# Mass media, lifestyle and young adults' (un)reflexive negotiation of social and individual identities in Windhoek

by

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## ABSTRACT

The rapidly growing presence of old and new media in postcolonial Namibia, particularly from the decade after the turn of the Millennium, has significance for cultural and identity transformations in the country. Formerly entrenched social identities, shaped by restrictive colonialism and indigenous traditions, appear to be under pressure as shifts become apparent in the face of globalisation. This thesis examines the characteristics of change from the perspective of young adults' mediated experiences in the city of Windhoek. The research constitutes a cultural study that addresses the current knowledge gap regarding how growing local and global media presences are increasingly situated in youth identity and cultural lifestyle spaces. Degrees of reflexive response to mediated information and entertainment are examined in an attempt to understand awareness of and reaction to local and global power narratives situated in actors' relationships with media. It was found that participants responded positively to the novelty and opportunities that global media offered for identity and lifestyle negotiations, while also revealing ontological anxieties about erosion of 'traditional' culture, and concern about absence of recognition and representation of the 'local' in global media productions. This led to the research conceptually establishing three participant orientations to media: cultural expropriationist, cultural traditionalist and cultural representationalist. The study concluded that while media seemed to be instrumental in identity and cultural change, social tension over matters of culture appeared to be emerging.

**OPSOMMING**

Die snelgroeiende teeenwoordigheid van ou en nuwe media in postkoloniale Namibië, veral sedert die dekade ná die millenniumwending, is beduidend vir kulturele en identiteitsverskuiwings in dié land. Voorheen verskanste sosiale identiteite, gevorm deur die beperkinge van kolonialisme en inheemse tradisies, skyn onder druk te wees soos verskuiwings duidelik begin te word in die lig van globalisering. Hierdie proefskrif ondersoek die eienskappe van hierdie veranderinge vanuit die perspektief van jong volwassenes se gemedieerde ondervindinge in die stad Windhoek. Hierdie navorsing behels 'n kulturele studie wat bydra tot die begrip van plaaslike en globale media-teenwoordigheid as toenemend gesitueer op die terrein van jeugidentiteit en kulturele lewenstyle. Daar word ondersoek ingestel na verskillende grade van refleksiewe reaksies op gemedieerde inligting en vermaak, in 'n poging om te verstaan hoe bewustheid van en reaksie op plaaslike en globale magsnarratiewe gesitueer is in rolspelers se verhoudings met media. Daar is bevind dat respondente positief gereageer het op die nuwighede en geleenthede wat globale media bied vir identiteits- en leefstylonderhandelinge, terwyl ontologiese onsekerhede oor die ondermyning van 'tradisionele' kultuur, en kommer oor die afwesigheid van erkenning en representasie van die 'plaaslike' in globale mediaproduksies, ook aan die lig gekom het. Hierdie bevinding het gelei daartoe dat die navorsing drie oriëntasies onder deelnemers vasgestel het: kultureel-onteienend, kultureel-tradisioneel, en kultureel-verteenwoordigend. Die studie het tot die gevolgtrekking gekom dat, terwyl die media instrumenteel in identiteits- en kultuurverandering blyk te wees, dit tegelykertyd sosiale spanning oor kulturele aangeleenthede aanwakker.

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## GLOSSARY

| | |
|---|---|
| 3G | Third Generation cell phone |
| 4G | Fourth Generation cell phone |
| ANC | African National Congress |
| CD | Compact Disc |
| DSTV | Digital Satellite Television (broadcaster otherwise known as MultiChoice Namibia) |
| DVD | Digital Versatile Disc |
| ESSRC | Economic and Social Science Research Council |
| GRN | Government of the Republic of Namibia |
| Leo | Telecommunication company first established in 2007 as Cell One, bought out in 2009 by Telecel Globe (subsidiary of Orascom Telecom, Egypt) and rebranded as Leo |
| MTC | Mobile Telecommunications Limited (telecommunication company, majority Namibian government owned) |
| MultiChoice | See DSTV |
| MWeb | Internet service provider (owned by MultiChoice Namibia) |
| NBC | Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (state controlled radio and television broadcaster) |
| NHIES | National Housing and Income Expenditure Survey |
| One Africa | Private television broadcaster |
| SABC | South African Broadcasting Corporation |
| SWABC | South West African Broadcasting Corporation |
| SWAPO | South West African People's Organisation |
| Telecom Namibia | Namibian state controlled telecommunication company |
| UNAM | University of Namibia |

# Chapter 1

# Background to the study

## 1.1 Introduction: Explaining an interest in media and identity

Academic and public perceptions of globalisation[1] have come to reflect an interest in cultural as well as economic interconnections. A focus on global cultural processes looks to institutions and symbolic products of the international mass media as implicated in cultural transformations across the world. It has been argued that media today are a resource presenting to individuals life-shaping choices and new identities, a means to connect people from different nations and cultural backgrounds; or alternatively, they are a threatening force that undermine heritage, imposing Western mono-culturalism and domination (Abélès 2006; Robertson 2002). This is a study of media and globalisation in contemporary Namibia that critically addresses these different positions. It represents a sociological inquiry of the lifestyle transformations occurring through the development of media institutions and media culture in the country. Why is such an exploration required?

There has been a growth of global media in postcolonial Namibia, the impact of which requires investigation. The research addresses the current knowledge gap regarding how a rising local and global media presence is being situated in identity and cultural lifestyle spaces of young adults in Windhoek. It explores in what manner their lives are increasingly mediated, and seeks to understand specific engagements with media and actor alignments to symbolic power narratives. Matters of reflexivity are included, reflexivity being defined as individual capacity to shape identity, self and lifestyle, to assess courses of action and those constraining social conditions in which actions must operate (Giddens 1991; Blumer 1986[1969]). The intention therefore is to research the scale of intervention of the mass media in young adults' identity negotiations, while their lifestyle actions and choices are also of interest. Why focus on young adults rather than the general population? It is argued that youth rather than adult populations are at the heart of current media processes in many countries: they are at the cutting edge of new developments in communications and

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[1] A note on spelling: 'globalisation' has been used throughout except in quotations when the spelling of the original is kept, if different. This spelling convention has been adopted for all -ise/-ize words (which can be spelt either way in British English) and their derivatives. It is the house style of Cambridge University Press, most UK mass media, and the European Union.

increasingly targeted and favoured by commercial interests, and a primary study group in media scholarship. As McMillin (2009:4-5) has said, it

> presses us – as media scholars – to study youth not just as users of media but as key players in the labour market. Adolescence is not just a time where identities are expressed and constricting structures resisted. It is a time where media and market pose strong interpellatory forces that shape the nature of the emerging subject. A study of how youth respond to those forces and what cultural reservoirs they tap into will provide important insights into the youth bodies produced through the conditions of globalisation.

Focusing on youth in relation to identity and media sought to overcome the exclusion of Namibia from trends of scholarly enquiry being undertaken elsewhere, in an attempt to provide an analytical picture explaining the character of the cultural shifts that are occurring.

The research focuses on 'what is happening' in the interplay between Namibian culture and an expanding media presence. Qualitative 'grounded theory' fieldwork was undertaken for this enquiry (Charmaz 2006; Strauss & Corbin 1998; Glaser 1992). The procedure gives priority to qualitative accounts of people's involvements in and interpretations of social topics or themes through in-depth interviews. It was used to establish a body of information from actors which then contributed to the building of theoretical conceptualisations that condensed participant experiences of media. Grounded theory involved interrogative conversations with young men and women who provided information 'from the ground', that is, directly from personal experience, revealing specific interaction and meaningful engagement with media cultures. Matters of identity and identity transformation in Namibia's postcolonial situation were directly addressed through this methodology. It asked: are media changing local identities?

**1.2 Addressing issues of identity in Namibian society**

At the centre of this research stands the concept of identity: self-identity and social identity. Sociologists and media researchers have come to situate the active subject in their work, resulting in the incorporation of reflexive philosophies into research frames (Gauntlett 2008; Alexander 2006; Giddens 1991). In Western European and American societies the terminology of identity is well-entrenched within everyday culture. Since the early 1990s debates about identity have had a considerable impact on everyday life, well beyond the academic base of cultural, sociological and psychological studies from which it originated. Popular magazines and newspapers frequently discuss or refer to issues of identity, while the

response of the public has been to incorporate the term into popular cultural usage (Demerath & Lynch 2008; Hall 1992).

This interest in identity and identity change in the Namibian context should be explained, and recent historical background provided. In the 1990s, Namibia, like South Africa, experienced the end of apartheid and the emergence of new postcolonial realities and challenges. Apartheid had led to forced racial segregation of living spaces in towns and cities, homeland policies based on geographic racial exclusivity, unequal employment practices and social opportunity determined on racial lines, all of which influenced contemporary levels of poverty. Ethnic difference was politically and culturally 'managed' on a general level, if not with the same scrupulous organisation and attention to detail as in South Africa. Colonialism profoundly impacted on collective identities of race and class, directly reinforcing apartheid-conceived discourses of tradition and race, thereby creating hybridised identities that were recognised as 'traditional' rather than as a complex mix of colonial and pre-colonial cultural forms (Winterfeldt 2005; Du Pisani 2000).

After the 1990s, existing identities encountered the Namibian and South African late 'revolutions of modernity', as they have been described, which opened up Namibia and its South African neighbour to currents of globalisation and new possibilities for identity negotiation, of which cultural forces of media were a central part (Van Binsbergen & Van Dijk 2004). Identity has been described as a defining term of personality, affiliation and belonging that represents a marker for older individual and social identities, as well as for the emergence of new ones under conditions of global modernity (Castells 2004; Stets & Burke 2000). Identity can be collective or personal. The connection between institutions of the global mass media and identity constitution has frequently been suggested by media theory and media studies (McMillin 2007; Nuttall & Michael 2000; Appadurai 1996; McLuhan (1994 [1964]). However, Namibia has generated few studies on this so far.

Namibian identity appears to be transformational, giving rise to cultural conflicts over what it means to be 'Namibian'. Previous identities shaped by Namibia's former traditions and its colonial past, as well as post-independence nation-building strategies around national identity, are being challenged by the promise of cosmopolitan identifications (Held 2010). Such options are largely on offer from the global outside, and stem from the meaning and symbols of a growing universal media presence.

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Young Namibians were chosen as prime research participants because their lives are currently closer in symmetry with these processes than older citizens. How are youth responding to and interpreting these outside flows of information and values? In what ways are their bodies and minds, in McMillin's (2009) conception, being shaped by cultural globalisation? In another sense, what degrees of critical resistance do they show to media flows experienced; how are they contributing to cultural facets of globalisation as active consumers?

### 1.2.1 Namibian newspapers and the rationale for researching identity

The Windhoek research was stimulated by an article on identity in *The Weekender* section of *The Namibian*, a popular national newspaper (*The Namibian*, 5 October 2007). Young people in Windhoek were asked in street interviews what identity meant to them. All said that they had a reasonable understanding of it and that it was important for reasons ranging from the personal to ethnic or national affiliation. Andrew stated: "Knowing what identity is, is needed because it tells you the sort of guy you are and what makes you different. It's sort of a problem not knowing about this. You don't know your culture." Being 'Namibian' was important to most interviewed, although a few stated ethnicity to be pivotal: Evaristus said: "I know that I'm Namibian, but being Owambo is important. I need to be around people like me rather than those other ones, even though they're Namibian". A minority added that support of political parties was central to their identity, while others said it was their Christian religion. A majority expressed a sense of individual or personal identity through interest in local and global fashion, music and media celebrities. Martha said

> I like to look good and dress up. Fashion is a lot of fun when I can afford it. I get ideas of how to look from friends and music videos and television. My friends expect us to look good, so I suppose that is my identity. Magazines and television and movies show interesting things; we watch those a lot to keep up with things that interest us.

A Rastafarian said that his identity was shaped by reggae music, another interviewee said his was shaped by black American hip-hop culture; both had the associated fashion imagery. Several females stated that celebrity media role models interested them, and that their individual identities were influenced by stars of African-American music and film. Many referred to media and identity: an explicit assumption of the article was that media are a chief force in the construction of identity through film, television and music, through the strong connection that young people have with media.

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Snap journalistic surveys written to capture instant conditions of identity are not scientific, but they are indicators of what might be happening with media and identity in Windhoek given the low density of academic studies. Kabongo (2007) partly deploys identity in relation to television soap operas and national identity, while Keulder (2006) implies it in measuring political identity and consciousness. However, it was decided that these studies lacked detailed analysis of media and identity negotiation, and matters of globalisation tended to be largely ignored.

The research investigated the current positioning of mass media in the lifestyles and identity negotiations of young adults aged between 18 and 26 years in Windhoek. It asks how they engage with media in relation to audio-visual forms (film, television, radio and music), print media (newspapers and magazines), and the Internet (new media, including social networks). Taking into account globalisation and postcolonial processes of change in Namibia, it tries to discover how influential media have become as a source for the maintenance and construction of social and individual identities, and of actors' lifestyle assemblies. By adopting such a scope, the research seeks to establish actors' views of the opportunities of media, and to capture the degree of their reflexive, or unreflexive, immersion in postcolonial, post-apartheid media worlds.

While this research does not adopt postcolonial theory, it utilises its key ideas, in particular recognition of the deep relevance of former colonial cultural experiences for understanding contemporary contexts, and its emphasis on cultural 'difference' and potential resistance to cultural incursion. These are seen in this research as vital for conceptualising the reception and responses to media in relation to identity and culture in Namibian society. It raises the following research questions: do Namibians defend the 'difference' of their own cultures (national or ethnic) against the cosmopolitanism of international media experienced? Or do they embrace and utilise the novelty and opportunity global media offer?

## 1.3 Contextualising the study

To establish the background of this research, this section will discuss the historical identity shifts that have taken place in the cultural landscapes of Namibia, and the profound impact of external influences before and during colonialism, through to the present. Postcolonial theory has argued that understanding societies like Namibia requires recognition of the ways colonialism shaped their cultural terrain, and disadvantaged their current position in a

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globalised world in the sense of marginality and unequal power relations (Appadurai 1996; Mongia 1996; Bhabha 1994).

Melber (2000:17) has argued that it is difficult to explain 'Namibian'[2] society and culture without reference to such exogenous forces. The country was shaped by the outer world before colonialism, and fundamentally during colonialism through the side-lining of the traditional economy by the contract labour system, and generally by capitalist economic labour relations and racial management (Winterfeldt 2005:50). Contacts with Western economic and cultural forces had a profound impact on the identities and material lives of 'Namibians'. Ethnic identity experienced manipulation and rewriting under these conditions.

A clarification of the terms 'ethnic' and 'ethnicity' is needed. These are closely connected to race which in recent southern African history is argued to have had a more profound impact than class (Manganyi 1991). Defining ethnicity can be highly contentious, but at a minimal level it is said to indicate a collective awareness of shared cultural space, values and lifestyle. Fearon and Laitin's (2000:9) definition rests on three positions: collective lineal descent (familial, clan and tribe); conceptual autonomy (in relation to discourse and culture); and a common history, while they add that "it is an empirical fact that ethnic groups understand themselves through contrasts with other ethnic groups". Modood and Berthoud (1997:10) extend this to include notions of identity and power, explaining ethnicity as

> a community whose heritage offers important characteristics in common between its members and which makes them distinct from other communities. There is a boundary, which separates 'us' from 'them', and the distinction would probably be recognised on both sides of that boundary. Ethnicity is a multi-faceted phenomenon based on physical appearance, subjective identification, cultural and religious affiliation, stereotyping, and social exclusion.

In this sense, Gabriel (1998) has referred to ethnicity as a form of cultural homogeneity distinct from that of 'others', although this need not be small-scale social solidarity. Smith (2008) argues that nations and national identity often coincide with large-scale ethnic and cultural exclusivity out of which nations emerged. Green (2004) has, however, claimed that scholars have been analytically weak in discussing and explaining the convergence of ethnicity with national identity, especially when nations diversify beyond initial origins to include 'other' ethnicities. Matters of unequal rights and discrimination arise at such

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[2] This is cautiously in 'denial quotations' due to the absence before 1990 of a formally-constituted nation-state called 'Namibia'. The country only came into being in March 1990. For convenience, the pre-independence Namibian territory is referred to as 'Namibia' and its people as 'Namibians'.

junctures. The issue of race and ethnicity as social exclusion and marginalisation is significant for the historical evolution of Namibian society.

Wallerstein (1987:275) has argued for a firmly grounded constructionist conception of ethnicity, stating that

> ethnicity must be viewed as a plastic and malleable social construction, deriving its meanings from the particular situations of those who invoke it. Ethnicity has no essence or centre, no underlying features or common denominator.

In other words, it is created out of explicit socio-cultural contexts which themselves require specific study to determine how ethnicity operates. This is undertaken below for socio-historical constructions of ethnicity and identity in Namibia. The intention of this research is not to naturalise ethnicity or race, but to signify the presence of constructed categories that are time and place-specific. Terms such as 'whiteness', denoting privileged and former dominant identities, 'black' and 'coloured', suggesting less favoured ethnic typologies, are social not natural categorisations, and so used conditionally throughout the research.[3]

Ethnicity may be defined by reference to access to or denial of certain types of social, economic or cultural capitals (Bourdieu 1979). In media studies, this would link ethnicity to possible types of cultural or informational exclusion, for example, from media worlds enjoyed by others, so representing what has been called the 'digital divide' (Goggin 2006). The basis for such exclusion may however be grounded in class rather than just ethnicity.

*1.3.1 Colonial interventions into identity*

This section will survey the shifting character of Namibian identity in relation to historical cultural influences and intervening power relations. It will provide the background to the emergence of current identity positions that may now be about to transform in the face of mediated cultural change.

Namibia was a discrete territory by 1800, sandwiched between the Orange River in the south and the Kunene River in the north, recognised by Cape traders, missionaries and explorers but not yet bearing the name Namibia (Melber 2000; Lau 1994). From this time, trade routes were established across its territory from the Portuguese colony of Angola to the border of Cape Colony. Contact with the latter made the greater impression on economy and society. Lau (1994) argues that the impact of trade imprinted itself on the identities of Namibia's

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[3] These racial constructions are discussed later in the chapter.

several ethnic societies during the 1800s; chiefly affected were the Nama and Herero peoples, being exposed to their first experience of Western proto-consumer culture. Merchant adventurers arrived with goods such as coffee, tea, tobacco, clothing, guns and alcohol, all of which rapidly became normal tradable commodities exchanged for cattle, and having a profound effect on the society (Lau 1994:147).

It has been argued that these proto-capitalist relations altered traditional identities some years prior to colonialism, bringing material and symbolic changes to culture and lifestyle (Winterfeldt 2005; Hartman 2004). Early media in the form of photography provided generic depictions of the country at this time. Photographic archives reveal the degree to which Western or Cape styles of clothing became firmly established among the dominant Nama and Herero ethnic communities of the central and southern areas of Namibia.[4] Traditional attire had disappeared among leaders and prominent figures in many areas on the eve of colonialism (1884). Economic and cultural change had occurred in just sixty years, profoundly changing identity, at least at the middle and upper social levels (Hartman 2004; Bollig 1998).

Hartman (2004) argues that photographs taken before and during colonialism contributed to consolidating subject identities and marginal social status. Colonial photography was used to "project a South African colonial modernity and, frequently and deliberately, indigenous Namibian pre-modernity or even primitivity" (2004:3). Photographs were racially 'representational' in Hall's (1997) sense, in constructing identity in line with colonial thinking around ideologies of civilisation and subordination, even 'inferior' identity. They aided in formulating and constituting in memory iconic and ideological views of Namibian ethnicity and culture. Mofokeng (1996) has said that ethnographic photography played a significant part in the subjection of African populations to imperial power, imposing enduring images and 'authoritative' meaning independent of the subjects in front of the camera. Open-ended readings of images taken were not an option and resulted in "lineaments of a colonised 'nation' crystallising into racial, ethnic and gendered categories" (Hartman 2004:7).

The photographic medium reflected one side of the thinking of the colony: respect for the image of the essentially 'unspoilt' native, defined as the "least urbanised, most primitive,

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[4] Hartman (2004) states that the first photograph taken in Namibia seems to have been in 1861. Early photographic 'identities' are divided between 'traditional' and 'modern' subjects who dress the same as traders or missionaries. It is obligatory for a chief or clan leader to look 'Western'. Poorer people normally appear in 'traditional' dress, although it is inconceivable that they saw themselves in this way: being traditional is itself an identity imposition.

most different" (Hartman 2004:7). Yet this contradicted the colony's official side, that of colonialism's alleged 'civilising' mission which claimed to put development and modern identity first. Colonial state policies established and enforced exclusive ethnic territories, imposing apartness of Namibian peoples into 'pure' types, while at the same time attempting to coerce them into waged proletarian identities. Berger and Luckmann (1966) have argued that definitions of social reality tend to reflect the preferred meaning of more powerful actors, and colonial photography appears to confirm this.

### 1.3.2. Proletarianised and subject identities

To be clear on the specific colonialisms experienced: Namibia's first period of colonial domination was under Germany (1886-1915), and its second era as a South African-British satellite (1915-1990) followed the invasion of the German colony in the First World War. The voracious demand for labour on farms and in mining was a feature of Namibian colonial policy. The German era never achieved proletarianisation of the population, although it laid the groundwork in marginalising the pre-1915 traditional pastoral economy (Melber 2000; Emmett 1999). Legislation forbade land and cattle ownership for blacks, and vagrancy laws were used to force people into employment. This was not without political resistance, as shown by the major Herero and Nama risings of 1904-7 which resulted in substantial loss of life.[5]

Control laws instituted by the colonial state reflect what Giddens (1985:181) has called 'internal pacification' whereby modern states seek administrative regulation of peoples through establishing a monopoly of violence. The process involves a diminution of freedom and corresponding identity imposition (Fox 2004). Namibian pacification helped enforce a transition from ethnic based identities to subject or proletarian identities, although this was only fully constituted during South African rule after 1915 which solved the old labour shortage problem. The Owambo territories in the north were not integrated into the colony until the late 1920s,[6] but its peoples were quickly introduced to contract labour, becoming migrant wage workers alongside other ethnicities sent to work in other parts of Namibia and

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[5] Pakenham (1992) says that more than 80,000 Namibians died in the rebellions. This represented two-thirds of the Herero, and over half of the Nama. Just a few hundred German troops and civilians were recorded as having been killed.
[6] 'Owamboland' was never a formal part of the German colony.

South Africa.[7] In this way, Namibian peoples were exposed to full-blown capitalist modernity for the first time, and consumerist dependency entrenched through the need to purchase food and clothing due to the decline of the traditional economy (Emmett 1999:58). Its chief repercussion was the subversion of traditional forms of identity and the establishment of further identifications of the 'modern'.

Modernity meant intense levels of supervision and submission to the needs of production, alongside a weakening of rural identity as workers suffered long absences from home. Exposure for the first time to urban centres meant new cultural experiences: the impact on former traditions resulting in hybridised identities is argued to have been profound (Winterfeldt 2005:233). Lifestyles changed radically in terms of family life as fathers were frequently absent, and new responsibilities were thrust upon women who became dependent on remittances sent by male partners (Hishongwa 1994). The loss of the traditional family has been argued to have shaped identity in relation to emergent modern sexual cultures (Fox 2005b). By the 1930s more than a third of families in Owamboland were one-parent, with males being absent. This resulted in men often having more than one family through other liaisons (Siiskonen 1998:234).

Colonial socio-economic policies inadvertently created hybrid cultural and symbolic fusions of traditional and modern which has continued into independence. Hybridity[8] is argued to be a defining condition of former colonies in the present global world, being uncomfortable fusions of colonial/non-colonial or local/global aspects of culture (Bhabha 1994). This has been said to create a problematic for postcolonial conservatives seeking to revive 'pure' past cultures in an independent Namibia (Winterfeldt 2005; Giddens 1996).

### 1.3.3 Alterity and San 'captive' identity

Certain groups during colonialism were objects of special attention. In the case of the Namibian Bushman or San, Suzman (2000) and Gordon (1992) have argued that in both colonial and contemporary Namibia they had an identity discourse imposed on them that profoundly impacted on socio-economic status. Gordon shows that colonial governments at first attempted to 'tame' this ethnic group for labour purposes, but later came to regard their capacity for 'civilisation' and 'domesticity' as inherently limited. The 'taming' policy was

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[7] The contract labour system involved workers signing work contracts of six months to three years in return for a fixed wage. A colonial state labour hire company was charged with acquiring labour and transporting it where it was needed. It was a male-only system, and families could not accompany the labourer (Hishongwa 1994).

[8] Theories of hybridity are discussed in Chapter 2.

replaced by official protection to ensure their unique, primitive 'purity'. Bushman reserves were set up from the 1940s ostensibly for the practice of traditional lifestyles unpolluted by modernity, but which quickly became objects of intense curiosity for anthropologists. Suzman (2000) states that this scrutiny conferred a negative status that has transformed their image and right to development. He calls this alteration of identity from the outside 'alterity', which assumes the power to impose collective definition (Suzman 2005).

While all non-white groups suffered alterity to varying degrees, the San were particular targets. After independence, they remain the poorest, lowest status group in the country, relegated to an underclass position in contemporary Namibian society. Suzman says that the Omaheke San "consider themselves as captives of others' images of them … captives to a theoretical framework which hinges on the idea that hunter-gathers should be understood in terms different to others" (Suzman 2002:168). Postcolonial identities tend to reflect other negative positions and lifestyles in current-day Namibia: the San, like the Himba of Opuwa, have become objects of global tourist pilgrimages, coming to represent a 'human zoo' of ethnicity.

*1.3.4 Rising resistance identities*

Emmett (1999) argues that these 'subject' identities, established through one hundred years of colonial suppression, gradually gave way to counter or resistance identities of the type that Castells (2004) has written about. One catalyst for this shift was the arrival of Garveyism: an external ideology of 'negro improvement' developed by a Jamaican, Marcus Garvey, who had previously agitated successfully among black Americans in the United States. These ideas came to Namibia via West Indian immigrants living in the port of Lüderitz who established a Garveyist association in 1921 (Emmett 1999:142). Garveyism had powerful liberationist combined with millenarian religious beliefs based on Christ's second coming, and the establishment of the idea of 'perfect freedom', in this case freedom from colonialism. This served to "boost the morale of the colonised" (1999:149).

While Garveyism was ultimately suppressed, Emmett argues that it was instrumental in generating trade union consciousness among contract labourers leading to the proliferation of trade unions which at first operated underground, but were later grudgingly recognised by employers. Trade unions became the basis for a growing political identity and consciousness among black leaders that was to result in the formation of opposition parties and the launch of armed resistance in 1966.

This crucial identity shift closely mirrors Bhabha's (1994) idea of transgressive agency, whereby the marginalised 'other' (the colonial subject) subverts formerly stable, objectively imposed identity, and transforms and expropriates it to the detriment of the colonial authority that previously shaped and regulated it. This characterises a (Bhabha 1994:193)

> disjunctive present of utterance [that] allows the articulation of subaltern agency to emerge as relocation and reinscription. In the seizure of the sign ... there is a contestation of the given symbols of authority that shift the terrain of antagonisms.

Namibian colonial identity experienced a decisive shift which, in Bhabha's conception, meant a historical rejection of voicelessness and exclusion from the subaltern's own society and culture.

The term subaltern has been used to describe the excluded 'other' in colonial or postcolonial contexts, being defined as "everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism" (Spivak cited in De Kock 1992:31), meaning that it is a concept describing cultural exclusion. Postcolonial writers argue that subaltern status or identities survive the demise of imperial systems and the departure of the colonisers and continue into the present, and that postcolonial nations struggle for representation in global consumerism and mediated culture (Ashcroft 2001:13). In this sense, postcolonial theory around identity and media emphasises the linguistic and textual debates taking place within the social spaces of reception between subaltern and hegemonic positions. This has been described as a discursive struggle between structure and agency (McMillin 2009:30), representing a key focus in this media and identity research around actors' reactions to or acceptance of global media culture in their postcolonial, post-independence world.

Namibian independence opened up the country to political and cultural change which had been retarded by over a century of colonial domination. Independence took place as transformations were underway in the global system representing economic and cultural shifts that had direct consequences for issues of identity. The collapse of communism in the Soviet Block occurred the same year (1990), which although political in character was driven by the failure of the socialist planned economy to deliver standards of living equivalent to those of the Western countries (Bauman 1992). In the West, a revolution was underway that both fed into and fed off an increasing individualistic discourse among citizens, closely linked with patterns of 'self-actualisation', consumption and identity (Bauman 2001; Giddens

1991). Self-identity has been said to have strengthened in relation to a weakening of social or collective identity.[9]

Media institutions contributed to these changes by conveying information and ontological symbols through advertising and entertainment. It has been argued that as a result of these processes, consumers became capable of choosing their own identity constructions (Tomlinson 1999; Featherstone 1997; Appadurai 1996). Economic and cultural change represented a retreat from collective national and political to more personal and private identifications.

At independence, Namibia's contact with these trends was limited, although it gradually became exposed as its commodity markets and media opened up to global processes (Tyson 2008; Fox 2005a). Commodification and rapid media growth were underway more quickly in South Africa (Tomaselli 1998), including opportunities for new lifestyle and identity constructions distinct from the previous control or influence of the apartheid state. It has been argued that this has resulted in the emergence of 'identity shifts' and identity politics (Wasserman & Jacobs 2003; Bekker & Prinsloo 1999). Despite the gap in degrees of change between the two countries, Namibia is experiencing social shifts in its third decade, although information on what precisely is happening is sparse in academic terms. The research problematic is to analyse and conceptualise the character of changing identities and lifestyle in relation to these globalising shifts within which the institutions of the media arguably play a key role.

## 1.4 Evolution of Namibian media

This section will focus directly on historical media developments and goes on to establish the present institutional character of the media terrain in Namibia. The influence of exogenous social and political forces on Namibian society and culture, as mentioned by Melber (2000), can be argued to include media communications whose development initially owed their introduction to colonial administration. The laying of a telecommunications sea cable between Mossamedes in Angola and Cape Town by the Eastern and South African Telegraph Company in 1899 can be said to be the beginning of Namibia's media communication system (Viall 2005). A branch line along the Atlantic coastline ran to Swakopmund where the first telephone links were established simultaneously with Walvis Bay. Lines were extended into

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[9] Identity theory is looked at in detail in the next chapter.

the interior in following years, creating communications with Windhoek and other towns. Telegraph links with Germany came in 1911 and with the rest of Europe by the 1920s. By 1949, much of the country was connected, both internally and internationally. The only other significant media in the early years were newspapers. Most towns had either weekly or, in the case of Windhoek, daily newspapers from the 1920s (Viall 2005).

*1.4.1 Colonialism and the control of television*

This section indicates factors explaining the previous retardation of media growth in the region which, in the case of Namibia, took more than a decade to reverse after the country gained its independence. Namibian media such as television and radio were inextricably tied to developments in South Africa where media were beset by delay and censorship during the colonial and liberation eras (Nixon 1995). Krabill (2010:47) shows that between 1950 and 1990 over 100 laws were passed controlling media across the country and in its dependencies, including Namibia. After the South African introduction of radio in 1926 (much delayed in Namibia), the medium was censored from the 1950s as sets were manufactured to receive only state-approved stations (de Beer 1998). Radio came to Namibia in 1949 under the auspices of the South West African Broadcasting Corporation (SWABC) (Lash 1998).

Television, a major medium in the rest of the globe from 1960, was effectively banned until 1976 in South Africa, arriving in 1981 in Namibia (Lush 1998). These were among the last countries in the world to establish the medium.[10] Bans were due to concern about potential dependence on American programming resulting from an absence or weakness of local production. The authorities feared that the liberal content of American programmes would present the 'wrong' values and identity-models to local black populations (Nixon 1995).

After its launch, American programmes were cautiously aired in Namibia and South Africa. Bill Cosby, an American comedian and activist for black rights in his own country, became an instant success. As Nelson Mandela's image was banned, Cosby became the most familiar black face by the 1980s, being popular mainly with white audiences who could afford television receivers (Krabill 2010). Krabill argues this was a significant factor in changing racial attitudes and discourses of 'whiteness' in the country, and preparing the ground for political change (Krabill 2010:105-6). This was an indication that South African television

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[10] By comparison Kenya, classified as a low income nation, had introduced television in 1961.

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was making itself felt in the national consciousness in ways that were new, and represented a repositioning of the media for the role it would play in post-apartheid lifestyles and identities after 1994. Krabill (2010:163) says that

> close analysis of the communicative space created by television in late apartheid – and particularly the counterintuitive dynamics made possible within that space – raises the question: what kinds of communicative spaces are being generated through social engagement with other media in other times and in other places?

This is precisely the question applicable to this contemporary Windhoek research: what kind of mediated spaces, but specifically cultures, are being shaped through local and global media such as television and the Internet?

*1.4.2 Early dominant media: Radio*

After independence, media spaces in Namibia opened up significantly, but at first mass media had little significant institutional role in culture and society. Namibian television had no productions of its own, being reliant on videos which were flown up from South Africa (Tyson 2008). Media access was uneven, racialised and skewed. In the first decade, only radio had a significant multi-ethnic presence, although in 1990 there were barely 150,000 radio receivers in a country of one million people (Lush 1998). By 2001, radio remained widely-accessed according to the Preliminary Report of the Namibia Household Income and Expenditure Survey (NHIES) 2003/4 (Government of the Republic of Namibia 2006). Nationally, only 15.4% of households did not use radio, while 84.6% had either direct ownership of receivers or access by visiting neighbour's homes or through collective listening in bars or public places.

This suggests the solid entrenchment of the country's oldest broadcast media form. The Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) currently transmits in six national languages on its radio wavelengths, whereas, English, the official language, dominates television transmission policy (Tyson 2008; Larsen 2007). Commercial radio has seen a renaissance of popularity since independence, and seems in danger of leaving NBC radio behind. There were just two private stations in the 1990s; currently there are eight, with five additional community stations (Larsen 2007:108). Under 26 year-olds are drawn to these due to the heavy content of Western and African popular music. Commercial radio, in line with television, appears to be an important reference for youth culture relative to an interest in personal image, lifestyle and identity formation (Najjuuko 2006; Odada 2004).

*1.4.3 Rising presence of free and pay television*

By 2001, ten years after SWABC was replaced by NBC, television had reached a greater proportion of the population: in 1993, 23% of households had access; by 1996 this had risen to 30% (United Nations Development Programme 2000:91). In 2003, 39.4% owned or had access to television (Government of the Republic of Namibia 2006). Urban households had greater access/ownership than rural: 56.7% owned their televisions, while 13.7% had access, exposing 70.4% to the medium. The regions with the highest ownership/access were Khomas, where Windhoek is located, (69.4%) and Erongo, which includes the affluent coastal towns (74.5%).

Namibia remains divided between commercially 'free' media, and 'pay' media, which neatly cut the population in two in terms of access on socio-economic grounds. Only radio and state television are 'free', despite requiring the purchase of a television license, unaffordable for many (Lush 1998). Poorer people bypass this obstacle by choosing not to pay the fee in the face of ineffective legal monitoring (*The Namibian* 12 May 2010). In 2003, the free-to-air One Africa television was launched proving immediately popular because of its strong entertainment orientation showing Western and regional soap operas, television series, news and sport. The public relations officer at One Africa claimed that nearly 60% of Namibians watched, while in Windhoek and similar towns it was closer to 80% (personal communication, 14 July 2010). The state broadcaster NBC had been disadvantaged in 2002 by the Founding President Sam Nujoma's decision to force the station to cut American and European content from the airwaves due to too much 'criminal crap' (Nujoma's words, *The Namibian,* 4 October 2002) referring to unwanted foreign influence, including alleged explicit depiction of sex and violence. The official version for the sudden change announced by government was that NBC was meant to be 'educational' and they were breaching this remit (*The Namibian*, 7 October 2002). In consequence, news, local documentaries, government information and televised proceedings of parliament dominated programming, in addition to repeats. This can be interpreted as one of the first direct postcolonial conservative challenges to cultural globalisation.

The Namibian state's efforts to control or challenge global media has been an on-going struggle. Since 2007, competition from One Africa has forced a rethink of NBC's anti-entertainment/pro-education policy. Soap operas from Brazil (dubbed into American-English) and South Africa, dominate both stations but One Africa retains a much stronger 'global'

component of American films and television. MultiChoice Namibia or Digital Satellite Television (DSTV) by contrast, a major Namibian media player, is a service for the affluent, offering international content across a broad range of channels. It is a South African regional subscription broadcaster and claims to reach 30% of Namibians, but as many as 50% of Windhoekers (phone interview with MultiChoice press officer, 21 July 2010).

From a postcolonial perspective, McMillin (2007:103) has said of inflows of media culture brought by satellite broadcasting that

> national governments are fearful of the implications of this flow for national identity and cultural integrity. Loss of control over the definitions and circulation of national culture translates into the loss of power and control over national boundaries – a reason for hegemonic anxiety.

Perhaps the Namibian state has solved this anxiety: Kalahari Holdings, the business arm of the government ruling party (SWAPO), owns a 51% controlling stake in MultiChoice (Larsen 2007) who are required to include NBC as part of its right to transmit in Namibia.[11] American Hollywood productions make up a majority of programmes on its channels, suggesting this business relationship has led to collusion to exclude rather than a propensity to transmit local production content.

There is little other national competition. Despite the underdevelopment of indigenous Namibian productions, television culture tends to be well-established, but Tyson (2008) has pointed to the overwhelming South African ownership of Namibian media beyond the state NBC. He has called this the 'new colonialism' and argues that there is little space for Namibian stories, experiences and representations in the face of global products (2008:11). The media or cultural imperialism thesis that this argument implies is an aspect that this research investigation.

The growth of television has given Namibians the opportunity to consume related media such as cinema through video-cassette recorders or DVD players. This allows access to popular films in the absence of cinemas, or international television products.

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[11] MultiChoice also agrees to block the three state channels of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), a source of contention for some audiences who find news and stories from South Africa difficult to access. However, people can gain a route to these with free-to-air decoders without the need of a subscription (Tyson 2008).

*1.4.4 Accessing popular cinema*

Cinema films, mainly from the United States, are widely consumed although few see them in theatres. Cinema has been offering popular entertainment for considerably longer than television in Namibia. The National Archive of Namibia possesses files of English, German and Afrikaans newspapers carrying advertisements for cinema outlets as early as 1928. By 1940, there seem to have been eight cinemas in the country, more than now (Viall 2005). Windhoek saw two of its surviving three cinemas close between 1990 and 1995 and currently there is one five-screen complex in the city run by the South African company, Ster Kinekor, showing chiefly Hollywood mainstream films chosen to appeal to young audiences. In north Namibia from 2001-2006 Ondangwa's Cinema Paradiso showed international films to a local black public. Its closure may indicate a lack of cinematic culture in the region; that films were only in English in an area where mainly Oshiwambo is spoken may have been a factor. Just three other cinemas exist in Namibia: two at Swakopmund and one in Walvis Bay; thus, there were only four in the country in 2012.

Namibian film and television production is restricted due to lack of professional film-making skills and financial support, although this is improving. No statistics are available on annual public cinema visits, although one youth study revealed a majority (70%) never having visited a cinema (Fox 2005a). It does not follow that people have no access to movies as recent films are available to hire throughout the country: there were nearly 40 video hire outlets in Windhoek in 2012. One Africa television shows several Western films each week. This represents a major entrée into Hollywood and other film cultures.

*1.4.5 Virtual connections: Rise of the Internet*

The Internet has become significant in little more than ten years with access growing exponentially in less than half that time through media convergence trends. Statistics tend to be contradictory. The public relations officer at Telecom Namibia estimated that more than 15% of the population had an Internet connection (personal communication, 20 September 2011), higher than the African average of 3% (Economic & Social Science Research Council 2008). Namib Net was the first service provider in 1995 followed by MWeb (MultiChoice-owned) in 1999. However, the Internet remained a minority medium well into the 2000s. From less than 1% of Namibians connected in 1999, there are now estimated to be 148,414 Internet users as at 31 December 2011, or 6.9% of the population (www.internetworldstats.com). Access is held back by high prices for bandwidth, but this is

projected to change when Namibia's first direct submarine cable link with the rest of the world is operationalised.[12] Prices are forecast to fall thereafter (Totel 2010). Internet use tends to be urban-based, and is likely to be high in Windhoek.

The Internet and cell phones are experiencing a media convergence, a recent process where technological change concentrates different media into fewer spaces (Kung, Picard & Towse 2008; Jenkins 2006). From just 20,000 cell phone users in 1998, there were over 1 million in 2008 (Economy Watch 2010). Mobile telephony results in a revolution in personal media communications whereby multi-tasking phones allow for broad communication potential. Specific uses of the Internet in Namibia have received little attention. However, a pilot survey (Fox 2010) at the University of Namibia (UNAM) revealed a widespread interest among students in having a Facebook account. Knowledge of YouTube, Twitter and other social network sites was high, and there was a general fascination with the options that the Internet provided such as music downloads and access to news and entertainment, including music and film downloads (Fox 2010). Those interviewed regarded cell phones and 3G devices as a more desirable means of accessing the Internet than a computer.

