerly regions. The country has twelve ethnic groups, the largest being Oshiwambo speakers (50%) followed by the Herero, Nama and Afrikaans groups. The Oshiwambo led the struggle against South African apartheid from 1966 to democratic independence in 1990. The last Census (2011) recorded a population of 2.3 million, with sixty percent of people living in the rural areas, although rapid migration is shifting the balance from traditional rural life toward urban living. Windhoek, on which this paper is based, is one of the most favoured migratory destinations.

² The present discussion is based on analysis of extensive qualitative fieldwork utilising grounded theory methodology undertaken in the capital city of Windhoek in 2010-2012.

where local culture alone monopolises control over communities and citizens by denying the Other and gate-keeping culture. Namibians, living in a former geographically and globally isolated nation during a hundred years of very recent colonialism, increasingly express a cosmopolitan desire for greater external connection – as their engagement with media reveal.

Virtual global connections: Rise of the Internet & social networks in Namibia

From around 2007, the possibilities for connecting with the global ‘outside’ through Internet connectivity became markedly enhanced with the introduction in Namibia of 3G communication networks (Larsen 2007). This has taken a further step forward with the recent launch of 4G technology. From less than 1% of Namibians connected in 1999, there were estimated to be 148,414 Internet users, or 6.9% of the population by December 2011. In the country, cell phones are a significant part of the trend for ever-closer contact nationally and with the global beyond. From just 20,000 cell phone users in 1998, there was over 1.5 million in 2011 (Economy Watch 2013). Mobile telephony has resulted in a revolution in personal media communication, in that multi-tasking phones allow for broader communication potential than was previously possible, including public debate and civic exchanges that bypass restrictive official state media (Sarrazin 2011; Tyson 2007). Given the pace of these changes in Internet access and the devices used to attain it, the 2012 6.9% official national figure may be a serious under-estimate of people with a working Internet connection. Internet has expanded exponentially in terms of access, with Namibians gaining rapid entry and considerably enhanced improvements in data-access speeds through desktop computers, laptops and, substantively, through cell phones. Cell phones have emerged as the cheaper prime platform for poorer citizens to use the Internet (Campbell & Park 2008; Van Binsbergen & Van Dijk 2004). The Internet outdoes traditional media which have represented more passive consumer practices, by allowing interactive, participatory, and even reflexive involvement.

Internet use has come to represent considerably more than a technical activity, emerging to signify profound novelty, and to occupy a new practical space in the lives of younger Namibians. Related to this, the phenomenal rise of social network sites such as Facebook, MySpace and ‘chat and comment’ destinations such as Skype, Twitter and a plethora of online news publication sites, have established virtual communication inroads into societies and cultures beyond Namibia and Africa, entrenching opportunities for unique forms of instant, globalised social interaction. Such mediated contacts and actions provide the means to transcend the narrow knowledge and opinion base of people’s immediate cultural locale. The consequences of these new social media practices are as yet poorly understood (Boyd 2008a), and barely researched in Namibia (Fox 2012).

Social networks can be defined as media forums found on the Web that allow for contact, sociability and virtual interaction with others who are distant and not physically co-present. They are meeting places where views and opinion on lifestyle and fashion, relationships, social, political and general interests, can be shared and debated online. Many Namibian social network users tended to be in contact with people in other parts of Namibia, other African countries or, just as commonly, in Asia, Europe or the Americas. Moderately well-off and, more obviously, affluent young people in Windhoek have a Facebook account, while knowledge of YouTube,

Twitter and other social network sites was generally high. There proved to be surprising interest and even some participation in social networks by lower-income individuals; for example, an informal economy car guard had a Facebook account which he exclusively accessed on his cell phone. All experienced a general fascination in other options that the Internet provided such as film and music downloads and access to news and entertainment (Fox 2012).