*1.4.6 Inequality of media access*

Despite improvements, Namibians continue to have uneven access to most forms of media. Considerable degrees of inequality exclude many from media transformations, particularly the Internet. This has been called the digital divide (Goggin 2006). In 2011, despite being a middle income nation, gross per capita income averaged US$6,206, and 52% of people survived on less than US$2 per day. High inequality measures are reflected in the richest 20% of the population controlling 78.7% of all income and expenditure, the poorest 20% having access to just 1.4% (United Nations Development Programme 2011).

Postcolonial dynamics reveal structural poverty reinforced by new degrees of class formation favouring new (and old) elites that skew consumption on all levels, restricting material and symbolic novelty to narrow population sections (Winterfeldt 2005). Rural communities are characterised by both poverty and limited media access to a vastly greater degree than towns (Government of the Republic of Namibia 2005). This is a justification for confining media research in relation to lifestyle and identity within an urban setting like Windhoek.

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[12] 2011 or 2012. Internet connections in the country are indirect, either via South Africa or Botswana which adds to usage cost.

**1.5. Media studies in Namibia**

This section surveys current studies that relate to Namibian media and identity. While media studies are not common in Namibia, research has partially touched on themes of identity, reflexivity and lifestyle. Keulder (2006) attempted to measure political consciousness among Windhoek students. He tried to determine how far media are used to obtain political and civic knowledge, further aiming to capture a sense of their political identities. He states (Keulder 2006:3):

> we lack an understanding of how [Namibian] citizens use the media, and what the cognitive outcomes from their interaction with the media are.

In terms of newspapers, 57.5% preferred social interest stories to political news; whereas 44.9% were interested in film, music and local culture. Keulder showed 64.1% watching television daily, 25% watching between four to six days a week; with only 1% having never watched. Measuring an interest in television news, 30% watched NBC, followed by CNN (on DSTV) at 21%. Interest in international news was high at 49.3%, but those preferring news programmes chose Namibian over foreign news (69%). Many respondents commented that they did not watch Namibian news because they thought news programmes poor. By comparison, Tyson has pointed to the overly-official state content of the NBC news, being considered by the public as dull and with limited information and explanation of stories, and poor reporting (*The Namibia*, 2 June 2006). Namibian content dominates with only one or two brief syndicated international stories tagged on at the end.

Keulder's study concludes that Namibian youth tend to be apolitical, confirming an Afrobarometer survey on democracy and civil society (2008). Young adults tended to prefer entertainment over news or other political media content, revealing limited political identity.

*1.5.1 National identity in media*

Kabongo's (2007) study of Namibian and South African television soap operas found a nationalist political sub-text. Popular soap operas such as *Generations* and *Egoli* frequently attempt to bridge the social gap between ethnicities to promote social integration and nation building in post-apartheid society. White and black characters and people of varying ethnic backgrounds co-mix within mutual friendship networks in the stories: in the real world they would not meet in similar social settings. Kabongo calls soap operas 'integrative

programmes': racial themes are excluded and conflicts are between personalities rather than ethnicities (Kabongo 2007:14).

In Namibian interviews, young people were more aware of this sub-text, more tolerant of ethnic difference, and more favourable to national identity than older people. The conscious attempt to promote or sustain national identity and culture through media is seen as a common state strategy in postcolonial nations which broadcasters feel obliged to support (McMillin 2007; Sreberny 2000). Media discourses may be used for other purposes, such as cultural patrimony, or to hide social difference and inequality in the service of 'national unity'. McMillin (2007:77-8) has argued that

> national media systems serve as vehicles for the dissemination of ideologies of power to establish and maintain relations of domination, and radio and television act as co-conspirators in establishing and sustaining the dominant codes of nation.

Frequent intervention by the Namibian state into the activities of private and public media bodies has revealed attempts to impose ideological official 'codes' on the media; although in the case of Kabongo's soap opera study, producers appeared to independently favour nation-building entertainment. Younger viewers were often aware of and appreciated this strategy as positive.

*1.5.2 Media discourse and power*

Matters of power will be directly addressed throughout this research. An investigative interest will be in how media consumers experience power, whether they are aware of its presence in mediated symbols and messages, and how they respond. How media may be subverted and expropriated by actors is also centrally incorporated into the study.

Media can be said to have power in its own right, in their control of symbols and ownership of the means of corporate communication. This has a bearing on issues of media responsibility which might be ignored in the pursuit of ratings, circulation and profit. Namibian media research (Kabongo 2007; Fox 2005a; Odada 2004) has emphasised the danger of the transmission of 'wrong' rather than positive values in relation to Namibian media; for example, there has been concern about violence in cinema and television entertainment. The Legal Assistance Centre in Windhoek (2000) reported significant levels of simulated violence in television programming. Over a period of one month, 24 murders, 30 violent assaults and 49 sexual assaults against women were recorded on NBC. It was

estimated that annually, children and adults were exposed to 288 murders and 2600 violent assaults. A similar survey by Fox (2005a) found that young people were heavily drawn to Hollywood action movies containing a high degree of simulated violence. These studies may have contributed to the decision of the government in 2002 to restrict the NBC to mainly local programming, resulting in the almost complete removal of American and European popular entertainment from 2003.

There appears to be a distinct relationship underway in Namibia between young people and the media in terms of lifestyle and identity patterns. Entertainment, social networking and information form chief markers here, potentially reshaping personal and social identities and youth culture. Youth culture has been said to transcend local/national identities and exhibit distinct global characteristics (Hebdige 1993). However, Namibian identity constructions were more likely to have their own 'glocal' characteristics that absorb both global and national factors to form a hybrid.[13] In intergenerational terms, this may result in tensions as conservative or traditionalist parent cultures resent 'alien' adolescent incursions. This is possible where the source of youth culture and values is visibly perceived to come from outside orthodox African contexts.

Using Giddens's terminology, media institutions may be viewed as disembedding forces, or in Appadurai's terminology, as deterritorialising (Giddens 2000; Appadurai 1996). Namibians increasingly utilise global media in preference to local media as a lifestyle and identity resource, often in ways that transcend their immediate Namibian-African cultural habitus (Strelitz 2008; Bourgault 1999). This exposure has been interpreted as Western cultural imperialism, but may involve more complex consequences (Curran & Morley 2006). Media 'intrusion' can alternatively be seen to represent cosmopolitan opportunities, cultural substitutes and new lifestyle choices which individuals can instinctively expropriate (Fiske 1996). This research addresses issues of cultural intrusion, ideology and power, but also incorporation of media as a central force within actors' lifestyles actions, resulting in shifting culture and identity patterns in urban Namibia.

## 1.6 The character of the study

The background on Namibian media and identity constitutes the context of the study and a basis for exploring contemporary identity and media negotiations. Media growth, especially

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[13] The idea of the 'glocal' is explained by Tomlinson (1999) below.

recent Internet and new media developments, is opening up the country to a wide range of consumer, sociological and ontological lifestyle possibilities. Interview conversations with young Namibians within the urban setting of Windhoek are intended to provide information regarding the nature of these interactions. They will gauge degrees of reflexive manoeuvre and response to mediated power narratives, including participants' receptions of global culture. Defences of local identity and heritage will correspondingly be assessed.

Also investigated is how actors' media strategies seek out satisfying phenomenological positions which give preference to either local or global ontologies. As a third position, Tomlinson's term 'glocality' is a useful reference point, being when actors in global settings seek local meaning and identity in relation to the cultural forces of globalisation, resulting in a hybrid compromise (Tomlinson 1999:9). McMillin (2007:221) has called for specific empirical international media research into matters of hybrid media and identity, and ways in which actors in societies like Namibia re-negotiatiate and assimilate popular foreign cultures. This research frequently addresses hybridity and its conceptual derivative, glocality, in the context of actors' lifestyle and identity constructions. Hybridity is examined in Chapter 2.

The research field was the city of Windhoek where 62 participants between the ages of 18 and 26 years from a range of social backgrounds and residential areas were interviewed over a six month period. At first, socio-economically poorer youth were left out of the sample, but it became evident that almost all Windhoekers were to differing degrees of intensity and extensivity endeavouring to be part of the city's emerging media culture. Poorer individuals tended to provide surprising insights on media that would have been missed had they not been included. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. However, where anonymity was requested, this was fully respected and ensured franker and more in-depth discussion and subsequent information than would otherwise have been the case.

## 1.7 Outline of the chapters

The following chapters of the thesis are structured so as to indicate and discuss relevant literature, theoretical frameworks and methodology as a first stage, and to present the findings and analysis as a second stage. These are outlined and explained next.

Chapter 2: *Literature review and theoretical frame* gives an overview of the theoretical literature that guided planning, conceptualisation and research analysis. Terms that appeared to support the structure of the study such as identity and reflexivity, lifestyle and media, are

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investigated. A theoretical frame is established to organise these and other concepts and ideas deemed important for the research. Issues of power are also addressed in relation to globalisation and matters of hybridity and hybrid culture.

Chapter 3: *Methodology* surveys the differing paradigms of grounded theory, and justifies the choice of constructivist grounded theory due to its proximity to symbolic interactionism and distance from positivist orthodoxies. Its procedures, but also possible limitations, are discussed. The way in which the methodology was operationalised in the Windhoek setting is explained which includes sampling and interview matters, and how theoretical codes were created from participant accounts. It states that the research intends to create a new theory of media in Windhoek.

Chapter 4: *Mediated identity biographies in the Windhoek matrix* begins to present the main research findings. Childhood and present engagements with media are explained. The chapter gives a detailed picture of what is happening with media in terms of participant biographies and main media preferences. The first theoretical codes that emerged from the interviews are established.

Chapter 5: *Ontological orientations of media users and impacts on identity constructions* employs a phenomenological perspective suggested by the fieldwork information. It shows how encounters with global media raised anxiety concerns about cultural integrity and existential positioning of actors in the face of possible corrosive impacts of globalisation. It also reveals how new ontologies are sought which transcend dependence on local culture in the search for new identity and lifestyle opportunities. The chapter reveals the cultural fault lines between participants, and begins to suggest emergent cultural struggles.

Chapter 6: *Self-identities, the Internet and social networks* reveals the considerable, and recent, centring of the Internet in the lives of Windhoek participants. This is shown to be experienced by them as a novel medium. The issue of virtual connectivity through interactive media, particularly social network sites, is also explored in terms of how they inform new directions for youth lifestyle. The relevance of online interactive gameplay around new constructions of masculinity is also explored, as are positive and negative encounters with virtual strangers. Matters of gender, sexuality and the Web are examined. The Internet is positioned as a medium for identity change within growing cultural globalisation in Namibia.

Chapter 7: *Grounded narratives and institutional power: Lines of resistance and expropriation in local/global media* explores the narratives of power that were both recognised and unrecognised by Windhoek participants. It shows that they often reflexively glimpsed the presence of power discourses in local and global media, and the chapter conceptualises their different responses. It concludes by suggesting that Namibia is beginning to reveal lines of struggle and resistance over matters of culture and power in the face of globalisation. Three types of participant orientations to media power are theoretically established here.

Chapter 8: *Conclusion: A theory of mediated interaction in Windhoek* abstractly summarises the main findings of the research by establishing a general theory of the mediated cultural processes that were found. It unites the core theoretical codes established within the findings chapters. It then constitutes, presents and rationalises the emergent grounded theory of young adult identities, lifestyle and media in the Windhoek matrix.

# Chapter 2

# Literature Review and Theoretical Frame

## 2.1 Introducing the goals and theoretical frame

This chapter discusses theoretical ideas and themes relevant to the research, as suggested by the background study and the research goals. Relevant literature relating to these will be examined. A literature review provides perspectives and paradigms around media and identity for comparison and application to the Namibian research, shaping the design and direction of the study by providing theory and case analysis from other societies. Discussion of literature will be revisited during the interview findings to compare with the Windhoek setting to determine what is unique about media and identity in the Namibian context, or how it converges with trends or processes elsewhere. In accordance with Curran and Park's (2000) argument regarding the need to de-Westernise international media studies, literature will inform rather determine the Windhoek research, allowing it to 'speak for itself'. A theoretical frame will be established around the literature and research goals. The goals of the research are to investigate: *first*, if old[14] and new media are implicated in cultural shifts regarding ontological and social dimensions of lifestyle and identity. *Second*, to discover how Windhoek youth negotiate their consumption of local and global media. *Third*, to assess the limits of actors' reflexivities regarding media power narratives, particularly in relation to cultural globalisation potentially embodied therein. *Fourth,* to construct a dedicated theory of media, identity and lifestyle in Windhoek. A survey of literature suggested by these goals will be undertaken, and a working theory frame established to discipline and organise the chief conceptual ideas.

The idea of a theoretical frame was proposed by Blackwell (1954) as an essential methodological device for providing an operationalising theory or theories to organise empirical research. Frames can be brought to bear on social phenomena to provide an epistemological starting point that organises the phenomena under study. Frames represent a research tool only. They are open to considerable adjustment in the face of the fieldwork information. A further purpose is to make clear the theoretical assumptions implicit in the chosen research methodology: grounded theory (Charmaz 2006; Denzin & Lincoln 2000).

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[14] While legacy can be used to describe media such as television, radio and print, the term 'old' media will be used in this research. 'Old' is usually contrasted with 'new' media such as the Internet, and this shorthand is a convenient way of contrasting divisions and difference in current forms of media.

Grounded theory methodology discourages undertaking discussion of literature at an early stage, arguing that too extensive a degree of engagement with prior theory and cases detracts from and de-prioritises emergent data (Charmaz 2000; Strauss & Corbin 1998; Glaser & Strauss 1967). Dialogue with literature is said to be more pertinent during analysis of actual fieldwork findings and new theory construction where it is used comparatively and critically. The researcher was initially reluctant to engage in an interrogative literature review or establish theory frames before fieldwork was complete; however, value was recognised in making explicit key guiding research concepts and theoretical assumptions rooted in research choices.

### 2.1.1 The main concepts of the theoretical frame

The theoretical frame deploys the following working concepts that ideal-typically establish its structure. First, *identity* is investigated in relation to media and sociological theories, as this research will analyse actors' media receptions in their identity negotiation. Second, *reflexivity* suggests the capacity for self-directed action whereby people potentially understand what they are hearing or seeing and doing regarding media negotiations. Third, *lifestyle projects of selves* (Giddens & Pierson 1998; Giddens 1991), refers to the centrality of lifestyle choices and self-constructions of youth in contemporary settings. Lifestyle entails the making of decisions about taste, fashion, image and values, or beliefs that inform how the self determines its life courses (Featherstone 1991; Goffman 1998 [1959]). Fourth, influence of *social and cultural context* represents the conditioning (rather than determining) existential mode of being of a person (McMillin 2007; Strelitz 2002). Culture provides an environment of belief and values which may contradict voluntaristic possibilities for actors, as do social or structural conditions generally. Fifth, issues of *media power* and *globalisation* mark the final conceptual pillar of the theoretical frame. It has been widely argued that media and identity are firmly situated in global contexts that have opened-up localities and nation-states to exogenous ideologies, images and products. These exhibit complex patterns of power in which media and actors are implicated in complex ways (McMillin 2007; Castells 2000; Tomlinson 1999; Appadurai 1996). All five conceptual positions represent points of investigation bearing directly on the Windhoek study and what is happening within this setting.

Young people's media negotiations are assessed in relation to these concepts, and grounded theory methodology is applied to develop a new theory of media and identity. As Couldry

(2003:16) states, the question is "how we assess the impacts of media systems on social life and personal experience, which is much more than a question of technical development."

## 2.2 Facets of identity and reflexivity

Chapter 1 established the importance of identity for this research, positioning it in the postcolonial Namibian historical context, but did not investigate the term in depth. Identity is here explored in relation to media theory by clarifying its theoretical nuances and making connections with its ontological and actional character in mediated contexts. The term identity has strong resonance in the social sciences for its ability to provide a powerful analytical marker of how older traditional or former identities are under pressure, and how new identities are emerging and being negotiated in an era of globalisation.

### 2.2.1 Facets of identity

Identity is pertinent to transformations in postcolonial, post-conflict societies such as Namibia in the face of currents of cultural change. Identity has several facets which operate in synthesis. *First*, identity is linked to the self and consciousness. This entails perceptions of the self's existence including who we imagine we are, our sense of place within society, and our relations to other selves as immediate objects of our experience (Merleau-Ponty 1974). Mead (1967 [1934]) argues that individual consciousness entails an 'I' and a 'Me' whereby the 'I' denotes the essential spontaneous personality of the self, a self-orientation, the 'Me' its social orientation. The self is never merely inward looking, but is oriented outward toward other selves. Identity cannot be reduced solely to expressions of consciousness as this implies a merely reflective, even passive, condition, which Mead argues selves never are. He states that: "we inevitably do tend at a certain level of sophistication to (actively) organize all experience into that of a self" and we are only capable of this through our orientation to society and others (Mead 1967 [1934]:199).

*Second,* the self and its identity are argued to be 'actional' and non-passive. Identity is the preserve of actors and their actions.[15] This actional aspect of identity is loosely, or by deliberate design, maintained or altered according to chosen strategic options (Giddens & Pierson 1998; 1991). This involves goal-seeking on the part of individuals, and is related to

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[15] The term 'actor' is regularly used in this research, referring to a member of a society who engages in day-to-day actions or social activities. They are 'agents' of the social sphere. Action or agency is defined as: "the stream of actual or contemplated causal interventions of corporeal beings in the ongoing processes of events-in-the-world" (Giddens & Pierson 1998:75). Actors engage in life-projects: to learn, to work, to vote for political aims, to build a career, to realise a special goal.

the lifestyle activities previously mentioned. Giddens argues that we are not what we 'are', but what we 'make' of ourselves in a constructivist sense. Goal-seeking for a defence of tradition or for modernist lifestyle projects, is recognised as being a widespread feature of modern cultures involving increasingly radical levels of individualism and agency. This actional character of identity needs to be established at the outset and its importance noted, although matters of culture and power set limits on actionality (Hall & Du Gay 1996; Goffman 1971).

*Third*, identity is deeply implicated in matters of ontology (Thompson 1995; Giddens 1991). Ontology refers to a concern with understanding the conditions of human existence and reality, with matters of belief and existential security for the self also being closely linked (Griffin 2003; Haack 1993; Giddens 1991; Berger & Luckmann 1966). As part of their reflexivity, actors are thought to implicitly establish their own personal and informal theory of existence capable of explaining their place in the world in ways that they understand. Epistemology forms part of their actions as a core strategy to acquire valid ontological information and knowledge. This ontological aspect was investigated in the research in the context of defences of traditional culture.

Engagement with mass media today is argued to be a central phenomenological activity within everyday projects of the self (Gauntlett 2008; Tomlinson 1999; Giddens 1991). Media are instrumentally more than entertainment or for gaining instant news or knowledge: media represent an ontological and epistemological resource. It has been argued that issues of ontology, as a basis for motivations behind peoples' immersion in modern media, require integration into media studies. There has tended to be a major neglect of existential factors in studies of media engagements (Kitter 2009; Tomlinson 2003). This study focuses on ontology in relation to loss of tradition and issues of cultural representation in media, but also in pursuit of novel cosmopolitan lifestyles.

*Fourth*, as a final facet, reflexive capacity and actions of actors are a central part of identity construction and negotiation. As a general description, Eagleton-Pierce (2009:111) introduces the idea succinctly when he says that "to be reflexive is to actively 'turn or bend back', to take account of the self in relation to other subjects and objects". Given that this concept is central to this research investigation, it requires specific clarification and discussion of its application by key contemporary theorists, and determination of its potential.

*2.2.2 Variants of reflexivity*

Blumer (1986 [1969]:15) insists that reflexivity should be seen as implicated in all individual 'doings', while recognising the highly variable levels of knowledge, skill or success deployed by different persons in their actions (including mediated ones). Blumer (1986 [1969]:81-82) defines it as a form of 'self-indication' or

> a moving communication process in which the individual notes things, assesses them, gives them a meaning, and decides to act on the basis of the meaning … By virtue of indicating such a thing to himself, he places himself over and against them and is able to act back against them, accepting them, rejecting them, or transforming them in accordance with how he defines or interprets them.

This contradicts structuralism, or systems theory, which regards action as a conditioned product of external societal forces playing on or through individuals. Constraint, either repressive or by dutiful necessity, characterises this type of theoretical approach (Parsons 1976; Althusser 1970). In rejection, Blumer states that there is no empirically observable social activity that does not spring from 'acting units', or rather, acting people (Blumer 1986 [1969]:85). Actions are always more than the mechanical outcomes of structure, although there is recognition that expectations of people toward each other in the general society, whether customary, based on core shared values, or restraint of authority, set loose limits on agency which curb possibility of free will. In Blumer, reflexivity is an innate creative 'device' conventionally used by agents to develop responses to social limitations encountered; a strategy that assists the establishment of possible courses of action through reflection and formulation of meaning.

Giddens (1998; 1991; 1984) regards contemporary reflexivity as inherent in an expanding global modernity. Borrowing from Beck (1986), modern societies are regarded by Giddens as 'risk societies' where actors are compelled to become self-reliant in the face of greater cultural individualism, and must more and more respond to and manage risk. In increasingly post-traditional orders, actors allegedly become aware that modern life represents enormous opportunity for what he calls "reflexive projects of the self" (Giddens 1991:52). This 'self' development has had considerable impact on former social identities as modern societies become increasingly post-traditional. A reshaping of former, traditional identities occurs in line with this social shift. Giddens states that to be reflexive is "to be a purposive agent, who both has reasons for his or her activities and is able, if asked, to elaborate discursively upon

those reasons" (1984:3-4). Purposiveness has a 'self monitored' character. Giddens (1984:3) explains it as

> a form of the knowledgeability of human agents … Reflexivity hence should be understood not merely as 'self-consciousness' but as the monitored character of the ongoing flow of social life … grounded in the continuous monitoring of action.

Self-monitoring is a form of 'checking' to see if we are achieving our intentions, or whether corrective action is required as we seek to shape our biographies. It is also utilises resources such as information pools that assist decision-making. Media are a strategic resource in this knowledgeability, and reflexivity is present in how media content is assessed and 'read', including the manner of its incorporation into identity and lifestyle constructions and projects. Giddens is at pains to stress that it is *a strategy* and should not be seen in terms of action free of constraint. The 'duality of structure', that is, the dialectical connection between actor and the rules and resources of structure, defines limitations on action, but also correspondingly provides opportunity for skilful agency to personal or group advantage. Giddens rejects transcendental notions of structure when he asserts: "society only has form, and that form only has effects on people, in so far as structure is produced and reproduced in what people do" (Giddens & Pierson 1998:77). He refers to structure as both enabling and constraining, much as in language or formal games where rules and principles restrict but ultimately guide utilisation. He is rejecting Marxian, or postcolonial, notions of structure which operate with restrictive consequences for agency. In summary, Giddens wishes to note reflexivity as a strategy of opportunity for lifestyle and identity creation, albeit one operating within concrete and symbolic boundaries of rules and available resources.

Bourdieu's theory of reflexivity is more restrictive, and, in some respects, automatically critical of Giddens's version. While Bourdieu is willing to agree that agents have choice in their respective goals that they reflect and decide on in the field of their particular habitus, the habitus itself asserts more substantial regulation on cognition and actions than Giddens would admit to. The habitus is the field of social relationships, limits and possibilities, but which denies the more open-ended, actor-friendly, character of the structurationist approach. As Williams (1995:601) commenting on Bourdieu writes:

> In drawing attention to the structural "constraints" (physical, economic, social and cultural) and social dynamics of lifestyle (re)construction, Bourdieu provides an important counterweight to those perspectives which see these issues simply in terms of personal choice or reflexive control.

Bourdieu (1979:45) regards actors' decision making as structured by pre-cognitive categorisation linked to culture, class and social position patterned in earlier and ongoing socialisation and systems of knowledge. These frame and restrict choice. In opposition to voluntaristic theories, he states that "we can always say that individuals make choices, so long as we do not forget that they do not choose the principles of these choices" (1989:45). The options on offer are also more limited in range than in Giddens's theory. Calhoun (1999: 145) says

> Bourdieu argues that agents do not generally adopt the theoretical attitude of seeing action as a choice among all other possibilities; they usually see one or a few possibilities.

Why would this be the case? Bourdieu's (1991; 1979) understanding of reflexivity needs to be linked with his concept of habitus. Habitus is useful for studying patterns of media consumption and identity negotiation in Namibia if it is accepted that culture shapes matters of taste and actors' choices. Bourdieu's essay *Social space and symbolic power* (1991) seeks to establish the relationship between objectivism (the influence of context or cultural habitus) and subjectivism (the actions of individuals). For him, objectivist and subjectivist division, rather than separate, must be regarded as dialectically related. It is possible for agents to perceive and creatively act on their situation by making (essentially finite) choices in their practices (in voting, music, dress, style and media), while at the same time recognising that they do so in relation to their habitus. Habitus is described as influencing actor's choices in the following manner (Bourdieu 1979:170):

> The habitus is both the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgements *and* the system of classification (*principium divisionis*) of these practices. It is the relationship between the two capacities which define the habitus, the capacity to produce classifiable practices and works, and the capacity to differentiate and appreciate these practices and products (taste), that the represented social world, i.e. the spaces of lifestyles, is constituted.

The habitus operates not as a structure but as a series of fields that limit, yet also provide opportunity for actors along the lines of Goffman's (1974) frames. Choices are strongly influenced by *place* or *position* within the social field (institutional, class, ethnicity, gender, nationality) which reflect differing material and symbolic identities, but also inequalities of consumption or status. This in turn shapes an actor's *disposition*, effecting decision-making. Lifestyle reveals cultural and consumption preferences where value judgments shaped by external systems of classification are made. Bourdieu defines lifestyle as: "a system of

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classified and classifying practices" which takes place within social space largely but not entirely objective of individual agents (Bourdieu 1979:171). Elsewhere he defines the linkages of actors, lifestyle and culture, stating that agents (Bourdieu 1991:130-132)

> classify themselves by choosing, in the available space of goods and services, goods which occupy a position in this space homologous to the position they occupy in social space. *This means that nothing classifies somebody more than the way he or she classifies* [italics added].

Culture is not neutral or 'equal' for Bourdieu, but is dominated by a preferred 'aristocracy of culture' in which cultural taste is graded according to hierarchical values that touch on principles of power and status classification (Bourdieu 1979). Lifestyle is always a *hierarchy of choice* with strong linkages of prestige shaped around class, race and gender, of which actors are frequently unaware.

Successful reflexivity in lifestyle actions depends on access to differing types of capital: economic (financial and material), cultural (symbolic goods, educational qualifications, skills), and social (valuable social networks and connections). For Bourdieu (1979), capital is any material or symbolic resource that can be appropriated for personal or group advantage in the social arena. However, success tends to be skewed in favour of groups who possess higher capital densities. Cultural capital provides entry to socially valued or legitimated knowledge which gives entries to symbolic capital. Symbolic capital entails insight into covert or subliminal principles, classificatory procedures or social structures not normally glimpsed: that culture is constructed rather than natural; that popular entertainment entails power; that inequality is shaped by social and political discourse, and so on. Here, a person's reflexivity can demystify and critique social processes, or rise above current paradigms to create new ones. Bourdieu's (1992) own examples mention breakthroughs in art and science, where old symbolic conventions of style and knowledge are radically superseded by highly creative actors.[16] This is a reflexive level that few attain, most actors being limited to mundane choices where deeper insights into power are ruled out of everyday consciousness. This is a very different theory of agency to that offered by Giddens, and one where reflexive potential is less pronounced.

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[16] In art, Monet for painting, Schoenberg for music or Joyce in the novel. In science, Newton and Einstein for the new physics of gravity and relativity. All 'breakthroughs' are reflexive outcomes that are said to change how men and women see their worlds (Bourdieu 1992; 1991). Bourdieu saw his own sociological project as reflexive demystification of social life and a form of symbolic capital.

Bourdieu has been criticised for failing to provide an adequate theory of change. Burkitt (2002:220) argues that habitus as conceptualised by Bourdieu is insufficient in understanding "those moments when habits break down or when habits clash and the self is forced to reflexively monitor itself and the context in which it is acting in order to meaningfully reconstruct with others both self and situation". This would involve a weakening or breakup of previous systems of social classification as new groups or classes arise over previous traditional ones, as in shifts away from apartheid toward a postcolonial globalisation.

Reflexivity is relevant for the Windhoek research in determining how participants monitor their mediated actions, in serving to determine their critical stance in relation to media and its message, and as a way to gauge consciousness of power processes in media systems. Writers have argued about the dangers of romanticising agency by viewing mediated identity projects in over-voluntaristic or instrumentalist terms. Agency and identity are never unconstrained, being active within specific local, national and global settings which wield degrees of hidden power and influence over actors (McMillin 2007; Couldry 2006).

## 2.3 Media and social contexts

Media consumption, identity negotiation and lifestyle choice occur within specific localities, communities or social contexts. Social context includes, but is much more than, a physical geographic locality such as a city like Windhoek, or broader national or nation-state settings. 'Context' entails cultural and symbolic levels involving value and belief systems which flood the geographic context and link up individuals (McMillin 2009; Smith 2008). Namibian arguments around the defence of tradition and national identity in the face of global influence, especially from mass media, tend to shape citizens' attitude to media culture in complex ways (Fox 2010). An examination of the theoretical character of social context and its regulating habitus, within which actors and media institutions function, is a dimension for this research. It is necessary to first clarify what is meant by media.

### 2.3.1 Defining media

Mass media refers to the institutions that transmit information, ideas and images to a public across distance, beyond the immediate setting of creation or conception (Briggs & Burke 2010:5). The emergence of electronic and audio-visual media in the twentieth-century greatly extended this possibility. Media can be divided into old and new. Old media includes print such as books, magazines and newspapers, followed in the twentieth-century, with time lags

in colonial and postcolonial societies, by the development of broadcast media, chiefly radio and television (de Beer 1998; Thompson 1995). Mass popular cinema arose in the same period with the international film industry, movies and television. A large-scale corporate music industry developed in the era after the Second World War based on music broadcast, record and compact disc.

New media are structured around the Internet. They have been described as 'social media' having key actional advantages over old media which tend toward passive consumption patterns. New media are said to have enormous interactive, even democratic, potential combined with the advantage of compression of time-space communication that allows instant meeting points between actors within national or global electronic settings (Castells 2009; Lister et al. 2003). This results in "new methods and practices of communication, representation, and expression that have developed using the digital, multimedia, networked computing" (Lister et al. 2003:2). Mass ownership of computers has given rise to individual and collective online communities able to engage in market transactions, rapid news and information access, and virtual social interaction. Since 2000, purchase of music, film, television and text in physical form is being replaced by digital content downloaded from the Internet through new media. As Internet speeds improve, old media come to be consumed differently. This has been called 'media convergence'. While this is frequently characterised as a technical development, it also entails a conjunction of media forms that changes consumer habits. The emergent outcome is the formation of new intermedial relations that pose research challenges to media studies (Jenkins 2006; Murdock 2000).

Social networking is a recent development requiring reorientations in media research. It is defined in terms of three elements as: *first*, the construction of a public bounded online space; *second*, a group of users sharing a common connection within that boundary; and who, *third*, are demarcated and linked by common interests or positions be it ethical, political or social (Boyd & Ellison 2007:36). Friendship or casual contacts with strangers in the rest of the world are possible via email, and, like Facebook (since 2004) or Twitter (since 2006), give rise to long-distance or global possibilities for social interaction, including political activism (Castells 2009; 2004). Many such sites now exist which are language, nation or culture-specific. Internet third and fourth generation (3G and 4G) mobile phones allow major convergence of these developments, combining standard voice-to-voice contact with Internet use that includes social network interactions. The sociological consequences of new media are as yet poorly understood (Livingstone 2008), but the resilience of old media in the face of

new should not be underestimated or neglected as these are changing rather than in terminal decline (Freedman 2006). As will be seen, these developments figured strongly in Windhoek participant media practices, and represented a significant context for many of their mediated actions.

### 2.3.2 Clarifying social context

Social contexts are where individuals share and exchange meaning (Marneweck 2006:258). People are socialised into these contexts which may bear significantly on their rationales of action and choice (Zegeye 2008; Strelitz 2002; Geertz 1973). A context may be viewed as a determinate structure in the functionalist or Marxist theory sense (Durkheim 1986 [1893]; Althusser 1970), or as a flexible process guiding or informing choice, as in interpretive social science. Free, or relatively free, theoretical accounts of an actor's meaning and preference as in ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1968), over-emphasise voluntarism without giving sufficient importance to the contexts in which actors manufacture meaning. While this Windhoek research is favourable to interpretive sociology's focus on an actor's meaning and decisions, it would be imprudent to neglect the influence of social and cultural matrices, although also unwise to posit structure, social context or process as over-determinate in any way (Giddens 1991; 1984). Social context will be inclusive to the theoretical frame as having an important bearing on identity projects and media consumption.

### 2.3.3 Justifying recognition of social contexts in media studies

Zegeye (2008) states that media research often neglects structural conditions that shape younger populations in their identity construction and media relationships. There is a tendency to ignore contexts such as the impact of ethnicity, class, gender, crime and health pandemics such as HIV/AIDS. He points to backgrounds of youth movements against apartheid, but also to the current fight against poverty, the ANC's failure to eradicate chronic inequality, and marginalisation from consumer rights in the new South Africa. He deploys Castells's (2004) concept of resistance identity to articulate this, while recognising the incoherent, often flawed character of action caused by lack of education combined with pressures of poverty for many black youth (Zegeye 2008:46). Zegeye does not directly explain how these contexts shape identity projects and media consumption, but establishes the premise that they must be taken into account in analysis. His point is relevant for Namibia where youth experience similar (but not identical) histories and concerns including structural constraints or opportunities.

Geertz's (1973) ethnographic research argued for a 'thick description' approach to people's behaviours and practices which reflected underlying socio-cultural patterning. He discussed the social significance of Balinese cockfighting which represented a sporting institution for 'letting off steam' in a society where aggression was normally prohibited. Thick description allowed for a connection between apparently incompatible opposites. In Geertz's account, it is only possible to understand Balinese society, the conduct of citizens, and cockerel fighting as a social event through connecting actors' actions and choices with the immediate conditioning cultural framework in which behaviour is situated (Geertz 1973:46).

### 2.3.4 Structuration and frames: Giddens and Goffman

Giddens's theory of structuration (1998; 1984) reveals similarities to Bourdieu's schema, albeit giving greater weight to agency. Social life is not a mass of uncoordinated, random 'micro'-level activities, as human actors and social structure are in a 'dual' relationship (the duality of structure). This produces predictable routine repetitions of life, but also opportunities for self or social transformation. Social structure is a process (rather than a fixed edifice) containing rules and resources which inform actors in their fields of social action; structure itself subtly changes in line with moving human influence (Giddens & Pierson, 1998). Giddens says: "society only has form, and that form only has effects on people, insofar as structure is produced and reproduced in what people do" (1998:77). Structuration analysis allows great weight to agency relative to restraining societal contexts.

Goffman's (1974) frame analysis sees all social action as contextual. The contexts in which social, including media, activities are performed are never entirely voluntaristic. A frame is: "a principle of organisation that defines a situation … frame is the word I use to refer to the basic elements that organise experience" (Goffman 1974:21). A frame can be a situation where people are watching a television show or a movie, social networking, attending an academic lecture, a job interview or theatre. A frame is therefore a physical setting (a classroom, a television room or a political gathering) plus its social conditions. Different events or activities involving others require the actor to understand and interpret the rules and codes governing that frame. Procedures and cultural conventions are present which the actor needs to grasp in order to recognize the situation. This is why we look for what Goffman (1974) calls 'keys' and 'anchors' that explain the precise nature of the frame. Keys allow actors to determine if the event in question is make-believe (a play or film), while 'anchors'

overcome the danger that a frame may breakdown by stabilising the situation (Goffman 1974:292).

In the work of both Giddens and Goffman a frame is not a structure but an enabling context with rules, cues and codes used much like in a game of cards or sport. Within that frame is the capacity to be skilful, resourceful and productive, rather than merely constrained. Activity within contexts or frames is a matter of reflexive competence of agents. This shows how frame analysis can be creatively applied to media studies in contexts not just of collective television viewing, but also in terms of virtual Internet frames in social networking environments.

### 2.3.5 Language frames, culture and media

Language is also a social context. It is a conditioning factor for the subjects or agents as a linguistic 'carrier' of culture, containing markers of cultural communication and symbolic belonging. It is the carrier of social experience, and the means to further that experience interactively with others. Writing about television viewing, Strelitz (2002) argues that actors seek out their language in media as a linguistic comfort zone, and as a means to protect and sustain cultural connections. Recent developments in Internet social networks have become predicated on the ability of online communities to converse in same-language contexts (Lüders 2008:697). Internet media are potentially open to customisation by same-language users, allowing for a repositioning and reaffirmation of languages such as Afrikaans or Xhosa through online chatrooms (Wasserman 2003:85). This represents a way around the overwhelming dominance of English in many forms of global media, pointing to a democratic potential. Yet, Wasserman (87) warns of the danger of

> mythologizing of virtual (linguistic) communities without acknowledging the extent to which 'real' social relations are repeated in virtual contexts.

There are also possible reactionary or protectionist outcomes resulting in exclusivity and primacy of one language and culture against another, particularly in the case of Afrikaans which was dominant in Namibia and South African during apartheid (Van der Waal 2008:67). However, Van der Waal warns against an essentialist view of language or culture in that it underrates the creativity of the user and the changing nature of language, being acquiescent to ideas in other languages (Van der Waal 2008:57). The dominance of English in Namibian media may be a discomfort for media users enmeshed in other first-language systems.

Language contexts in relation to media require particular consideration in Namibia where over twelve languages are spoken and where the official language, English, is not commonly used by everyone.

## 2.4 Exploring identity

A central concept in this research is identity which refers to a sense of individual self or group recognition with awareness that it is separate and distinct from others. Identity involves a sense of difference, of knowing the borderlines or boundaries between you and other individuals. It distinguishes personality, people, community or culture and can be defined in collective cultural terms as (Hall 1992:274)

> those aspects of our identity that arise from our belonging to distinct ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious and, above all, national cultures.

Lifestyle markers such as dress and taste indicate specific national characteristics of symbolic identification and belonging and distinguish one ethnic or national block from another. In turn, cultural taste and lifestyle preference, along with socio-economic status, indicate class positioning within a particular habitus (Bourdieu 1979). Identities can be highly solidaristic and defensive, particularly when confronted by forces that are perceived to undermine them or do so in practice. Castells has emphasised the upsurge of resistance identities in defence of religion, nation, ethnicity and locality in the face of resurgent economic and cultural globalisation (Castells 2004:2).

### 2.4.1 Fluidity and historical identity shifts: Hall

Hall and DuGay (1996:3) state that identity is never essentialist but strategic, allowing selves to work within modern discourse, negotiating symbolic and material choices for their constitution. 'Difference' and power also come into play. The position of the 'other', or the 'excluded', limits or closes off the potential for identity building and self-strategies, creating marginality. For example, the identity of the man is constructed against the identity of the woman, or the white against the black person. The exclusionist aspect of discourse, in which power grades and separates, is relevant for Namibia where levels of historically constructed inequality and segregation persist. Hall and DuGay criticise Foucault's one-dimensional view of subjectivity as leaving little room for variation and difference in a power/knowledge dichotomy that essentially shapes all identity in the same disciplinary way.

Woodward (2002:69) argues that self-identity and social identity frequently overlap and cannot be easily distinguished. There tends to be a connection between identities that mark out personal characteristics with social ones based on gender, class, race or nationality. This does not mean that self-identity is automatically reducible to social identity, but at a level of the self incorporates collective markers according to relevant context or the specific interactive experiences that are encountered. Self-identity always "reflects the complex relationships between the personal and the social" in modernity (Woodward 2002:21).

Hall (1992) emphasises the profoundly historical character of identity. Identity is chronologically fluid, sometimes subject to fixity or stability, while in the late modern age becoming looser or crisis prone in the face of a bewildering range of contemporary options for identity choice, as in Namibia and southern Africa today. Hall cites three types of identity with the advent of modernity from the late 1600s: The *first*, Cartesian identity, asserts the presence of the rational individual expressing Descartes's dictum: *cogito ergo sum* or "I think therefore I am." This is an active identity that engages in pursuit of progress, reason and social improvement based on rights and liberty. The *second*, social or sociological identity, expresses the rise of new social identities of class, gender and nation following industrialisation. Social identities are collective, 'fixed' and stable (Hall et al. 1992:276). In colonial Namibia, similar sociological identities were deployed from the German era onward, but without the commensurate rights enjoyed in the mother country (Du Pisani 2000). Such identities, including white 'master' identities, continue in postcolonial Namibia alongside hybrid versions of former culture and identity (Winterfeldt 2005; Hishongwa 1994). The *third*, postmodern identity is argued to have emerged in the late twentieth-century. Former guarantees of stable identity supported by national and cultural institutions such as the state, lose purchase and authority. There has arguably emerged in its place a "plurality of power centres" which in turn contributes to a plurality of identities (Hall 1992:278). The outcome is a 'de-centring of the subject' where people rely on their own agency and solutions to societal and personal life challenges (285-290).

Individual and collective identities in modernity (or postmodernity) are subject to cultural forces linked to the rise of modernity (Giddens & Pierson 1998). Modernity has the potential for reflexive agency, but is prone to change and instability compared to earlier social systems. This is potentially unsettling as well as opportune for many people (Delanty 2007; Hall 1992). Powerful cultural contradictions mark modernity's character, whereby national boundaries increasingly open up to symbols and values from outside local settings. Local

spaces and identities struggle for representation against this global inflow. In particular, international media enter Namibian local spaces, resulting in complex forms of cultural exchange with consequences for identity possibilities (McMillin 2007; Bhabha 1994). Identity today arguably has the potential for constant re-negotiation and transformation.

*2.4.2 Self-identity and lifestyle*

The Windhoek research noted strong indications of personal or self-identity in the context of cosmopolitan opportunity provided by global media culture. Giddens's (1998; 1991) influential theory of modern identity casts doubt on Hall and Bauman's postmodern premise as exaggerating the instability of identity and institutional modernity generally. Modernity is not 'post' but a mature stage where individuation processes have opened up previously unavailable possibilities for people. 'High' modernity is a new, viable social order where modern identity is normalised as 'the way we live now' rather than the regretted aberration that Hall implies (Giddens 1991:6).[17] As young Namibians recognised, modernity provides enormous opportunities for the self, albeit in an environment of risk and doubt. This means (Giddens 1991:28-29)

> living with a calculative attitude to the open possibilities of action, positive and negative, with which, as individuals and globally, we are confronted in a continuous way in our contemporary social existence … In a post-traditional social universe, an indefinite range of potential courses of action (with their attendant risks) is at any given moment open to individuals and collectivities.

An actor's identity is not to be found in behaviours or the reactions of others (contrary to Mead), but in terms of a biographical narrative: "The individual's biography, if she (and he) is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into an on-going story about the self" (Giddens 1991:54).

Giddens argues that in modern societies lifestyle has become of central importance to self-identity, and is connected to life goals within contexts of shifting choice. Global capitalist markets of production and distribution confront the actor with an enormous range of material and symbolic commodities which are incorporated into contemporary lifestyles.

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[17] Bauman's sociology is firmly within postmodernist thought, and should be distinguished from that of Giddens who rejects his assertions about the 'liquid' and disorganised character of (post)modernity. However, they share similar ideas about self and identity being embroiled in individualism, radical choice and consumption.

As a consequence (Giddens 1991:5)

> the more tradition loses its hold, and the more daily life is reconstituted in terms of the dialectical interplay of the local and the global, the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among the diversity of options.

Short-term and long-term goals are part of 'life projects of the self', being ontologically bound up with a desire for psychological and emotional security. People not only choose ideas, values and practical philosophies that are meaningful for them but 'bracket out', in Schutz's (1967[1936]) sense, counter-beliefs and practices threatening 'basic trust' in existing life routines and beliefs; therefore "maintaining basic habits and routines is a bulwark against threatening anxieties" (Giddens 1991:39). With reference to tradition he adds that (81)

> the choices that we make in modern society may be affected by the weight of tradition on the one hand, and the sense of relative freedom on the other. The more post-traditional the setting in which an individual moves, the more lifestyle concerns the very core of self-identity, its making and remaking.

Issues of tradition and ontology have implications for postcolonial societies where modernity and media may be less entrenched and traditional identities more persistent in the face of change. In these settings, media may be less central in identification processes, or oppositionally may create tensions and conflict between tradition[18] and emergent individualised forms of culture. The Windhoek research pointed to evidence of this abrasive dialectic.

In other studies, lifestyle is said to denote individuality, self-expression and self-conscious style (Featherstone 1991:83). Consumption tends to be at the heart of lifestyle actions, leading to what Featherstone has called the 'culture of consumption'. Goods are both material and symbolic, and can be used to connect with social groups in order to gain recognition of social standing or respect in Bourdieu's (1979) classificatory sense. There is an emotional satisfaction to be obtained from consumption, even personal fulfillment, but with the possibility of commercial and cultural manipulation (Featherstone 1991:22).

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[18] The term 'traditional' is used conditionally. Winterfeldt (2005) has cautioned against essentialist and purist conceptions of tradition in societies like Namibia with long histories of colonialism. He states that culture was hybridly altered by socio-economic factors at that time, as well as by cultural impositions of the colonial state. It is doubtful that 'authentic' tradition and cultural identities are possible today. To counter this argument, what a particular community believes to be their valid culture will in effect be 'true' no matter how it was constructed.

Bauman (1992) argues that modern or postmodern societies favour lifestyle agency. Former 'imposed' lifestyles and identities have weakened making lifestyle central to identity activities, the world being an unconstrained field of consumer opportunity. 'Self-constitution' and 'self-assembly' are central components of lifestyle activity, and the body becomes the site of its own (re)constitution and self-definition in interface with its habitat. Body-cultivation is (Bauman 1992:194) "the capacity of the body for absorbing the input of sensuous impressions and producing a constant supply of publicly legible self-definitions". This is argued to be part of the new society of individualisation whereby social organisation yields to the needs of self-identity projects. Thompson (1995:211) argues that the media are pivotal in the 'new individualism', and this may be said to be an emergent cultural phenomenon notable in the Windhoek research.

Nyamnjoh (2004) has critically highlighted the glaring lifestyle inequalities between rich and poor consumers globally, and within and between African nations. Giddens (1991) may be nominally correct to say that all have access to 'lifestyle' in some form, but structures of class and capital determine wealth difference. Globalisation has produced hierarchy, inequality and marginalisation in terms of peoples' ability to pursue lifestyle choice. Nyamnjoh argues that globalisation benefits one side but not the other, forcing large numbers of citizens to pursue legal and illegal strategies to obtain a semblance of lifestyle choice (Nyamnjoh 2004:49). Namibia is not immune to this restrictive situation and self problematic.

### 2.4.3 Ignoring culture: A critique of Giddens

Namibia as a postcolonial society has been characterised as having a strong sense of cultural and ethnic tradition, being a carrier of many complex forms of pre-existing identity (Winterfeldt 2005; Keulder 2000; Diener 2000). Giddens's theory of self-identity has little time for an examination of the persistence of pre-modern cultural forms. This automatically rules out tradition in ways unacceptable to certain writers who regard this neglect as making Giddens's theory inapplicable to postcolonial societies (Alexander 1996). Other critiques state that Giddens has unwisely disengaged identity from influences of culture, resulting in its side-lining in favour of sovereign decision-making practices of actors. This results in "a 'neo-modernist' normative take on culture, which values rationality, teleology, voluntarism and instrumentalism whereby cultural systems have minimal effect, and individual choice is radicalised" (Adams 2003:225).

The value of taking account of culture emerges strongly in the South African study of Strelitz (2002) on ethnicity and tradition in television reception practices. Strelitz undertook participant observation of male black 'homeland' students, who used the haven of the television room at Rhodes University to share space with students of similar rural, class, ethnic and linguistic background, against the perceived alienating, 'modern' character of the white and coloured culture of the university. Their viewing was scrupulously selective, foreign programming being largely spurned as irrelevant in favour of local South African productions such as *Isidingo* and other soap operas.[19] There was a tendency for participants to look for the type of 'traditionalist' identity positions in television viewing that they personally occupied (Strelitz 2002:479). The group showed a critical stance toward female characters (excluded from the 'homeland' room) who did not comply with perceived traditional gender stereotypes of submissiveness and domesticity. Television was a tool for confirming existing male ethnic identities and values, much as in Bourdieu's (1979) theory of cultural embodiment and habitus.

Strelitz's study shows how conservative tradition (as 'homelanders' perceived it) represented a comfort zone or realm of ontological security in Giddens's sense, but which heavily structured and bore down on how they consumed and interpreted media content. They appeared to defend older traditional identities in the face of a creeping modernity, a factor recognised in the Windhoek research which revealed strong traditionalist positions in media consumption.

*2.4.4 Castells: Three forms of identity in a globalised world*

Identity can be antagonistic where it is disrupted and under threat from globalisation, according to Castells. His theory, presented within his overall conception of the 'networked society', emphasises resistance identities. Information technology and a restructured global capitalism are producing new forms of social organisation which are (Castells 2004:2)

> shaking institutions, transforming cultures, creating wealth and inducing poverty, spurring greed, innovation and hope, while simultaneously imposing hardship and instilling despair. [While also creating] the widespread surge of powerful expressions of collective identity that challenge globalisation and cosmopolitanism.

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[19] Schutz's (1967[1936]) idea that people 'bracket out' or seek to exclude social data not immediately relevant to them, is expressed in the approach of the 'homelanders' to television viewing. Aspects of modern life that uncomfortably contradict tradition and related values were ejected from the television room.

Castells proposes three basic forms of identity in a networked world. *First,* legitimising identities which are civic in character and that "rationalise sources of structural domination" through affiliation with churches, parties, associations, trade unions (2004:8-9). These are widely recognisable identities which 'normalise,' even naturalise, many aspects of social structure and its institutions. While legitimising identities are capable of challenge to the state, even of political change, they tend on the whole to be defensively conservative. *Second*, resistance identities regarded by Castells as the most important, being sources of social change as people challenge oppression, or negatively imposed identities of exclusion. These represent reaction resulting in "*the exclusion of the excluders by the excluded*" (2004:9, his emphasis) which creates communities of resistance as the fundamental source of political challenge to cultural and economic globalisation. *Third*, project identities, derived from Giddens's (1991), whereby individuals construct identifications meaningful to them as part of their biographies. Career or life planning, or more far-reaching aims to change both self and society are pursued. More generally, Castells argues that the defence of cultural identity can be implicated in all three, connecting project or legitimising identities with resistance identities. Resistance identity is relevant in relation to Namibian media where government and citizens alike frequently criticise the 'inappropriate' content of certain television programmes and newspapers as 'un-Namibian'. The Windhoek research further found project identities that unmoored themselves from antagonistic positions, and which sought cosmopolitan options that revealed little reference to local tradition.

Castells's central argument is that older legitimising identities are 'drained away' in a network world unable to sustain solid, shared identities in the face of radical individualism, market rationality and global cultural homogenisation. Resistance identities become a pervasive, possibly violent challenge. His view is that globalisation, arising from *imposed* economic and cultural networks, puts collective identity under threat. Power is no longer found in state, civil or cultural centres, but is diffused within "global networks of wealth, power, information, and images, which circulate and transmute in a system of variable geometry and dematerialized geography"; he adds that "the sites of this power are people's minds" (Castells 2004:424-5). Individualism disrupts collective identities and shared meaning, making a defence of collective identity difficult. Non-state social movements represent his idea of 'the power of identity' in providing the humanistic collective and ideological counter-means to this power.

Castells's view of both globalisation and identity has been described as sombre and reactionary. Tomlinson (2003:271) argues that Castells fails to recognise the 'compelling inner logic' behind the relationship between identity and globalisation, that globalisation accelerates the growth of identity rather than destroys it. He states (Tomlinson 2003:273)

> in so far as globalisation distributes the institutional features of modernity across all cultures, globalisation produces 'identity' where none existed – where before there were … more inchoate, less socially policed belongings.

The core cultural impact of globalisation is that consciousness of identity is heightened, reinforced or reconstituted in relation to a new awareness of them and us, of other nations, peoples and cultures. Globalisation is the 'waking up' of identity. Tomlinson regards this new dispensation as an opportunity for identity freedom and choice against Castells's side-lining of the potential benefits of a cosmopolitan world. Traditionalistic, frequently violent ethnic and religious movements against the state are romanticised (Tomlinson 2003:274). Elsewhere, his analysis has been defended as a valid empirical description of the effects of globalisation, although his concept of network power is underdeveloped and unclear (Bendle 2002).

*2.4.5 Postmodern theory, lifestyle and identity*

Bauman has optimistically called postmodern identity the possibility of emancipation from "in-born determinations" and transformation "from a given into a task" (Bauman 2001:144). Postmodernity offers individuals creative expressiveness in their identity actions, freedom and self-reliance rarely available before. Yet a loss of community is a consequence: "just as community collapses, identity is invented" (Bauman 2001:150). Social experience becomes confined to narrow family and friendship networks rather than society as such. Identity goals are never fully achieved as re-arrangement of self-identity is a continuous, always incomplete, activity. An arrived-at identity is quickly replaced because "I lose my freedom when I reach my goal; I am not myself when I become somebody" (Bauman 2001:150-1). Bauman calls this the 'endemic illogicality' of contemporary identity in a globalised world.

In contexts of identity and media, Kellner (1992:144) states that "many postmodern theories privilege popular culture as the (main) site of the implosion of identity and fragmentation of the subject". The centrality of television in popular culture was seen as the cause of a 'depthless superficial culture' in which individualism and creative expression had declined. Identities are seen as reduced to a fickle 'market identity' as people are relegated to mere

consumers of programmes and advertised products (Jameson 1984). Kellner is critical of this monochrome view of popular culture and the alleged identity it produces, being too close to Adorno's (1991) severe view of modern culture where people are alleged dupes of the culture industry. While it may be correct that modern and postmodern identity tend to arise from leisure and consumption pursuits, this does not exclude choice and self-construction of a reflexive character (Kellner 1992:153). Rather than identity disappearing or suffering 'reduction', popular culture presents a repertoire of possibility.

*2.4.6 Social change and shifting identities*

Whether postmodern analysis is pertinent to identity in Namibia or the southern African region is open to analysis. Wasserman and Jacobs (2003) raised the postmodern possibility of 'shifting identities' in the context of postcolonial and post-apartheid transformations, in which political change, global media and economic consumption are embroiled in new African identities. The opening up of the region to the symbolic and material goods of economic and cultural globalisation in the postcolonial era after the 1990s has led to (Wasserman & Jacobs 2003:15)

> new forms of imagining … and hybrid forms of identity construction that challenge the old apartheid forms.

This does not represent unlimited opportunity in the sense used by Bauman and Giddens. Exclusionary and marginalising notions of identity based on race and ethnicity persist, while older 'traditionalistic' identities may be reaffirmed or enforced (Strelitz 2002). Traditional identities may prevail, or result in complex creolisation or hybrid identities that combine new and old forms (Wasserman & Jacobs 2003:5). Mediated experience plays a significant role in new identities through growing exposure to soap operas on television, western programmes, films and music, including hybridised or 'fusion' version of Western/local media productions. This contributes to 'fluidity' of identity, where struggle between local and global versions of reality ensues. Yet prevailing socio-economic conditions of exclusion and difference in postcolonial realities place limits on how far identity is 'shiftable' for many in Namibia and the region.

Whether such tensions represent 'postmodern' identity, is unclear. However, identity fluidity potentially contributes to the establishment of complex postcolonial realities in which possibilities of multi-identity represent a new problematic for post-conflict societies recently opened up to globalising trends. Tomlinson (2003:276) argues that it is the 'phenomenology

of global consciousness', formed in local/global context of shifting identity, that cultural analysis must seek to understand, and this ontological theme is investigated for the Windhoek research in Chapter 5.

## 2.5 Media theory, youth and identity

This section attempts to bring together accounts of media influence, how audiences read media, and questions of power. Media and social theorists have long been interested in the ways media shape individual actors' identities, while also taking account of reflexive possibilities for self-identity construction. Questions of restrained or empowered relationships with media on the part of actors emerge in these studies.

### 2.5.1. Cultural studies theory: Morley and Hall

Studies that gauge reflexive or unreflexive elements within media engagement will be addressed here. These are relevant to how Windhoek participants 'read' and critically interrogate media. Cultural studies theory emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in Britain, out of a critical interest in the impact of popular culture. At the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (BCCC), Morley's reception theory proved highly influential, while Hall later built on this, applying Gramsci's concept of hegemony to rationalise the basis of power and consent in modern capitalist societies. Agency and identity came to the fore in later BCCC studies from the 1990s (Edgar & Sedgwick 2005).

Morley's (1992; 1986; 1980) reception theory typifies the main thrust of the cultural studies stance in relation to media output and audience reading. Socio-economic backgrounds of audiences were strongly seen to shape how media are received and read as texts. Cultural theory largely rejects the Frankfurt School's critical theory approach, which saw audiences as a passive easily manipulated 'crowd'. Here, a far more complex picture of the relationship between media and public emerges.

In Morley's *Nationwide* studies, responses to news and current affairs content gave rise to three types of audience readings: dominant, negotiated or oppositional (Morley 1992:89).[20] *Dominant readings* revealed close symmetries between the 'preferred' coding of the

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[20] *Nationwide* was a popular daily early-evening news and current affairs programme in the UK in the 1970s and 1980s. Its emphasis was on 'nationhood' and it made assumptions about what was 'British' that would be largely rejected today. Race was perceived as a social 'problem' based on exclusion from, rather than inclusion in, the national project. The programme was pitched at an audience that was somewhere between working and lower middle class (Morley 1992).

programme makers and an audience sample of mainly young working class white males, even showing deferential acceptance of meaning (Morley 1980:137). *Negotiated readings* represented a more critical approach, with greater commentary and analysis from a sample of middle class men and women such as teachers. They sought compromise based on partial acceptance of the original codes through an interrogative dialogue where media producers' meaning was only conditionally accepted, sometimes changed in line with their own interpretation. *Oppositional readings* were more uncompromising. Here, actors rejected, devalued or displaced preferred meaning in line with their personal or community experiences and ideologies. Black interviewees and trade unionists typified oppositional media reading, although in different ways; the first from experiences of marginalisation and cultural difference, the second from class or political standpoints. Morley (1980:51) argues that people from these social backgrounds or positions "will tend to share a cultural orientation toward coding messages in particular ways. Their individual 'readings' of messages will be framed by shared cultural formations and practices".

Hall (2002[1974]) extended Morley's focus on preferred or dominant meaning. He proposed an 'encoding/decoding' model as a means for analysis of connections between media, the broader networks of ideological power/influence, and actors themselves. Hall argues that codes of meaning within the media address us by hailing or 'interrupting' the user and subsequently present us with a specific interpretation or intentional 'code' of meaning. Actors unconsciously respond, absorbing the coded assumptions about events and the worldviews which are presented. Codes are not casual but connected and shaped by broader structures of knowledge and power within which media themselves are embroiled and structured. The role of the media is to make the interpellated message immediately understandable and naturalised, a process of articulation constructed on terms with which typical audiences can identify: this is where hegemony comes in. It is a process of imposing a coded 'definition' whereby a dominant media-coded 'viewpoint' is publicly transmitted. Hall (2002[1974]:307) states that

> the definition of a hegemonic viewpoint is (a) that it defines within its terms the mental horizon, the universe of possible meanings of a whole society or culture; and (b) that it carries with it the stamp of legitimacy – it appears coterminous with what is 'natural', 'inevitable', 'taken for granted' about the social order.

A person watching television who 'reads' the news on the terms of the news producer's coding, is operating inside the dominant code. Political positions, social representations,

including those of gender, race or class, are made to seem natural, 'true', beyond question or criticism. This expresses what Hall calls official or 'preferred meanings' which successfully 'close-off' access to alternative interpretations (Hall 2002 [1974]:304).

All along the line between audience, media production and broader social power there is the possibility of inconsistency or breakdown in the message, the 'misunderstanding' that Hall talks about. This inadvertently creates a negotiative position which opens-up space for reinterpreted or alternative meaning and possibilities for challenge. We are potentially capable of disassembling and subverting original encoded meaning to enable us (Hall 1997:58)

> to constitute [ourselves] as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover the places from which to speak.

This involves enhancement of our 'decoding skill' and is capable of generating alternative meaning and knowledge. The Namibian research will apply and assess decoding possibilities. It is valuable in assessing matters of critical media literacy and ability to recognise and respond to power narratives in the Windhoek setting.

### 2.5.2 Defending media agency: Fiske

Fiske (1989a) is withering of analyses such as Hall's that over-emphasise ideological content in media and mark consumers as restricted or passive, suppressing what he argues to be the huge creative potential of modern media. He sees no evidence that culture is manufactured 'from above' by capitalist media corporations to the point where it requires extensive liberationist challenge. Fiske writes that "culture is a living, active process: it can be developed only from within, it cannot be imposed from without or above" (Fiske 1989a:23). He points out that media productions can commercially fail, being rejected by publics who actively decide their likes and dislikes, forcing media corporations to respond to failure by corrective market action. Even popular productions are not automatically liked by everyone because society is factionalised, divided into different groups with different social identities.

Fiske recognises that contemporary culture can be oppressively commercial as audiences are not entirely free in their choices. They are 'relatively' free within the constraints of commercial-capitalist frameworks. All meaning entails what Fiske calls 'overspill' whereby alternative interpretation always exists. Conservative or hegemonic meaning is always challengeable. Conventional gender positions, for example, are frequently presented in the

media, but are open to challenge and reinterpretation (Fiske 1989b:124). Fiske argues that media are "a site of semiotic struggle between the forces of patriarchal control and feminine resistance, of capitalism and the subordinate, of the adult and the young" (Fiske 1989b:113). There exists, he argues, 'audience power' where people expropriate. This idea of expropriation or appropriation is relevant to Windhoek youth, some of whom appeared to use media in this instrumentalist way.

The problem with Fiske's populist response to Adorno and Hall is that whereas Adorno over-integrates individuals into his schema of (mass) culture, thereby denying any form of agency, Fiske proposes the opposite. He has been accused of regarding culture as a 'semiotic democracy' where we do not have to worry too much about media power (Morley 2006:31).

### 2.5.3 Youth and media studies

As the terms 'youth' or 'young adults' are regularly operationalised in this research, these should be briefly clarified in the context of media studies of young people. Legal definitions of youth separate it from adulthood using age criteria, below 18 years usually denoting childhood or 'youth', while above 18 years being a marker for statutory conferment of 'adult rights' and responsibility. Exactly when childhood becomes youth is often unclear; therefore the legal dichotomy of childhood/adulthood is preferred in many societies. The United Nations states that the ages 15 to 24 years should define youth, although limited explanation is given for this (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation 2011). Namibian government definitions vary widely, but generally see youth from late teens to 35 years, much in line with the World Health Organisation which gives the ages of 15 to 34. The present study chose the age range of 18 to 26, preferring to conceptualise youth as 'young adults'.

Social science treats youth as a flexibly active category that is socially assembled, and based on acquired lifestyles. Buckingham (2008) regards youth as a social and historical construct determined by time and place, and where commercial and mediated worlds shape its definition. Melucci (1992:56) echoes this arguing that 'youth' is a cultural process where age measures have little bearing on what sociologically defines youth. He says

> people are not young because, or only because, they have a certain age, but because they follow certain styles of consumption, or certain codes of behaviour and dress.

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Young people shape youth identities fundamentally through modes of consumption out of which a bricollage of identity and lifestyles are moulded. Much of this is increasingly symbolic in character in addition to being material. Miles (2000:70) 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. He adds that the mass media have emerged as important for the young and they have shown remarkable 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. Miles (2000:84) says that media represent a world where youth can be largely free of adults, although they may be vulnerable to entertainment and advertising which has a vested interest in maintaining a certain type of consciousness and identity among them; but this is not to say that they are automatically manipulated dupes.

On how youth engage with media, Willett (2008) says that young people use media as a symbolic resource to build their own centres of sociability which have been said to shape their youth identities. Television and music have arguably done this for some time in African and other contexts. Rushkoff (1997:13), in his United States study, refers to the young as 'natives of chaos' who in an individuated and complex age are better adapted to the demands of the shifting contours of 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 life negotiations in contemporary worlds.

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 (2008:54) 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 (Willett 2008:56). 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, Subrahmanyan, 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 offer enormous potential to shape both personal and social identities. New media offer interactive potential for constant contact with others via mobile phones, the Internet and email, essentials now that social life is virtually networked and contact 'distanced' rather than conventionally face-to-face. Larsen, Urry and Kay (2008:656) call new media '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 are skilled in accessing and exploiting networked capital.

Symbolic qualities such as status are valued. Boyd's (2008a:129) study of social networks in the United States revealed peer pressure to use either MySpace or Facebook in order to be 'considered cool' by other young people, therefore representing a form of cultural capital. Social networks offered youth the means to display their identities and "write themselves into such sites" (*ibid.*), but also to manage idealised self presentations in Goffman's (1998 [1959]) sense. Online profiles become the main means to self-management which Boyd argues is an acquired social skill shaped by experience. She sees social networks as places of self-development that are a vital means to access contemporary public life. Boyd says that the exceptional civic space they provide for the young should not be controlled, given that many studies of youth and media have a tendency to address the relationship as a moral or social problem. She warns (Boyd 2008a:137): "we are doing our youth a disservice if we believe that we can protect them from the world by limiting their access to public life. They must enter that arena, make mistakes, and learn from them. Our role as adults is not to be their policemen, but to be their guides".

While television and the Internet tend to be the predominant means of shaping identity and lifestyle for many young people, mobile telephony is a third key media for them in many countries (Nielson 2009). Cell phones now often combine chat with Internet access, revealing recent convergence trends (Jenkins 2006). Cell phone ownership has grown phenomenally in

Africa and the rest of the world giving birth to the concept of 'perpetual contact' among youth and adults (Katz & Aakhus 2006). For global youth, mobile phones intensify social communicativeness in terms of connection with friends, acquaintances and family. With this emergence has come the development of new frameworks of skill, norms and values that guide how communications take place (Stald 2008). Rules of etiquette for interaction emerge in terms of how to text, itself giving rise to a new abbreviated language. For African youth, mobile phones are fast becoming more than a significant means for instant contact with familiars. In a continent where many are separated from each other by migration from rural to urban areas, and where the poor in cities require information from the grapevine on the latest potential source of work and income, cell phones become a survival tool, a means to maintain family networks, as well as a generator of new forms of cultural integration (Horst & Miller 2006).

This summary of media and youth has touched on some of the main trends that will later be pursued for media and Windhoek young adults. While at this stage a limited general focus is given, a wider range of related studies is presented within the research findings, by way of critical contrast with what was found in the Windhoek setting. Power and media are now discussed.

## 2.6 Assessing media power in relation to globalisation

Power and globalisation must be addressed given the increasing presence of global media in Namibia. Most media theories are oriented to issues of media power in their assessment of the interplay of agency and institutionalised power in media settings. Concerns with globalisation have expanded this analysis to include impacts of media discourse in international contexts. This is regarded as overdue, and an essential direction (McMillin 2007; Curran & Park 2000). This section articulates the concept of media power explicitly and critically within concerns about cultural impacts of Western media, including an examination of the cultural imperialism thesis. An alternative conception that merges culture with power is examined through investigation of the idea of hybridity.

### 2.6.1 Explaining power: Foucault

Power can be defined as the degree of manoeuvre people have in relation to conditions of constraint, to interpretive ability as opposed to the capacity of other individuals or institutions to impose ideological narratives. Castells (2009:10) refers to it as "the relational capacity that

enables a social actor to influence asymmetrically the decisions of other social actors in ways that favour the empowered actor's will, interests and values". In politics and the social sciences power is frequently related to domination, coercion and violence. Alternative deconstructionist conceptions of power suggest productive possibilities for meeting social goals and effectively organising societies.

Foucault (1980) sees modern power as constitutive of identity, of forming subjects. It is not something that is 'done' to someone, but exists as established knowledge and practices. This is referred to as 'discourse' which is a disciplinary chain or system without fixed centres of power, with connections operating through institutions and individuals. Today "power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault 1980:92). Discourses shape and limit subjects and their identities, defining their existence and identifications, encapsulating who we are as man or woman, Namibian or South African, black or white. On a second level, Foucault states that the field of discourse is a site of struggle and contestation where power relations confront each other. Here there is emphasis on *reception* of discourse (general or mediated) whereby actors support or challenge discourse itself and the ways it plays on them. Resistant identities (in Castells's sense) are a possibility but not a given for Foucault due to the pervasive and entrenched disciplinary character of modernity (Foucault 1977:90-91).

### 2.6.2 Power as transformative capacity

Giddens builds on this productive conception of power, suggesting greater manoeuvre for agency than Foucault appears to allow, power itself being largely constituted by individuals working through and within rules of social structure. Power is seen here as 'transformative capacity': "the capability to effectively decide about the course of events, even where others might contest such decisions" (Giddens 1984:9). Actors' ability to alter situations or bring about intended outcomes is an expression of the 'duality of structure' whereby structural rules and resources are the basis for calculating agents' actions, rather than being a simple matter of constraint. Cohen (1987:280) comments that this approach significantly moves power *a priori* into agency, opening up productive potential for actors to 'make a difference'. Power and action are implicated *within* reflexive agency, although in unequal measure according to the competence of the actor.

McMillin (2007:3) has reservations about accounts of agency that overstate reflexivity in relation to media or other power forms. Structural power contexts are reduced to fields of

play where personal strategies are worked out, and opportunities calculated as a basis for action. This is not to deny that there has been an 'opening up' of choice in many geographic areas of late modernity, but this "completely sidesteps the issue of power" (McMillin 2007:7). The cultural landscapes in which choice is made are 'tempered by structures of power' which, in media contexts, involve capitalist corporate business and fierce global advertising campaigns to influence potential buyers.

Globalisation and matters of power are controversial and hotly debated in the social sciences. Globalisation involves growing patterns of interdependence of nations and peoples at economic, political and cultural levels (Waters 1995). Economic globalisation is argued to be older, as expansion of capitalist markets and colonial domination forged international linkages in the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries accelerated by industrialisation. The rise of international financial and corporate capitalism in the twentieth-century, combined with digital networks of communication and information flows from the 1980s, encapsulate what economic globalisation has now become (Dicken 2007). Castells (2000:440) argues that globalisation is a world of 'space and flows' that involve practices and processes. These result in social actions that are economic, political and symbolic, taking place through the hubs of cities, regions, markets, through electronic circuits of media or money flows. Flows are not placeless, he argues, although "the logic is" (Castells 2000:443), nor is the system person-less: organisations of 'cosmopolitan' dominant managerial elites are functional to globalisation, whether in industry, finance, multinational political entities, or media institutions. Elites make major decisions with global ramification, but within the networks that are in effect logically separate. They have 'power', but power which is functional and not to be confused with the placeless macro-levels of global power. Yet elites are secondary: pure power, for Castells, is global and networked. Power arises from symbolic manipulation of narratives and image from a technical base which is effectively invisible to their publics. Popular media culture is disguised as neutral entertainment, allowing the media and those who control it to capture 'their' version of reality and present it as real (Castells 2000:404).

*2.6.3 Globalisation, symbolic power and media*

Thompson (1995) drawing on Bourdieu (1990) characterises globalised mass media as having 'symbolic power'. Symbolic power utilises image, symbols and texts in the mass-transmission of news production and entertainment. Today symbolic power is uniquely predicated on the existence of media institutions, even though it is found in other sectors such

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as education or the church. However, the media are more technologically immediate in their influence, occupying a strategically important place in societies than other representations. Symbolic power is defined as (Thompson 1995:17)

> the capacity to intervene in the course of events, to influence the actions of others and indeed to create events, by means of the production and transmission of symbolic forms.

Three power advantages are suggested: *first*, 'intervention', whereby an event is both reported and interpreted in terms of standard media production practices, reveals the media's capacity to define news and shape particular ontological views of the world. *Second*, 'media influence' over the practices of individuals and groups through symbolic representations. *Third*, 'control over both production and transmission' makes media power one-sided against global publics. The rise of the Internet and social networking has been argued to have altered this imbalance since Thompson wrote this (Castells 2009).

On a cognitive level, Robertson (2002:8) links globalisation to an intensification of consciousness that people have of a world no longer little-known and distant, but compressed and directly experienced: to an awareness of places other than their immediate location. He calls this 'global consciousness', a 'single 'place' in which individual interactivity and actions have been enhanced. He agrees with Waters (1995) that it is a cultural as much as an economic system in which the individual gains manoeuvre beyond the constraint of local and national contexts. Tomlinson (1999:1) states that "globalisation lies at the heart of modern culture and that cultural practices lie at the heart of globalisation", insisting that the global cannot be properly explained without reference to this 'vocabulary of culture'.

Globalisation is therefore a form of expanded consciousness and cultural connectivity between global peoples, but also includes economic networks of material consumption. The economic and the cultural are closely associated, but the symbolic representations of consumer culture, with its flows of symbolic goods, are at the core of global connections. Tomlinson (1999:10) says that

> the way people make use of advertising texts may often be similar to the way they use novels and films. This is because they offer narratives (however ideologically suspect) of how life may be lived, references to shared notions of identity, appeals to self-image, pictures of 'ideal' human relations, versions of human fulfilment, happiness and so on.

This emphasises the ontological and profoundly cultural aspects of media power, although he is at pains to explain the ambiguity of the relationship between the individual and the narratives offered in the possibility to 'react back' at cultural inflows of the global, activating the reflexive possibilities of modernity for individuals.

Modern consciousness is now said to have both local and global aspects, in that people are constantly aware of their physical 'home' of everyday living, and the global transient life that bears down upon it. Both Robertson (2002) and Tomlinson (1999) see tension arising from this duality, creating a sense of 'difference' rather than a cosmopolitan global homogenisation, not in Castells's (2004) 'resistance' sense, but as a dialectical awareness of here and now, compared with the global 'out there'. This tension, according to Tomlinson, is at the heart of global culture itself, where consciousness has been 'deterritorialised' and the individual's ties to place or home weakened and no longer exclusive (Tomlinson 1999:20). Global culture represents contemporary actions of individuals projected into global settings, whereby they consume highly mobile goods and mediated narratives or set up lines of expropriation or resistance in favour of the local 'here'. He says that it is important to recognise that enhanced reflexivity and emergence of complex identities is a further outcome of globalisation. This means, in opposition to anti-globalisation writers such as Alexander (1996) and Castells (2004; 2000), that globalisation can be a basis of opportunity and, in certain contexts, of possible transference of power from structures such as the nation to agents or citizens. Tomlinson argues that globalisation cannot simply be seen as just another system of injustice, exploitation and oppression, globally writ large.

### 2.6.4 Appadurai's theory of globalisation

Appadurai (1996) argues along similar lines that populations are lifted out of former national cultural contexts and identity frames as global modernity 'opens up' their societies to a bewildering range of cultural and existential options. These offer "a new role for the imagination in social life" through novel economic and symbolic opportunities in which personal consumption and choice is central (Appadurai 1996:31). Actors are unmoored from previous social and cultural belongings of the old nation-state, although this is not unproblematic.

Globalisation ultimately brings rootlessness, alienation and distance between individuals. The critical problem is how people connect in this new system, and Appadurai argues that individuals must through media 'imagine' their connections, places and identities in the

global order. Appadurai points to the disorganised and over-reflexive character of global modernity, saying that (Appadurai 1996:32-3)

> the complexity of the current global economy has to do with certain fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture and politics that we have only just begun to theorize.

Modernity's current malaise is essentially cultural. Appadurai says that global disjunctures can be analysed through five dimensions or 'scapes': ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes. The first three refer to migratory movements, technological systems and global markets. *Mediascapes and ideoscapes* are more relevant to the Windhoek research in conceptualising repertoires of information, representation and meaning, electronically and virtually linking Namibians beyond their national territory to the global 'outside'. Mediascapes are the cultural basis for new 'imaginings', being: ontological options, fictions and cultural possibilities available to individuals, through which they seek out (often with difficulty) solid, anchored identities and connections with others. Agency is promoted through the heavily commercial character of global media, as actors become embroiled in material and symbolic consumption which is the basis of 'imagination as social practice' (1996:31). Collective identities weaken as selves pursue these practices. Media "create communities with no sense of place", in that they are 'deterritorialising', by which he means 'coming from everywhere and nowhere' (Appadurai 1996:29). Media blur distinctions between real and imaginary by presenting consumer fantasies for the self to inhabit. *Ideoscapes* have strong linkages with mediascapes, feeding into and through media, representing 'chains of ideas' for personal identity constructions. They are capable of linking people beyond personal identity, and can convey political ideas about freedom, rights and democracy unmoored from previous ideological connections of citizenship, class, gender and ethnicity (1996:36). This political dimension is possibly conflictual, as the Middle Eastern revolutions of 2011 and 2012 revealed, and new media were catalysts in providing communication and models for social change (*The Financial Times*, 25 February 2011).

Appadurai's important idea here is 'displacement' whereby past certainties of citizens in traditional national settings are shifted in favour of unstable global cultural flows that make meaning contingent. People occupy two disjunctural spaces in globalisation: an alluring cosmopolitan globalism and the more familiar but less novel local. However, nation-states battle to weaken global intrusion through attempts at regulation of their media spaces, a point McMillin (2007:37) has made. This is reflected in attitudes toward public and private media

in Namibia itself where government has intervened in editorial or broadcasting decisions. Such points of resistance have led to curbing of media, but also cultural adaption whereby mediascapes are forced to respond to differences in other cultures, leading to a merging of Western and local in terms of values, symbols and custom. Appadurai (1996) calls this cannibalisation, others hybridisation (McMillin 2007; Piot 1999), and Hebdige (1998) bricolage. All argue that 'mixings' of local and global culture does not necessarily confer control or mark out unique cultural spaces against global cultural flows, although there is potential to do so.

### 2.6.5 The cultural imperialism thesis examined and the alternative of hybridity

In Namibia, government frequently refers to past and 'present' colonialism. Foreign media are sometimes adduced as agents of imperialism, requiring state regulation (*The Namibian*, 3 May 2007). Views on cultural imperialism and media imperialism are frequently linked to discussions of power of the type reviewed above. Cultural imperialism refers to the political and economic capacity of (usually) rich Western nations to impose goods and values on other countries. This is often associated with the United States due to its technological sophistication and globally dominant media industries. Media imperialism suggests the ability to impose foreign media culture on indigenous cultures, usually less developed nations with weaker media systems. McPhail (2002:14) states that this 'electronic colonialism' results in "a set of foreign norms, values and expectations that, to varying degrees, alter domestic cultures, habits, values, and the socialization process itself". Much of this argument strongly reflects the manipulation thesis of Adorno's critique of mass culture. Schiller (1992) argues that American values have been extensively imposed through a one-way media flow benefiting transnational corporations, non-Americans being influenced to buy American goods, and thereby American ways of living. Media have allegedly become the right arm of United States foreign policy through dominance of film, television and news.

Some criticism has been directed at this thesis. Morley (2006:34-5) locates a number of problems which include its simplistic model of media flows, seeing audiences as passive recipients of foreign values, much like the early hypodermic model in media studies. This ignores the counter-flows of, for example, local production centres broadcasting local soap operas, drama or news. McMillin (2007) has said that the cultural imperialism thesis does not take into account social and cultural diversity in and between nations nor their capacity for dissent and rejection of ideological goods. She criticises both media imperialism and many

globalisation theories which neglect the concept of 'difference': that is "careful attention to differing postcolonial experiences … and awareness of difference among its subjects" (McMillin 2007:63). This is argued to be both the case for general experiences of globalising tendencies and in particular for reception of media. The cultural imperialism thesis is mostly dismissed as a 'single-effect' model of what foreign media 'does' in developing societies. Postcolonial encounters tend to be far more complex than this assertion of cultural homogenisation. There has been a recent tendency to supersede this thesis with a more convincing application using the counter-idea of hybridity. This has been undertaken in the cultural arena by postcolonial theory.

Hybridity has been referred to as one of the most disputed ideas in postcolonial theory although it has come to be widely valued in various accounts of globalisation (Prabhu 2007). There are three contexts in which it is normally discussed: biological, ethnic and cultural. The grafting of plants to produce resilient strains or new desirable 'hybrid' varieties are examples of the first, while a union of ethnically diverse peoples and identities in interrelationships might fit the second. Cultural hybridity is a concern of this research, and in the contemporary sense was first suggested by the Russian linguist Bakhtin (1981:358) who defined it as

> a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different levels of linguistic consciousness, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation, or by some other factor.

Bhabha (1994) built on this polyglotic conception of 'meeting points', applying it broadly to cultural processes within international settings where power relations exist as unequal. The idea of the postcolonial subject (sometimes called subaltern) is relevant here, being one who confronts the flows of global Western culture with his/her own reaction and resistance. Bhabha, like Bakhtin, is at pains to state that hybridity is never simply a merging of two binary opposites to produce an alternative variant or outcome. Rather, as Beckmann (2004:88) argues, it is a "blurring of binary codes" that challenges the usual juxtaposition of subject and object. Bhabha criticises Said's (1979) depiction of former colonial and contemporary power as a holistic all-embracing domination of colonial or postcolonial subjects, saying this ignores that such past or present 'possession' cannot be conceived as absolute or without resistance from those experiencing it.

Bhabha argues that all cultural systems are constructed in what he depicts as the 'third space of enunciation' which is described as an area of both opposition and ambivalence. Applying

postmodern theory's critique of modernity, itself subverting ideas of totality and all-embracing grand projects (applicable to colonialism itself), Bhabha (1994:37) insists that in cultural terms there can be no singular, purist or totalist conception of culture. This in turn

> makes the structure of meaning an ambivalent process [and] destroys the mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open and expanding code.