Self-celebrity: Presentations of self online: “*They don’t want to see the real you*” (Diane)

How do Namibians ‘culturally practice’ within the new borderlands? One of the chief attractions was Facebook, and for participants it represented the opportunity to engage with media that allowed actor self-identities to be publicly displayed. Couldry (2003:107) has written of the emergence of modern self-celebrity, first created out of reality show formats such as the heavily-exported *Big Brother* franchise. He argues that this and similar shows combine “ordinariness and celebrity” generically comparable to social network sites. Social networks extend the reality television premise that anyone can be a celebrity, be visible ‘out there’ before large audiences, establishing platforms for public self-presentation. Goffman’s centrally relevant sociological premise, that modern actors in their daily public relationships ‘present’ themselves in the dramaturgical manner of an actor on a stage, takes on a new dimension in social networks. Goffman (1998 [1959], p.77-78) believed that individuals socially presented idealised versions of themselves to others through self-managed performances that carefully concealed defects of character or imperfection that might spoil ‘perfect’ public identities: “contrived performances we tend to see as something painstakingly pasted together... Some performances are carried off successfully with complete dishonesty, others with complete honesty.” The best of ourselves is displayed while the worst is hidden in a performance that is always a contrived social drama.

Such strategies of Windhoek youth to present idealised selves and unspoiled identities were apparent in their Facebook interactions. The participant, Twama, said that self-display was one of the obvious purposes of Facebook and social sites. She liked this aspect, stating that: “*I like Facebook for the displaying of yourself. I change the picture each month if I have time, and I update my status according to the things that have happened to me. My life is out there, and I share it with those other people.*” Diane valued it also for identity displays with online friends, stating candidly “*it’s not about being in touch with relatives for me. For me it’s more about popularity, being popular and seen. You can only do that on Facebook. It’s presenting your photo and lifestyle to the world and say ‘here we are’. It’s showing off really, but it’s fun. People want to be popular.*” She added: “*it’s interesting how perfect people want to appear on Facebook. They wouldn’t want any old picture, but they want you to see this perfect picture; no mole, no freckle, they wouldn’t want a normal face. They don’t want to see the real you.*”

Sonny was a self-proclaimed conservative-traditionalist participant who disliked this type of self-identity exposure. It was not ‘cultural’ to do that, but ‘a new Western thing’. He said: “*These social networks like this Facebook, I just don’t like them. I just don’t want everything about myself to be exposed out there for all to see. I am private, a bit reserved. Why expose myself so publicly like that? I don’t like my things*

to be known.” He added that Internet should be policed and controlled by the Namibian government.

These represent brief examples of how social network participants expropriate global media for their own ends. While power is being directed at them from institutions of Western media, we should not underestimate the degree to which youth capture and use media for shaping their own cultural practices and identities, irrespective of the power processes from media institutions which they also undeniably encounter (Rantanen 2005; Van Binsbergen, & Van Dijk 2004). However, Turkle (2011) has warned of the loss of real-world social community resulting from spurious and unsubstantial online ‘friendships’, bemoaning the perceived decline of meaningful face-to-face interactions.

Sharing cultures and global lives

Social network interactivity was a window into other people’s worlds, lives and cultures. Making contacts in other parts of Africa, Europe, the United States or China proved to be a significant attraction to the Windhoek research participants. They provided a great deal of discussion on the cultural possibilities of sites such as Facebook. Miller’s (2011) study of Facebook in Trinidad also reported this culturally attractive side to people in that country. A small Caribbean island was effectively linked to people in various nations in some sense, either to connect to families who had immigrated to the United States or Europe, or to be part of the greater global community in the culture sharing possibilities the Internet provided. The opportunities for these intense interactions frequently gave insights into how people lived elsewhere in the world. The participants became temporary roving ethnographers discovering ways of life that were sometimes a revelation to them. They frequently compared other unfamiliar lifestyles with their own.

Diane mentioned how surprised she was in discovering facts about India through her Indian Facebook friend. She heard about caste discrimination, the low status of women and “India’s rape problem”, the intense situationality of Hindu religious beliefs in the lives of many, and about social problems such as intense poverty for many Indians. She had also become aware that India was now a major emerging economy. She admitted that she ‘knew nothing’ about these things before her Facebook contact: *“I used to know only Namibia. I didn’t have any knowledge of elsewhere. Now I know about India, the US, places like that. It has opened me up.”* Discovery of other matters, such as insights into economic catastrophes in rich Western nations following the crash of Lehmann Brothers in the United States, emerged from social network communication. Talia, a white Afrikaner, gave a picture of the reality of the global economic crisis or ‘credit crunch’ that first hit the United States economy in September 2008, quickly spreading to other parts of the globe. She said:

“my US [United States] friends have told me a lot about the economic problems. It really comes across when you talk with them. They say the economy is really bad there. They’re so depressed sometimes. One person’s dad recently lost his family business, and he says they are struggling financially now, where they were very well off before. It was tough for them, and I can relate to that, as my own family depend on a business.”