Bhabha is at pains to emphasise that cultural hybridities are historically specific and "emerge in moments of historical transformation and result in an in-between or liminal space" (Bhabha 1994:18). He therefore regards culture as constantly shifting and transformative in the practices of actors as they destabilise global culture at their various national points of contact with it, thereby making hybridity a permanent act of subversion. This suggests that there will always be hybridity because global cultural power constantly meets its points of resistance in the localities of subalterns. Hybridity is normal because resistance is unavoidable and perpetual. There is no suggestion here that hybridity resolves or pacifies the tension between two cultural positions. As Drichel (2008:605) says, it is a state that "holds the tension of oppositions and explores the spaces in between fixed identities through their continuous reiterations", while Young (1995) insists that hybridity represents a political strategy for oppressed peoples to present their own narrative against cultural and other forms of power in global settings.

Hybridity has been criticised for its vagueness, loose definitional qualities, and lack of clear delimitation in application. Prabhu (2007) has said that the term has not been sufficiently interrogated and problematised in the social sciences, being too loosely deployed and readily conflated with other terms such as creolisation, syncretism, diaspora or glocalisation. Yet he does see it as a means to a postcolonial group solidarity and basis for what he calls 'radical agency' among former colonial people. Easthope (1998) is sceptical that hybridity allows for the subaltern resistance that postcolonial theory assumes. While this theory celebrates difference and gives a sense of empowerment, as a political strategy it is limited and "is no real substitute for state power" (1998:346). His further concern is that writers like Bhabha do not sufficiently limit the scope of hybridity. He asks, under what specific historical conditions, in what context, and in what ways does it concretely operate? Aboul-Ela (2007) echoes these arguments insisting that it is essentially an empty term unless applied to concrete situations where the suppressed power of its meaning can be adequately established.

Applying hybridity to mediated culture, McMillin (2007) shows that American or Western media are strongly present in many countries, including developing ones, which import films and television programmes or buy in franchised formats such as game shows and soap operas. Her case-studies illustrate that media products often undergo hybridisation through adaption to local cultural expectations. Stadler (2008:352) has similarly shown these trends for South African music in her discussion of Kwaito as an incorporation of American Hip Hop with African rhythms, instruments and language.

Such a conception of hybridity is more about cultural power imposed than power compromised or contested in ways similar to those suggested by Bhabha, although a third possibility of *expropriation* suggests itself – a disempowering of the producer by the consuming subject. For example, Indianisation of Hollywood films results in heavy editing of movies to remove unclear or culturally inappropriate content, and dubbing into Hindi, often at variance with the intended English meaning. Western television shows are frequently copied and revamped with Indian storylines only partly resembling the original. Western advertising is also heavily copied in local productions, but again culturally filtered (McMillin 2007:125). In this respect, Kraidy (1999:474) asserts that "active audiences [have] resisted and re-appropriated media messages, reinventing them to their advantage in their daily lives". As a reformulation of the hybrid, Kraidy refers to this as 'glocalisation' and like Bhabha says that in global culture this can now be expected to be the norm.

McMillin (2007) agrees with both Kraidy and Bhabha concerning the powerful commercial nature of modern global media, yet her view is that there is undesirability in culture being relegated to a modernist/local hybrid: a mix of one thing with another to produce something which is neither. Commercial media and their play on local cultures and identities work to produce profit and enmesh populations in imaginary narratives. This sets limits on agency and projects for postcolonial nations to create their own spaces of representation and recognition within a global order.

Hybrid culture, despite its resistant properties, is not necessarily epistemologically or ontologically valuable (McMillin 2007:209). Contrary to both Young (1995) and Kraidy, Hall (1991:168) sees the contact point of global and local cultures as less about the media receptions of ordinary actors and subjects than about global capital 'speaking to' local capital. He explains that

global mass culture had a homogenizing impact on local values but recognized the role of local reception in shaping the communication process, seeing global culture as a peculiar form of capital which can only rule through other local capitals.

Hall's idea of hybridity, while recognising possibilities of subject agency, sees it as restrained by the domination of mediated hybrids created by capital accumulation. This is a very different and more pessimistic conception than those offered by postcolonial writers. This study will afford a degree of concrete application of the term to Namibian contextualisations. Easthope's (1998) assertion, that hybridity is too 'transcendental' in its general statements about flows and patterns of culture, can be overcome by operationalising it in settings such as Windhoek. Its relevance may, or may not, emerge from this empirical investigation of what might be happening within the liminal spaces in between the local and the global.

### 2.6.6 Democracy and social networks

The rapid rise of social networking through Internet media has raised questions about possible shifts or transference of power to individuals (Livingstone & Brake 2010). Opportunities arise for the presentation of the self to virtual 'others', with possibilities for online dialogues of more or less unlimited scope. Some writers have argued that the ability of 'new media' to communicate ideas and opinions, sometime forming online social movements, has changed the democratic parameters and dynamics of modernity by making users actual media producers (Atton 2001). Social networks de-institutionalise and de-professionalise previous media forms by allowing for a participatory voice and an instant, direct connection with potentially large sections of the global public. These in turn can answer each other through virtual exchanges that vastly extend normal face-to-face communication. Livingstone and Brake (2010:75) show how engaged young people have become in such processes. In 2007, 55% of 13 to.17 year olds in the United Kingdom had social network profiles.

Like the mobile phone with its SMS and digital camera facilities, Internet social networks create highly flexible and expressive possibilities for the individual. This has been described as the 'architecture of participation' and a means for a global participatory culture (Hartley 2005; O'Reilly 2005). Internet itself allows for personal web pages, fanzines,[21] social issue site including online social movements, all with interactive potential. Production possibilities

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[21] Derived from fan magazine: fanzines began in print media as publications for providing information on celebrities in music or film, migrating online with the rise of the Internet.

are high with many users presenting film or video, while sharing of content creates enormous electronic flows. Lüders (2008:698) argues that

> power relations are changing, and mass media institutions are no longer the only ones to produce messages for dissemination in public domains … Private individuals become important sources of information particularly concerning countries with a severe lack of freedom of speech.

This political advantage of social media was attested to in the 2005 London bombings when cell phone film from victims was broadcast on television and the Internet, and during the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and Libya in 2011 when Internet and cell phones were the chief means for participants to coordinate protest and propagate political opinion.

Livingstone (2010; 2002) has pointed to the flexible, individualising nature of new media, while cautioning about democratic or voluntaristic assumptions. The Internet, including social network sites, is often heavily commercialised and seeks especially to manipulate younger users, and privacy is frequently invaded. Assessment of media literacy is also an issue as skilled users, technically and culturally familiar with the multiple discourses and conventions of the Internet, will determine how new media can be used against power narratives, and what the drawbacks are. Social network sites like Facebook proved important for Windhoek participants, making these arguments relevant to the current research.

## 2.7 Conclusion

This literature survey has articulated the research direction and goals of this Windhoek-based analysis by conceptualising identity in relation to media and lifestyle consumption. Its purpose was to clarify key working ideas and theoretical positions guiding the research. Literature directly relevant is: Giddens (1998; 1991) on identity projects and lifestyle; Castells (2004) on resistance identities; Giddens (1991; 1984), Blumer (1986[1969]) and Bourdieu (1991; 1979) on reflexivity; Morley (1992; 1980) and Hall (2002[1974] 1997) on media and coding practices; and Bourdieu (1979) and Goffman (1974) on structure and social frames.

Globalisation is a larger conditioning frame representing inflows of global mediated culture, raising the question of how actors encounter it (McMillin 2007; Tomlinson 1999; Appadurai 1996; Thompson 1995). International media studies and communications theory have tended either to overplay the universalising Western character of cultural globalisation, or to assume a common experience of resistance and cultural defence. Western media have been viewed in

earlier first world studies as models for media expansion elsewhere (Lazarsfeld & Merton 1974 [1948]), and later as an irresistible global force bringing cosmopolitanism to the rest of the world (Held 2010; Robertson 2002). Postcolonial studies, on the other hand, frequently posit a distinct postcolonial identity of the subaltern collectively resisting cultural incursion from the powerful Western 'other'. While developing nations may share aspects of global economic and cultural experience, distinct national and personal media biographies exist in individual countries that must be investigated independently. Namibia may have similar media histories and culture to South African, but it would be erroneous to assume these are identical, or that identity and media negotiation are mirrored in both contexts. Assumptions about similarity tend to ignore conditions of 'difference'.

McMillin (2007:11) has argued that peripheral and postcolonial societies need to be "drawn into the central discourse of global media theory" from which they are marginalised or absent. It is necessary to articulate the points of their interconnectedness with external and local factors of media consumption, culture and identity through research into national distinctiveness, while retaining a perspective of shared mediated cultural experience in a world that has globally opened up local and national spaces. McMillan (2007:14) has asked

> in an era of globalisation, how do local media networks and audiences accommodate competing and overlapping narratives of global, national and local identities?

This question encapsulates the research problematic and the goals of this study on youth and identity in Windhoek.

# Chapter 3

# Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

The methodology chosen for this research is grounded theory (Charmaz 2006; Strauss & Corbin 1998) which is applied to investigate how a growing national and global media presence in Windhoek is implicated in the identity and cultural lifestyle spaces of young adults aged between 18 and 26 years. This age range represents the post-independence, postcolonial generation that has grown up in Namibia since 1990, and which has experienced increasing access to expanded media flows in the country. A study of what is happening regarding media engagements among these actors is relevant given that limited research exists for Namibia. Media impacts remain only tentatively examined in the case of identity. Research may also provide information on how media are contributing to cultural shifts in the country's capital city, Windhoek.

Grounded theory uniquely provides a systematic methodology that allows the building and construction of analysis directly out of the lives and experiences of participants. While it is primarily used to generate a general theory about specific social phenomena, its main value is the priority it gives to participants for rationalising about the social processes and practices they directly encounter. It recognises that social actors are well-placed to provide their own initial interpretation and meaning which is then interpretively built on and refined by the researcher. It is hoped that conversational encounters with people with an interest in media, and using media regularly in their daily lives, will give rise to insights into the character and patterns of their media relationships and identity constructions. McMillin's (2009:181) assertion that grounded theory "privileges procedure over interpretation" assumes that explanation and elucidation of social phenomena under study are automatically undermined by methodical procedure, whereas on the contrary it makes imaginative interpretation more efficient and effective through clear instruments for organising participant meaning. Analysis is not mutually exclusive of or incompatible with method, and later versions of grounded theory do much to avoid charges of positivism. Grounded theory is well-placed to provide entry into an understanding of mediated cultures and identity shifts in Windhoek.

Grounded theory can create confusion when described as 'methodology'. It has the dual character of encapsulating both theory and method: it is capable of producing new theories of

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empirical social situations, although having originated from a distinct sociological and philosophical tradition, symbolic interactionism and interpretive sociology and phenomenological philosophy (Blumer 1986 [1969]; Mead 1967 [1934]; Schutz 1967 [1936]; Berger & Luckmann 1966). The paradigm views social knowledge as solely derived from the meaning and interpretive processes of actors, from how they process reality, and states that valid empirical research methods must be consistent with this epistemological position. In this respect, it represents a theory that has given rise to a distinct *methodology*, itself capable of producing fresh, ongoing theories of social phenomena (Charmaz 2006; Denzin 2001; Denzin & Lincoln 2000).

This methodology will address questions of 'mediation', being the degree to which social actors are situated in cultural relationships with audio-visual media such as television and the Internet. It will be sensitive to matters of reflexivity and to the connection of media to identity and lifestyle managements. Media engagement entails exposure to new global (as well as local) ideas and symbols, but also struggles over what should be heard, seen and valued. Power and discourse tend to be implicated in media, lifestyle and identity projects, and represent a further level of empirical investigation. An interest in media power does not exclude a focus on reflexive potential that allows creative and pragmatic possibilities within mediated interactions (Thompson 1995). The research will centralise this subjectivity, while paying attention to processes or social frames within which actors manoeuvre, confront or normatively accept. From such encounters, concepts around these themes will be developed to capture participants' meaning, interpretation and experience. These can then be used to construct an explanatory theory of media and identity in Windhoek.

## 3.2 Justifying the choice of grounded theory methodology

An exploratory grounded theory approach was adopted to allow interviewees to speak about their experiences of media, giving rise to "a substantive theory which in turn helps to generate new grounded formal theories and to reformulate previously established ones" (Glaser & Strauss 1967:36). Grounded theory utilises an interpretist methodology in the sociological tradition of Mead's symbolic interactionism (1967 [1934]), and Schutz's phenomenology (1967 [1936]). Both emphasised the importance of self interpretation of social settings. Garfinkel's later ethnomethodology (1968), developed in the 1960s, revealed significant parallels with grounded theory in its exploration of meaning and interpretation of social situations through actors' own accounts or 'ethno-methods'. Glaser and Strauss's

(1967) pioneering first version of grounded theory drew directly on interpretive sociology, transforming its qualitative prescriptions into an empirical methodology. Contemporary grounded theory has become less prescriptively rigid and more flexible in its procedure. It has evolved rather than stood still. Practitioners have over the years engaged in reformulation and repudiation of its original tenets to produce new or revised versions (Charmaz 2006; Corbin & Strauss 1998).

A media study of this nature will arguably benefit from grounded theory application, being pragmatic and participatory in allowing for a conceptually-oriented generation of information and theory concurrent with, and based within, the emerging data of the field research itself (actor's meaning). It allows for an inductive interpretation of people's media encounters, and should clarify Namibian-based negotiative processes of media use. Grounded theory also reveals similarities with Geertz's (1973) 'thick description' method as both approaches seek to place people's emergent attitudes and meaning within their social "web of significance" (Geertz 1973:5). A further advantage of using grounded theory is that it is capable of providing a Namibianised theory and case study on media and identity. It allows for engaged research participation with Namibian actors within their own cultural settings, without overly-specific preconceptions about their mediated circumstances.

Utilising an interactionist approach primarily dependent on interview engagements might be disputed as an alternative, for example, to an ethnographic study which would use observational methods over dependence on participant statements. While observation was not excluded within interview settings,[22] the research was substantively dependent on participant meaning. An ethnographic approach would have been a different type of investigation, and as a researcher interested in media statements of actors from an interactionist paradigm, there seemed little reason to infer that participants were not themselves able to explain ways they instrumentally used media, independent of the need for observation. Insistence on combining an observational or ethnographic side is essentially a demand for verification to assess the accuracy or 'truth' of what participants say, an essentially positivist prerequisite. The value of observation is not disputed, but it goes beyond the methodological and sociological limits of this research. To aid verification, grounded theory provides an in-built procedure for cross-checking information through the 'constant comparative method', being the systematic

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[22] Much data from participants themselves did clarify practical as well as sociological and existential media engagements. During interviews, participants constantly checked cell phones, and their emotional shifts and reactions to questions revealed their deep connections with the type of media they spoke about.

comparison of each interview during fieldwork. Information from actors on media utilisation can be contrasted and unusual or doubtful statements isolated. Grounded theory has an ability to corroborate evidence and meaning, although its procedure is different to conventional positivistic social science. However, alternative methodologies such as ethnography will undoubtedly be beneficial for future Namibian media research.

### 3.2.1 Grounded theory for reflexive exchanges in interviews

A qualitative methodology approach was chosen that flexibly applied Charmaz's (2006; 2000) 'constructivist' version of grounded theory which had developed out of the work of Strauss and Corbin (1998; 1994). Qualitative research methods are suited to actional fieldwork of this type, being sensitive to investigations of how actors construct their social worlds and rationalise their generation of meaning. It represents a methodology that conceptualises social reality as constructed through language and general societal interaction, allowing for in-depth and rich conversational interviews based on exploration of the primary research questions (Bauer, Gaskell & Allen 2000; Bartlett & Payne 1997). Qualitative approaches can frequently dispense with interviews by engaging in critical, interrogative textual analysis, as in critical discourse theory (Tate 2007; Pêcheux 1995). However, in grounded theory research interviewing is a crucial starting point.

Interaction in an interview situation is a linguistic exchange in which identity is operationalised and expressed from the standpoint of interviewee and researcher. The researcher is never an objective participant, but is involved in the exchanges of meaning that are taking place. Riach (2009:366) has argued that interviews can benefit from what she calls 'reflexive exchanges' that encourage participants not only to articulate taken for granted attitudes and practices, but also to be fully involved in understanding why they are being interviewed. The grounded theory interview process sees the interviewer and interviewee as occupying two identity positions jointly exploring research. However, it is the researcher alone who ultimately has the responsibility to construct a theory of media and identity but out of the grounded meaning and interpretations arising from the original interviews (Charmaz 2006).

Grounded theory provides the basis for the exploration of how young Windhoek adults reflexively or unreflexively consume and are influenced by audio-visual media (film, television, music and the Internet including social media) and print media (newspapers, books and magazines). The method is capable of capturing a picture of the socio-cultural urban

matrix of consumption, lifestyle and identity construction within Windhoek, and of generating an explanation of and a theory of how the media are implicated in contemporary social processes of identity construction. It is flexible and 'free' enough to capture both minimal and substantive media behaviours.

### 3.3 Grounded theory: which version?

This research relies on the work of Charmaz (2006; 2000). Her 'constructivist' version of grounded theory differs from the classic grounded theory approaches of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1994, 1990) being built out of the generic version by Glaser and Strauss (1967), also revealing a debt to Strauss and Corbin (1998; 1994). The Charmaz version "provides a systematic analytic approach to qualitative analysis ... because it consists of a set of *explicit* [emphasis added] strategies" (Charmaz 2000:514). These incorporate a clear step-by-step research process that includes built-in self-correcting techniques in relation to data collection which keep *a close research connection* with the unfolding reality conveyed in the interviews.

Grounded theory is not a mechanical replication of respondents' views as some qualitative approaches can be, and is more than the mere gathering of opinion. It provides a methodical way of organising and contrasting people's views and meanings, and generating concrete explanations of these. As Corbin and Strauss state, it is a procedure used to develop a well-integrated set of concepts that explain what we study; it uncovers relevant conditions and processes; it determines how actors respond to those conditions (Corbin & Strauss 1990:5).

### 3.3.1 Rejecting positivism

Constructivist grounded theory rejects positivistic objectivity on the part of the observer (the interviewer/researcher). It posits the *incorporation of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee* into its central methodology, in rejection of assumptions about independence and objectivity of the researcher (Charmaz 2000:524). The interviewer is a facilitator of information rather than an over-subjective interferer or someone separate from and 'above' the interview. The shaping of information from the interviews is a joint interactive enterprise with participants. Charmaz (2006, 2000) is distinctive in overtly incorporating a symbolic interactionist *constructivist* element into the research frame regarding social reality constructions. Pre-Charmaz versions either implicitly (Corbin & Strauss 1998, 1994) or explicitly (Glaser 1998, 1992) revealed positivistic traits that assumed the *objectivity* of the

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academic investigator in relation to research subjects. Glaser implies researchers are 'above' and methodologically separate from the actors they interview. One 'goes in' to the field of actors' viewpoints and derives scientifically 'reliable' grounded codes and categories from them directly, and this produces a logically emerging theory that 'authentically' represents a frozen moment of reality in objective fashion. The researcher is the vessel and conduit of extracted knowledge, but stands at a distance.

Corbin and Strauss modified this position by providing, albeit reluctantly, some recognition that the researcher is more embedded in the research field than Glaser admits. Corbin says that leaving the researcher out of the interviewed actor's interpretive process is 'difficult', but that we need to try to keep a distance by 'sticking to the data' rather than to our preconceptions (Corbin 1998:123). Charmaz disagrees on this point, asking: what is 'the data'? How is it built up, and through what constructionist process? For her, researchers can never objectively be 'above' the interview nor the world of meaning-construction they seek to study. She captures the essence of Corbin's comment, and converts it from a methodological problem into a logical element of the research process: researchers become interactively and intimately immersed in research, rather than being independent observers who 'discover' data from a distance. The research codes and categories generated later to explain an actor's utterances and meaning derive from the researcher as much as the actor: they jointly build the reality through the research, whether they recognise it or not. The point is to *know it*. Personal interpretation of the context is enmeshed with participants' own viewpoints to the extent that the researcher consciously or unconsciously 'works with them' during qualitative research. The researcher's own interpretation of the research situation is constantly present.[23]

Academic researchers rarely work with theoretical or practical paradigms with which they disagree. For the success of any research design, it is important that researchers feel a strong degree of correspondence between a chosen research paradigm and their own beliefs and knowledge about the nature of reality (Mills, Bonner & Francis 2006:6). Choosing qualitative methods over quantitative is itself a value judgement, an expression of the need for correspondence, and reflects a reality preference as well as adherence to one theory of

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[23] Interviews suggest a 'balance of power' between researcher and the person interviewed. To some extent the researcher imposes frames, categories, interpretations and statuses on the situation from the very start. Up to a point, this is inevitable. How would research get done otherwise? But researchers must recognise that research is a privileged interpretation of 'reality', while at the same time being balanced with the accounts of the people interviewed. Research should build upon actors' meaning which must not be distorted with too many preliminary theories or models at the outset.

knowledge or another.[24] Selecting constructivist grounded theory, deriving from interpretive philosophies, for media-identity research represents a congruent level of preference in line with the researcher's own ontological and epistemological values.

The original statement of grounded theory that the research must ignore previous literature and theory on the topic of study (Glaser & Strauss 1967:37) ignores that the epistemological starting point of grounded theory indicates a pre-existing theoretical position. Grounded theory shares a strong affinity with interpretative studies, mainly symbolic interactionism which complements grounded theory and closely parallels its central sociological assumptions (Charmaz 2000:513). It is 'people-oriented' in focus, and is used for producing rich studies with depth and insight regarding actors' constructions of knowledge and meaning out of experience (Charmaz 2000:515; Garfinkel 1968). Vitally, in the context of this research, interactionist perspectives implicit in and expressed by grounded theory will provide the frame of reference for interviewees to speak on the subject of their own experiences of rationalising and engaging with media. Both interactionism and grounded theory assume: (a) that social reality arises from meaning generated by the reflexive self; (b) that meaning is interpretively negotiated between selves; (c) that reality is an ongoing process that is constantly being re-made; and (d) that multiple realities and interpretations are frequently possible but that background expectancies (rather than fixed structures) condition our choices (Blumer 1986 [1969]; Garfinkel 1968; Mead 1967[1934]).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1998), after his methodological break with Strauss, were at pains to ignore or screen-out this affinity with interactionist principles, requiring researchers to go to the field with a blank state of mind thereby avoiding imposition of values that might make the research field 'impure'. They advised (Glaser & Strauss 1967:37)

> ignore the literature of theory and fact on the area under study … so that you can maintain your fresh gaze.

The research situation is intended to suggest its own theory, rather than have one imposed on it. The researcher occupies an objective position above the context of their scrutiny. Later versions of grounded theory questioned this. Strauss and Corbin (1990) introduced various

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[24] This may suggest that a theory is already being imposed before the research has been concluded – a methodological travesty for the early grounded theory typified by Glaser and Strauss (1967) which insists on both a cognitive and theoretical *tabula rasa* from the outset. Yet the choice itself of allowing people interviewed to talk about their lived experiences immediately suggests a theoretical standpoint. This implies that we are almost never 'theory-free' even if we might believe this. Charmaz (2006) sees no problem with theory tentatively guiding the initial research, given that it is always there anyway. The requirement of being explicit about its presence in order to be in control of the research setting is alone needed.

techniques such as their 'axial coding' approach used to specify properties and dimensions of generated categories. Axial paradigms force the researcher to look at conditions or contexts, strategies of action/interaction and their consequences, to reveal intentions and patterns of social action. A coding frame is meant to guide how we see what actors have told us (Strauss & Corbin 1990:13).

Charmaz insists that ontologies and epistemologies invariably precede research (Charmaz 2006:15):

> Neither observer nor observed come to a scene untouched by the world. Researchers and research participants make assumptions about what is real, possess stocks of knowledge, occupy social statuses, and pursue purposes that influence their respective views and actions in the presence of each other.

There is, therefore, a conscious practical need to incorporate explicitly stated positions into research schema. Rather than be 'blank' and objective to the setting, the researcher's knowledge and familiarity of the ethnographic context (in this case, Namibia and Windhoek) may prove useful for understanding nuances beneath the surface of certain answers, and allow probing in fruitful directions. To screen out both theoretical preconceptions and knowledge of the locale may make the researcher miss key cultural or other references that may enrich the quality of the interview. This is an important reason to avoid overtly positivist or objectivist standpoints at the outset of the research.

### 3.3.2 Limitations of grounded theory method

Grounded theory, as any methodology, is not without limitations. Bryant (2002) is critical of what he regards as its naïve inductionism and potential for uncritical over-reliance on participant statements. He argues that personal meaning can be taken too readily at face value, without sufficient verification procedures being deployed. Goldthorpe (2007:77) has similarly accused it of 'extreme inductivism' and 'adhoccery' which produces a theory believed to rely too heavily on subjective data sources (actors) and not falsifiable in terms of standard mainstream empirical research.

Mjøset (2005) defends the paradigm against doubts about adequate falsification and verification procedures, seeing verification as a continuous part of grounded theory through its constant comparative method: interview statements are regularly contrasted rather than crudely accepted, being cross-checked for thematic similarity and difference; thus grounded theory offers a critical and analytic induction that tries to avoid reification of an actor's

commentary. Unusual or incongruent information or meaning not repeated in other interviews will be insulated and provisionalised, becoming potentially excluded from the emergent patterns or processes of media and identity embodied in the final theory.

Denzin (2006) argues that comparative procedures can be used to substantiate the value or validity of what is said. This may involve use of a combination of verifying research methods, called triangulation; or, within the interview situations, corroborative comparison of interviews to ascertain consistency of statements and meaning. The research used this second form, corroboration, with several participants being asked for follow-up interviews to enquire further about novel or unusual information previously obtained. This offered opportunities to cross-check the reliability of initial contributions for possible exaggeration or mis-description. Denzin (2006) argues that this methodological substantiation allows for successful validation through critical revisiting of participants' comments, although it is recognised that these specific criteria are unlikely to satisfy conventional positivist researchers.

Buroway (1991) has criticised grounded theory for narrow theory production and its dislocation from other theoretical standpoints. He alleges that both at the start of and at the end of research external theory is deliberately distanced and not permitted to inform or enrich the method, an untenable position in his opinion. The final grounded theory becomes restricted, without wider applicability beyond its initial case context. While favourable to this method, Goulding (2001) refers to the 'unwiseness' of grounded theory screening out previous information, ignoring that theory valuably guides all stages of research. She points out that later grounded theory significantly modified its original position, as exemplified in the work of Strauss (1998; 1994; 1990) and Charmaz (2006; 2000) which conditionally allows sensitivity to previous theoretical standpoints. Mjøset (2005:385) maintains that minimising the influence of other literature limits dangers of projecting preconceived theory on fresh social setting which might otherwise radically distort the case under study.

A further critical limitation noted by Buroway (1991) is that grounded theory cannot say anything valid about macro level processes. It describes small scale micro situations which do not inform about wider social currents, a criticism expressed also by Giddens (1998; 1984) who argues that interpretist and action analysis, typified by the work of Garfinkel and Goffman, have problems theorising connections of actors to broader macro-structural social conditions. Micro-macro linkage is sometimes tenuous and ambiguous in grounded theory

results, although opposing criticism may be made of structuralism or critical theory that they are rarely based in concrete actional contexts. Grounded theory at least engages in a constant dialogue between evidence and ideas, and does not neglect broader processes (Ragin 2000).

What are the limitations intrinsic to the chosen methodology, constructivist grounded theory? Glaser (2002) is scathing of the constructivist approach established by Charmaz (2000) which he regards as descriptive rather than concept-driven. While seeking to accurately reflect what participants say about their experiences, he states that latent abstract patterns of reality are sacrificed and higher level conceptualisation downgraded. This is argued to make grounded theory a 'poor qualitative method' which reduces it to interpretations of how individuals see and construct 'their' meaning, rather than how the researcher can objectively generate valid abstract patterns of what is going on. He adds that the insertion of the researcher into the development of meaning within fieldwork is irrelevant, and undermines the method's integrity. Glaser (2002:526) refers to constructivism as "impressionistic research" that is little more than a narrative "talk story". However, Glaser demonstrates low prioritisation of actual content of participant discourse which is merely a means toward the (his view) more important primary stage of abstract reality conceptualisation forming part of theory construction. Charmaz (2006) sees no reason why grounded theory cannot represent both criteria by displaying vital participant meaning, while also generating a valid theory about social processes from that meaning.

This study recognises that the eventual theory established out of the fieldwork will necessarily be a synthesis, rather than a substantial break with earlier media theories. Creating a new Kuhnian paradigm from scratch is not an intended (or realistic) ambition here, but it is hoped that a distinctive and informative Namibian theory of youth, media and identity will emerge using constructivist grounded theory, despite the limitations referred above.

## 3.4 Sampling for interviews

Actors' meaning and interpretation of media engagement, lifestyle and identity negotiations were revealed through in-depth interviews with willing participants. The selection of interviewees did not attempt to be scientifically 'representative' of the Windhoek population. The intention was not to measure media negotiation and access, but to interpret, analyse and develop a working theory of mediated social processes from participant accounts within the Windhoek matrix. Representation and measurement are generally beyond the goals and

principles of grounded theory (Puddephatt 2006; Glaser 2002). Snowball sampling and stratified sampling were used to select the participants before interviewing.

### 3.4.1 Criteria for sampling in the Windhoek matrix

The Windhoek matrix[25] was chosen as the location for fieldwork, and refers to the urban geographic character of Namibia's capital city, also denoting spaces of class, race and gender-divided statuses that reflect different socio-economic backgrounds. Fields of culture and power shaped by distinct histories and biographies exist within this setting.

Windhoek is relevant for research because it has the largest urban population in Namibia at over 280,000 people (2001 Census). This figure is likely to be substantially higher when the results of the 2011 Census are published. Windhoek has the greatest volume of economic activity and consumption in the country, with diverse lifestyle patterns compared with non-urban areas. Youth culture is emergent and vibrant, and the city is a magnet to young people from other parts of the country that come for work or to attend the large number of higher education institutions (Mufune 2008). Windhoek provides a setting where access to media is good and where media growth has been pronounced since independence, particularly from 2007 when Internet availability rose substantially (Larsen 2007; Namibia Broadcasting Corporation 2005). Windhoek is a good base for capturing patterns of meaning and reflexive possibilities around the media practices of young adults.

Informants were selected using *stratified sampling* through criteria of *age*, *residential location*, *class*, *ethnicity* and *gender* (Mills, Bonner & Francis 2006). The selected *age range* for the participants was *18 to 26 years*, as this was thought hypothetically to capture the experiences of young adults who had grown to maturity hand-in-hand with the rise of media in the country since Namibian independence. These have been referred to as 'post-struggle' or 'free-born' youth (Fox 2005a). An interest in how this group of young adults, rather than older Namibians, was responding to and using media was central to the aims of the research.

*Residential location* was used to choose participants by residency from the following areas of Windhoek: Katutura (East and West), Khomasdal, Eros/Klein Windhoek, Olympia and Pioneers Park. These locations tended to collectively characterise the socio-economic and

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[25] The term 'social matrix' is intended to convey the physical context of space or place: city, town or village, differing residential areas, buildings and landmarks. On a human level it is relationships and social interactions, intimate and general, including (unequal) power relations. It represents the sense that people have of their place of residence in terms of their knowledge and utility of it, as well as degrees of emotional attachment. In this study, it refers to the city of Windhoek and the social actors that give it its living dynamic quality.

ethnic patterns of the city. Geographic selection ensured inclusion of participants from varied income, class, and ethnic backgrounds. Windhoek continues to retain relative racial and ethnic separation as an 'after-effect' of former colonial urban policies, whereby people were expected to reside in some areas while being excluded from others. As a consequence, degrees of significant socio-spatial separation persist (Pendleton 2000).

*Class* criteria based on access to income were chosen as relevant due to economic and social inequality experienced in Windhoek, and because class is argued to have increased in relevance in addition to racial stratification (Winterfeldt, Fox & Mufune 2005; Melber 2004). In Gini coefficient measures, Namibia performs worse than most other nations, placing it among the top five most unequal countries internationally (United Nations Development Programme 2011). Class is deployed as socio-economic factors determine intensity of media consumption. Class also embodies cultural distinctions in terms of the habitus of consumer taste and cultural preference, in Bourdieu's sense (1979). Therefore, class was treated as a cultural as well as an economic category. Participants were generally assessed in terms of low or high income, or by occupation; for example, shop workers, car and security guards, bank clerks, administrative or government worker and student, with parental background clarifying class location of students.

Sampling by *ethnicity* chiefly attempted to capture black and white distinctions in terms of how ethnicities similarly or differently engaged with media. Racial markers of 'whiteness' and 'blackness' in Krabill's (2010:9) sense, were a useful means to uncover potentially different media engagement along ethnic lines of practice. While sampling by ethnicity favoured black or white distinctions due to the significance of this in colonial times, participants were also sought from other groups. Representativeness was not strictly attempted in selection.

Sampling by *gender* proved important to the overall structure of the research given that gender markers emerged strongly from the fieldwork. Gender factors influenced how men and women used or responded to gendered media content, and their practices showed variation along gender lines. Other studies have pointed to the necessity of incorporating gender into media research, revealing liberating female experiences through engagement with modern media (Gauntlett 2008). Slightly less than fifty per cent of the sample was female.

*3.4.2 Snowball sampling*

Stratified sampling determined the choice of interviewees and was combined with *snowball sampling,* also known as chain-referral sampling. This is a non-probability technique to locate participants in specific social networks of friends, family and acquaintances, being useful for finding difficult-to-access individuals particularly in places like Windhoek where ethnicities continue to reveal high degrees of separation from each other (Bernard 1995). Initial interviewees nominated people they knew by placing them in contact with the interviewer for subsequent interviews in the manner of continuous links in a chain (Castillo 2009). The snowball method is therefore a form of *convenience sampling* that drew into the interview process people with experience of, and interest in, mediated interaction. It made participants relatively easy to find, but with one crucial drawback.

If a chain of referral remained too close socially to the original participant, information and meaning became repetitious and saturated as groups of participants tended to share similar lives and social backgrounds. New participants therefore needed to be located to begin a new chain of referral, and this required going outside or beyond existing chains. *Stratified sampling* techniques led to new introductions, and started fresh flows of information from new groups of participant networks (Mason 2002). In this respect, stratified sampling was combined cautiously with snowball sampling to ensure variation of participants and experiences, as has been recommended (Salganik & Heckathorn 2004). While random sampling is an approach giving a high probability that any member of a population will be chosen, stratified sampling takes an appropriate number of people from each stratum or sub-group of a population with the required social characteristics, being described as a useful means to revitalise the interview process when snowball sampling is used (Silverman 1999:112).

Snowball sampling has been described as 'respondent driven' sampling (Heckathorn 2002). Sampling reliability and regeneration of participant information and meaning were ensured by combining it with stratifies sampling to establish fresh insights into identity and media until information saturation was reached. Maintaining a stratified dimension to participant selection was necessary throughout the evolving snowball effect to keep close control of the direction of the research (Noy 2008).

### 3.4.3 Where participants were found and interviewed

Participants were found in places where 'naturally occurring' populations existed (Pelto & Pelto 1997). They were approached at educational institutions such as Windhoek College of the Arts, the Polytechnic of Namibia and UNAM. These locations were chosen because of the large number of young adults that congregated and studied at these sites. As heavy users of media, students were an obvious group from which to seek information and they constituted half of the sample. Interviews with students took place at the locations where they studied or at the researcher's office, or in places of leisure such as cafés. The choice of interview venue was by agreement with the participants, with the intention that they chose places where they were at ease.

Other 'naturally occurring' populations were found in mainstream public places such as shopping and entertainment centres. The Maerua Mall complex on the east side of the city proved ideal for interviewing participants or gaining permission to do so. Maerua Mall is Windhoek's main entertainment centre where the city's only cinema is situated, along with numerous shops and restaurants. It proved a rich location for obtaining information given that it was heavily frequented by young people at evenings and weekends who liked to 'hang out' and promenade there, being a popular place to see and be seen. It represented 'neutral territory' where youth of all ethnic and class backgrounds congregated. The location also made interviews possible with lower income workers not easily accessible elsewhere such as shop workers, waiters, car guards and security personnel. They were questioned during lunch breaks in cafes or at seating areas outside take-away food outlets. Such public interviews were limited to between 30-60 minutes given the time constraints for these participants, but produced interesting and unexpected findings. Data was frequently dense and interesting. Approaching people in this manner shifted and enriched the nature of the evidence in ways that might otherwise have been missed. The conventional research view that outside homes or places of leisure people are less relaxed, and behaviour and speech less natural, does not necessarily seem correct. Studies show that interview situations may be regarded by participants as 'unnatural events', with researcher's intrusion into intimate private spaces like the home being perceived as deeply invasive. The skill of the interviewer must be to put participants at ease and establish appropriate conversational interaction wherever encounters occur (Arksey & Knight 1999).

For purposes of confidentiality, participants were given the option to be identified in the final report either under a pseudonym, their first name, or a nickname which most opted for. Privacy and discretion in terms of sources of information were maintained at all times. As the researcher exclusively undertook the fieldwork, it was possible to preserve participant confidentiality effectively.

### 3.4.4 Data collection methods

Snowball sampling combined with stratified sampling was used to find the participants at the geographic locations described. There were three stages to data collection:

1. In the first stage, 6 *pilot interviews* were undertaken to test the viability and effectiveness of the qualitative media and identity questionnaire. Three men and three women between the ages of 18 to 26 were chosen from students at UNAM. Interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were tape recorded. As a result, questions were adjusted in line with the core themes and patterns of media use that emerged. For example, it transpired that the Internet and social networks required stronger addressing, so questions relating to this were added. These pilot interviews were not included in the final interviews due to the revision of questions.

2. In the second stage, 44 *individual interviews* took place in various locations across Windhoek from January to July 2011. These were with 24 males and 20 females in addition to 4 *joint interviews* undertaken with 2 people at a time: a total of 8 individuals in a group that fell short of being a properly constituted focus group. As participants approached in public places were sometimes with companions, all individuals were included, and the joint sessions with paired participants proved to be some of the most successful sessions. Interviews varied between 30 minutes to over one hour in length, subject to the time participants were prepared to offer. The stratified criteria were adhered to at all times by ensuring a broad range of participants from different backgrounds and residencies. In line with grounded theory methods, certain questions reached saturation point after around 20 interviews, and saturated questions were scaled down, replaced or removed. For example, questions relating to media practices in childhood quickly produced similar findings, making continuation repetitious and unnecessary. Participants were tape recorded in most cases except when they objected, and interviews were instead written up. In all interviews notes

and memos were taken to record observations and ideas emerging during conversations. This is recommended by core versions of grounded theory.

3. In the third stage, 6 *focus groups* were undertaken with a total of 18 participants of mixed gender. It had been intended to undertake 8, but it proved difficult to get participants to attend or be available at the agreed venues in all instances. Each group varied between three and four individuals, which has been described as an acceptable range (Nkwi et al. 2001). These produced good exchanges and met the aims of generating interactive discussions on chosen topics.

Focus groups participants conversed on key themes taken from the original questionnaire where saturation had not been reached, and when it was thought further in-depth enquiry was required. These themes were: values and culture, the Internet and social networks (two groups), American popular entertainment, Namibian media, and last, gender and media. Focus group discussions offered the opportunity for interactive rather than purely individualistic exchanges, and allowed exploration of the themes under the moderation of the interviewer. Focus groups made possible a conversational social dynamic that could not be attained in individual interviews, providing debate and argument which has been said to usefully establish lines of difference and articulation of position in relation to key research themes (Bauer, Gaskell & Allum 2000).

If at the start of any of the interviews Windhoek individuals revealed their use of media to be non-existent or there was a limited interest in media, the interview was brought to an early close. New participants were then sought.

## 3.5 Interviewing in grounded theory media research

All interviews were qualitative and based on semi-structured questions allowing for relatively free responses in line with the chosen research themes. An interview is an evolving research situation which must be open and responsive to inflows of information. Questions were flexible rather than closed to revision (Mason 2002; Denzin & Lincoln 2000). Interviews entailed frequent supplementary probe or 'prompt' questions which sought further depth on issues or statements from participants. Questions were open enough to allow participants themselves to freely comment on favoured media. Phenomenological rationalisations were also allowed to emerge, and supplementary probe questions frequently obtained deeper explanation of lifestyle and identity ontologies.

For research questions and goals to achieve their aims empathy is required between participants and interviewer (Bernard 1995). An interview should be a conversational exchange where the participant feels comfortable and information flows freely. Positivist research discourages getting 'too close' in this way to interviewees, but the interview is never one-sided, with the researcher a mere observer of objective verbalised actions. Sensitive and sympathetic interviews are a means to get closer to the issues being discusses, and a cool, formal and 'objective' interview may not create a relaxed atmosphere for this. An empathetic conversational interview approach, flexibly undertaken around semi-structured questions, contributed to achieving chosen media research goals.

*3.5.1 Continuous comparative analysis during interviews*

A key technique of grounded theory is the 'constant comparative method' (Charmaz 2006; Glaser & Strauss 1967). Data processing was continuous during interviews; the first interview was compared to the next, and so on until all possible information and coding had been gathered to provide rich data (Charmaz 2006:113)

Grounded theory is *comparative and interpretative,* forging causal links between emergent levels of information on media in which memoing and coding practices work intimately together (Charmaz 2006; Glaser & Strauss 1967). Interviews were contrasted to find relevant linkages, convergent and divergent attitudes between the participants as a basis for generating core descriptive codes which, in turn, established crucial social patterns and processes.

*3.5.2 Constructivism during the interview stage: Being reflexively aware*

Social meaning as well as research knowledge is always 'constructed', being essentially interpretive (Berger & Luckmann 1967). Interviews were micro-societies of interaction involving interviewer and participant. As Charmaz (2006:27) points out: "An interview is contextual and negotiated". Interviewer and interviewee engage in creating an account of the reality under scrutiny. This was true of the construction of media reality in Windhoek through the interview process. Respondents may distrust or misinterpret the intentions of the interviewer, and may react to the researcher's class, gender, race or age positioning during interviews. Interviewers also tend to harbour their own prejudices: unrecognised, these might disrupt the course of the interview. An English white male researcher carrying the status of 'middle class' academic, asking Windhoekers about their engagement with media and its symbols, is baggage-heavy with social assumptions. This combines with the researcher's own

ways of seeing and assessing reality, partly personal, partly patterned by being 'of' a particular social world. Ideas about media and society may have been shaped by personal experiences of consuming media, by theories previously engaged with, as well as by specific media research interests and questions. This was a methodological issue requiring recognition during the fieldwork, and interview interactions tried to reflexively take into account different status constructions of class, gender and ethnicity.

### 3.5.3 Sensitivity to power agendas in interview accounts

Research interviews need to be 'knowing' of social agendas underlying what people say, whether coming from interviewees themselves or from society's broader social or political institutions. Namibia, as elsewhere, is a channel for discourses, new and old. Global media have expanded in the country over the last generation, bringing with them powerful commercial imperatives. Negative as well as positive factors tend to be bundled up in these importations (Fox 2005a; Tomaselli 2003). Locally, post-liberation politics exert demands on citizens to participate in national projects of nation-building parallel with state insistence on loyalty and unity, often in contradiction of the democratic right to support opposition parties and programmes (*The Namibian*, 27 February 2009). All such processes are bringing change to and imposing pressures on the lives of those who encounter them and are potential factors which influence the course of interviews and interviewees' responses. Charmaz (2006:27) clarifies this general problem, stating that

> both powerful and disempowered individuals may distrust their interviewers, the sponsoring institution, and the stated purpose of the research, as well as how the findings might be used. During interviews [they] may recite public relations rhetoric rather than reveal personal views, much less a full account of their experiences. [They] may raise silent or overt questions about whether the interviewer represents officials or advocates – and test his or her loyalties.

The interview strategies in the Windhoek context tried to recognise and show sensitivity to these factors rather than screen them out, as Strauss and Corbin (1990) had advised. This approach assisted in creating better data and data analysis for the study of media.

### 3.6 Memoing analysis in grounded theory media research

Memo writing was a central technical device in this grounded theory approach. It was used as a 'marking and noting' activity threaded through the research design leading directly to the creation of codes and the eventual grounded theory. Charmaz (2006) says that memos "form

the core of your grounded theory" (94). Memoing accompanied the research from the beginning of interviews to their end, and a second stage of memoing took place after the final interviews. The notes from the memos fundamentally assisted the development of the central theoretical categories.

### 3.6.1 Use of memos in the research

Memos fine-tuned the research and logically structured its progression, also allowing for a constant thread of control throughout. The researcher used memos to make comparative links between the codes and categories as they accumulated. Glaser and Strauss called this 'integration' which occurs after "a substantive model has sufficiently emerged" (1967:42-43). Memoing was used to record the following:

- Ideas and events arising during interviews, and contributing to the eventual theory;
- Initial codes and ideas suggested by the interviews;
- Non-verbal information based on observation of what was happening in the research situation;
- Emerging patterns and properties as earlier interviews were compared with subsequent ones. Memos were central to the grounded theory demand for 'constant comparison' of interviews as they marked out or recorded significant stages in the development of both the emerging theory and picture of what is happening in Windhoek in terms of participant engagements with media;
- Spontaneous insight into connections with already familiar media/sociological theories and cases. These were revisited in the formulation of the final grounded theory that required the comparison of emerging theory with earlier media, identity and reflexivity literature.

### 3.6.2 Selecting or discarding memo information

Memos were sifted for relevance and information and selectively used. Not every memo contributed to the understanding or interpretation of media use and identity negotiation, although the richness and thickness of the eventual theory was achieved through detailed memos. Several memoed concepts were discarded as they failed to adequately or abstractly capture actors' processes of media engagement. Charmaz explains: "memos provide a record of your research and your analytic progress [and] will form the core of your grounded theory" (Charmaz 2006:94).

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Memos are described in the literature as 'spontaneous rather than mechanical' in character (Charmaz 2006:80). Yet, they are more than simply the jotting down of ideas – being rather the start of systematic analysis. Memoing, like initial and focused coding activity, proceeded during the course of the Windhoek interviews, continuing until core codes and theoretical categories were established at the research conclusion.

*3.6.3 Early and advanced memoing*

Memoing was undertaken in two stages: at early and advanced levels.

(a) *Early memoing* was a creative free play of ideas suggested by what was heard in the interviews (Charmaz 2006). Ideas were written down or 'memoed' for later development and refinement, along with possible codes implied by the interview or ideas for later improvement of codes. As identity and reflexivity were central concepts in the research topic, markers and counter-markers identifying these were sought in the interviews. Early memos allowed for the documentation of spontaneous *insights and reflections* into participant relationships with media. Memos also recorded theoretical associations as they were suggested. Strauss and Corbin (1994) and Charmaz (2006) state that memos are valuable for recording theoretical connections unexpectedly suggested by what the researcher is hearing in interviews. The research memoed this theoretical 'suggestiveness' as it did theoretical *incongruence or contradiction* with previous theories. Memoing for theoretical suggestiveness and contradiction were important in two respects: first, it enabled the researcher to make valuable connections with existing literature research; second, it comparatively *prioritised* the current research field by allowing the researcher to discover what was *unique* within it compared with what was found elsewhere in other theories or studies (Charmaz 2006:73).

(b) *Advanced memoing* took place once complete 'saturation' of information had occurred, when the interviews became repetitious and yielded no further novelty (Glaser & Strauss 1967). At this point, it became necessary to review early codes, and isolate those that offered rich interpretations of media actions and processes. 'Sorting' is logical ordering of core categories out of which theory is created producing *theoretical categories* of meaning archeologically suggested and 'dug out' of the data actors had provided. This was the 'discovery phase' as it provided the whole picture of Windhoek media/identity interactions and underlying processes through the generation of analytically appropriate concepts (Charmaz 2006:85). Categories are the final theoretical elements chosen from the broad array

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of codes gathered through earlier memoing. Emergent categories must explicitly (Charmaz 2006:91)

> explicate ideas, events, or processes in your data … they subsume common themes and patterns in several (commonly linked) codes.

Categories are abstract, general, precise and substantive, being overarching devices for drawing together similar clusters of focused codes and commonly explaining their connectedness and logistic principles.

## 3.7 Media coding in the Windhoek urban matrix

The Windhoek interviews generated a wide range of codes which contributed to the creation of the main categories for the media and identity research. Qualitative coding helped define or identify patterns of significant meaning within media consumption and negotiation (Strauss & Corbin 1990:12-15). It assisted the researcher to summarise, encapsulate and illuminate what was heard in interviews with actors: "initial codes are provisional, comparative, and grounded in the data" (Charmaz 2006:43). Initial coding is what it implies: temporary markers of meaning to be refined or improved as successive interviews were undertaken. Early codes were revised, discarded, and new ones added as new information emerged in line with what participants were saying about media. Left relatively open at the beginning, being sensitive to ongoing improvement (2006:48), they were developed during interviews and were 'memoed' as codes suggested themselves to the researcher.

Coding did not solely relate to verbal language (Charmaz 2006). Observation played an important part in the media analysis, and non-verbal factors were noted as part of interviews. Memoing what was observed as well as was heard was a strategy here. For example, when a participant expressed a degree of emotion about a question or topic (enthusiasm, reverence, cynicism, or anger), these affective aspects were recorded and incorporated into initial codes. Body language and non-verbal traits were also noted. For example, *media intensity* was suggested as a code to explain actors' time and emotional investment in the Internet.

All codes tried to preserve the essence and character of meaning emerging from the comparative Windhoek interviews, and tried to capture how people explained their media negotiations. Codes remained 'close to the data' and sought to 'preserve actions' (Charmaz 2006:49), allowing for the crystallisation of key points people said as interviews progressed from one participant to the next. Theoretical codes encapsulated what Charmaz calls the

'identifying moments' of the research (2006:59): they "have particular properties (that) reflect views of self and identity as well as immediate interactional circumstances" of media and identity situations (2006:66). The researcher marked and recorded the flow of information as interpretation rather than objective discovery. Theoretical codes were fundamental to the construction of the final theory of media negotiation and identity in Windhoek.

Charmaz cautions against *uncritically accepting what interviewees* say in relation to coding and interviewing. Researchers must not become so immersed in the lifeworlds of interviewees that their words and personal interpretation are regarded as *the end* of analysis. Research needs to move to the next level, which is to identify *significant processes* implicit in what actors are collectively saying that are possibly unknown to them. This is where coding procedure and interview comparison takes place.[26] The researcher is here privileged in relation to the participant, being in a methodologically advantageous position to recognise distinctive interpretations and general processes of media and identity.

### 3.8 Presenting the grounded theory and the writing stage

While processing participant meaning took place during fieldwork through memoing, the writing up phase and theory construction took place simultaneously after this. It attempted to explain the situation regarding what was happening with young adults and their uses of media within Windhoek. Draft writing 'pulls the pieces together' and represents the main analytical process (Charmaz 2006:154-5).Writing-up must ensure the soundness and explanatory power of categories and codes chosen, and the links between them, in forming the body of theory (2006:161). The research report itself establishes the structure of the grounded theory.

The advanced memos assisted in this report stage. Previously discussed and new literature was deployed in the writing stage, and used in relation to the theoretical codes that had emerged. Sociological theory, media theory and cases were systematically contrasted with provisional findings and the emergent grounded theory on media in Windhoek. This is an essential part of the drafting or writing stage (Charmaz 2006:159). How do previous theories 'fit' or reveal discrepancy with what this research found? Are previous theories or cases confirmed or contradicted? Incorporation of the comparative literature analysis into this stage of the research enhanced the depth and interplay of ideas. The writing phase tried to discover

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[26] Grounded theory originally called this the 'constant comparative method' (Glazer & Strauss 1967:47).

patterns and practices of media use unique to the Namibian postcolonial setting, or shared with social and cultural practices elsewhere. Postcolonial or interpretive theories were discounted or confirmed, or realigned in relation to what was unearthed in the interactive field of study. The eventual grounded theory in the final report was not permitted to 'drown out' what the participants had said. Conversations with interviewees were cited at length to illustrate and justify the theory which directly emerged from participant actors.

The eventual grounded theory is found within the accounts of participants in the findings chapters. Theoretical codes will be used as subheadings there. As further theoretical clarification, the concluding Chapter 8 will highlight the primary structure of the theory in systematic fashion.

## 3.9 Concluding remarks

The intention was to establish, through constructivist grounded theory research, a non-Western theory that explained the role of the media in the lifestyles and identities of the participants in Windhoek. A supplementary aim was to encourage further writing, research and debate on the media in Namibia. Issues of power implicated in media consumption and identity were also articulated.

In generating the final media-identity theory it was necessary to follow Denzin's (2001:122) advice that the researcher must understand actors interviewed better than they understand themselves. This is not to adopt an arrogant positivist standpoint. The researcher is in the privileged position of seeing the 'whole picture' once the analysis is in place after interviews, memoing, coding and writing up. The researcher has to go a step beyond the participant accounts by clarifying the larger processes or currents of the social context of the research.

The next chapters will analyse the empirical and theoretical results of the research design, and revisit aspects of the theoretical frame established in the literature chapter. The findings from the Windhoek study will be presented in terms of emergent themes and concepts from the research participants' media-identity negotiations.

# Chapter 4

# Mediated identity biographies in the Windhoek matrix

## 4.1 Introducing the Windhoek research results

The following chapters present the findings of the Windhoek qualitative fieldwork on media and identity negotiation. Meaning and interpretation of participant dialogues with media are ordered around theoretical codes and core themes that were suggested. These represent the abstract pillars of the emergent grounded theory, as well as being the chief methodological means of logically organising the diverse contributions.

Four findings chapters are presented around the central conceptual themes that emerged from the research assessment of media and identity processes. The present chapter sketches participant biographies of both childhood and current media engagements, serving to establish how participants were introduced to media and how it is used now. Chapter 5 discusses their deeper media encounters, referred to as ontological orientations to media, and determines ways in which these shaped identity and cultural alignments. Chapter 6 gives priority to the Internet and focuses on actors' global and local cultural encounters and self-identity presentations online. Chapter 7 discusses mediated power narratives in relation to tradition and modernity, and the reflexive potential of actors for strategies of resistance and expropriation of media. Chapter 8, the final chapter, summarises the main findings and abstractly confirms the emergent grounded theory drawn from the theoretical concepts discussed in the previous chapters.

The results of the research are presented through an interrogation of the individual identity and media narratives of the Windhoek participants. This approach privileges participant actors as a primary source for understanding Windhoek's media cultures. It is argued that such accounts give insight into broader structures and processes of media and identity negotiation, encapsulating local conditions and their intimate connections with global conditions. This is close to Rantanen's (2005:14) mediagraphic method which considers "how people connect and disconnect via media and communications both within local and global contexts". It allows for self and comparative biographical analysis of people in a wide range of communities around their media engagements, and makes possible an intuitive comprehension of broader processes outside immediate individual biographies (Murphy 2008). The Windhoek findings focus on individual commentary which is then contrasted with

other interviewee accounts. This allows the investigation to locate patterns of shared or disparate mediated experience, which has been found to be a satisfactory way of organising the material in a 'mediagraphic' manner, in Rantanen's sense.

Focus groups as well as individual narratives are used throughout the research. Individual interviews provided personal reflection, while focus groups presented interactive debate around media and parallel issues. Focus group interviews often revealed the fault-lines and disagreements over media between participants in terms of preferences for conservative tradition or cosmopolitan outlooks.

### 4.1.1 Situating participant biographies in early and present media practices

This section considers how interview participants discussed their early and recent experiences of media within the Windhoek social matrix or context. It also provides an indication of actual uses and preferences for media. The intention of discovering early media experiences was to establish formative media patterns that were influential on participant lives and identities. *Formative media* are defined as media that demonstrate degrees of impressionability and influence at a primary stage of a person's biography. It refers to media encounters in pre-teen childhood, a period when it has been argued children tend to be sensitive to the novelty, value and influence of media (Livingstone 2002).

Asking participants about formative media offered the advantage of getting them to situate and explain media from within the socio-cultural settings in which they were raised and socialised. Participants frequently revealed early memories of media in relation to family, community life and culture, thereby offering insights into their socio-economic background and personal histories. Factors of socio-economic class as well as ethnicity emerged in this way. The accounts of white, black or coloured participants[27] tended to outline dissimilar lives, lifestyles and identities. Some, usually black or coloured participants, had clearly experienced a relatively poor existence in socio-economic terms as children and teenagers, which is unsurprising as all were born close to or immediately after independence following a century of colonial exploitation and forced inequality. Others interviewed had been and remained privileged by affluence and plenty. Young white people in the interviews had known a prosperous upbringing, although some black interviewees were similarly from

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[27] Race is not discussed as anything other than a socially constructed category. White, black, or coloured descriptors were constructions of self and social identity frequently used as identifiers by participants themselves. See footnote later in this chapter for further justification.

middle class business or professional families. It was seen that patterns of media use predictably aligned, but sometimes cut across, class and ethnic divisions.

Interview questions sought factual and ontological information on the 'here and now' from within the present Windhoek research matrix. The investigation attempted to discover how recent or contemporaneous experiences of media had been built upon these early formative aspects. How were continuous or discontinuous media practices revealed in later life, and what were participants now doing with media? What is the same, what has changed? The theoretical category that suggested itself in contrast with the biographically-situated concept of *formative media* was *media engagement* which explains how people rendezvous with and use media, what they are doing with it, how they might be favourable or hostile to its different forms and products. Media engagement is not simply reducible to narrow instrumental or utilitarian intentions (Willett 2008; Rushkoff 1997). It represents complex cultural and cognitive encounters between individuals and old and new media. *Media engagement* is potentially reflexive and relational, being open to dialectical interactions of local and global culture, individual consciousness, self and social identity. It can represent a fulcrum, or point of resistance to or incorporation of mediated culture: a possible interplay where identity and consciousness becomes open to or resilient to change.

## 4.2 Childhood and formative media identities: Bertha

Strelitz (2008; 2002) has argued that media research can be enriched by adopting a biographical or narrative gaze into the interplay of social contexts of an individual's mediated actions. First encounters with media can reveal much about a participant's social background, as well as the way media were positioned in their life patterns at an early stage. Asking what type of media they first remembered, and why, tended to stimulate a descriptive opening-up of their life at that time. Giddens (1991) has referred to this as the accessing of memory traces which stand in the background of all forms of self-identity. Such traces, in turn, reveal glimpses into identity histories, be it personal or social. As explained in the introduction, processes of a person's media genesis are referred to as engagements with *formative media*, a conceptual type that is studied because it discloses media practices on which participants constructed later media actions. It also reveals early cultural influences which may indicate later cultural preference, including the presence of conservative or cosmopolitan opinion toward media.

Early patterns of media consumption emerged from most interviewees. Radio was often their formative media, their initial contact in any form, while television tended to come later in their childhood. Bertha[28] is mentioned first as she spoke substantively at length about her childhood media biography. She was a researcher for a non-governmental organisation (NGO) with Oshiwambo ethnicity. She revealed much about her origins and ethnic identity while talking about early media. Bertha came from an extended family which she describes as "the size of two soccer teams" on her father's side alone, members being scattered between her own and other villages in north Namibia. They were not well-off. She said[29]

> we didn't get much exposure to media. It was probably radio at first. I was living in Omalala. It's a village in the north deep in the bush between Ongwediva and Ondangwa. It's quite a big village. At first there was only radio. I was 5 or 6 years old. I remember I loved listening to the poems for children [nursery rhymes] and songs on the radio then. They were so nice. I looked forward to the time when they were on. I was so fascinated. There were cows jumping over the moon, spoons, and things about clocks. I think they really spurred on my imagination. They were quite educational. At that time I didn't really understand much else that was on.

She remembers her radio encounters as a learning process that helped her develop her own language. Radio was also a collective family experience, a point of contact and togetherness.

> The [radio] shows were in my own language [Oshikwanyama] and we used to listen often as a family. I remember we were very selective in what we listened to. It wasn't the [state] NBC radio we mainly listened to. That was hard to receive. It was more the private Omalunga Radio that my parents liked [community radio sponsored by a Finnish NGO]. It had lots of entertainment, music, that kind of thing, also football. It was also important for announcements on who died or this or that public message.

Expanded media access only came when they left their rural location for an urban area. Omalala was outside the signal range for television in those days (1990s), but when Bertha's family settled in Oshakati, the largest northern town where they already had relatives, television became possible. She described the occasion she first saw television as 'an event', and spoke of the impression it made on her.

> I was 13 or 14 when we got TV. It was only NBC on this small, tiny black and white television. Oh, we were so happy when we first got it. It was the first time we were seeing it. I came home and my mum said 'look at this, now you can watch cartoons, football or whatever you like'. I was so excited.

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[28] The reader should refer to Appendix A for biographical details of all interviewees.
[29] While participant interviews were transcribed verbatim, their reported comments have been edited to remove repetition and hesitancy. This improved the flow and readability of their narratives.

Cartoons and films were her favourites. Then Bertha's parents bought a 'cheap' video recorder. She says that this expanded their range of viewing considerably, assisted by affordable pirated videos, later DVDs, from the Oshakati town markets. These were cheaper than renting and raised their consumption. The family regularly watched Hollywood movies, but also African films from Nigeria and Zambia. They did not always understand them due to language problems, but Bertha says that she learned some of her English from Western productions. She remembers enjoying music videos for the first time, mainly American, featuring black popular musicians although she could not say who. She admitted to being fascinated by these global products from 'strange places'. News programmes were universally unpopular among family members, being considered "not fun".

She indicated that extended family gatherings tended to control listening to radio or watching television: "We often made a party where we all came together. But when that happens, there is no TV or radio. We talk." Apart from this, it was the only time any form of regulation of media happened. Outside these large family get-togethers there was potential for conflict over what could be watched, given the large number of family members living in the house or relatives visiting. She says: "With a lot of people coming and going in the family, we used to make arrangements on when to watch what. There was a lot of democratic agreement, and surprisingly little conflict".

Bertha's love of television and radio was involuntarily curtailed when she reached the age of 15 years. The local schools had no places after grade 8, and she was forced to leave home for a conservative residential state school a considerable distance away. This disruption of normal contact both with family and media came suddenly and traumatically. She said

> it was very far from home. I missed my family. You only got to go home every 3-4 weeks. You have to do what they say. TV was there, but you could only watch on Saturday or Sunday, but very restrictively. I lost touch with TV and the programmes I used to follow. I lost interest. They didn't allow it in the week because of the effect on studies. It wasn't the same anymore. Losing my family also lost my use of TV!

Some time elapsed before Bertha was able to independently use and enjoy media again. For her, media represented 'fun' or freshness, a charmed feature of childhood. Her memory traces express her fondness particularly for television as an early 'novelty media', and sadness at its loss when she went to boarding school. The impressionability of early media has been noted in other studies of children, for example in Longe's (2007) Nigeria study which argued that

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television had become central to collective African family life, and later that adult media preference seemed to be shaped in childhood.

What can be deduced from this first biographical dialogue? For Bertha, it was television and video tapes rather than radio that introduced her to global entertainment, and experiences of cultures and worlds beyond the confines of north Namibia. She implies that this connection has stayed with her. While being an individual who by admission valued her own traditional culture, Bertha revealed a fascination with the broader world she referred to as 'out there'. McMillin (2009:81) writes about media technologies and media products making possible a cultural proximity whereby non-Western consumers can

> live in the same temporality as their Western counterparts [but] enabling the consumer to partake in a global experience within a locally relevant context.

Bertha's formative media encounters with television and the broader possibilities of video and pirate products established global cultural immediacies which she missed during the relative isolation of her later school years. McMillin (2009) states that a young person's media choices from this initial connection or proximity serve to enhance the development of self and identity in complex ways through the interplay of global and local cultures.

**4.3 Nuances of formative media**

How did other participants experience media in early life? Questioning them on their memories of formative media revealed distinct nuances of media engagement. Interviews unearthed features of ethnic background and identity, class and socio-economic distinction and also gender patterns that shaped the density and character of their media involvement. Low family income with limited media options did not automatically weaken entry or attachment to media such as television compared to higher family income. Yet inequality of access was marked, frequently being linked to social stratifications and relationships of authority in the biographical circumstances of the participants.

*4.3.1 Lines of resistance to media: John (1)*

John (1), a bank clerk, revealed conflict, or what may be termed *lines of resistance*, regarding audio-visual media engagements within his family during childhood, arising mainly from his father and struggle among family members over what ought to be watched. Living in a

'coloured'[30] area of Windhoek in Khomasdal in the 1990s, John (1)'s family had not been able to afford anything beyond radio when he was a child: "Well, I grew up without television really. We didn't have a lot of money when I was younger, plus my mother and father didn't really like the idea of television at the time [because] my father liked to read." Radio and books dominated the household. As the family's finances improved, television was introduced into their home, but not without disagreement.

> I was about 13 years when they weakened and got a TV. Before, they were dead against it, mainly because my father wanted us to be interested in books or be outside doing sports or games. It was my mother who wanted it. She'd been told by friends what was on and bothered him to get it. We got TV '99 or 2000. My father had a better job by then [as a local housing administrator], so we could now afford it. My mother loved it, but he never approved. He said it was such rubbish, although he liked to check out the news and anything on the colonial times, historical stuff.

John (1)'s father valued reading as a form of constructive leisure and education: television was regarded as the antithesis of both. Rising income created opportunities and pressures to expand media as a consumer choice. At first they had only NBC, but later subscribed to DSTV due to their view that NBC deteriorated in terms of quality during the late 1990s.[31] This broader choice, according to John (1), created increased family dissension over what to watch. Television failed to generate the harmonious collective family viewing that Bertha mentioned for her Oshakati household. Competition over what programme should be on disjointed and fragmented the household. John (1) said

> it was a struggle between family members because my brother and sister liked cop shows and cartoons, and my mother liked the soaps, and she didn't have the interests of my dad who liked sport and documentaries. He would leave her to watch those while he read the paper or a book in another room.

Media as a source of social contention can be provisionally referred to as *discordant media* as opposed to being harmonious and non-conflictual. John (1) admits to having felt 'fed up' or exasperated at the arguments that broke out.

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[30] 'Coloured' refers to so-called mixed-race individuals or communities. The term suggests colonial or apartheid-oriented descriptors of people devised when social actors were graded by colonial authority and state according to hierarchies and dichotomies of whiteness-blackness. The term is used for convenience to indicate a particular socio-cultural grouping. 'Coloured' can be justified in its use by participants to describe themselves. They spoke of it positively as their social identity marker. The intention is not to naturalise socially-constructed categories. This research uses it conditionally, as it does when describing people as 'black' or 'white'.

[31] Participants were frequently unsure about exact dates. If the family had not obtained television until 1999 or 2000, it might be thought unclear how they had noted declines in programme quality in the 1990s.

John (1)'s own favourites were historical films which were not to his siblings' taste. While growing up, he came to share his father's love of print media, of reading history particularly classical and colonial history. Unlike his father, he supplemented this interest with cinema and mentioned films such as *Gladiator* (2000). His other early preferences were thrillers and detective stories such as *LA Confidential* (1998) and the *Lethal Weapon* films. Yet reading became a parallel interest acquired from his father, and he valued and continued to read historical and crime literature in addition to his interests in cinema. Print media brought him closer to his father's preferred tastes than television could, which suggested a close connection between them. John (1)'s interest in literature is discussed again later.

*4.3.2 Lines of resistance to media: Crispin*

While John (1)'s experiences of lines of resistance in terms of media involved dispute rather than actual censorship, the university student Crispin revealed the obstacle of strong regulation of access to media. His early encounters were marked by stringent control through his grandfather who was also his guardian in childhood. He did not grow up with his parents due to marital problems which he could not explain. He said

> my grandfather was very strict. You had to get his permission to watch anything – he decided what could be watched. I should explain that I didn't live with my mother and father, only with my grandfather. He looked after me when I was a boy. He was a politician and businessman [therefore] we were not a poor family.

The grandfather was concerned that Crispin should not be exposed to bad influences, and he worried about him watching American and foreign television programmes and listening to Western music. The household had both radio and television. Crispin said he was fascinated by hearing American Hip Hop music on the radio as a child.

> I liked Hip Hop on the radio a lot. I never liked traditional music on radio, only when it was live. Traditional never works on TV or radio, and it can seem so boring. I loved Hip Hop and Hip Hop stars, admired the way they dressed, their dress-code, their style. Like the trousers – they have to be right up [gestures to his chest]. Due to my grandfather's disapproval I had to hide this interest.

Hip Hop remained one of his favourite popular music styles. American or global music for him had the edge over local varieties, although he spoke of local artists who imitated the music style 'quite well' in his own language (Oshiwambo). He liked the way they performed, and tried to copy it himself, but not within the hearing of his guardian. He was asked if he ever tried to adopt the dress style: "[Exclaims] No! My grandfather would never allow it, he

would forbid it! He'd say no, no." Crispin can be said to have experienced strong *parental gatekeeping* regarding early media.

Crispin's media experiences at home (where he knew only regulation) and outside the home, reveal two different worlds. He grew up in a peri-urban area outside the northern town of Tsumeb near one of the copper mines, although the family originally came from the Oshakati area further north. Contact with the broader mining community was frequent, and it was there that he knew freer media practices among the miners and road workers based in the town.

> We were on the edge of a town [Tsumeb], rural really. There were some hostels where road and mining workers used to stay nearby. That's where we played football, but sometimes we used to watch their TV which was in a recreation area for the workers; they watched this after work, and we used to join them. But it was mainly soccer and soaps. Sometimes they played radio in that same place. Even gave us food. They would let us kids sit with them and listen or watch – we liked to go there. They would often let us watch what we wanted after we had played football, very nice.

Crispin later referred to the workers as having been his "extra family", and spoke of his fond memories of the time he spent with them, particularly the longer periods when his grandfather was away from Tsumeb on business. His affluent background did little to expose him to rich media experiences due to the sanctions placed on him, although it proved freer and broader when he watched with the mine and road workers, even if what they had access to was limited. Crispin's conservative upbringing shaped a distinctly critical view of Western media in later life, as will be seen. Bourgault (1999:193) has spoken of the African media as frequently in tension with conservative culture and state authority, resulting in interventions to 'protect' the public through sanction and censorship. Crispin's grandfather fulfilled this function in terms of his ward's upbringing. Other studies suggest that African states have a proclivity to regulate media as a norm to repress its potential for change and challenge to the status quo (Nyamnjoh 2005). These participant comments are therefore an indication of much wider conventional attitudes to media.

### 4.3.3 'Whiteness', affluence and media engagements in Windhoek: Jan and Talia

For Krabill (2010:114), white identification denotes a cultural attitude, space or socio-economic locus of power. In the colonial or apartheid eras, it represented privileged authority and status, sharply contrasting with the low status ethnic subject 'other'. Puttergill's (2008) discussion of 'whiteness' states that in societies where this was the dominant reality, such as South Africa and the United States prior to the acquisition of civil rights, whiteness presented

itself in universalistic, racially neutral terms, as opposed to 'blackness' which was viewed as a negative ethnic phenomenon. Definitionally, he explains that (2008:81)

> whiteness denotes higher status and a collective sense of entitlement accompanying the dominant position occupied within societies. This ideology of superiority serves the self-interest of a dominant group within racialised capitalism at the expense of racial others both materially in terms of resources and psychologically in terms of status. The privileges have become so embedded that whites have come to expect and rely on them over time unaware of the advantages they have enjoyed.

Puttergill, like Krabill, regards whiteness as a substantive identity position in its own right in post-apartheid South Africa which retains privileged elements for many whites while losing decisively its initial props of political power, as has happened in independent Namibia. White identification may be similarly noted in Windhoek where a large white Afrikaans-speaking community resides.

The white participants Jan and Talia both came from significantly better-off families than many others interviewed, being young Afrikaners who had grown up in prosperous households. They revealed affluent patterns of early and present media use. Their parents ran successful medium size businesses. Jan lived in Klein Windhoek, regarded as an 'upper-class' side of town. The family was second generation, having in the past moved to Windhoek from Johannesburg. They took full Namibian citizenship in 1990 rather than leave the country as some of their friends had done. He explained that because of this, he and most of his family kept strong connections with aspects of Afrikaans South African culture.

> I must explain. My grandfather came to Namibia in the 1960s from Joburg. That's why I'm into that stuff. We emigrated for a fresh life. We have a strong connection with the Republic still due to that. A lot of uncles and aunts are still down there, we are back and forth each year. While I am Namibian, the links with there are strong.

He said 'media was everywhere' in his household. They had radio, although it was rarely listened to, but television and the Internet were dominant. He described the home as a 'TV house' stating

> my father and mother always watched TV every evening, unless we had visitors coming round. We were, still are, a TV house. We had South African TV on most of the time through boxes [decoders]. We got SABC and the international programmes through DSTV. We never watched the Namibian TV much, almost never. My parents didn't like it. So I grew up with TV, usually movies and various TV series. When I

was younger I could only watch TV up to eight o' clock if I had done the school homework.

He acquired a strong love of music from his father, although now had different tastes. During Jan's upbringing, the father often played a mix of Afrikaans and English popular music. He hastened to explain that it was "not the old Boer *tranne trekker* [tear jerker] music our granddad likes, but the more modern rock stuff." He explained further, and he said

> I mean the old fashioned Afrikaans music. It's mainly like folk songs from the past. It's what my dad calls old apartheid music. He laughs about it really. I can't stand it, it's embarrassing! Why? Well it's very sentimental and about the past. I have some black school friends and they really can't believe that anyone listens to that anymore. They think you must be racist to want to hear that. He [his father] never played that, and I'm pleased he doesn't [laughs]. I've been to places where they play that music full blast and everyone is singing it! So embarrassing!

He said that his father liked Kurt Darren and Steve Hofmeyr, while his mother was a big fan of Robbie Williams. Jan, like his parents, had grown up with both English and Afrikaans popular music. What emerged strongly from the interview was a cultural affinity with the latter, but also to newer avant-garde styles such as urban 'Zef' music (discussed below).

Jan's interview revealed him and his family to be engaged with a mix of Western and Afrikaner media, between traditional and modern forms. Effectively, three cultures hybridly blended here in Bhabha's (1994) sense: the old and new Afrikaner 'whiteness' and inflows from global culture. Jan himself remains unapologetically 'an Afrikaner youth', quite apart from his traditionalist grandfather yet separated also from his father's 'uncool' musical tastes in favour of arcane modern ones.

Talia also lived in Klein Windhoek and was from a similar social background to Jan: "We are quite well off. My father has had a computer sales company for some years. We always had television or Internet, various media. I still live at home." Her formative media were wide-ranging: she developed strong familiarity with visual media as well as the Internet, taking full advantage of the family's financial circumstances.

> My parents always gave me what I wanted and still do. They were very generous that way. I had my own TV in my bedroom, and so did my brothers. We were a three-TV household. So you could say we were a house with a lot of media. Because of my father's business interests, there were also computers in the house, and we were early users of Internet. I remember that Internet was as much in use as television from quite an early time. I was maybe 6 years old when I first used it, although it was a slow

service then. But my father always paid for the most expensive and fastest Internet he could get.

Both participants revealed rich and cognitively deep engagements with a broad range of media, and took the opportunity to enjoy and immerse themselves in these, albeit in different ways: Jan orienting himself to his own definition of 'modern' Afrikaner urban culture, hybridly supplemented by Western varieties; Talia on the other hand leaning heavily and unrestrictedly toward American Western culture. Neither revealed commitment to any form of 'Namibian' culture as such, although both had black and coloured friends with whom they shared their media tastes. Their 'whiteness' was not socially isolating. When asked about Namibian national culture, neither quite understood what this entailed. They replied that

> Talia: I really only understand my own background. But I have Owambo and coloured friends. They have their own values, but I can still relate to them.

> Jan: My dad says that [Namibian culture] doesn't really exist. There are many cultures in Namibia and there will always be. Perhaps Namibian culture is all of those added up?

This ambivalence about shared national values seemed to confuse them and they tried hard to explain their connection with 'Namibian-ness'. They expressed a looser, less integrational view of national identity than that insisted on by official government policies of national unity. As Afrikaners, they stood on the margins of that identification: Jan relating more to a tolerant white South African culture (unlike his grandfather's generation), and Talia toward a cosmopolitan Western culture coexisting with her Afrikaner identity. Studies have argued that postcolonial societies experience national identity and nation-building as incomplete projects, as in-process rather than achieved, favouring previous ethnic identification (McEachern 2002; Diener 2000). This did not seem the case here, as for both Jan and Talia media proved to be one of the means to link with non-white friends, potentially a positive multi-cultural force ensuring social and psychic connections with other ethnicities through the shared cultural interests they provided; media contributed to ethnic bonding, while allowing space for older and previously conflictual identities.

### 4.3.4 Formative media and the 'coloured experience': Gail

What early media experiences did other participants offer? Gail's early media engagements reflected a different ethnic biography to those of Jan and Talia, and she referred to her life as one of 'a coloured experience', sharing similar cultural memories to John (1). Her interview

is carried here at length, as it reveals a strong interplay between her social background and the development of her media history. Several nuanced elements concerning patriarchy and postcolonial social mobility are exposed.

Her family was originally from Rehoboth[32] (75 kilometres south of Windhoek) where she spent her childhood up to the age of 8. The Rehobothers or 'Basters' (a term deriving from their mixed race status, and adopted by them as an identity label) maintained a neutral stance during the liberation struggle from 1966-1990. The town is a source of skilled labour servicing the building trade in Windhoek, and both employed and self-employed builders commute daily between Rehoboth and Windhoek. This background is revealed in Gail's comments when she said

> we only had radio when I was small. I liked to listen to music on the radio with my grandfather when we [the family] lived in Rehoboth. He was living with us up to when he died in 1997. We did not have television at that point. The radio always seemed to be on and we had it as a kind of background noise. My mother liked it also, but when my father came home from work [as a builder] it usually got switched off for dinner, but turned on later for the news. In 1998 our family moved to Windhoek [Khomasdal] and still live in the same house we moved to then. It was easier for my dad's work, as he had to travel between Rehoboth and Windhoek every working day [for building work].

The death of the grandfather in 1997 was a misfortune, but also an opportunity for the family to move closer to Gail's father's workplace in Windhoek. As the patriarch, the grandfather had always forbidden them to move from Rehoboth, despite the severe travel problems it caused the father. An important point here on the centrality of identity among the Baster people, rigorously upheld by Gail's grandfather, was that a true Baster must live in Rehoboth. Gail explained why.

> If Basters move away, they traditionally lose status, respect. In our community, we distinguish between coloured people and Basters. Basters regard themselves as special, as better and independent. We don't really regard ourselves as racially mixed, like coloureds. That's why my grandfather didn't want us to leave, despite the difficulty it caused. My father was worn out by this demand, getting lifts back to town every day [over an hour's journey] while you are exhausted from the day's work. A lot of people have moved now, mainly to work in Windhoek. You are poor if you

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[32] Rehoboth was founded in the 1860s by so-called mixed-race coloured migrants originally from South Africa. During the colonial era, Rehoboth was ceded relative autonomy to operate as a self-governing town, but within the political jurisdiction of the South West African colonial state (Lau 1994).

don't go now, so it's hard to keep that tradition. Rehoboth is economically depressed now.

In around 1999, one year after the move from Rehoboth, the father left the building trade and got a job in a government department as a housing officer regulating the rebuilding of informal settlements into formal brick-built houses in Katutura. The new job and the considerable increase in income were to change the media habits of the whole household. They bought the first television that anyone had ever had in their family, and this new addition to material culture shifted the time and leisure patterns of all family members. Gail said of this change

> yeah, this new TV was interesting as a child. I watched it mainly on Saturday mornings when there was kids' stuff such as cartoons and things from South African TV. I wasn't interested in much else, although there was sometimes a movie on that we all watched together. But most of the time my father dominated the TV because he liked sport. He was obsessed with rugby and stuff, he loved watching. Sport programmes were on all the time, particularly over the weekend. We have DSTV [since 2002] once he earned more money, but it's still sport, sport, sport. My mother gets to watch soapies which she likes a lot. I don't mind them, but I prefer to go out with friends.

There was a notable gender gap here in television viewing and access. The father and even the brothers, Gail said, had a tendency to dominate the television in a patriarchal sense, involving clear family gender discrimination. Later this led to restrictions in access to other media such as the Internet. On the other hand, soap operas became the preference of the females in the family, and she could more easily watch these. The outcome of these restrictive gender practices was for Gail to withdraw and seek alternative activities outside the family. Her media engagements come across as relatively weak compared with those of other participants, although patriarchal regulation seems to have been a strong cause, itself reflecting other studies of familial power relations within which women are the losers in terms of choice (Moghadam 2005; Coetzee 2001).

### 4.3.5 Television cartoons as formative programming

Animated cartoons and, later, digital animation films stand out in a majority of participant's comments as perhaps the most enjoyed formative media genre. A substantial number of participants mentioned cartoons as their most prominent early television viewing. Most mentioned cartoons either in passing or specifically. Participants from all social backgrounds

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watched and enjoyed cartoon animation media. Why is this? These are a few of the comments participants made.

> Falen: I liked cartoons and that kind of thing. Cartoons are fun, even if you are an adult; it's the graphics, there is fun behind it.

> Tom: Television, watching the cartoons is what I first remember. I used to enjoy them very much up to 13 years. We got DSTV and they had the cartoon channel. I really loved it as a kid. I liked the crazy things that went on. They were very jokey, sometimes rough and violent. But the characters would always recover unharmed, it was a relief! I liked things like *Tom and Jerry*.

> Talia: I liked the Disney stuff. *Toy Story* [1999] sticks in my mind for the story and the characters. Also the amazing graphics. It had such a lot of vivid colours, really eye-catching. I was so taken by it when I first saw it. *Toy Story* was so different to the other animations like the *Lion King* or *Mulan*, although I still liked that style. I still see most of the modern animations like the *Shrek* films even though I am much older now. I saw *Toy Story 3* this year. That was great.

This fascination with cartoons tends to be typical for children globally, although it is argued to decline as they become older and more emotionally complex (Hayes & Casey 1992). Cartoons appear at first impression to be merely entertainment or an aspect of fantasy.

Giroux (1996) has argued that animated film has long been situated in the viewing habits of children across the world, while adding that they exceed the boundaries of mere entertainment. Writing on Walt Disney animation in global culture, he points to the heavy ideological content of cartoons. They are not free of values, tending to reflect particular corporate ontologies and cultural assumptions. In the case of Disney, Giroux says (1996:18)

> at the very least, we must be attentive to the processes whereby meanings are produced in [animated] films and how they work to secure particular forms of authority and social relations. At stake pedagogically is the issue of paying attention to the ways in which [such films] invite or indeed seek to prevent particular meaning and pleasure.