Grace gave specifics on cultural differences which were a topic of Facebook conversations. She described social networks as being a means to “culture share”. While Miller (2011) confirms this desire of participants to gaze into other societies and share global cultural options, potentially generating cultural change, other studies are sceptical about the far-reaching effects of this. Kung, Picard and Towse (2008, p.94) state that “there is no overwhelming proof that globalisation or cultural change is taking place because of people getting online and using Internet”, adding that domestic websites remain the most popular in many countries. This assertion is doubtful, and the writers do not anyway address social networking practices, which seems a different order of mediated cultural possibility altogether.

Family interconnectedness through social media: resolving diaspora

There proved to be a powerful connection between the Internet and modern international migratory patterns. Several participants used social networks to make connections with family members who had moved to other parts of the world. ‘Keeping in contact’ was an important ontological and emotional need for Windhoek participants. Internet social networks were found to be a means to overcome diasporic displacement and dispersal of family members through emigration, becoming a means to reconnect and to re-establish interconnectivity with relatives thousands of miles away. According to the International Organisation for Migration (2010), emigration out of Africa achieved historic proportions from 2000 onward. Many Windhoek participants now had friends or family living permanently or for long periods in Europe or the United States. Most used the strategic opportunity of social networks as the chief device to maintain contact. The young student Happy explained its advantages, speaking of the ‘rediscovery’ of lost family members:

“I have found lost relatives in other parts of the world by looking for people with my name. I found a lady who I discovered to be a relative in the USA. I talk a lot to my brother who lives in Canada on Skype, and you no longer have to write letters to keep in touch. Very few write now since social networks. I think it’s a very good thing. It allows us to live as a family even though we are scattered and not seeing each other. It helps with a sense of family belonging.”

Strong evidence presented itself that participants used social media as a counter-diaspora strategy. This well explains why Facebook is experiencing a greater expansion of take-up in the developing world compared to the developed (*The Financial Times*, 15 June 2011). Mass migration to other areas, primarily Europe and North America, over the last 15 years has fragmented African families, scattering kin members globally (United Nations Development Programme 2009). Facebook represents a strategic resource to locate, contact and maintain interaction with relatives across this global diaspora landscape (Tsagarousianou, R. 2004).

It follows that an important function of Facebook is to bring the diasporic global family ‘virtually’ together. Adeyanju and Oriola (2011, p.22) state that the ‘insatiable desire’ of Africans for a new life in Western countries, and subsequent large-scale migration, has created a fragmentation of the African family. Diasporic Africans use social online sites to communicate legitimising performance impressions of their

‘successful’ lives abroad, while needing at the same time to suggest they maintain ‘culturally appropriate’ Namibian lives away from home.

Abrasive media & the ‘stranger’ in online encounters

An area of cultural conflict on social networks arises from how people culturally address each other, converse or generally interact on them. Namibia is a country where formality is mostly carefully maintained in social encounters. However, online communication often displays a raw approach in discussion, frequently resorting to harsh criticism and unrestrained language or prose, including abuse (*The Guardian*, 24 July 2011). Certain cultures may find such discourse hard to accept. This type of encounter with media can be described as *abrasive media*, which typified how Windhoek participants experienced certain individuals on the Internet. Andrew was a participant who had an interest in conspiracy theories which he debated with others online. He found these encounters sometimes severe, and at times hard to take. He provided an example based on a significant news event, which had occurred a few weeks before his interview:

“After the alleged assassination of bin Laden, I commented on this. I said how much I thought it was a staged event, that he was killed to raise Obama’s ratings. Gradually, it went on to a war of words [with other commentators]. Then it got personal, insulting each other. It got to abuse and swearing with some guy from the [United] States. He was saying ‘what do you fucking know? Excuse me, you’re from a fucking third world country’. That sort of comment. I would say that bin Laden has been dead for years already. The situation was invented to increase Obama’s ratings. I told this to the American guy but he was quite rough.”