Giroux refers to the hidden character of the messages and depictions of social life presented in cartoons. Their image of 'innocence', both oriented to and expressing childhood, veils socio-stereotypical socialisations of gender and race, and commercial imperatives directed at impressionable children. Giroux admits that there are educational and enlightenment possibilities in cartoons and children's television generally, as the worldwide success of

*Sesame Street* indicated (Thakkar et al. 2006). Andrew specifically referred to this aspect with nostalgia.

> First thing I saw was *Sesame Street* then the cartoons. I have such fond memories of *Sesame Street*. It taught me my A, B, Cs, how to count. There were the different characters and personalities and games. It was fun, but at that age [6 years old] it's educational. It was kind of like a school away from school, a sort of supplement to school.

Other agenda are also possible in less affirmative ways, including utilisation of cartoons as commercial vessels to influence children to want toys or games, which has long been a subliminal function of cartoons (Regan 2005). The issue of violence in the genre is another widely discussed and debated topic (Kirsh 2006; Brown 2005; Winstone & Wolfe 2000).

Participant recollections of watching cartoons revealed no insight into such potential ideological factors, even though a majority of the examples they gave related to Disney and other American productions. Few participants viewed them as anything more than innocent childhood entertainment, being largely unaware of and unreflexive to latent narratives regarding the graphic media genre. Cartoons represented fond memory, a trace link with valued past childhood. Yet they are possibly more than that as early windows into global, particularly American culture.

### 4.3.6 Final comment

Use of the concept of *formative media* attempted to articulate and explain first contacts and introductions to media types and products consumed in childhood. What emerged from the interviews was the way formative media combined with, and reflected, the social elements of childhood and early teen life. This represented the 'first shaping' of personal and social identity, although it was not possible to state how central media were at this life stage. *Formative media* represents one of the central concepts of the present grounded theory, as does our next concept *media engagement*.

### 4.4 Contemporary participant practices: Media engagement

Contemporary experiences which revealed deeper and richer patterns of media encounters were conceptualised as *media engagement*. As with formative media, the aim is practical: what is happening with media, how is media connecting with lifestyles, identity and socio-economic backgrounds? Media types are discussed sequentially in terms of how respondents

indicated attraction to favoured media. Here, insight into actors' ontological underpinnings began to emerge. Radio is discussed first.

*4.4.1 Radio engagements*

Radio is the oldest broadcast media in Namibia and until the growth of television the most popular with 70% having access at the time of the 2001 Census (Larsen 2007). Larsen implies that it is intensively used by low-to-medium income Namibians, although a broad range of participants accessed music or news in this way. It was seen that radio was something to listen to in the motor car while moving about the city, or casually at home or work.

Tyler was an educational administrator who lived in Khomasdal. She used radio as part of her daily routine, although this normally excluded listening at home which was reserved for television. She said

> radio I like when I drive to work and once I am here [at work]. I love to have Radio Wave playing when I come to work. It's very nice on the drive in. I like the music which is sort of Western pop. When I am in work, I like to listen to radio on my cell quietly when I have a break or a spare moment. I am doing that a lot in the day, if the job allows. Sometimes it is Radio Wave, other times NBC radio for the phone-ins or the news. You get a lot from the radio that keeps you in touch with what is happening in the country. So, radio is an important part of my life in the day. I never listen at night. That is for the TV which I watch with my hubby [husband].

Tyler was fond of the local Radio Wave which played popular Western music peppered with discussions by the presenters on various issues. She found these discussions 'involving' and 'interesting' and listened as much for these as for the music.

> I enjoy the discussions and the arguments that the male and female presenters have. This morning they were talking about some guy who is living off broccoli only. He doesn't eat meat, only that. He claims he can think better and will live longer, but is apparently unemployed in France, I think. They [the DJs] were arguing that he will live longer only because he doesn't have the pressure of a real job. The female DJ was defending vegetarianism as a good lifestyle, while the guy DJ was making fun. It was a very amusing discussion. It is like that every morning. Sometimes it is serious like the multiple car crash on the Rehoboth road last week and why people drive so bad here, and sometimes it is just fun talk.

For Tyler, radio was a primarily a diversion from her daily routine, a medium that "helped her through her day" in a job that she found dull and to be endured.

Lower income workers relied heavily on radio, having limited access to other media. Several interviews were undertaken at the Maerua Mall shopping and entertainment centre in Windhoek where workers talked during their lunch period. It was decided not to exclude low income individuals from the interviews by assuming that their media engagements were limited, as it became quickly apparent that media were more important to their daily lifestyles than was initially thought.

Abby, a supermarket worker living in Katutura East, was relatively underprivileged compared to other participants earning around N\$60 a day. Abby liked listening to radio in the day on her cell phone. She said she used her earphones when she was unpacking boxes and loading the supermarket shelves. The music on the radio, as with the white-collar employee Tyler, was a distraction from the "dull job". Her bosses did not like her doing this, so she would "hide the earphones under her hair." Sometimes she did not hear the supervisor when she was called, and got reprimanded, although she continued to do it: "they don't really mind because I am a good worker."

Tuka was a low-paid informal car guard at the parking concourse at Maerua Mall. He worked for six days each week from 7.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. earning N\$40 to N\$50 dollars a day minding people's cars. His rent was about half his daily income. This financial position shaped his relatively limited media experiences. He used his cell phone for listening to radio and this 'helped him' through his long day. It was the only media he reported as having, as he lived in an informal peri-urban settlement on the edge of West Katutura without electricity. He said standing around all day minding cars was boring, and that he could not do the job without this distraction. Having no radio at home or electricity, radio on his cell phone represented his entire media access. While music was commonly listened to by Tuka, mainly on NBC, he also checked the news each hour to 'keep up' with what was happening in the country. He preferred the NBC Oshiwambo broadcasts as his English was limited.

It became obvious that Tuka had little knowledge of audio-visual media and seemed only partially aware of the Internet. He rarely had the opportunity to watch television, having little familiarity with film or television productions. However, he clearly loved listening to radio, saying he "relied on it". Regarding the Internet, he said

> I know it is important. I have checked it on other phones and it is interesting, but I can't afford it. I know about Facebook, but I cannot do it. Some friends do this.

By comparison, the similarly low income Mayunga, a bank ATM guard, had the Internet on his cell phone.

> I use it [the Internet] just for music. I download on the cell. I used to like those people who sing that American gospel music. I downloaded those. In Namibia, I like The Dogg. I know Lady May, but I am not so interested. I also like Hip Hop as well as gospel. I like any type, South Africa, Namibia, American. The American is the best. I like it because it is singing about life, what you know. I like those words about life, not the swearing, not that. I ignore that. There is other stuff about life I like: how tough life is, problems with relationships, enemies that bother you, things like that. I like that. That sort of thing is in the Hip Hop music. It's real.

Fresh FM radio, which came on air in 2009, was mentioned by Mayunga and others as a favourite station. It was popular for playing local music, although few white participants listened. In a joint interview, Mary and Berns, who both worked at a confectioner, explained that they were 'hooked' on Fresh FM because of one of the presenters.

> Mary: I like Fresh FM because it is the presenter on that. She is awesome! She is called Lucy Kay.

> Berns: She is so open-minded! She's great [both agree].

> Interviewer: Why is that?

> Mary: She is so into young people's stuff. She is also into these anonymous phone calls where she calls people's boyfriends. If you suspect they are up to something [having an affair], you tell her. You ring her and give the number and she calls them and asks all these sorts of questions to trap them to see if they will cheat. They don't know who she is or that they are [live] on the radio when they are speaking. If he doesn't answer the questions right, you are listening and know if he is cheating on you or not. These guys can get so embarrassed on air. The girlfriends are listening, so they know what they are saying and what they've done. I love that.

They accessed Fresh FM on their cell phones regularly, although not when they were at home.

To summarise, music was a chief but not exclusive reason to listen to radio. News and on-air discussion proved important, as did media personalities who could be fun. Lower income groups were most likely to listen to radio for music and news. Few white participants said that they used radio, although this does not take into account informal listening when other family members had a radio on at home. The cell phone had in recent years become a common means to access radio in addition to conventional devices, being easily mobile.

Participants valued the flexibility of this, much as others did in Katz and Aakhus's (2006) African study.

*4.4.2 Musical tastes: From Zef to Jericho*

Broad musical tastes emerged from the interviews around radio including strong interest in Namibian, African and Western, particularly American music. Jan revealed strong orientations to contemporary South African urban culture, especially to a new form of music that had emerged there called Zef. He described this as Johannesburg urban-style music. Jan said the word itself meant 'common' or 'ordinary', but he did not know its origin. It is said to have derived from the Ford Zephyr, an iconic car favoured by working class people in 1960s Britain. *Die Antwoord* led by singer Waddy Jones has come to characterise Zef music (*New Musical Express*, 2 September 2010). There has been a wide debate about their Afrikaans 'rap-rave' publicity-seeking style, but they have become an export band with a cult following in Europe and the United States (*The Guardian*, 12 September 2011). Jan explained that Zef represented a culture embracing poorer (rather than affluent) working class Afrikaners. It contained elements of skinhead and punk subculture.[33] It was emphatically not 'white'. He said of it

> my parents hate it. Me and my white and even black friends, we're guys that like Zef. What is it? Well, it's fast rapping mixed up with Hip Hop. The word means 'common' or ordinary. It's a lot of fun. It's hard stuff, tries to be tough, a bit gangsterish. Die Antwoord is a great band; Ninja [the lead singer Waddy Jones] is mad but cool. It's good that Afrikaans modern music is so new and different. Yes, I like it. I even sing it with my pals, but I admit I'm not that good. One of my black friends loves Die Antwoord, although he says white people usually can't do that style. I like it because it's different and it tries to fill the black-white gap on the music scene. The people in bands like that are crazy, covered in tattoos and looking interestingly weird. As I say, different. We see them as very cool. My father says Zef is crap. But I just laugh at that because he doesn't understand it.

Jan was the most unusual of the participants in terms of his music tastes. He seemed mainly rooted in urban South African culture despite having been born in Namibia. His enjoyment of Zef gave him an emotional connection outside his own social context. One of his comments was that Namibia 'was quite dull'. Zef represented something cooler and more vibrant than

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[33] Skinhead subculture emerged in 1970s Britain and typified traditional working class youth culture at a time when industrial decline was destroying older working class identity. It had an aggressive reputation. Punk was an anti-authority, even nihilist, youth culture also arising in Britain, but in the 1980s, being symbolised by the band The Sex Pistols (Hebdige 1993).

anything accessible to him in Windhoek. While compact discs of Zef music could be purchased in town, this style tended to be unavailable on radio in Namibia, and was only accessible through South African stations online over the Internet or by download. Despite a shared cultural background, Talia had very different tastes, preferring Western popular music exclusively: "It's Western [music]. It's more vital and fun. US even British pop is sometimes OK. I download a lot of it [from the Internet] and listen from my cell or MP3 player."

Unlike Jan, Regan, a waiter from Khomasdal, was a Namibian music fan, this being his most important taste. He was the only participant apart from the student Petrus (Focus Group Four) who immersed himself heavily in local music culture. He liked to listen to this on radio, but also downloading local music from Internet to his cell phone. He said

> radio is my favourite! I like a lot of music. I am not too much into TV, movies and so on. We got TV at home, but I like to spend my time in my room listening to radio or playing CDs. Gazza is a different style. For Namibians, he is very inspirational. His music lyrics are about our lives. He talks about the problems we have like money, being poor, how you cope, also about having hope. He is very encouraging, because he has the same background as most of us. You can relate to him because he knows how to reflect his life and yours in his music. I think we are rising, and in a few years we will have our own established music [in Namibia]. Then there is Jericho who really shows the best, he shows the standard. His album got the best album of the year here. His songs and tracks are just awesome. I listen to it because he is talking about reality, about his life and how he has grown up, and so on. I like music that I can relate to. Being a waiter [at a steakhouse], when I come home after a hard day, I just go in my room and put my earphones in from my phone, and relax with the music. It is the most relaxing thing to me.

Despite the growth of other media, radio has proved resilient, particularly among relatively poor participants. Many rely on it as their primary media, while often requiring it to get them through the working day by diverting them from dull jobs. It was a major means for enjoying various styles of music, but also for national and community news similar to ways Bosch (2003) reported for rural radio users in South Africa.

### 4.4.3 Television practices

From being a minority medium in the early years of Namibian independence in the 1990s, television viewing has grown substantially. It is estimated over 60% of the population have some form of ownership or access (Larsen 2007). Popular television viewing involved watching movies, usually Hollywood but also Nigerian films. Hollywood film and television

were more commonly accessed through DSTV's offerings of a broad choice of relatively recent content but also One Africa which substantially increased its American film and television programming in 2011. NBC offered only occasional examples of this, with few participants expecting to find American content there. Soap operas were the other primary reason to view.

South African soap operas such as *Egoli*, *7 de Laan* and *Generations* were favoured because Afrikaans was frequently used and the South African social settings regarded as similar to Windhoek's. American soap operas were also liked: *Days of Our Lives* and the *Bold and the Beautiful*, and also Brazilian and Mexican soap operas dubbed into American-English, *Hidden Passions*, *The Clone* and *The Storm* being mentioned. In May 2011, the first Indian soap drama, dubbed from Hindi into American English, appeared: *Indian Love Story*, being very popular and widely discussed.

During fieldwork interviews, several of these soap operas disappeared from schedules due to a change of policy at One Africa. In June 2011, it terminated its contract with the South African e.TV which had allowed One Africa to utilise approximately 50% of its air time to show chiefly movies and soap operas (*The Namibian*, 27 May 2011). One Africa began to buy in programming direct from United States and South African providers. Interview participants were often not happy with the change.

Abby, the supermarket worker at Maerua Mall, did not like the 'new-look' One Africa. It had dropped most of her favourite South African soap operas, and she did not approve of the replacement American action and crime shows even though many had been hits in other parts of the globe, for example *24*, *Prison Break* and police shows such as *CSI* and *Boston Legal*. She said her family found *24* interesting, but they did not have the time to watch every episode, as it was on every night. This was too much of a commitment, so they now watched NBC more which has few American shows.

The bank clerk John (1) said he and his wife enjoyed American popular television. While socialising outside with family and friends was preferable, having a child now restricted leaving the home, and television had become more important for their leisure. He enjoyed it after a hard day's work at the bank, and liked many of the programmes on the DSTV channels he subscribed to which he preferred to the local state television. Several of the American blockbuster television serials intrigued him. He stated

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our kid is only about three years, so it doesn't know what's going on yet. But cartoons keep her quiet. My wife and myself like this series called *Lost* – do you know it? That was really intriguing, about these people who crash [in a plane] on an island which is not quite *lekker* [good]. It's a sort of jigsaw puzzle thing, trying to work out what's happening. I like that, where you have to think a bit for yourself. It respects your intelligence, while playing games with you. Something the NBC would never show, man! Also, we're really into football since last year's World Cup [2010]. My wife likes the Italian league. We're not doing TV all the time, of course. We have friends so we're out when we can get someone to mind the kid.

Not all participants favoured the programmes available, especially the white middle class Talia, who expressed dissatisfaction with the quality and content available. She said

MultiChoice DSTV is the only serious TV we get here. It's the only alternative to One Africa and NBC, but both are poor. DSTV is nothing special either. It's a limited choice on the whole, and such a lot of stuff is endlessly repeated. My dad really only likes it for the sport and news. But we cannot get the South Africa news here as MultiChoice blocks it [SABC stations]. He says the government in Namibia doesn't want people to know what is happening down there. It's a news blackout

This 'blackout' of South African news was mentioned by several participants. Many were suspicious that so little news was available from South Africa on the Namibian television stations, and the unavailability of the SABC stations on DSTV was blamed on the Namibian government, participants believing that the state wished to limit flows of external news. There may have been some truth in these beliefs given that Kalahari Holdings, the business arm of the ruling SWAPO party, has a 51% stake in MultiChoice giving them considerable control of the conditions of its operation including 'blocking' SABC broadcasts.

Talia had her own strategy for overcoming the general limitations of Namibian television culture.

Namibia has no TV or film culture. I really dislike that. There is much better stuff out there on the Internet. I use various iPlayers from US, UK and Germany to watch TV. These are wonderful and you can see such a lot. We download. We spend a lot on Internet services in our house. N$1000 to 1200 each month. We have the unlimited Internet contract from MWeb [MultiChoice]. It's usually fast, and dad pays [laughs]. I'm using it fully downloading a lot and watching pretty much what I want. It's unlimited what you can do.

For Talia, conventional ways to access television programmes were becoming redundant. She preferred her laptop and the Internet which she saw as allowing her to 'access when I want, watch what I want' by downloading. While few participants interviewed were able to afford

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this standard of convergent media access, such practices were not rare and seems to represent a decisive shift in how audio-visual entertainment is increasingly accessed as international studies have shown (Kung, Picard & Towse 2008; Jenkins 2006).

Films and particularly soap operas were dominant in the viewing habits of interviewees. Establishing participant interest in these is undertaken in the next section.

### 4.4.4 The centrality of soap operas in participant television viewing practices

Soap operas or 'soapies'[34] were central to the viewing habits of a majority of respondents, appealing across class, income and ethnicity, a finding born out in studies from Britain and the United States (Robson 1998; Harrington & Bielby 1995).[35] As programmes they were followed avidly and loyally, or treated lightly or with derision. Why do people in Windhoek or global audiences in many countries across the world so enjoy these often low-budget dramas? Why are soap operas 'meaningful' to viewers?

The student, Falen, had a family history of watching soap operas. Her mother had been a fan, and Falen had grown up with them as one of her main television interests. She had a specific connection to soap operas then in terms of her named identity, saying

> I started liking soaps from when I was 10 or 11. My mother and I would sit and watch together. Soaps are there on a daily basis, and are always there for you to watch them. You want to know what happens next to the characters; some are good, some are bad. At the end of the day, you just want to enjoy it. It does reflect your life. In fact my name [Falen] actually comes from a character in a soap: the character in the American programme *Dynasty*. My mother loved that and named me.

Falen had enjoyed with her mother the co-viewing practices that Nathanson (2001) has described. Nathanson argues that children adopt positive views and habits of parents when they watch things together in a supervised situation. She was literally brought up with soap operas as formative programming.

Liking them is more than acquired habit: their continuity of story lines compared with other types of programming is part of their appeal. That they run often on a daily basis or several

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[34] The term 'soap' derives from the United States television drama series Peyton Place which ran from 1964-1969. The show had been created by an advertising agency (much like the one portrayed in the series *Mad Men*) to advertise washing products of a detergent company. During broadcast, programmes were interrupted with product advertising. The name soap or soapie emerged to describe any similar style of domestic drama (Haralovitch & Rabinovitz 1999). Few Windhoek participants were aware of why the terms soap or soapies were used.

[35] Further literature on the influence of soap operas is discussed in relation to ontology media in Chapter 5.

times each week over a long period establishes a close affinity with characters and plot. In this sense, Crispin and Bertha explained well why they liked the soap genre.

> Crispin: I like soaps such a lot also. You watch one chapter [episode] and you want to know more, so you seek out the next one. The stories and the characters are so interesting and they look so real. Watching a soap is so different to watching a movie. A movie has such a short time to interest you, so you don't really get to know the characters like you can in a soap.

> Bertha: There's only one programme that I like to watch. It's an Indian [actually Brazilian] soapie on One Africa called *The Clone*. I like it because of the story and the characters. It's really entertaining. It's similar to all the other soapies. It's always a love story, getting the approval of dad, leading to a happy end. It's about relationships, breaking up, divorce. But people end up happy. I know how it will end, I know. But I don't care because it's happy. It's good to know it turns out happy even if life is not always like that.

Participants found meaning and examples of their own lives in such dramas. They were a type of ontological programming, an *affinity media* which reflected and informed their lives. Not everyone watched them with approval. John (1) explained how his family viewed them on a normal evening. He had a far more reserved and cynical view of them from within his collective family viewing, saying

> I come home from work and Lena [his wife] is already watching *Egoli* or *7 de Laan*, or something like that. I join in. Even my daughter joins in, but I'm not sure what she thinks is going on, but she watches with us. She thinks these are comedies, because she laughs at them a lot, even when it's not supposed to be funny. That makes us laugh! In many ways the soaps are ridiculous anyhow. Stupid plots and characters. I'm not a great fan, but my wife is interested. Where we think they're interesting is that they're usually about people like us. At least they're Africans. You have black, coloured, white [people] involved in all these everyday situations. Unlike the movies we watch, they're partly closer to real life; you know, the friendships, rivalries, people having affairs, showing people's workplace experiences. You don't relate to the American stuff in quite the same way, even though it's enjoyable. But of course, it's all from South Africa and we don't have our own soaps here. But you can relate to South African people because we often look the same and speak the same.

These relational desires have been discussed by McMillin (2009) in the context of her youth and media studies. Audiences respond better to media that has local or representational relevance. While foreign film and television is widely enjoyed across the globe, direct need for identification with culturally familiar characters and plots was frequently demanded.

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Not all viewers of soap operas were ready to accept the sexual aspects of the storylines, which might involve extra-marital relationships, occasional scenes of sex or similar intimate depiction. An art student, Grace, enjoyed them and was unconcerned about such aspects, but watching them proved difficult when she visited her parents in Katima where more traditional values prevailed. Parental censorship quickly established itself during Grace's family viewing.

> I like to watch movies or TV things with others, but not with my mother who will often turn off the TV as soon as she sees someone kissing. She will not have that. I used to watch *The Bold and the Beautiful* when I was in Katima, but my mum was switching off as soon as there was any indication of sex. She would switch it off, wait and turn it on again when she thought it was probably over. So it was really hard to follow what was going on. I lose interest with soaps when I am with her.

For Grace, the intimate nature of the relationships portrayed and the making public on television of private lives were part of the attraction of soap operas even where this contradicted tradition (Fox 2005b). They revealed private lives that her parents normally forbade discussion of, including her own life, this being the main reason their stories were important to her. Grace said

> we are like many families in the north [of Namibia]. You don't ever talk about intimate things to each other. That is our tradition. We are all formal and reserved. That's how we were all brought up. You don't learn anything about relationships from your family. You get no help, and it is not correct to ask your mother about problems, even problems with men. You would never ask your father, no. Then when you meet someone, you don't know what to do or how to handle it. You just have to find out, to discover it. Soaps really help you because you see how other people do it, how they handle relationships. That's probably the reason I like them.

The value of the genre's emphasis on intimate relationships was discussed by participants from many different social backgrounds, and seemed an important indication for the popularity of soap operas as other studies have shown (Ruddock 2007; Haralovitch & Rabinovitz 1999).

In sum, soap operas have been described as the ultimate twentieth-century television genre embracing traditional elements of literature and the novel in serial form (Geraghty 2006). The format has experienced enormous commercial success and has been exported to many countries where it is now widely established. Windhoekers favoured localised soap operas over foreign. They liked the pleasure of talking about familiar plot lines, characters and,

frequently, social issues reflecting societal problems experienced in their own communities. In line with studies elsewhere, soap operas formed daily topics of everyday conversation, and viewers expected them to strongly relate to and generally reflect their own lives. Expectations of them were that they must be representative in terms of mirroring participant ontologies (Harrington & Bielby 1995). In Windhoek, they were often the chief reason to have a television.

*4.4.5 Hollywood films in visual media practices: "What American movies do best"*

In the sense that soap operas were essential to participant audio-visual media habits, so too was film. Hollywood movies were widely viewed and in most cases liked and enjoyed. The majority of those interviewed were heavily immersed in American Western films which were watched either in theatres, on television or through DVD rentals. Entry through cheap pirate DVDs and downloads from the Internet were not uncommon. The type of films mentioned among more affluent participants tended to be recent: *Pirates of the Caribbean 4* (2011), *X Men: First Class* (2011), *Black Swan* (2011). Lower-income participants tended to refer to older films which had been seen around the time of their interview on One Africa or (less so) NBC, occasionally DSTV. Most were probably similar to American film ubiquitously consumed across the globe. Olson (1999) has indicated that American or Hollywood commercial and cultural dominance goes largely unchallenged because few other regions have the capacity to produce and distribute films which penetrate other societies so successfully.

There were lines of resistance to Western film in the Windhoek interviews, as not everyone approved of them or wished to watch them. Regional alternatives such as Nigerian cinema were preferred by low income and less cosmopolitan participants; frequently by people who had migrated from rural areas in recent years to work or study in Windhoek. Their tastes differed to those who had grown up in Windhoek. Responses to Nigerian film are discussed in the next section.

Several authors have argued that this cultural grip on world film production and its audience represents more than commercial influence, involving what Fiske (2011) calls 'semiotic productivity'. Viewers, particularly youth as the main consumers of film and television, are presented with exogenous symbols and messages. Fiske argues that these are received and adapted to the personal and social identities of the audience rather than passively received as in Adorno's (1991) theory of the culture industry. Audiences are said to 'work on' symbolic

products in their media practices, making them meaningful for their own personal, local and national contexts (Fiske 2011:37). In this way, they engage in a form of semiotic production. Yet not all participants were pleased to orient themselves in this manner, and the popularity of films such as *District 9* (see below) reveal ontological demands for greater 'localised' visual and symbolic representation ignored by Fiske. Mentally or semiotically adapting foreign productions to personal cognition is not the same as directly *seeing* and experiencing local culture and community directly in media productions.

How did the Windhoek participants approach Western Hollywood-style cinema? Tom, a charity worker and aspiring businessman, had grown up in Katutura, and remembered seeing his first American film in the (now defunct) municipal cinema when very young.[36] When it closed, he had to travel to the town centre.

> I used to go to the movies [at Maerua Mall] when I was young, but not so much really when I was older. Sometimes my dad took us, but he complained because it was too far from Katutura. There was once a cinema in Katutura which is now the Women's Centre or something; but it closed some years before. There is nothing there now.

Tom's cinematic interests had developed as a teenager. Memory of the musical *Moulin Rouge* (2001) had stayed with him because it was 'fast and full of colour'. He liked the 'strange city of Paris' as portrayed in the film. He liked *Chicago* (2002), but more recent musicals such as *Mama Mia* (2008) he thought "weak and without that sort of fun". In his late teens Tom stopped going to cinema when he mixed with a different set of friends. They had little interest in travelling the eight or nine kilometres into town at night. He began to view more through video, later DVD rentals and through television. Action movies were central for him, as they were for several other male interviewees.

Focus Group Two consisted of coloured middle class engineering students John (2), Pietre (2) and Jacob whose parents were all professionals in state or private sector employment. They enthusiastically discussed Western films, being fans of crime and gangster action movies from the United States, and said that they watched very few other types. None of the three admitted to having viewed African cinema, and knew little about Nigerian productions except

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[36] The Municipal Cinema closed in the early 1990s. It originally doubled up as a community hall and a drinking club for migrant workers, but began showing films from 1968. As it was subsidised, it was affordable. Lack of maintenance by the local authority resulted in the building deteriorating and being closed for safety reasons until part of the building was restored for other social activities. Ster Kinekor Maerua Mall is now the only venue in Windhoek for cinema.

to say that they were 'bad'. They provided the following exchange on Hollywood action films.

> Pietre (2): I like anything with action in it. I like the pace of those and the power of the stunts. They can be very exciting when done well.

> John (2): But they are best when there's a good story, don't you think? Some of these are just action and noise, one scene after the other. I like a story that interests me. This *Knight and Day* film with Tom Cruise we saw had no story, just one shoot-up and explosion after the next. That was just boring.

> Pietre (2): I thought that was OK. He was quite cool in it. But I don't like too much talking in them if it breaks up the flow of the action. That's why you go, for the action. I go for escape, not to have to think too much.

> Jacob: You like them violent! You are into that violence they show. I'm OK with that, they're fun.

> Pietre (2): No, not really, it's more the excitement.

> John (2): My taste isn't the same as you two, I think. I like a movie that involves you. Action is good, but something like *300*, the Spartan movie, was a very good tale. That was way ahead of something like that Cruise film that had only the action. Violence doesn't bother me, because that's how movies are.

Jan, the Zef fan, was just as much a devotee of action and also blockbuster Hollywood cinema. He tried to watch as many 'good movies' coming to Namibia as he could, although Windhoek's only cinema, the five-screen Ster Kinekor, was 'very limited' in what it offered. He thought it was easier to wait and view a selection on DSTV. In the week before the interview he had watched two movies: the hit *Avatar* and the more modest movie *Precious*. Jan contrasted them interestingly, saying

> yes, one is really just fantasy, shoot-them-up in space. The other tried to show real life. It [*Avatar*] wasn't as good as I'd heard. They [friends] said it was really about colonialism and was like the liberation struggle we did in history at school. I suppose you could watch it like that. But for me it was just an action film. I watched *Precious* with my mother. It was about a poor black family in an American town – not the type of movie I'm used to watching, but it was hard to stop looking. She has a terrible mother and no one likes her. My mother liked it because she [the Precious character] tried to improve herself at college. It was a bad image of America.

Jan also illicitly downloaded recent Hollywood films from pirate or 'torrent' websites. His family had a fast Internet connection, so it was possible to do this. He said many of his

friends now obtained new movies this way, rather than going to the cinema or renting. He was critical of the local Ster Kinekor cinema.

> I dislike boring stuff. By that I mean some of the bad movies we get here in Namibia. I don't know who owns that cinema but such bad movies are shown. We don't get the ones they get in South Africa. We don't even get that many of the big blockbusters. The choice is not good here. You have to wait for most of the good films to come to TV or out for rental.

Various respondents said they preferred the cinema to television for viewing films, seeing 'real' cinema as a more enhanced experience. Tyler said: "My husband and I have been [to the cinema] a few times recently. We prefer the big screen and the sound."

Rashida, a student, came from the eastern town of Gobabis and was currently studying in Windhoek. Over the last two years, she had experienced cinema films for the first time and enjoyed it. She mentioned what some might describe as 'demanding' film preferences such as Darren Aronofsky's *Black Swan* which had screened at Ster Kinekor in June 2011. She had heard a lot about it from others, but found the less conventional plot perplexing, if intriguing.

> I have seen *Black Swan*. That was good, but it was a hard film, but also confusing. The part where she seemed to be one person, but there seemed to be two people; she had this, what do you call it, a multi-personality disorder. There were two people, but she was really a disturbed single one. There was something we liked about it. It played with you and made you think more about the characters. We [referring to her joint participant in the interview, Charlotte] are not so keen on action movies. We would not go to a cinema to see those.

Rashida and Charlotte, a fellow student also from Gobabis, liked conventional movie actors, if not certain film styles. Charlotte said: "We don't like these unreal movies, these ones with fake landscapes. We don't like these movies that have been computerised a lot, this special effects thing that so many movies have now. We like movies that are natural, that reflect the world as it is. It is a bit too obvious and not real."

Tom sought out media of 'difference', and had broken with the usual American action style. He was very enthusiastic about the Aaron Sorkin/Fincher film on the rise of Facebook, *The Social Network* (2010) which neatly linked with his business aspirations.

> [Enthusiastic] Yes! I've watched it [*The Social Network*], that's my type of movie. Someone coming up from nothing to something. Being a university student creating something wonderful. It shows that at university you must make the most of it. It showed me that I wanted to be something, to run my business, to try anything and

succeed. I rate that movie ten out of ten. The way everybody tries to take credit out of your work and get a piece, like those brothers – money for nothing! I loved the business manoeuvrings in that.

John (1) was interested that film could be used to make political or social parallels with the present, although he said that media entertainment was ultimately no more than 'escapist', a relief after a tiring day at work (seen this way also by Tyler). He said that he missed the presence of local productions. Like several others, he referred to his fascination with the 2009 science fiction movie, *District 9,* set in an alternative future Johannesburg.

> [I saw] a South African movie I liked last year; it was *District 9* about alien immigrants in Joburg. That was pretty good. Some of it could have been [set in] Windhoek. But there doesn't seem to be much else made from down there; and nothing is made here that I know about. Of course I would want there to be more.

John (1)'s view encapsulates what has been called elsewhere in this research the *representationalist* position, which itself establishes an important category for the grounded theory. Representational desires were expressed by a significant minority of those interviewed. This is where Namibians raise an interest in seeing their own society and culture reflected in the media products they consume. In postcolonial studies this is referred to as an ontological or representational desire for populations to control their own cultural spaces and tell their own stories (McMillin 2009; Appadurai 1996).[37] It characterised a need to possess a sense of inclusion, rather than exclusion, in a world flooded by exogenous Western media symbols.

While John (1) favoured American cinema, several participants revealed hostility to Hollywood popular film. Much of this was an overt cultural aversion, mixed occasionally with moral reservations. Hilma, who worked as a government researcher, was extremely critical of American action movies, arguing that

> I can't relate to them [American movies]. They're too fast and the violence is too much. Is it really like that there? If it is, then why do they want to show they're like that? I know friends who watch that, and I worry they get too excited by it. Male friends really get hyped up on that stuff. It's not good to like such things. Television is full of it.

She said she agreed with her parents on the 'negative' character of American film and television, and neither had ever approved of these, an opinion she had inherited, objecting to

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[37] See Chapter 5 for discussion of cultural representation in Windhoek media.

their 'sex and violence'. An art student, Twama, criticised American film for other reasons. For her, the problem was their 'lack of a message'.

> I don't watch the American movies. I wake up scared when I have seen them, they are too violent. I don't understand what they are saying to us. The message is too hidden. Tell me what they are about?

Others interviewed frequently said that they expected entertainment to provide meaningful messages. For example, Grace explained that the point of media should be to educate and "tell people things. If it doesn't, what is its use?" Gail was bored rather than offended by the popular Hollywood films she watched in the cinema. She explained that she went to the cinema, but not by choice because

> I've got this boyfriend who likes going to the cinema at Maerua Mall, but some of the films are boring and I use the time to text my friends [on a cell phone] when I'm bored. He likes them more than me and watches them right through. But I get bored sitting all that time.

Wang (2009) has written about reception to American film in China which suggested similar patterns of experience to Windhoek, including a mix of interest with criticism of American film. He states that Chinese cinema productions have been forced by its public to mimic Hollywood styles, although the result has not been clone media, but rather globalised versions of Chinese tradition; this is acceptable to Chinese consumers who enjoy hybrid foreign styles that retain local cultural symbolism. On the issue of representation, Strelitz's (2002) South African study has noted the desire of people to experience media to which they can readily relate, involving careful cultural sifting and rejection practices. Foreign productions or local media that diverged from expected cultural ontologies were screened out of viewer interests.

Schuker (2010) has provided important evidence that Hollywood recognises its failure to socially and culturally cater for other societies, while simultaneously realising the commercial folly of this, as 68% of box office sales in 2010 were earned outside the United States. As a result, film production has shifted focus from local to global markets, responding to demands of international rather than American consumers. Producers have reportedly altered scripts, adapted stories to less American themes, and abandoned conventional casting by employing international rather than just American actors, and generally restructuring film formats to regional tastes. Scenes are now shot exclusively for the lucrative markets of Chinese, Russian or African audiences which will not appear in home releases in the United

States. Rivalry to Hollywood from strong indigenous cinema industries is also driving this change. It remains unclear how far the American film is prepared to take this de-Westernising trend.

Part of this strategic shift that Schuker reports is reflected in Hollywood's willingness to fund 'African' films such as *District 9* or *Blood Diamond* which utilise local cinematic skills and include strong representation of local settings, languages and historiographies, albeit packaged within familiar popular production formats. This suggests that theories of global media, including postcolonial studies, underestimate the commercially adaptive character of the American cinema industry, while overestimating its Western cultural exclusivity. Hall's (1991) idea of global capital's need to function through local capital resonates here. Yet beyond this potential for cynicism, the markedly positive public reaction to *District 9* in the research suggests a desire to see symbolic displays of local/national society in popular entertainment. This gives validation to conceptions of hybridity and hybrid (or 'glocal') culture previously discussed as part of the literature and theoretical frame (Prabhu 2007; Kraidy 1999; Bhabha 1994). When the conception is applied more broadly to other formats such as television soap operas or fusions of African-American music, the value of the term emerges more strongly: *District* 9, *7 de Laan* or Namibian music such as that of Lady May, are potentially hybrid productions that constitute the 'third space' of cultural contestation and resistance that Bhabha talks about. For Hall to see hybridity as merely a facet of global capital ignores the participation and practices of 'subaltern' actors in the reception and further hybridisation of media forms, although he may be correct to warn that such a space is itself being colonised or exploited as media empires see commercial advantages of culturally adaptive strategies. This point of the research established the concept of *hybrid media*.

It is difficult to confirm that Namibian or other publics truly see 'their' worlds in foreign audio-visual entertainment. Some participants clearly did not. The need of publics representationally to experience substantially more of their lives and society in film may account for the attraction of Windhoekers to Nigerian productions.

*4.4.6 Receptions to Nigerian Cinema: "African movies are more real to me" (Mumba)*

Nigerian cinema and television proved to be a strong preference of Windhoekers, although less so for white and coloured participants. Black Africans generally appear to favour entertainment from Nigeria. After Hollywood and Bollywood (India), 'Nollywood' is the world's third largest film industry and is widely watched in Africa and by African migrants

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living in Western cities for whom it represents a nostalgic means of symbolic and cultural connection with societies left back home (Madichie 2010; Esan 2008). This is another example of the potentially *representational* demands that consumers may make of media in that 'Africa' as a cultural idea and reality tends to be exhibited in this type of cinema far more than any other. Esan argues that Nigerian film production broadly reflects (2008:5)

> many genres that are easily conflated in the effort to create a wide appeal and guarantee quick returns on investment. There are evangelical (usually Christian but also Islamic) movies which bestride genres whilst retaining their religious sensibilities. These video/films are known to explore the conflicts between the traditional ways and the challenges of contemporary living. They feature variations in lifestyles to be found in urban and rural areas. In all, they offer contrasting sets of values that the viewer may have to choose from in the attempt to correct societal ills.

Esan's description largely coincides with the views of the Windhoek participants who responded positively to the themes of Nigerian cinema: Christian-style morality tales, the dangers of ignoring tradition, custom versus modernity, the dangers or opportunities of the big city to new rural migrants, depictions of social problems such as crime and poverty or troublesome personal relationships. Participants liked them because they appeared to touch on and reflect their own lives. In that sense, they were *life-relational media* as well as being representational.

It was possible for participants to accommodate both Hollywood and Nigerian productions in their viewing tastes. Mumba, a media studies student from Pioneers Park, enjoyed films from the United States because they allowed her to escape reality; Nigerian movies were cultural forms she felt great empathy with. She considered that they

> have such good stories, and I don't care how they are made. I can really relate to them as an African. The storyline is good, especially the comedies. They don't really have violence in them, they're more everyday and it really takes me back to my African roots. They're all about jealousy, personal conflicts, problems people have in their lives. American movies are more about 'action', a sort of fantasy thing to escape from things when you are tired. I relate to Nigerian programmes or films much more. But African movies are more real to me.

Werner, a soldier, expressed considerable enthusiasm for Nigerian cinema. His account explains their typical style, and how they relate to his view of local culture.

> Yes! They [Nigerian movies] are good. I love this *Mr Ibu* [a comedy figure]. That is great. Also the Nigerian movies are very interesting. They show the gap between

father and son, like with me and my father. One wants to be modern, but the father wants him to be backward and traditional. That connects to you. But they are very funny in this context. I like US action movies for their modern aspects, but here in Africa I can relate to the Nigerian movies more. We have a sort of commonality with them. We are rural and so are the Nigerian films. They show this witchcraft which we have; they show this life with cattle, which we have. It's still part of our culture. American stuff is all cities and towns, cars chasing each other through streets and past buildings. But for most of Africa it is rural. We relate more to these rural movies that are closer to our culture [here in Namibia].

In Focus Group Six, a chemistry student, Tuleli, mentioned her fondness for the popular *Mr Ibu* films.

I can watch those twenty times a day. They are very enjoyable. But I accept the American films, I have no problem with them really, I accept them. There is a time for American and a time for Namibian and African. It depends on what mood you are in. Sometimes I don't want this African stuff with all these screaming African characters [imitates it loudly) Eh! Ah! Everything has its time.

Yet Tuleli was reluctant to state that Nigerian cinema was the only style she wished to watch. She liked to choose and 'to switch'. Nigerian films and television had critics. Tyler and Tom admitted to being mystified by their appeal given production quality issues. They said:

Tyler: It is a mystery to me why they like them. In my view, they watch them for the flimsiest reasons. Just because they have only black people in them, they think they need to be watched! I assume they relate to them. Maybe it's a cultural thing? But how can you forgive that low quality? For me, they are unwatchable. Even if they were full of coloured people like me, I wouldn't say they were good for that single reason! I don't understand some of our people, that they tolerate that rubbish. They must be cheap, that is why the TV [NBC and One Africa] buys them. I prefer the well-made American stuff. Not so much the British or European stuff because they can be very slow and demand too much of you to understand their stories.

Tom: I sometimes come home and my family and friends are sitting watching one of those Nigerian African movies, and want me to join in. But they are too primitive for me! I can't stay long. I like the American western stuff.

Nigerian cinema, like soap operas, was well-entrenched in many black participants' entertainment practices, although as was seen a minority berated and condemned them. Those who approved did so on cultural grounds, arguing that they reflected Namibian or broader African life in a way American cinema could not. Once more, the importance of representational media is revealed in the preferences of Windhoekers. These ontological imperatives in relation to Nigerian cinema are discussed further in the next chapter.

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*4.4.7 Experiences of print media*

The research now turns to participant orientations to older print media. Namibia has a long tradition of this, including newspapers since the early 1900s and the novel in Afrikaans, German and English (Larsen 2007; Vale 2005). Yet it has been argued that the reading available is narrow and that Namibia lacks a reading culture in these languages, but markedly in the Oshiwambo language spoken by nearly 50% of Namibians (*New Era*, 31 October 2007). In consequence, a dominant commitment to print media was not initially expected in the research. Only a small number of participants favoured books, magazines or newspapers. However, print media was highly valued by those who did use it.

John (1) equally preferred the Afrikaans and English written word. His father had been an avid reader of history and had berated other media as inferior. He had absorbed his father's interests which reflected a view of the family's own historical identity. He said

> we had books in Afrikaans and some in English on history [in childhood]. My father was a fan of history: African, even Roman, he was interested in Rome, Caesar and all that. I grew up on his history stories. He knew a lot about Namibia, and said that the family came to Namibia with Jonker [Afrikaner], the Orlam warlord in the early nineteenth-century. Yes, I think we did, because we had these old letters from my grandfather that said how we'd come up from the Northern Cape and took over the southern Namibian tribes. I liked those stories as a kid, also the Roman stuff. I used to read history, but not so much now. It's hard to buy such things here. Access is not good.

The majority of interviewees who liked to read tended to read better in English than their own written languages. Diane was an ambitious student funding her own studies from a small jewellery business through Facebook. Like Crispin and Mumba she regarded good English as advantageous for future self-development.[38]

Most of those who liked to read showed a strong interest in classic and modern novels. For some participants, Afrikaans figured as the preferred language, for others it was English. Participants presented varied reading interests. John (1) liked crime fiction and had read a mixture of South African and international examples. Others were familiar with classics.

> John (1): I read in both Afrikaans and English. I prefer Afrikaans, but I don't have a problem with English. I use English all day at the bank, so I've got even better than

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[38] English is the official language of Namibia, but many continue to have problems speaking and reading in it proficiently.

before. I read novels in both languages, South African books. I like crime stuff. There's a guy called François Bloemhof whose crime fiction I like. This Christmas I read *Spinnerak* which was very good, very intriguing and exciting. I'd previously read another book by him given by a friend, called *Bloedbroer* or something like that. His stuff is firmly in our southern African world. Some of it could be set in Windhoek, very real stuff. They would make good movies. I also like Stieg Larsson's books – very exciting. They're in English, but I think he's from Sweden or somewhere.

Andrew: I just read *1984* by George Orwell. I first read it at school and it didn't make any impact, but I read it again and saw it shows how the world has become now. It analyses the way the world is modelled now, it's a sort of way it is. How we live. The movie *The Truman Show* does that in a different but also similar way. I read also James Patterson's *Along came a Spider*, a US detective thing about solving murders. I like crime and detective stuff. I read sports magazines like *Sports Illustrated*. I try to keep up with what's happening.

Crispin showed a strongly reflexive application of Russian classic literature to his own Namibian context. He explained how he thought a novel he had read by Gogol fitted the circumstances of modern Namibia, and was something he could relate to.

I recently read a book someone gave me: *The Government Inspector* by a Russian guy, it was Gogol. It's about these two drifter guys who come to this small town and they're mistaken for government inspectors come to check out things. They're befriended by this local governor who thinks he can get benefits from knowing them, but also wants to hide his malpractices; he's a very corrupt guy. He even offers his daughter to marry one of them because he's a corrupt man. They took advantage of this mistake, and they run off with the money of the town. It's very funny. It's like an African town in some ways. You see such people, and it happens that way. Yes, I can relate to it.

This represented the novel as *relational media* whereby a narrative plot can be lifted out of its original setting and applied to the social context where the reader resides, representing a cultural hybrid inversion of European literature to Namibian locales much as Bhabha says is possible (Bhabha 1994). Crispin was able to expropriate it to reflect themes of corruption and patriarchal politics in his own country.

Tom read for instrumental reasons, being critical of those who read purely for pleasure or diversion. This practical orientation to the printed word extended to a narrow choice of reading, and he referred to his business orientation.

I look for ideas [in media]. Like there is the founder of Pick 'n Pay [supermarket chain], one guy I really admire called Raymond Ackerman. He's South African. He

used to work at Checkers as a holiday job, and always told the manager that you should do this and that to make the shop better, and they gave him a warning not to interfere with management matters. He was eventually fired. So he founded Pick 'n Pay. In his autobiography he said that people called him 'The Cricket'. Too many people use the media for gossip, only wanting to know 'who's doing this and who's doing that'. I read only books that help you to succeed. We are poor in this country, so should seek ways to make money.

Jan used to read music magazines and the occasional novel, but now he had limited experiences of print media. He still reads, but now only saw reason to do so through electronic print, a further indication of media convergence in Windhoek. He preferred this mode of reading and said that he had not looked at a magazine or book 'for some time'. Everything he needed was online.

> I go on my computer and do everything there these days. I get my music and movies and anything I want to read. I read stuff about music, the music scene from South African mags [magazines]. I check out gossip stories about what my favourite musicians or movie actors are doing. I do read a lot. But not in the old way [printed word]. No one has to do that anymore. It's cheaper and easier online.

An assessment of the *New Era* newspaper that a reading culture is 'absent' in Namibia was not borne out, as print media did appear to be a visible, if minority, interest among participants. While there was evidence that audio-visual media such as television, film and music had leap-frogged and eclipsed an interest in traditional print for many, it become clear that people were reading intensively online, in the way that Jan had described. Indication of a growing online reading culture in African countries through Internet access has been highlighted by Kachala (2007) who argues that the Internet is removing restrictive access to print for poorer citizens. Modern communications are arguably generating literacy and information access.

### 4.4.8 Reading newspapers

Newspapers were read widely if in an ad hoc and occasional manner. Few respondents thought buying newspapers was worthwhile, most sharing editions. Many spoke of an informal network where newspapers and magazines were passed around. They valued free newspapers such as *Informanté* which could be obtained at public places in town.[39]

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[39] It has been anecdotally reported that distribution of *Informanté* is banned in public municipal places. This may be why it is often difficult to obtain, although its popularity may be the reason for this.

Interviewees were often reluctant to pay for newspapers, therefore a free title tended to generate much interest. Crispin said

> I read the *Namibian Sun* and *Informanté*. *Informanté* as it's free. I borrow the other papers that you need to pay for because I don't like spending money on them. I get them from friends. I read magazines like *Drum* which I buy. It writes about crime or scandal, a bit like *Informanté*. It shows how people behave, it's real. It shows the photos of the people, so they are exposed. I like scandal.

*Informanté* is a popular free weekly newspaper, funded by the insurance company Trustco, being well-known locally for exposing the private lives of politicians. Issues of corruption, cronyism, divorce and extra-marital affairs dominate the content. SWAPO Party politicians, ministers and heads of private and public institutions tend to be the subject of many of the stories in tabloid exposé fashion. For this reason *Informanté* has been subjected to several defamation court cases.

Such exposés were much enjoyed by a number of participants.

> Twama: I like to get the free *Informanté* one. It's good for the entertainment scene. It tells you what's happening. I also like it for showing how corrupt our government can be. Where it shows those politicians who have stolen state money or put their relatives in good jobs they don't know how to do! It is a scandal paper, yes; but how would we know the mistakes of the government if they didn't tell us? No one else writes those stories!

> Lebius: I like this paper *Informanté*. It gives the dirt. I love to read it when I can find it available. It is wrong for people to say that it informs only on government people. Yes it does expose them, but there are these private businesses where people are exposed. There was the big cement company where the office lady had stolen millions over the years. The paper got her sent to the courts. I like this exposing of corrupt people.

There are parallels here with the popular South African tabloid *The Daily Sun* which has been argued to provide poorer South Africans with a basis for a shared civic culture in direct criticism of and conflict with government, often seen as failing a majority of citizens (Wasserman 2010). Tabloids tend to serve the role of occasional brutal opposition that conventional politics currently seems incapable of. *Informanté* appeared to fulfil a similar critical civic function in Namibia, but not always with approval.

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Robert, a librarian, held a different view and disapproved of the paper, referring to what he regarded as its poor quality and 'lies'. He was especially concerned at its attack on public figures, and he said

> if you read *New Era* or *The Namibian*, it is likely to be true, but not the *Informanté*. I spoke to a journalist from there a while ago. He told me that they wanted to bring the news that nobody else wanted to bring to the public. That would have been a good thing if they had done it properly, also if they did good research into the stories. But they do not. The stories are mainly persecution. It is poor journalism.

Hilma said that newspapers were the main source of Namibian news for her as she found television news 'poor', and therefore did not watch it. Like others, she read newspapers that were free or handed on to her by relatives or friends. *The Namibian* was her favourite, particularly the Friday edition that included an entertainment section, *The Weekender*.

> I get information from newspapers or from conversations with friends who have heard recent stories. But I only 'skim' newspapers and don't have time to read stories. I just like to get a quick idea of the story. Namibian newspapers write too much on stories.

The term 'skimming' news was often mentioned: people did not read whole articles or reports. Tom said: "I skim at first, check out the headings and skim through from there. Later I check them out again when I am in bed. I don't usually look at all the political stories. I'm not at all interested in politics."

Tom regarded newspapers as important in practical terms, as he did with his choice of books which reflected practical business or life motivational themes. He was critical of people who read newspaper 'idly' with other purposes.

> People buy *The Namibian* for the wrong reasons, particularly on Friday for *The Weekender* section which most of them like. They want to look at the pictures of friends or maybe themselves if they are in.

*The Weekender* is an entertainment section giving information on social events such as theatre, music and cinema. Photographs of people attending arts and social functions during the week are published in a double-page spread each Friday, and this is a popular item that many people check to see if they or their friends are included. Tom was critical of this as it represented a frivolity. Newspapers were for 'finding out things'.

Another aspect of print journalism emerging from the interviews was an aversion on the part of readers to news items other than social issues and entertainment, politics being widely

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avoided by many, supporting the findings of a recent report that youth rarely use media to find out about political issues (Keulder 2006).

**4.5 New media practices**

The Internet and new media are only briefly mentioned here, as this is extensively discussed later in the study. A considerable increase in Internet use became apparent from 2007 in Namibia when the arrival of 3G made it possible to access the Internet with less dependence on fixed line services. This has been followed by improvements in signal strength for wireless mobile internet devices. These developments combined with widespread expansion of cell phone ownership led to media convergence whereby phones, laptops and computers are now used to access a range of older media products (Jenkins 2006).

*4.5.1 Internet practices: "Online living"*

Gail from Khomasdal was hindered in her Internet preferences by what she regarded as poor access and service despite recent improvements. As a student, she was exposed to what she described as 'a bad system' which was slow and hard to access. This, in combination with gender conflicts and rivalry at home, resulted in dominance of the Internet by male family members, frequently resulting in degrees of side lining for Gail.

> We Internet at home, but it's hard to get to use it, as my father and my brother seem to be on all the time. When I do use it, I mainly check out some things for writing assignments or listen to download music. I like American music quite a lot, so I listen to that online and check out some of the singers to get the gossip. But I'm not big on the Internet because it's not easy to get onto, and I don't have the patience for it.

Among other participants, despite problems of speed and cost, the Internet was central in their media practices. There was generally a marked preference for this new over older media.

Diana remarked that she did a lot of 'online living' based on the intensity of her Internet activities. She said she used Facebook or accessed her preferred websites at 'least three or more hours a day, maybe all day at weekends'. This conception of online living arose frequently in the interviews. Elsewhere, Talia explained that the Internet had become fully integrated into her daily life. She used it for fun and also for practical purposes. It transpired that she had been checking websites on her phone immediately prior to being interviewed.

> I'm using it [the Internet] every day. If I don't use it at home, I'm accessing it on my cell phone. I probably check Facebook every hour, like I did a few minutes before you asked me for an interview. I was also looking for a skirt here at the shopping centre [Maerua Mall] that I had first seen online. So I checked that as well just now. I found one similar to it at Edgars. The Internet gave me the initial idea. You see that I have this 4G iPhone [shows me a very modern, probably expensive phone]. It was from my Dad for Christmas.

She added that: "My parents complain a lot saying that 'you live online' all the time!" At the end of her interview at a Maerua Mall café, Talia's mother arrived and exclaimed: "She's online too much! You can write down there that she is becoming isolated from her family!" Her mother was very serious when she said this, revealing a generational tension between daughter and mother.

The Internet is a source of and means to new forms of entertainment and social interactivity that participants found either exhilarating or disturbing and to be rejected. Internet culture is discussed in depth in Chapter 6 due to its perceived importance for this research.

*4.5.2 Cell phones: "Keeping in touch with my folks in the north"*

It is argued that media technology such as cell phones are "re-shaping social realities in African societies" (De Bruijn, Nyamnjoh & Brinkman 2009:11). They represent a social and cultural appropriation of media on the part of Africans, where social settings shape the context of how they can be used. The cell phone has been said to be 'a social mediator' in society, directly expressing and negotiating aspects of local culture and identity. Youth in particular utilise cell phones in ways that directly express personal and social traits. While in some societies mobile telephony is an urban activity, in other it represents links both within and to the rural countryside. It is a means for family connectedness, but also for maintaining friendship networks. Cell phones 'more vigorously' allow people to extend and intensify characteristics of life that are already historically well-established (Horst & Miller 2006).

Cell phones had a special place in the practices of Windhoek participants. It has already been seen how they were used for entry into other media forms, in addition to their more familiar and conventional uses for talking to and texting familiar others. Goggin (2006) states that since the 1990s, the cell phone has become much more than a device for speaking in many global cultures, being "a central cultural technology in its own right". It is an individualising device that involves a (2006:2)

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> proliferating range of cultural activities [that] revolve around the cell phone: staying in constant contact, music listening, text messaging, work routines, remote parenting, interaction with television programmes and video, Internet, meeting new people, dating, flirting, loving, bullying, commerce. They fit into new ways of being one's self, new ways of organizing and constructing one's life.

Telephones are becoming central to questions of culture and are argued to entail cultural change. Campbell and Park (2008) refer to the recent global adoption of mobile communications technology as having marked social consequences including the merging of private and public space, new forms of social interaction and self-negotiation which are argued to represent a new form of global culture. While offering increased flexibility, cell phones extend body and mind beyond immediate spaces, enhancing urban identity and individualisation.

For Windhoek youth, cell phones were part of the rise of networks of sociability that gave entrée into the Internet: "young adults are known for their distinctive use of mobile phones to establish, maintain, demonstrate and reinforce social network ties … while mobile phones play into the emancipation of teens as they develop their own individual identities" (Campbell & Park 2008:379). Campbell and Park refer to the creation of 'mobile youth culture' (*ibid.*) which was glimpsed within Windhoek participant mediated practices.

Many Windhoek participants distinctly remembered their first phones. Mumba said "I got my first cell phone in 2006, although I had wanted one long before that. I loved getting it. I'd use it to contact my friends, but also to access Internet. I made sure I was as up-to-date as possible. I need media to keep in touch with my folks in the north." Mumba saw her cell phone as a 'social device' that was essential for organising her social life and communications with family and friends. She said she was 'always on it', and that others were constantly in touch with her. She frequently checked to see who was sending messages on her favourite social network site, Facebook. She added: "I am always in touch. My cell is essential to me".

Pelckmans (2009:44) comments that mobile telephony has had

> an impact on the shifting boundaries between work and family life and on the blurring of the public and private.

This was perceivably the case in Windhoek where contact with family and friends had become easier and more intensive. The Windhoek interviews with participants were

frequently interrupted by calls from familiars, a significant finding revealing what Katz and Aakhus (2006) called 'perpetual contact'. Interviewees both expected to be called, and thought nothing of delaying a real-world conversation for a virtual or mediated exchange. Cell phone contact was welcomed as inevitable and as normal as any chance public encounter with friends.

All participants engaged in text messaging, usually intensively. For example, Grace said: "I am texting many times each day, every hour. It is normal for me. I am both receiving messages and replying. I am doing this more than I speak [on the phone]." Berg, Taylor and Harper (2005) showed that text messaging multimedia options are favoured by young people, being constantly enhanced and refined by manufacturers to further attract youth who text and share photos as much as they use cell phones to speak. Such 'circuits of culture' as mentioned by Goggin (2006:14), were reflected in Windhoek participant practices. 'Mobile youth culture', as it has been called (Campbell & Park 2008), revealed the centrality of mobile phones in youth lifestyle, along with different strategies of contact depending on who they communicated with. Parents were rarely texted, this being chiefly for friends. Parents were preferably spoken to direct. Texting or SMSing connected friends rather than relatives was undertaken several times each hour, unless the participant had an appointment, or was restricted by work or studies.

A discussion of texting language among young Namibians revealed intensive strategies to express as much as possible within the confines of 160 characters. This had created an abbreviated language of words and phrases, part local and part outside (*The Namibian*, 17 October 2008). For example, TTYL (talk to you later), 10Q (thank you) or IDGAD (I don't give a damn) were terms well-understood by Windhoek participants, less so by older cell phone users. Sending text messages had become a way of life for most participants. Grace confirmed this, saying that she had her 'quick language' that was shared with friends for text messaging. This is part of the constant communicative character of the cell phone that has emerged in Windhoek. Ito and Okabe (2005) mention the culture of permanent contact, or being 'always on', a concept which creates an ambient virtual co-presence for mobile phone users in which the Windhoekers seemed united and immersed through near-permanent links.

Negative aspects of cell phone use, according to some studies, potentially included dynamics of surveillance which countered freedoms cell phones offered. This may be the case between young adults and parents or guardians where mobile telephony may represent intrusion into

private youth lives (Horst & Miller 2006). This aspect was at no time expressed as a problem by Windhoek participants. Many accepted the 'intrusion' factor by family and familiars as inevitable, even predictable. Some referred to 'screening' techniques for unwelcome calls which were rejected. More research is needed to look deeper into filtering or screening practices. Wajcman, Bittman, and Brown's (2008) Australian studies suggest that mobile phone owners are increasingly developing stratagems to maintain control over telephony in their personal lives. They choose when to take calls, from whom, when to reply to texts or to switch off, in a regulated manner. Family and close friends were prioritised in communications, over acquaintances or strangers.

Phones represented status. Having the latest model with the maximum number of applications was highly desirable, and conspicuous public displays of cell ownership common. Mobile telephony has been said to be paramount to a person's "progress, social mobility and quality of life" (De Souza e Silva et al. 2011:421). Focus Group Two specifically discussed the lifestyle importance of cell phones as symbolic rather than merely practical items. Aspects desired were a well-designed modern phone, high purchase value or at least pretence of value, and attractive representational and display possibilities. The group discussed as follows, and includes interventions of the interviewer:

> Taria. With cells, I know people who still have really old models that are prehistoric. Others say 'what is this thing? Does it run on steam'? Maria is right. People expect you to look modern.

> Interviewer: How do you know what sort of cells look good? How do you find out?

> Taria: It's mainly advertising. You see the new ones in the newspaper or in a magazine. TV also runs ads when something interesting is launched. Then you go check it out, and if you can afford it, you try to be the first to have it.

> Maria: But not at any price! Some phones cost as much as a computer! You have to be wise and not crazy when you buy. You pick the best looking phone at the right price. I do.

> Lucas: But it might not be any good. It has to do the stuff you need, 3G minimum. Internet is needed now [they all agree]. It has to work well.

> Interviewer: Do you use the Internet a lot on your phone?

> Maria: It's vital for that.

> Interviewer: Do you show your cell phone off in public?

Maria: Yes, of course. I got an expensive one in January this year. Big screen for Internet. Nice keyboard and lots of colours. When I got it, I made a point of going around town [Windhoek] showing it off. I walked and talked to friends, I did SMSing. It was different and new at the time, so people looked. One guy asked me if it was an iPhone. I said yes, but it was really a Samsung copy. I didn't tell him that. It's just as good, but cheaper. You could say I showed off a bit! [laughs]

Taria: Yeah, we all do that! I walked around the streets talking to myself when I got my cell for the first time. I wanted to show off. It felt good! But I wouldn't do that now. I'm more sensible.

Cell phones were part of an idealised presentation of the self in Goffman's (1998[1959]) sense. They represented utility and means to access other media, but were more than this, being novel social and self-identity display objects for many interviewed. In his Swedish study, Stald (2008) found that it was deemed 'trendy' for youth to display the latest phones, with stigma attached to those who retained ownership of older models. Degrees of humiliation or respect were socially conferred by the character of media young people had in their possession.

In a Spanish study, García-Montes has written that (2006:71)

> the mobile phone is capable of satisfying a great diversity of aims, and can be used in a variety of cultural and social contexts. Even so, it can also be argued that the use of this and other technologies favours, promotes or foments a particular way of behaving and of understanding one's own identity.

The cell phone is argued to be both an expression and extension of one's identity, intervening beyond the self into other settings such as the street, when eating somewhere or, as mentioned earlier in relation to Gail, during the watching of a film in the cinema. They further claim that it feeds into the development of postmodern individualism, providing the actor with the technical means to extend the self and fulfil the reflexive capability the present global age now demands (García-Montes 2006). The impact of cell phones and mobile media generally in more traditional societies has been said to contribute to 'the crisis of the patriarchal family' resulting in the weakening of traditional forms of parental authority. This leads to a growing tension between parents and children or youth through the changing patterns of sociability that mobile media bring about. Intensive communication in virtual communities weakens reliance on family interaction as cultural orientations markedly shift. The importance of youth projects of autonomy and individuality removes the family from the central focus of culture and lifestyle (Castells et al. 2007:143-4). There may be truth in such

assertions for the participants in Windhoek, as tensions were glimpsed, in that mothers and fathers resented their child's social reorientations away from core interests in family life.

Poorer low income cell phone users valued their phones deeply. The car guard Subeb and security guard Mayunga, both Oshiwambo speakers only recently migrated to Windhoek, found them essential for work, contact with others, and also entertainment. Cell phones were a survival means to waged opportunity, and both said they found out about employment and new openings through the linkage of friends and familiars that cell phones made possible. Horst and Miller's (2006) Jamaica study similarly showed that cell phones were vital for poor users to access income and occupation provided through information from in-town social networks. Instant tips could be passed on and quickly taken advantage of. Mediated networks could also be used for securing temporary loans in hard times from vital acquaintances (Horst & Miller 2006; Smith 2005). Cell phones can therefore be said to represent an important source of social capital (Goggin 2006). Mobile telephony helped alleviate the so-called 'digital divide' in terms of unequal degrees of media access between rich and poor, linking people into beneficial information circuits (Goggin 2006). They were socially inclusive, heavily valued and much appreciated. Cell phones in Windhoek fed and reinforced a sense of self in terms of individuality and social identification, but equally strengthened formal as well as intimate collective communities.

Goggin (2006) states that it is necessary to pause cautiously when arguing that human communication has radically changed due to cell phones use, stating that they may have just intensified existing communications patterns. However this does not mean that cell phones have not now shifted to the centre of social interactions of publics. He states that cultural aspects of cell phones have so far been underexplored (2006:5), requiring international cultural comparisons to accurately determine cultural difference, including clarification of the power relations and structures that shape cell phone cultures. As in earlier times with the advent of the Sony Walkman device for mobile music, cell phones represent a catalyst for what has been called the circulation of culture and the means for the production and dissemination of social knowledge (Green 2004; Hall & Du Gay 1997). Campbell and Park (2008:381) go further stating that "we are experiencing an historical movement toward a personal communication society characterized by the widespread development, adoption, and use of PCTs (personal communication technology), such as the mobile phone."

## 4.6 Celebrity preferences

Celebrity regularly came up in the comments of participants in their uses of both old and new media. The Internet was a means to check out the lives of celebrities on a regular basis. Writing about the essence of celebrity, Kurzman and Anderson (2007: 347) have said

> celebrity is an omnipresent feature of contemporary societies, blazing lasting impressions in the memories of all who cross its path. In keeping with Weber's conception of status, celebrity has come to dominate status "honour", generate enormous economic benefits, and lay claim to certain legal privileges. Compared with other types of status, however, celebrity is 'status on speed'. It confers honour in days, not generations; it decays over time, rather than accumulating; and it demands a constant supply of new recruits, rather than erecting barriers to entry.

For Kurzman and Anderson, celebrity is a form of 'glorified self', and those who stand under its spotlight open to the public gaze represent a status group for the excluded others to admire. It has been argued that celebrity is perceived by people in purely emotional ways, with limited reflection on why stars are 'special'; but it is this emotional connection that is the precise function of celebrity, providing someone who is immediately recognisable and identifiable within a largely faceless, anonymous global world (Turner et al. 2000).

Some studies suggest that celebrity today is changing, and has morphed into a new aristocracy open to all. With the appearance of reality shows like *Big Brother*, celebrity has turned outward toward the 'masses' (in Adorno's negative sense) drawing them in, making instant stars of some and throwing others away, leaving everyone else hopeful, it has been argued (Turner 2004; Couldry 2003).

It is unclear whether the Windhoek participants saw celebrity in these ways. It is worth raising Couldry and Markham's (2007:182) pointed question: "Where is the evidence that people 'identify' with celebrities in any simple way, or even that they regard 'celebrity culture' as important, rather than a temporary distraction?" He adds that there is a lack of international empirical evidence on celebrity.

Why do people choose other individuals as their ideal celebrity? Among Windhoek participants they were chosen because they had an attractive acting style, or their musical performance was admired, some for moral deeds, others because they were exciting, outrageous or unpredictable, or had a special connection with Namibian lives. They occasionally represented role models, a personality type which overlaps celebrity.

Celebrity figured in most participants' interview responses: examples were offered of Hollywood music and film stars, Namibian singers, public figures and politicians. Windhoekers made the following pronouncements about their celebrity ideals.

> Mumba: Very few [I like], I have my own mind. But I like them, such as Brad Pitt, Will Smith and Matthew Perry. OK, Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie set an example to rich stars by being more than they are, by giving and caring about poor people and problems poor people have. That's good, they connect. They make a difference. Like Oprah who is one of my favourite TV stars. African actors are not so known as Americans, they're not exposed so much.

> Crispin: I always enjoy Nicholas Cage. He's so real, such a good actor. I also like Brad Pitt who I loved in *Troy* and in *Mr And Mrs Smith*. Jamie Foxx also: he can sing he can act and do anything, very interesting. I like them because they can entertain and hold you when you watch. Yes, I think I follow them to see what they will do next. I check their lives, the news and gossip, and so on [on the Internet]. But I don't obsess about them! They are just interesting.

> Andrew: I like Stone Cold Steve Austin. He's a wrestler with a bad ass persona. But it's more entertainment really, rather than wrestling. I know it's not real, although I once believed it. But I grew up. I still like it. It's entertaining. I respect Al Pacino, particularly my all-time favourite *The Godfather*. I like the way he gets in character and portrays his parts. Robert De Niro also. I like Bruce Lee also: I've got most of his movies. He was more than an action hero. He has also a philosophical aspect, a sort of Karma thing behind the action. I like more than just action to my stars. I like a certain quality.

John (1) said that most stars were little more than a means to entertain and divert him, but mentioned one example as a role model. He had been impressed by the film *Invictus* (2009).

> There was a movie a while ago with Morgan Freeman about the winning of the Rugby World Cup in South Africa in the 1990s. He impressed me as Mandela and made me more interested in both Mandela and in the actor. Mandela has such good qualities that we all need. So few of our political leaders here have qualities like that. So I suppose that actor influenced me.

Diana also looked for role models, but practical ones rather than people with high ideals. She had her own jewellery business advertised on Facebook and was determined to be rich and successful in fashion one day. Business and fashion role models assisted in her personal development in this direction.

> Yes, I follow the lifestyles of Kimora Lee Simmons and the Kardashians. Kimora was married to this fashion mogul Russell Simmons, they own the label Phat Farm. But

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> when they divorced she took it to a whole new level. She's American-Korean and lives in the US. I like her because she's a very independent woman, and she like me is in the fashion industry. She's a no-nonsense person. Like, if you are late for a meeting she will fire you. I like her ideas, especially her fashion. I go on her company webpage a lot. Other celebrities, like they're not my role models. But people like Lady Gaga, I like to see what they are wearing. It's always interesting to see what crazy dress she's wearing next. The other day she was in an outfit wearing meat, I don't know how she managed to make a dress out of it. She also showed up at the Grammy awards in an egg shell

She and other female participants chose celebrity models to enhance their confidence as women, particularly those from rural areas with heavily patriarchal cultures. Other international studies reveal similar pragmatic uses of media to shape structures of confidence against former negative attitude, culture or lifestyle (Kitzinger 2008; Raphael 2006). Diane went further, building her personal identity and seeking business inspiration through media as part of her project of the self (Giddens 1991). She was probably the most proactive and reflexive participant in terms of lifestyle constructions.

Jan, the fan of Zef music, had celebrity preferences that were firmly regional (South African), while Bertha's were strictly Namibian. Jan's first choice was Ninja or Waddy Jones, the real name of the musician already mentioned, chosen for his notoriety and novelty: "He's fun and crazy." His second celebrity represented a clear hybrid choice mixing South African symbolic contexts with Hollywood, whereby Hollywood was subverted and localised in Bhabha's (1994) sense.

> I'm a fan of Sharlto Copley who was Wikus in *District 9*. That was a fantastic film. Copley was fantastic, although I'd seen him before in television. I couldn't believe that there was this guy, a real Afrikaner, in this Hollywood-style film! At first it seemed so out of place. But then I could relate to it, feel part of it. It was great, man [laughs]. One of my teachers was like him, a bit off, in the clouds and a bit weak; but basically a nice guy. Putting a character like that in such a film worked. It was such a good bit of acting, the way he deteriorates or changes. I loved that film.

This empathy appears to bear out the assertion of writers such as Bhabha and McMillin who write about the emotion and cultural connection media consumers feel about media products that reflect local contexts and realities, and Jan's celebrity choices came from his own culture and background. Asked if film actors had any strong influence on him, he replied: "I don't think I copy them, just enjoy them and get fun from them. I suppose I fantasise about being an action character but I know I'd get shot in minutes!"

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Bertha also revealed her own cultural-ethnic affiliations. Her favourite star was the Namibian Owambo popular singer, Lady May.

> Lady May is great. She is unique. Tunakie also who is singing these traditional songs and wearing traditional attire. Lady May is very stylish who we call the Namibian Brenda Fassie. She's confident, really doing her own thing well. They really like her! I prefer local stars rather than Western ones. They are African, their message is one that you can understand here. You can learn and relate to it. It is somehow teaching me things. But the American [celebrity] is mostly another beat [another place] that I am not so interested in. I need that link with my own society.

However, for many participants celebrity was frivolous, an aspect of entertainment and casual liking of global media personalities. Few obsessed about or over-valued it.

## 4.7 Media access, media affordability

Participants complained of the expense of various media such as high Internet and download data costs, DSTV, or buying music. Accessibility issues concerned, first, the narrowness of *media availability* in terms of latest television programmes, music or books; and second, *quality of access,* especially in terms of Internet services which were regarded as too slow or generally inadequate. Diana expressed her frustration, commenting

> I want to say that NBC has such bad television. We get the soaps very late, years after sometime, and all the movies are old and bad. NBC needs to be run by people who actually like television. In my view, none do. That's why it's bad! The way they show movies that are, like, I don't know from what century!

Cost was the main concern of many, who complained that cell phone and Internet charges needed to be lowered, that more players were necessary in the market to enhance competition and create improvements. The DSTV satellite monopoly was seen as resulting in an expensive and largely unaffordable service. Robert said

> It is expensive here! Competition lowers prices, and we don't have enough of that here. In terms of television, it is a similar problem. There are few television companies. We have One Africa and NBC only. Then there is DSTV which you must buy. Only the full bouquet [all channels] is really worthwhile for what I want. So it is very expensive. It is a monopoly again of the satellite TV

Several participants were in agreement with this argument. *Restrictive media access* was widely complained about. Cell phone costs were mentioned, although these were slowly seen to be more affordable. Yet participants widely criticised the general narrowness of media

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availability, feeling that the country was bypassed in diversity and quality compared to other places. Many sought out strategies to compensate for such exclusion, showing reflexive initiatives through new media. In the Afrikaner Focus Group Five, students Tiaan and Martin said that downloading audio-visual media products was 'now normal' among many of their friends. They explained how they used the Internet to obtain other types of media.

> Tiaan: I download a lot. Movies or music, sometimes television. We all live at home still with our parents, so they get to foot the data cost [laughs]. Most of us have good Internet connections to get these movies or music or whatever. In South Africa where we are studying, Internet is cheaper, faster and easier for us to pay for as students.

> Martin: I personally watch most movies on Internet through downloads. It depends on how the monthly finances go. I can be downloading quite a few films. They use a lot of data to download, so I have to be careful of costs. But my parents pay when I am in town [Windhoek].

Many others mentioned that they obtained older media such as print, music and film in this manner. The *media convergence* that arose in the Windhoek research was not unique to Namibia. Recognition of the merging of old with new media through Internet downloads represents 'convergence culture'. Jenkins (2006:282) defines this as "technological, industrial, cultural and social changes in the ways media circulates within our culture." This is said to be a period of transition rather than a new situation, and it is as yet far from certain what the outcome of this novel process will be.

Kung, Picard and Towse (2008) have described convergence as a process of media integration. Film, television, music and general communication begin to be experienced in an increasingly narrow range of technical locations, and evidence for this came out strongly in the Windhoek interviews. Participants revealed practices of downloading music rather than buying CDs, and watching television and movies on personal computers more than on conventional televisions or in cinemas. New media habits were evolving. Convergence of media forms through the Internet represents what has been called an isoquantic shift whereby a technological development fundamentally alters how people consume, and this decisively changes their perceptions of how mediated tasks can be achieved (Kung, Picard & Towse 2008; Murdock 2000).

## 4.8 Conclusion

This broad sketch of how participants utilised media reveals a complex picture. Matters of class and ethnicity shaped media engagements, interweaving with practical matters of

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affordability and strategies of access. Issues of ontological responses to media have only marginally been touched on at this stage. Participants were strongly aware of their own poor local media production base, with only a strong local presence of music being an exception. They bemoaned the lack of depiction or representation of their own communities and Namibian cultures. Responses to global culture were given specific expression in relation to American film: participants either loved them or resisted them in favour of African media such as the cinema of Nigeria, while correspondingly raising concerns about 'loss of culture'. This dichotomy generated recognition of ontological issues in relation to media, which is discussed in the next chapter.

The key theoretical concepts established and discussed here were *formative media* and *media engagement*. These tended to explain biographical characteristics of media utility in Windhoek and were shaped and driven by the empirical narratives themselves, and connected with further core categorisations that came to contribute to the eventual general theory of media and identity.

# Chapter 5

# Ontological orientations of media users and impacts on identity constructions

## 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter established an indication of the biographical patterns of media engagement taking place within Windhoek. In this practical attempt to understand degrees of intensive and extensive encounters with local and global media, deeper ontological or phenomenological positions were glimpsed. Insights into culture emerged, and out of these, values and personal philosophies of what was acceptable or unacceptable media for the participants. Their personal critiques or condemnations were often connected to broader social structures, processes or contexts such as systems of culture and defence of perceived traditional values, moral (sometimes religious) outlooks that arose when countering something seen on television or in film, or political outlook that connected to or challenged government discourse. Participant orientations and attitudes to media were shaped by pre-existing, or alternatively, by more cosmopolitan and recently acquired ontological worldviews. In Geertz's (1973) and Zegeye's (2008) sense, social and cultural context ontologically conditioned participants' agency, shaping outlooks and reactions in terms of the way they negotiated, utilised and judged media. Conservative individuals were more likely to reveal influences of traditional value systems than those drawn to modern lifestyle outlooks.

Ontological and phenomenological positions of actors sometimes departed from convention, challenging traditional principles. Ashcroft (2001:40) has written that alternatives to resisting or passively accepting global cultural discourse in postcolonial societies involves taking expropriational advantage of global culture for self-representation and self-fashioning of new identities over older more restrictive traditional ones. Ashcroft describes strategies of postcolonial subjects using global culture and media for identity and lifestyle refashioning as 'self-opportunism'. Various writers have indicated that self-opportunism in late modernity is less an option, in Ashcroft's sense, than a necessity thrust upon the actor by contemporary shifts toward greater emphasis on agency and self-reliance in the face of state ineffectiveness (Giddens & Pierson 1998; Beck 1986). Self re-fashioning through global media may be for practical purposes, or can entail the frivolous pursuit of transient novelty (Bauman 2001; Kellner 1992). Ontological values, novelty or instrumental media practices can represent

separate media actions, but may occur simultaneously. Participants frequently indulged in both novel and practical media engagements that challenged traditional or official positions. Some used media for reconfirmation of existing identity positions, others for (re)negotiation of new identities as they distanced themselves from former social restrictions in favour of enhanced choice perceived to be on offer from the global outside.

This chapter investigates these complex responses to contemporary media culture by actors in terms of ontological orientation. It recognises that while such responses *encounter* global media discourses, in turn, existing localised discourses can be brought to this reception, so representing the meeting of the particular (local) and universal (global) culture (McMillin 2009:144). Personal identities tend to be maintained, negotiated and forged anew at this point of (occasionally abrasive) contact. Phenomenological ethnography is an analysis that seeks understanding of social worlds from the *consciousness and standpoint of the individual*, and through interactions with others in that world. It considers the conventions of actors in relation to intention to conform to certain types of knowledge (scientific, traditional, cultural or moral) while observing reflexive goal-seeking practices which may contradict conventional knowledge (Schutz 1967[1936]). Phenomenology seeks insights into the thought processes of actors, gauging their points of resistance to social phenomena or acceptance or approval of them.

Ontology is the *study of the conditions of existence of an individual or social community* which seeks to establish the foundational values, knowledge and symbols that define and motivate the existence and actions of an actor; whereas phenomenology emphasises pre-action structures of consciousness and ways in which meaning is initially formed (Berger & Luckmann 1966). The aims of ontology and phenomenology coincide on the primacy of the individual and individual existence as the object of study; and on actors' internalisation of social knowledge and social objects (such as media) to fulfil intended goals initially formulated in consciousness (Smith & Thomasson 2005).

Windhoek research participants gave 'accounts', in Garfinkel's (1968) ethnomethodological sense, of what media meant to them in the context of broader social life and ontological habits. In interview accounts, they drew upon cognitively embedded ontologies to defend established value position, warding off challenges that undermined their version of how the world 'should be'. Media were a frequent object of challenge. It has been argued that the search for 'ontological security' is the primary drive of actors, and culture the primary basis

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to ensure that security (Giddens 1991). Culture potentially provides the ontological underpinnings for a meaningful and secure sense of social existence on the part of individuals, and leads actors to confirm or defend cultural positions that in their view successfully explain social lifeworlds, while rejecting others that perceivably contradict. Personal and social identities are strongly anchored in ontological *loci* (Berger 1974; Garfinkel 1968). Indications of participant ontologies arose out of earlier formative and present media encounters, and through subsequent media explorations.

This chapter will investigate defences of cultural or ontological outlook, but also seek out contrary opportunistic responses from young Windhoek actors.

## 5.2 Identity ontologies in mediated contexts

How was ontology reflected in people's media engagements? Sometimes media were perceived in benign fashion and confirmed what participants saw as positive about their lives and culture. At other times, media represented contradictory knowledge or a decisive threat to the worldviews they valued. Below, the focus is on the life outlooks or lifestyle ontologies that emerged from interviews. Hilma is discussed first.

### 5.2.1 Hilma and media for 'life matters'

Hilma was from a black middle income household in Katutura where she lived with her parents. Her father was a manager in an insurance company. Hilma worked as a researcher in a government ministry. She was single and said she had difficulties 'finding boys', blaming her height for this as she was taller than most women interviewed, and had 'problems understanding men.' These biographical details are mentioned because they have a bearing on her orientations to media.

Hilma had an ambiguous relationship with media, praising them one moment and criticising at other times. On one level, media was a functional resource of invaluable information for lifestyle choices, fashion and advice on relationships. She constantly implied the practical instrumentality of media as 'useful', 'helpful' and something she 'could not live without', utilised for help in what she called 'life matters'. This meant 'meaningful things' capable of framing and making understandable her personal existence. Hilma referred to 'life matters' as

> getting advice about life things. They tell you about your own problems which I thought only I had. It's great to know that you're not the only one. But I'd rather not tell you what I mean here, it's private.

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There was considerable reticence to explain further. This seems to bear out Giddens's (1991) idea of the self and its pursuit of what he described as ontological security, meaning the acquirement of a particular phenomenological orientation, and set of ontological values and practices capable of satisfactorily defining personal existence.