Andrew expected discussion to be confined to ‘reasonable bounds’ that excluded insult and swearing, while admitting that it was difficult to meet those expectations out on the Web. He said that *“if you met some of those people in real life, you would be fighting them.”* Lebius, a conservative participant, liked Facebook but reported that he restricted contact with people outside the country because they were ‘always too rude’. He mentioned past abrasive encounters as an unpleasant downside of the Internet, but also people that ‘reveal your secrets’, presumably people who knew him. He explained: *“some bad experiences have happened. People try to irritate you with their comments. They can be very direct. They talk about people in a bad way. That I don’t like. Things like Facebook can often be culturally inappropriate. I may stop it soon.”* Social media were widely perceived in Windhoek to breach culturally-accepted standards, being criticised on several occasions on cultural grounds. Over-expressive language displayed publically on the Facebook ‘wall’ or through close friends via the inbox, shocked some Namibian users. It was culturally difficult for Namibians to overcome these reservations and fall into this spirit of fierce, even aggressive debate. It was just ‘not Namibian’. Yet in other ways the participants could transcend such conservative coyness in surprising ways when it came to the internet strangers they encountered.

‘Strangers’ online where another unexpected problem, long ago described by George Simmel as the core fact of industrial modernity: “The stranger is close to us, insofar as we feel between him and ourselves features of a national, social, occupational, and generally human, nature. He is far from us insofar as these common features extend

beyond him and us, and connect us, only because they connect a great number of people” (Simmel 1950[1908], p.98).

Windhoek participants were often reserved individuals, yet they had the courage (even foolhardiness) to be questioned in depth online by a stranger about their lifestyles, and were able to engage with unfamiliar in the global outside. Simmel regarded the stranger as a fact of modern life which had replaced ‘community’. In large-scale societies where impersonal social relations had become the norm, so too had strangers. They were people we meet or usually only see in passing that come and go in our lives, or are glimpsed from a distance. They are those we never entirely comprehend. They represent what Simmel labels ‘the larger unknowable’ or greater society beyond the immediate locales of ‘familiar’ such as family, friends and work colleagues. Simmel says we are curious and wonder about them, because they are also ‘us’, and to others we too are strangers. Maybe the Internet is changing this social configuration, as the unknowable ‘other’ is increasingly integrated, often unpredictably, into our evermore mediated lives.

Social networks brought the strangers to Namibian youth’s laptops or their cell phones from great distances. As Simmel said, strangers are close to us and far from us. The Internet offers the option to bring them intimately, frequently uncomfortably, closer. Hilma said of her more benign encounters: *“Maybe they are strangers, yes, but I feel I know them well. They share my interests with them from Brazil to Japan.”* Less benignly, several female participants mentioned uncomfortable experiences on Facebook involving implicit or explicit sexual suggestions from people they had never met. Strangers tried to probe about their sexual lives, tried to meet and date them. The term for this in the United States and Britain is ‘cyberstalking’, and it has been cited as a major Internet problem in the perceptions of many (*The Guardian*, 8 April 2011). Most participant experiences did not result in a face-to-face meeting: in the case of Mumba, it did. She mentioned an incident that had led to her trusting no one on social networks, and this had made her extremely reserved. She explained that she had ‘foolishly’ met someone she had previously spoken to online, resulting in an unpleasant sexual assault. Understandably, she was unable to say more.

Boyd (2008b) has written of the radical implications of social network sites for previously held social values and codes of behaviour. Lines between openness, and former practices of concealment of personal information, have blurred and broken down online. The private becomes a domain open to all, with Internet participants imagining greater degrees of anonymity and protection than they actually have. Friendship loses its generic meaning, as those with profile accounts on social networks tend to have fifty, five hundred or sometimes a thousand or more ‘friends’ with whom they imagine they can share intimate secrets and discuss deeply private information. Boyd (2008b, p.14) argues that many young people are now aware of and experience trepidation at this disintegration of private space, stating that social networks “rupture people’s sense of public and private by altering previously understood social norms”. A sense of exposure and invasion has set into people’s attitudes, leading to demands that sites like Facebook provide better architectures of privacy to curb the free flow of private information. To date, there is little sign of this emerging.

Youth as ‘Natives of Chaos’

How can the Windhoek research presented above be equated with and contextualised within wider international studies of youth and media? Miles (2000, p.70) writes of the omnipresent positioning of media in the consuming character of contemporary youth, stating that no viable studies of youth can today ignore this. The mass media have emerged as important for the young, and they have shown remarkable technical abilities in mastering each new communication innovation. Youth tend to show strong reflexive skills of utilisation, while revealing uneven degrees of resistance or submission to its commercial pressures. Media represent a world where youth can be largely free of adults (Miles, 2000, p.84), although they may be vulnerable to entertainment and advertising which has a vested interest in maintaining a certain type of consuming consciousness and identity among them; but this is not to say they are automatically manipulated dupes.

On how youth sociologically engage with media, Willett (2008) says that young people use new media as a symbolic resource to build their own centres of sociability and youth identities. Television and music have arguably done this for some time in African and other contexts. Rushkoff (1997, p.13) refers to the young as 'natives of chaos' who in an individuated and complex age are better adapted to the demands of the rapidly shifting contours of an uncertain modernity than most adults. Their immersion in modern popular culture has prepared them to cope with and manage the social changes occurring around them. Media provides the paradigm and the practical means for their negotiation through contemporary worlds that border their immediate localities.

Mediated youth abilities do not automatically shield them from the powerful capitalistic commercial pressures they daily confront in media and beyond. Willett (2008:50) states that any study of youth and media is required to explore the tension between young people as acted upon by societal forces, and seeing them as independent actors in their own right. Willett (2008, p.54) adds that:

"it is undeniable that youth constantly come into contact with commercial pressures and imperatives, whether using new or old media ... young people can be seen as "bricoleurs," appropriating and reshaping consumer culture as they define and perform their identities, and in some instances rejecting or simply ignoring marketing techniques and discourses."

Yet their agency is framed within commodity spaces that are deeply conditioned. In her own field of study, online Internet, Willett sees this as an important area for expression, development and access to alternative cultures for youth, albeit one where virtual spaces may be deceptively less free and open than many may realise. In relation to the Internet, Subrahmanyam, Greenfield and Tynes (2004) say that it is critical to view this as a highly valued new social environment for youth in which universal adolescent issues pertaining to identity formation, sexuality, and self-worth are explored in a virtual world. Going online for accessing and discussing with others intimate information relating to sex and personal relationships has not been available to such a degree previously. Chatrooms and social networks, as confirmed by the 2011 Windhoek research, offer enormous potential to shape both personal and social identities. New media provide the space for interactive and constant contact with others via mobile phones, the Internet and email, essentials now that social life is

virtually networked and human contact is more and more 'distanced' rather than conventionally face-to-face. Larsen, Urry and Axhausen (2008, p.656) call this 'networked capital' which is described as "the capacity to engender and sustain social relations with people who are not necessarily proximate, and which generates emotional, financial and practical benefit." Youth, including in Namibia, are increasingly skilled in accessing and exploiting networked capital. Yet their responses to mediated institutional power proved more diversely ambiguous and uneven.

Three reflexive positions on global media power

McMillin has stated that "examining globalization processes from the ground, from the level of lived experiences, is a very different endeavour from examining it from the perspective of institutional power" (McMillin 2007:180). Institutional media power emanates from multi-national media corporations who distribute monopolistic cultural and symbolic products worldwide, ostensibly for profit but also arguably to ideologically disseminate cultural and social agendas. Institutional power, on the other hand, can have a local presence as commercial and state media collude with or resist global media in line with national ideological goals. According to McPhail (2010), Western media are a key aspect of international communications which have been defined in the context of contemporary globalisation as the flow of norms, values, culture, information and effects between nations and people. Western global media are commercially very powerful. But what are the *reactions* or lines of resistance to global media in the 'borderland' reception countries? Postcolonial theory tends to suggest uncomplicated reactions to power as either passive acceptance (a Marxian false consciousness) or favoured resistance, focusing exclusively on challenges to globalisation (Ashcroft 2001; Mongia 1996; Bhabha 1994). The problem with uniform theories of power is that they lack nuance and tend to downgrade local power discourses and the way these complicate general flows of power and, more importantly, actors' varied and diverse responses to them. In Windhoek, the research established three general positions, with each representing diverging relationships with media power: *cultural expropriationists*, *cultural traditionalists* and *cultural representationalists*.

Namibians who were 'cultural expropriationists' viewed Western media in favourable terms for its novelty, richness, pragmatic potential and cosmopolitanism. The quality, imagination and sophistication of many film and television productions and the array of possibilities of Internet sites such as Facebook were valued. They prized global media's ability to connect them with other cultures and otherworldly experience, while recognising possibilities for integrating media-based global knowledge into their self-development. It was a strategic option for them, representing opportunity for new outlooks and identity negotiations that transcended local possibilities. To suggest advantages of reflexive opportunities for actors is not to adversely underestimate contexts of restraint or power that will be encountered (Zegeye 2008). Perhaps on the other side of the argument, optimists like Tomlinson (2003) tend to downplay the rapidly corrosive effects of global media on valued local culture and identity, that may itself lead to genuine ontological crisis and insecurity for more traditionalist actors.

In polar opposition, *cultural traditionalists* in Namibia were resistant or belligerent to the expanding media environment in Namibia, frequently being disapproving of the cultural expropriationists' enthusiasm for global culture. Cultural traditionalists raised

fears about perceived erosion of existing ethnic or national cultures by foreign media. In class terms they were what might be termed 'middle class', often as a result of socio-economic position gained by parents who tended to be recent beneficiaries of rapid social mobility through acquiring government jobs or patronage. Many retained strong links with existing rural-ethnic networks. Some participants in this traditionalist position were also from black working class backgrounds who were recent arrivals to urban settings. Cultural traditionalists did not reject modern media, but thought it should be used as a neutral practical tool for, first, development and, second, entertainment. They were the most likely to talk about the need for media regulation including state surveillance of media to ensure what they called 'appropriate' content. However, there were genuine concerns expressed about culture that were not automatically anti-progressive, and which appeared to represent valid defences against infringing commercial, cultural or other manipulative global discourses. Cultural traditionalists should not be regarded as unreflexive puppets of cultural tradition. On one level, the existential security of a cherished traditionalist worldview was genuinely under threat, and they responded disapprovingly, with trepidation at future uncertainties.

Cultural representationalists occupied a more ambiguous position. They had the same fascination for diverse global media as cultural expropriationists, yet harboured doubts about the *presence*, or absence, of their cultural heritage in mediated products. These were distinctly not the same concerns as those of the traditionalists who sought maintenance and regulation of their cultural viewpoint in power defence terms. Cultural representationalists desired or demanded modes of *representation* of their Namibian lives, lifestyles and culture that they felt were missing from much of what they viewed and listened to. They rarely found this in Western film or television, but local media also failed them. Cultural representationalists desired *representational media* that mirrored and confirmed their social contexts. It has been argued that media are cultural tools that are used by individuals to reflect, approve or reorder lives and cultures (Boyd & Ellison 2007:34). Where their society and culture was not represented on their border locales, they asked why.

Conclusion

This discussion has attempted to establish both a picture and an analysis of Internet social network 'borderland' engagements in relation to patterns of cultural transformation in Windhoek among youth. While Anzaldúa's borderland metaphor is applied in principle to empirical findings, the article has used its imagery and philosophy as a guiding conception only. The conclusions reached are that the Internet has moved decisively over international borders into the lifestyles of young Windhoekers as a resource, as a form of self-presentation or a window into other cultures, as entertainment or to access novel or sundry ideas and experiences, and even for sensual or intimate possibilities. Social networks and new media generally, are a portal to a vast realm of intriguing global possibilities, at the same time emerging as an increasingly normalised social phenomenon in everyday experience. The final overriding outcome of these cultural shifts appears to be a cosmopolitan one for Windhoek youth, despite reservations and resistance of more traditionalist Namibians. Namibia's cultural borders increasingly reveal emergent conflict over matters of culture, especially via growing 'traditionalistic' state regulation of media and Internet in an attempt to police these global cultural contacts. Yet there is, in turn,

a strong reaction from those youth who demand their borders 'open' to global culture, wishing to be free in their reflexive negotiation of what they find. Which side is likely to prevail in the debates over power and Namibian culture, remains at present a contingent question.



References

- Adeyanju, C. & Oriola, T. 2011. Colonialism and contemporary African migration: A phenomenological approach. In *Journal of black studies*. 42(4). 134-152.
- Anzaldúa, G. (2012). *Borderlands/La Frontera: the New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.
- Boyd, D. 2008a. Why youth 'love' social network sites: The role of networked publics in teenage social life. In Buckingham, D. (Ed.). *Youth, identity, and digital media*. 119-142. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Boyd, D. 2008b. Facebook privacy trainwreck: Exposure, invasion and social convergence. In *Convergence: International journal of research into new media technologies*. 14(1). 13-20.
- Buckingham, D. (Ed.). 2008. *Youth, identity, and digital media*. 119-142. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Campbell, S. & Park, Y. 2008. Social implications of mobile telephony: The rise of the personal communication society. In *Sociology compass*. 2(2). 371-387.
- Couldry, N. 2003. *Media rituals*. London: Routledge.
- Economy Watch. 2013. *Namibia media statistics*. At www.economywatch.com. Accessed 22 August 2014.
- Fox, T. 2012. *Mass media, lifestyle and young adults' (un)reflexive negotiation of social and individual identities in Windhoek*. Doctoral thesis. Available online at <http://scholar@sun.ac.za>. Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch.
- Fuchs, C. 2009. *Social networks and the surveillance society*. Salzburg/Vienna: ICTS Centre.
- Goffman, E. 1998[1959]. *The presentation of the self in everyday life*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Held, D. 2010. *Cosmopolitanism: Ideals and realities*. Cambridge: Polity.
- International Organisation for Migration. 2010. *World migration report 2010: The future of migration*. Geneva: IOM Publications.
- Internet World Statistics. 2010. At www.internetworldstatistics.com. Accessed 22 September 2010.
- Jenkins, H. 2006. *Convergence culture*. New York: University Press.
- Kung, L., Picard, R. & Towse, R. 2008. *The Internet and the mass media*. London: Sage.
- Larsen, J., Urry, J. & Axhausen, K. 2008. Coordinating face-to-face meetings in mobile network societies. In *Information, communication and society*. 11(5). 640-658.
- Larsen, M. 2007. *Media ownership and legislation in the Republic of Namibia*. Windhoek: Media Tenor.
- Livingstone, S. 2008. *Internet literacy: Young people's negotiation of new online opportunities*. In Livingstone, S. & Brake, D. 2010. On the rapid rise of social networking sites: New findings and policy implications. In *Children and society*. 24(1). 75-83.
- Marneweck, M. 2006. Internet chatrooms: Real or virtual identities? In Alexander, P., Dawson, M. & Ichharam, M. (Eds.). *Globalization and new identities: A view from the middle*. 173-191. Johannesburg: Jacana.
- Melluci, A. 1992. Youth silence and voices: Selfhood and commitment in the everyday experience of adolescents. In Fornäs, J. & Bolin, G. *Moves in modernity*. 51-71. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wisell.
- Miles, S. 2000. *Youth lifestyles in a changing world*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Miller, D. 2012. *Tales from Facebook*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Potter, W.J. 2004. *Theory of Media Literacy: A Cognitive Approach*. Santa Barbara: University of California.
- Rantanen, T. 2005. *Media and globalization*. London: Sage.
- Rushkoff, D. 1997. *Children of chaos: Surviving the world as we know it*. London: Flamingo.
- Sarrazin, T. 2011. *Texting, tweeting, mobile Internet: New platforms for democratic debate in Africa*. Windhoek: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.
- Simmel, G. 1950[1908]). The stranger. In *The sociology of George Simmel*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.
- Subrahmanyam, K., Greenfield, P. & Tynes, B. 2004. Constructing sexuality and identity in an online teen chat room. In *Journal of applied development psychology*. 25(3). 651-666.
- Thompson, J.B. 1995. *The media and modernity: A social theory of the media*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Total Pty.2010. *Namibia telecommunications research*. At www.total.com.au.namibia. Accessed 23 September 2010.
- Tsagarousianou, R. 2004. Rethinking the concept of diaspora: Modernity, connectivity and communications in a globalised world. In *Media and migration*. 1(1). 52-65.
- Tyson, R. 2007. The case for new media. Windhoek: *The Namibian*. 21 September.
- Turkle, S. 2011. *Alone together*. New York: Basic Books.
- United Nations Development Programme. 2009. *Human development report: Overcoming barriers*. New York: UNDP.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. 2011. *How youth drive change*. In *UNESCO Courier*. 64(3). 54-56.
- Van Binsbergen, W. & Van Dijk, R. 2004. *Situating globality: African agency and the appropriation of global culture*. Leiden: Anthony Rowe.
- Wasserman, H. & Jacobs, S. (Eds.) 2003. *Shifting selves: Post-apartheid essays on mass media, culture and identity*. Cape Town: Kwela.
- Willett, R. 2008. Consumer citizens online: Structure, agency, and gender in online participation. In Buckingham, D. (Ed.). *Youth, identity, and digital media*. 49-70. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Zhao, S., Grasmuck, S., & Martin, J. 2008. Identity construction on Facebook: Digital empowerment in anchored relationships. In *Computers in Human Behavior*, 24(1). 1816-1836.