Hilma used a range of media in pursuit of the guiding values and practical advice she felt she needed. Her chosen media were lifestyle magazines, television but specifically soap operas, and her communications with others on the Internet social network sites. She liked to read the South African magazines *You* and *Drum* mainly for their stories about relationship problems and how to solve them, but also for insight into how other women lived.

> I usually read in my spare time because I like to read. But only magazines about 'life matters' involving fashion, what girls do in their lives. I have only a few close friends. I know them, but they are not typical. I don't really know about how others live. It helps me to try to know. So I read these life stories they often have in these magazines.

Soap operas were also for 'relationship matters'. These were her favourite television programmes, and she watched as many as she had time for. She did not mind where they were made, or their quality. She referred to soap operas as 'life guides': "they show you family problems and problems between men and women. They explain why they happen and give you ideas on how you can solve things. They give you insights into life, I think."

She said social network sites served a similar function, stating that

> they are wonderful. You meet people like you. You can talk and share lives. It's amazing how close you can get to people you don't know. You can share a lot. It helps with your life. You get to need these friends.

Hilma favoured the use of media to obtain guidance for relationships and other problems, yet she was also derogatory about media for undermining her other ontological positions.

*5.2.2 Disparaging media: "Making you feel bad about yourself." (Hilma)*

There was, for Hilma, an unattractive side to modern media that promoted perfect image of men and women. These demoralised her. She stated with some bitterness that

> the media are responsible for making you feel bad about yourself. Films and television do that. My friends worry about 'fatness' and 'looking good' [body image]. I suppose that worries me [also] as I don't keep fit as much as I should. They read magazines to get advice so that boys will like them. They want to be 'anti-fat'. They

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see videos, TV and magazines as quite good for seeing what people think is the right way to look. It gives you an idea of how men should look as well. Men should be tall, strong and muscular. Women are slender and desirable. That's how it goes, but I don't buy that. It's negative, yes. The Liberian president, who is quite fat, is a role model for intelligence [of women] and what you can be. I think that the media, particularly Western, limits women a lot, and doesn't promote this side.

Hilma objected to 'impossible' images of perfection portrayed in visual media, expressing a strong gender critique. It was a highly personal view on show in the interview. She regarded herself as excluded from mainstream media views of what a woman should look like, feeling she did not fit in. This troubled her. Being 'too tall' placed her beyond the perfect ideal of body image, and her relationship problems seemed linked to this. Hilma was an ambivalent media user compared to others.

Branston and Stafford (2006) indicate that transmitting idealised and frequently derogatory images of women has long been a tendency in Western mass media. Gill (2006:6) argues that media in recent years have reversed former positive trends in portraying women gained by women's movements, resulting in a subsequent "pervasive re-sexualization of women's bodies" through popular entertainment and advertising. Gauntlett (2008) states that media representation of women tends to be more complex, sending mixed gender symbols of what he calls 'girl power', meaning tough and robust depictions, while elsewhere displaying women through overt sexual and beatified imagery. Hilma reacted to what she saw as over-perfectionist representations that few women could aspire to. Her comments come close to Paglia's (2001) view that Western art and popular culture has traditionally idealised or deified women, while effectively denying them the essence of their own authentic identities. Hilma expressed the view that media both repressed and demeaned the 'real her'.

### 5.2.3 Media and 'double identity': Werner

The soldier, Werner, had been stationed at the army base in Windhoek for two years. His moderately well-paid job separated him from his family back home in the north of the country, so he used media to fill in the time when he was not engaged in social pursuits with friends. He explained how he shared media with military colleagues in the television room watching action films and sport. This took his mind off his family in Eenhana: "I am missing my wife and child while I am down here. Army rules forbid us living with wives and family on base. You must be alone. So when I am not working, television and stuff by myself or in the TV room [at the base] passes the hours."

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Werner said that his two years in Windhoek had "changed him as a person". Windhoek was a 'big place' unlike Eenhana. There was a lot to do and it was exciting compared with his home town. He met a broad range of people that he would not have met back home, and he liked this 'mix' as back there, they were 'only Owambo'. He said he saw the limitations of small places that restrict people's experience and outlook. Windhoek had opened up his life to cosmopolitan possibilities, and he hoped to bring his family eventually. It had introduced him to television and the Internet which he had not known much about previously. Coming from a strictly traditional background which he 'respected and supported', he said he had become 'flexible' in his choice of culture.

Werner provided an account of how he had to 'change identities' when he went home to his parents and family, leaving behind the emerging diverse side of himself he had acquired in Windhoek.

> If I go home to my parents [and wife and child who lives with them], I must adapt back to my traditional culture. I must behave in a certain way, and I respect that. For example, if I am with my mother, I must not go until she gives me leave, you do not walk away. My father does not allow me to talk to him until he tells me to; I must be quiet until then. There is a cultural way of talking. I would not be able to talk to them the way I am talking to you [the interviewer] now, impossible. Even at table, you must not even ask for the salt or oil. You wait until they offer.

Werner noted that his favourite media were sharply curbed on these visits: "My parents are very suspicious of town culture, they see it as bad. My parents won't allow any TV at home, only radio for NBC. Nothing else is allowed. When I take my laptop home, they insist it is locked in my room. He [my father] is afraid that my younger brothers will watch it and see bad things." Television and the Internet were associated with 'bad' town culture. Werner contrasted life in his home village with his life and lifestyle in Windhoek.

> When I am back in Windhoek I am different. So many in Windhoek are from somewhere else, and they are like me but have now changed. There will be a Windhoek life and a rural traditional life. It is different. We behave differently here in town. Like, I have these nice shoes and jacket. They are very modern. But when you go home, you don't wear them because they are not appropriate. You must wear a very formal jacket and shoes which are very dull, but if I don't, they insult you by saying 'oh, you are from Windhoek'! But I must do that. I don't want to, but I must. You are freer here in Windhoek, although I try to continue to respect my tradition. But I don't like to change when I go home, but I am the eldest and must set an example to the others [brothers and sisters].

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This suggests *dual or double-identity* existing oppositionally between parochial traditional and cosmopolitan identities. He implied that he occupied two worlds, but was increasingly drawn to more flexible cultural outlooks and, accordingly, identities. He talked about how far he felt he had moved from previous cognitive association with his rural origins. Werner had received urban outlooks from locations such as Oshakati and Windhoek where he had 'experienced new things'. He had insightfully said: "town is about being modern and rural areas about tradition." Recent studies have highlighted rapid expansion and change in media in Africa which have unexpectedly introduced young people to alternatives to traditionalist lifestyles. They have been introduced to modern values, outlooks and identities, particularly in urban areas, which have led to familial tensions (Njogu & Middleton 2009).

While Werner valued traditions and claimed to defend them where others might ridicule them, he felt himself drawn to 'modern things' of which use and enjoyment of contemporary media were part. He referred to his parents and other family members still living in rural locations as 'knowing so little' compared with what he considered he had learned since he had left them. Werner's ontological outlooks and needs had experienced cognitive and social shifts that reflect social transitions to post-traditional conditions (Giddens 1996).

**5.3 Lifestyle and identity: Presenting self ontologies**

Lifestyle represents aspects of an individual's existence, their ontological outlooks and identities. How they choose to present themselves to others and the kinds of material and symbolic objects they consume to fulfil this, contribute to their definitions of socio-economic image and status (Featherstone 1991). Lifestyle can be about the choice of clothes a person wears as their fashion style, the car they drive or even the partner they select to live with or marry. Yet it is more than simple materialistic 'look', and includes values and beliefs selected or held that seem consistent with preferred self-image and cognitive orientations (Delanty 2007). Lifestyle constructions or reconfirmations of participants' already existing life patterns frequently drew upon *ontological media*.

*5.3.1 Lifestyle as sartorial presentation: Media and "Looking good" (Maria)*

Members of Focus Group Four consisted of Oshiwambo-speaking accountancy students. Their contribution was valuable in that discussion of lifestyle and values proved strongly interactive and resulted in debate more than was possible in an individual interview. They were asked to define what 'lifestyle' meant to them. The importance of appearance and self-

presentation were quickly established. Public displays of lifestyle and identity were imperative for some of them. Maria said "it's very important for me. You must look good to others. I like to look good. Other people like it if you present yourself well, if you try to look interesting. It's how you choose your life, your style. I mean how you look, the way you present yourself to other people, to your friends and family. There's also a showing off aspect." Taria then said

> it is good to show off. I dress to look good. I get my dress style from the movies or TV, but also from others. I get the ideas from males. I choose what's OK. Then if I can afford it, I buy it. Obviously I look at real people [not on TV or in film] in the street and get influenced.

Maria agreed, saying that she obtained fashion ideas from movies or the Internet. She then added: "I suppose this lifestyle is also [about] your personality, being interesting, even being a good person. That's part of it." Lucas, the oldest member of the group, (25 years), then generated the following exchange after he exclaimed disapprovingly of Maria's last comment.

> Lucas: No! With the youth, it's all about how you look now. People in Windhoek want to 'state' themselves everywhere almost saying 'look how rich or cool I am'! It's very shallow really. It is this Western thing. Everyone wants to look like Americans or Europeans, or they pretend they are important people in government or business. Being good has nothing to do with it. People are not polite anymore. They fake everything.

> Maria: It's not about fake. Some show off and pretend, but that is just a youthful thing. We are not like our parents. There are different opportunities to the lives they had. People were poorer in their day.

> Lucas: So many are becoming well-off. Affluence is changing Namibia. No one has time for each other, only for making money and showing off.

> Taria: That's true. But it's more. We once did not have this media. I grew up without cells and TV. We [her family] only had radio at first. People used to just speak to each other all the time. As he [Lucas] said, they were polite with each other. Now everyone is obsessed with this media, they do copy all the behaviour from this American TV.

> Maria: But you miss the point. Lifestyle is meant to be fun! It is what happens now. You dress up, and people expect it.

Tensions between old and the new outlooks emerged here, Lucas taking perhaps the most critically conservative position. He saw Western media (meaning essentially for him 'American') as influencing sartorial lifestyles in Windhoek. His constant reference to

'showing off' revealed that he was offended by these effects and considered them negative. He regarded what he considered 'fake' identities as undermining 'authentic' versions of Namibian culture due to ways in which young Namibians 'wrongly' respond to growing affluence. There is a conservative expression of Castells's (2004) resistance identity in these comments, whereby incursion of global culture against the local is strongly resented. Maria took the opposite view, being more in line with the self-identity discourse of Gauntlett (2008) and Giddens (1991) where actors narcissistically or pragmatically take advantage of new social situations and opportunities. Affluence was something to welcome after the long colonial era of poverty that Maria's parents knew, and lifestyle cultivation the means to enjoy it and show it off.

*5.3.2 Lifestyle shopping and media: "Lifestyle checking" (Diana)*

Ndaka lived in Olympia with her husband and child. She was a student studying education policy and said that being among such a large student population meant that she liked to dress well and present a good appearance. She indicated that there was pressure to dress well, as it could be 'quite competitive' among the students. She kept up with them by getting dress ideas from advertisements in magazines and from television news. She said

> I love clothes, I love shoes. Advertising is a source of finding things. I'll see there is a sale in the newspaper, and I'll go to the store to see if there is something nice. I do get some things from the TV or even the news. I love the way the people on CNN dress. I look at this lady's clothes and I really think they dress stylish. I prefer a more professional business style. That's why I check out news presenters.

Diane agreed about the fashion competition where she studied: "Every girl on campus wants to look fashionable", she said. She enjoyed competing and presenting whatever her chosen fashion image might be at the time. She came from a low income family, but had a modest business sideline selling handmade jewellery she advertised on her Facebook account. She said she 'did well' from this, and had the money to buy clothes and help fund her studies. She described herself as 'in the fashion business', in addition being a consumer of fashion. She chiefly accessed Internet sites on clothing and obtained dress ideas from Facebook friends and advertisements sent to her profile. She applied the following strategy.

> Facebook is better for clothing ideas or the latest shoes or handbag, although I do look elsewhere also. Then I go to the shops and I look for something similar and buy it. Like a certain shoe. This allows you to fit in with the latest group that is always oriented toward fashion. For me, Mr Price is the best clothing shop because it's very

good and very cheap. It's cheaper than Edgars and usually just as good. But I don't worry about makeup fashion, not cosmetics. I think I look better without. I love Internet for this lifestyle checking I do.

Diana liked global fashion styles, but revealed that she occasionally adopted traditional dress: "I'm more interested in international [fashion]. But I'm interested sometimes in Namibian traditional [Kwanyama] dress, but that's only once a year for traditional cultural events. There aren't many of those so much now, only when I go home to the north."

Diana's comment on 'lifestyle checking' stood out as a distinct research category. *Lifestyle checking* involved participants utilising a range of media for acquiring a 'look'. Print media such as magazines and newspapers were frequently used. The Internet proved to be the other primary source, but sometimes television and film.

> Mumba: I get fashion from the Internet. But also I watch the fashion channel on DSTV when I can. I also look at what people wear in films or soaps. I'm on the lookout for something interesting. Magazine photos are also a source. Friends also discuss ideas, although they've usually seen something in the media. It's very important to me what I wear, so I need these ideas.

> Grace: I do talk a lot about fashion on Facebook. We discuss photos and say I would not look like that or I would wear that. It's very interesting to get people's opinions on how you might dress, to keep up with the fashion.

> John (2): I wear what I like based on what's in the stores. I buy clothes and sometimes my girlfriend chooses for me. But I'm no fashion freak. I once saw a Nicholas Cage movie where he wore this nice black leather jacket. I remembered seeing that when I got my dad to buy me one. But I can't say movies influence my other clothes. I do like to look good. But don't think your media influences generally, no.

Deciding what clothes to buy was not influenced purely by media. Other factors, friends and family, and strangers viewed from a distance in the street, came into play. Such a finding is to be expected; however, using media to research what is new or available was deemed essential.

### 5.3.3 Conforming to others: "They expect me to look fashionable" (Grace)

Some participants had specific reasons to look good. This was either to look acceptable (rather than 'cool') or to present a professional image others might demand. As an aspiring businessman, Tom stated that fashion was vital in terms of presenting the correct business-

like image to others, as this was a way of attracting business partners and 'fitting in' with their business culture. He said

> I move in business circles in Windhoek and also in the north [Oshakati]. If I am to stay in those circles and succeed, I have to convince them by wearing a good suit or jacket. I must be formal for those guys otherwise they will not take me seriously.

Grace (contradicting Werner's experiences of traditional family resistance to urban styles) stated that her rural family expected her to 'set an example' in dress appearance when she went back to her northern home by looking 'modern' and successful.

> It's important to look good for me, especially when I go home because they look up to me as the town person who has lots of knowledge and is up-to-date. In Katima, they expect me to look fashionable when I visit them. They copy me if they can. I can afford to buy what I want usually because my brother helps. He is in the Ministry of Agriculture and helps financially.

The student Lucas in Focus Group One, perhaps the most conservative group member, valued a different type of presentational conformity. He stressed the importance of being seen to uphold traditional values in his culture rather than pursue style. He believed lifestyle in Namibia today overemphasised personal image and presentation and involved excessive consumerist materialism. He explained

> but lifestyle is more than that [how to look good], or should be. Well, as a Christian, I would say there is a moral side to lifestyle. It can't only be showing off and fantasy stuff. There are moral values as well. Look at someone like Mandela. Yes, he is stylish in an African way. But there are also principles which he makes central to his image. Your life can't be just style, it must also be about principle.

Lucas wanted to present 'correct values' and a traditional image rather than just visual fashion. Materialist symbols were less important to him than other participants, and he insisted on making a moral and traditional example. Fashion image was for him a shallow ontological contradiction, an unwanted product of outside cultural forces of Western and American culture, of which he disapproved.

## 5.4 Ontology media: Deriving meaning from media consumption

Certain types of media emerged as intimate vessels of meaning for participants: these can be conveniently called *ontology media*. Ontology media are media (either in form or in content) that touch and reach into individuals or communities in some way, taking on special

significance. Such media produce special insight or are 'life-changing', striking a chord in the actor's psyche by triggering sudden self-awareness or epiphanies regarding lives.

By way of an example, female participants frequently mentioned *The Oprah Winfrey Show* as a big favourite. They did so in respectful terms, calling it 'inspirational', wise or life informing. Its affirming format, exposing the intimacies of lives of ordinary people, impressed them by telling them something about themselves. As a further example, McMillin (2007) has written about *telenovela* or educational soap operas in Latin American television that address core social problems in younger viewers' lives such as drug abuse, teenage pregnancies or crime. Solution strategies are suggested within the plot, directly offering the viewer the potential to incorporate social and personal messages into their agency. Telenovela can in this way prove influential. McMillin (2007:151) says that these "carry a high pedagogical content resulting in actual changes in viewing behaviour … with effects more far-reaching than straightforward education." Sometimes this genre can go beyond the intentions of the producers by articulating and fulfilling, or possibly changing, the outlook of the person. Soap operas emerged as valued ontology media.

Video games were unexpectedly another. Schott (2006) argues a key attraction of video and online games is the empowering sense of agency they provide. He states "gameplay to some extent depends upon and requires a positive experience of agency on the part of the player" (2006:148). Games allow for the expression and shaping of personal identity within the pre-created social universes of game formats that provide cognitive and moral challenges tested in life and death storylines. Schott's description goes some way to explaining Windhoek gaming engagements: participants relished the 'physical', ethical and logistical contests presented to them and they enjoyed devising strategies to 'solve' these.

How did the participants existentially incorporate video games and soap operas into their various identities?

*5.4.1 Masculine culture and video games studies*

Playing of video games privately at home on a computer, or out on the digital landscapes of the World Wide Web as a multiplayer, emerged as a strong and intense media practice for several participants. These tended to come from middle or high income backgrounds, and were always male, but of varying ethnicity. Such a profile is explainable due to high purchase costs of video games. Visits to Windhoek stores revealed that new (2011) titles such as *Call*

*of Duty: Black Ops*, *Grand Auto Theft: Mississippi*, *Halo 3* cost between N\$400-500 per title,[40] older titles varying between N\$100 and N\$300. These generally required either generous parents or some other income base able to sustain purchase. It was noted that piracy or 'torrenting' practices sustained a certain degree of access to video games, and sharing of games was normal among groups of friends. Torrenting was a protocol for accessing music and film, in addition to games, from dedicated download sites; these were sometime illegal pirate locations for free media.

Salen (2007) points to the learning resource that video and online games can represent. She rejects the narrow view that games are trivial 'messing around' or that they only encourage negative behaviours among youth. Gaming generates creative practices and reflexive experimentation with rules and formats that go beyond entertainment limits set by game producers. Ways to 'win' or successfully complete a game generate cognitive and problem-solving skills. Games potentially generate media literacy. Salen argues that there are educational opportunities to merging learning projects in schools or universities with gaming culture. This view is supported in other studies where improved speed of visual skills, enhanced visual-spatial memory, and visual attention can be transferred to general study and work skills (Dye, Green & Bavelier 2009).

The prominent male presence in game-play appeared to relate to the aggressive themes of many titles. A majority of games involve competitive combat scenarios whereby the player is placed in a virtual life or death situation. The popular *Call of Duty* games, for example, are embedded in either Second World War or modern day militarist storylines involving terrorists or 'enemies'. The player is usually part of a team who must counter opponents in violent conflict or battle situations. Participants can 'die' in the game, or they can 'win'. Such games have been criticised for sanitising war and belligerence, but also for desensitising players to real-world violence; males were argued to become prone to violent behaviours (Gagnon 2010; Funk 2004). Others have found limited solid evidence to confirm these assertions.

Williams and Skoric (2005) equate such studies with 'hypodermic needle' media effects theory stating that contact with any media is not a simple cause and effect situation. In the case of video games, a number of variables need to be taken into account: type of game, game-play length, whether played with others or alone. Long research periods are also

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[40] The Namibian dollar replaced the South African rand as the official currency at independence in March 1990. The dollar is pegged at one dollar to one rand.

required, problematically perhaps many years, to determine whether or not external behaviours have been ingrained in users. Malliet (2006) states that fantasy elements of gaming media are well-recognised by many young consumers who are acutely aware that they are playing a simulation of life rather than life itself. Games are an escapist medium, but one which can contain strong educational elements which test the cognitive and imaginative skills of participants. He adds that players have important moral choices to make within the scenarios they enter, and such ethical elements were found among the Windhoek gamers that were interviewed.

Bialasiewicz (2007) has argued that military games should be looked at as a discourse which for intense and compressed periods of time radically intervenes in the player's life. The characters, plot and setting of games reflect (2007:406)

> a specific series of representations and practices through which meanings are produced, identities are constituted and political and ethical outcomes are made more or less possible.

The player is undeniably living someone else's discourse (military, political, commercial or gendered) for the duration of the game, and ontological, even moral factors, come into 'play'. Identities are tested or challenged online in the face of the particular discourse encountered. Whether these gaming identities cross over in this way from plot into 'real' life is argued by Malliet (2006) to be doubtful. How the discourse is received, interpreted and acted on in practice by actors is a chief interest in this Windhoek research.

Only male interviewees immersed themselves in video games, and no women mentioned that they played. This represents a finding reflected in studies elsewhere. Gorriz and Medina (2000:44) state that games are generally produced for young men and are tailored toward overtly masculine tastes; males favouring fast, action based titles that feature fighting and killing. Carr (2006) argues that this underestimates the considerable range of games available, and also that many are increasingly produced for women. However, there is controversy around so-called 'pink games' such as *The Sims* or the *Harry Potter* film spinoffs which, while less violent, are said to be over-feminine and perpetuate "female weakness and marginalization" (Carr 2006:172). Cicero said that he knew of women gamers attracted to pink games, although he stated that some did like to play action-based conflict games.

Dill and Thill (2007) present a feminist argument that video games promote sexism through genderised cultural constructions of game characters. Fictional male figures are conferred

higher status than female, women being presented in highly sexualised imagery, and where they are portrayed as 'strong' this is usually to commercially appease male gamers rather than women. Males demand tough figures of both genders, although showing favour to 'sexy' female characters. The authors also insist that unwelcome male behaviour, such as aggression, is encouraged.

However, Gentile (2011) has argued that game studies judge games to be either beneficial or bad, when their impacts need to be examined in more complex ways. He proposes a 'multiple dimensional' method for assessment that considers a range of effects as being simultaneously possible, such as increased strategic thinking alongside aggressive tendencies, over-high time investments occurring alongside increased cognitive and rationalising skills, or enhancement of social skills compared with reduced school or work performance. To this may be added an acquired respect for tough female characters, while adopting more negative stereotypical gender representations. Gentile's interpretation astutely reflects the complexity and contradictions of gaming effects, which were recognised among Windhoek gamers.

### 5.4.2 Gaming ontologies: Digital warriors

Gaming was explicitly discussed by Focus Group Five consisting of young white male Afrikaans-speakers heavily engaged in this, and they explained why combat games were mostly favoured.

> Pietre (2): Yes, I game a lot, every day. Shooting games, combat and war. *Call of Duty* series is good.

> Martin: I play strategy games: *Age of Empires*, *Rise of Nations*, *Shogun* etc. I like the way you can move large armies around and conquer other peoples. But they are demanding.

> Tiaan: Yes, shoot-them-up stuff. I like the challenge of trying to survive a scenario without getting killed too much.

Interview participants played games that involved combat. Warfare and military confrontation defined what most wanted from a game. Andrew discussing his gaming habits, and the feeling of playing for the first time, said

> on the Internet I keep it lonely and personal. I don't like anyone in the room when I play, and I don't play in teams online. I would say [individual] online gaming is the best. I play *Call of Duty*, and *Fields of War* and *Counterstrike*. The first time I played was quite exhilarating, a bit of a god-like feeling.

No irony or humour accompanied his last remark. He seemed to mean it. Perhaps he was role-playing in the interview, the way he did in the game itself.

Mitch, a young Afrikaner currently unemployed, spoke about the addictive character of games and said that he could be gaming for 'many hours' at a time. He said

> I can be doing that [gaming] all night and my parents don't know it. I once did thirteen hours straight. I was so tired the next day, but I had to go to work. When I got home I crashed [into bed] and slept for eleven hours straight. I love those epic sessions online. I can't really explain to you how incredible the experience is. But it takes it out of you, it is exhausting. It really tenses you up in the way a real battle might do.

This time-intensive character of play has been shown to be typical in other studies (Gentile 2011; Buckingham 2008). The combat element was central to most participants' practices, but went much further than simple violence or fighting. Games had a strategic quality that required players to learn the ground rules and the limits or possibilities of the game. They approached game-play much the way Giddens (1991; 1984) describes the interaction between agency and structure in his structuration theory. Agents require an understanding of social rules and available resources in the social system in order to pursue their life projects (Schott 2006). Games seemed to require orientation to similar structural conditions.

Cicero stated that a game could not be properly played until "all aspects of the rules are known. You can't get far until you learn the landscape you are in. What it's about. Otherwise, you die and the game is quickly over." He explained his strategic approach.

> I like a strategy aspect, of capturing things, winning the game using minimum force to the greatest effect. I get my ideas on this from documentary and history I have read. I like the British army model because it doesn't boast about war, unlike the Americans who like blowing everything up. The Brits are in and out without anyone knowing. That's why I don't like the American society, that it's too brash and horrible. I like the way the British do their war.

He hints here not just at rules, but an imagined ideal approach to war grounded in broader knowledge derived from documentary media. Cicero was an aficionado of history.

### 5.4.3 *"Fighting all over the world": Multiplayer global gaming*

Multiplayer gaming is an option programmed into all video games. A player can choose to play alone, or to engage with other personalities online through an Internet connection.

Windhoek gamers chose both, but frequently competed against other rival unknown and faceless global players spatially distant but virtually near, and this encounter could be testing and intensive.

Andrew explained that it was 'tough' at first, but constant play improved him: "At first during the testing period when I was getting proficient at playing, I didn't cheat. But now I know the tricks, shortcuts and stuff. I'm quite ruthless online and do anything to win. I like this interactive side that the net offers." Winning was important to him, and he admitted that he would bend the rules to succeed against real or virtual opponents. He added that gaming could be 'exhausting' but vital.

> [Online multiplayer] gaming with others is great but quite stressful, I would say. I play as much as I can. I do the sending of comments, it's all part of the gaming, you put your game face on.

Cicero stated that online gaming was not only one of his central media interests, but a current key 'life-interest'. He seemed strongly aware of the global character of what he was involved in.

> I do it for hours, maybe a whole day or night sometimes. I am doing something like *Call of Duty* and I'm fighting people all over the world! I mean the other players on the Internet. We are sending comments, giving threats to each other, shooting each other. Man, it is such fun. There is really nothing else like that out there on the Internet.

Other participants offered a range of information on their multiplayer experiences.

> Martin: It's extremely addictive. You can be hours online and think of nothing but the game itself. You even forget to eat and drink. That's not always a good idea if you have other important things to do. These tend to get neglected. But I do it when I have a clear evening, not meeting anyone, going out, that sort of thing. It can be quite exhilarating.

> Mitch: I am in the bedroom on my computer fighting the rest of the world. I totally enjoy those alien games like *Halo 2* or the war stuff like *Call of Duty*. All my friends play those, although not so much online like I do. I like chatting. Well, that is where you provoke your opponents or you taunt them with insults about what you think of them, or you say you will track them down and shoot or capture them. What's great about it is you are playing the world, people in America, Europe, all over, even the Chinese. I have played people in China!

A brief informational comment here. Multiplayer gaming requires a good Internet connection which was only partially in place in Windhoek or Namibia before 2007 when MTC introduced its 3G service. Cost improvements have also occurred. Young Namibians have been quick to take advantage of online possibilities, and appear to be utilising the Internet in diverse and creative ways, global gaming being one of these initiatives. However, it continues to be expensive to play online for many, dividing users along class lines.

*5.4.4 Online identities*

Internet offered the participants opportunities to express and display their identities to the world through social networks and video games. Games gave the chance of expressing a different type of identity as digital warriors engaging 'out there' with digital 'others'. Gaming allowed the imaginative possibilities to occupy markedly different ontologies, if it was so wished (Carr et al. 2006:90). A version of their real-world identity was clearly carried with them into the game, but it was extended and transformed by its fictional characters and format, and also by the creative options games left open to players. Games allowed people to inhabit new identities that were an extension of real-world selves (Burns 2006). A player could become another personality or occupy a new *persona* by becoming someone quite different. Most participants implied that games did not change character identity during play, yet all hid their real names in favour of substitute identity labels.

Members of Focus Group Five were asked about their online identities: how were they known to the 'digital warriors' out on Web gamer landscapes?

> Martin: I'm not going to tell you! You might try to find me and I would have to kill you online! [laughs].

> Tiaan: Tell him that we fight other together in the same game format. Yes. Occasionally we pitch up against each other. We don't always say that we are doing it. We just suddenly meet up online. We have the game names, so we recognise each other. I'm Grand Slammer 2.

> Martin: OK, I will tell you. I'm called Bergstorm. I've beaten quite a few gamers. Yes, I've become pretty good!

In his separate interview, Andrew (who had confessed to feeling 'godlike' when he first played a game) stated his own online fantasy identity.

> My online name is GodSon, I'm known as that. When I get comments during the game from the players, it's usually pretty offensive, a lot of insults. But that's how it

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is. Compliments are there also, but it's usually negative, lots of swearing. It's not personal, because they can't see who you are, there's no racism involved.

His last comment on 'no racism' is interesting. As a postcolonial citizen from a family with a history of racial oppression, the gaming terrain was in his view race-free. Hidden identity online was attractive because no one knew if you were black or white: a distinct advantage from Andrew's viewpoint. His online visual self varied from game to game. He liked being anyone he chose, so long as his character survived the violent encounters with others. Winning was an important goal no matter which *personae* he deployed.

*5.4.5 Gaming as ontological practice*

Gaming has been said to be an intensely sociological activity. One enters a virtual world which is a mirror reflection of the real one, offering meaning alongside excitement and immersion. It meets certain ontological needs that transcend mere entertainment. Carr (2006:165-6) states that in games

> each player is a culturally and socially situated subject who is manipulating a keyboard or console control, interpreting menus and on-screen action, and participating in an experience within a particular context or within an online shared world … part of the meaning of a game resides within its relationship to wider cultural contexts.

Cicero provided the most detailed and frank interview around the subject of gaming of all participants. He admitted to his 'addiction' to online and offline games, and he said that when he began to play a game he felt compelled to continue until it was over, either through losing or winning against opponents. Sticking to this time logic could take some hours.

> I can play from 6 in the morning to 6 in the evening. It can go on for a whole day. Once I did it from the afternoon until dawn the next morning. Why do I do it so long? It's the challenge of trying to finish a complete game, of getting through the various levels [of skill]. Also to beat my time record.

He revealed that his gaming 'obsession' (his word) including the long periods he dedicated to it, had consequences for one of his close relationships.

> The reason my girlfriend left me was because I was playing too many games. She got neglected. It was because of the game of the year [2010] *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* that she left me. I offered to stop. But she didn't want any of it, she left.

This did not, however, result in him abandoning the playing of games or reducing time spent on them. Gentile (2011) has similarly pointed to the impact on and neglect of other social activities as a result of time spent on play, suggesting *addictive media* practices. Cicero went on to explain enthusiastically the details of his gaming practices.

*5.4.6 Moral gaming: "You do not shoot a person without a weapon" (Cicero)*

War games entailed a 'moral' dispensation which Cicero regarded as essential even when engaging with fantasy media. He was open about and fully cognisant to the violent character of his gaming interests. He was sensitive to the potential accusation that they fuelled aggression and possible desensitisation through focusing on combat and military themes. He claimed a particular moral position based on the way he played, saying

> there is a scene in *Call of Duty 2* where you are undercover with some Russian terrorists where you go through Moscow airport shooting civilians, innocent people, massacring people. I just refused, so I pulled my character back so that I did not shoot. I just followed the terrorist but did not participate in the shooting. I follow strictly the rules of engagement followed by Britain and America that you do not shoot a person without a weapon. That is very strict with me. I like it between soldier and soldier, not involving civilians.

A further moral dilemma in this example might be that Cicero should have helped the civilians in the airport. However, he was not pressed by the interviewer, given the sensitivity he showed over the matter of violent gaming. Discussing this made him uncomfortable. A tension was revealed between his intense attachment to gaming, and the moral 'rules' he tried to follow.

Participants argued that games had a greater purpose than merely entertainment that touched on the educative. They thought that cognitive and rational skills could be enhanced. Tiaan was critical of press (and academic) reports that games were too violent and socially isolating. He said that it was

> very preachy. The media have taken that point as a good reason to criticise people who like to play games. I like competitive games, whether it is sport or combat. It's a competitive world and I don't see why games shouldn't be useful for preparing you for it. I think they have immense educational potential most of the time. Not with all games, I admit, but quite a few. It's a unique way of keeping your mind active and challenging yourself against other people.

Gaming has been said to be a social and educative rather than individually isolating activity. People play each other in multiplayer settings, discuss strategies of play before and after games, and orientate toward virtual others. They also tended to be creative with game production formats "in their own fashion, negotiating and developing a shared way of pursuing their interest" (Carr et al. 2006:131-2).

Such positive effects have been referred to in various studies, their value being said to enhance ethical thinking, as Cicero's contribution showed above in the context of the moral dilemmas of war (Gentile 2011; Schott 2006; Burns 2006). In a revealing moment, Cicero opened up candidly and stated that games made him a 'better person' than he was, being a means to 'let off steam'. He said that he was a 'rougher' and less likeable person *before* he played video games.

> I think I used to be a very negative person. I was always angry, getting into fights, generally being horrible to people. Once I was not very nice. But then I told myself that I don't want to be like that anymore, and I changed. I think these games calm me down. They have been good for me along with music which is calming. I am trying to be more like my big brother who is a [Namibian newspaper] journalist. He is very reflective and calm and sensible. I am being more like him now. It's more in keeping with my Catholic belief. I am a strong Catholic these days.

Cicero's self-confessed aggressive side was dissipated by playing video games. He saw them as intense and fulfilling entertainment, but also functionally ontological, as both a way to deal with what he saw as his less attractive personal side, and as an imaginary framework to enter worlds normally impossible for him to experience where he competitively tested himself and sought to comply with the moral codes he valued.

The attraction of global (essentially American gaming) media as a means for the Windhoek participants to leave their normal day-to-day lives, emerged strongly from these interviews. Thompson (1995:175) speaks of media making possible for actors

> the accentuation of symbolic distancing from the spatial-temporal contexts of everyday life ... allowing [them] to live symbolically, imaginatively, vicariously.

This concept of *symbolic distancing* typifies actor practices in the fieldwork, especially relating to gaming and online actions, and is a core imported concept of the research.

**5.5 Soap operas and their boundary with identity ontologies**

Soap operas were discussed in the previous chapter where it was established that they were widely watched by participants and are possibly the central viewing preference of people in Windhoek next to films. Why people liked them was only touched on briefly. Many spoke of them as being 'meaningful' and engrossing, and they made statements such as 'they are reflecting our lives'. Their degree of popularity in line with such comments suggests an ontological or existential connection between soap operas and audience. Precisely what the nature of meanings was for them requires articulation.

The significance of soap operas for Windhoekers was born out of a complex combination of factors. Mundanely, it was to 'pass the time' or merely to be entertained. Other factors were also noted. In the Indian context, it is argued that the explosion in popularity of sub-continental television soap operas was due to them "representing a source of pleasure, discussion and a shared identity" (Munshi 2010:6). People simply liked to talk about and analyse them with each other. That they were an everyday conversational reference point for the half-a-billion Indians who consume them is significant; Windhoekers also liked to verbally share memories of previous episodes with others, and they formed an aspect of daily dialogue.

Another factor was culture: participants preferred soap operas that depicted (even partially) their own life ethos and society and their own personal life-dramas. While men as well as women liked them, they were watched more loyally by women. Geraghty (2006), in an early British study, stated that what was unique about these dramas was that people used them to interpret their own cultural background and experience. Soap operas were "spreading their hermeneutical entanglements well beyond the television set" (1991:5). Women would value them because of their powerful representation of women compared to other genre. By comparison, participants complained that Hollywood cinema failed to portray females as convincing or rounded characters in the way soap operas did: soap operas made female characters 'real' and 'believable'.

*5.5.1 Soap operas and "I can learn things about life from them" (Hilma)*

Hilma had previously discussed her 'life-matter' approach to media, and the importance of soap operas had strongly emerged in this context. She took from them what might be termed

'patterns for living'; sometimes representing ways she believed the world should be ordered, which was chiefly along the lines of 'fairness and morality', even justice. She said

> the characters have the same problems that you yourself have in real life: pressure from other people who want to be unfair and make your life difficult to live. They can be very moral as well, because the unpleasant people usually in the end get a reaction from the others [other characters]. They get confronted and even punished. I saw *Egoli* this week and the guy that runs the business mistreats one of the women workers. He was challenged by someone important over the mistreatment; he lost business because of it, and a lot of money. It teaches you how you should behave, and what happens if you treat people as rubbish.

Abby, the supermarket worker, reported that she looked forward to the 'soapies' which she watched after work collectively with her large family. Their favourite was *Generations*, but they liked the new drama, *Indian Love Story* as it was 'different to the usual', and the people in it were Indian, a culture she said she knew little about. Abby reported that she could watch and 'really relate to them' even though they lived in a far-away country. She and her family: "liked the look of that culture which is in some ways different, in other ways much the same as us in Namibia. People have the same troubles and problems, loves and hates as us", she stated. She added that they would watch any soap, because they 'are all interesting at the moment' and reflected 'real life' for her.

Focus Group Three voiced similar sentiments. These dramas were 'learning experiences' and for solving personal problems.

> Mumba: They are fun, but you learn a lot about relationships, how to handle your man. You get your ideas from them. You see how the characters have problems in their lives, and how they solve them.

> Diana: They are something of a guide to you. They have the same experiences as you, but where you don't know how to solve an issue, maybe, they give you a model.

> Mumba: Yes. You learn only good things from them, never bad things.

Not all participants saw them in positive ways. Lebius, an arts college student, saw soap operas as undermining Namibian values and culture. He objected to the 'easy way' they talked about and presented sexual matters and more intimate aspects of relationships. These were things that should not be presented on television, and he stated

> I really hate these soapies which are such a lot of rubbish. They are all over the TV. I think these teach our people bad things. They are not made in Namibia, usually South

Africa or sometimes the US. They show people talking to each other without respect for each other. People are too open in these soaps. They reveal all their lives to each other, and you cannot do that in Namibia. You keep that private. They are showing all their weakness! All their private life things. You don't express that! Then there is the sex. They are sleeping around, these people in these soaps. They are cheating on each other and violating their families. They show too much of the bad things about people. I know people have this bad side, I know that. But do you reveal everything, everything [emphasises] all over the TV? That does not seem right. Our Namibian people should not be exposed to these things.

Later in the interview, Lebius contradicted this earlier condemnation of soap operas by stating that he watched mainly news and soap operas on television. When asked to explain this discrepancy, he said: "I know I said they were a problem, but how can you avoid them? I watch them sometimes. There are some good things in them like the stories and a few of the characters. But really I hate wasting the time I do on them [laughs uncomfortably]!"

*5.5.2 Soap operas as models for relationships: "Providing options to deal with your life" (Tyler)*

Lebius's viewpoint on excessive intimacy in soap operas reflects broader Namibian social attitudes on sexuality. Namibia has been described in various studies as a country where it is not culturally appropriate to talk about sexual matters at any level or institution of society, including the family (Tersbol 2005; Talavera 2005). Sharing knowledge or experience of sexuality or personal relationships is therefore traditionally restrictive, although it is argued to be changing (Fox 2005b). These studies suggest that many Namibians grow up knowing little about sex or what to expect for their future sexual and intimate relationships. This seemed to be an important factor why soap operas were so popular among the participants in this research.

One of the joint interviews involved Mary and Berns who were low income shop workers. Both lived in Khomasdal and were Afrikaans-speakers. A cultural reticence about sexuality came out firmly in their interview, as did the valuable role that soap operas were seen to fill on sexual and relationship matters where the viewer lacked such knowledge. This exchange occurred.

> Berns: I really like the soapies on TV. Really this is because there are currently some interesting ones from other countries, and you have these different cultures, like India and Morocco. That type of soap is out of the ordinary and I wouldn't get to know about those cultures normally.

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Mary: I also like them for the love. You learn about relationships which you wouldn't know about.

Interviewer: Didn't your parents tell you about such things as relationships?

Mary: In a way they did, but they don't tell you a lot. Not about these sex things.

Berns: I have a friend, but not my parents, who I can talk to about everything. But not my parents. The way we [young people] do things now, they are not used to that. It's way awkward for them. They can't talk to you that way.

Mary: You sure do learn from those soaps. They make you curious. When you see two people making out and having sex, you sure want to try that [both laugh].

Interviewer: Are either of you married yet?

Mary: [Exclaims] No way, no!

Berns: That's something I never want to do. Och, no! That thing about Mr Right, he doesn't exist.

Mary: There is no such person. You just have to make the most of the relationship.

Participants acknowledged soap operas to be existential mirrors that reflected their personal lives. While they were fictitious, they were considered to be grounded firmly in everyday reality reflected through characters, storylines, and life themes and situations. In them, relationships descended into tension and crisis, marriages were threatened due to infidelity of a partner, or there was some point of contention and conflict between couples or familiars. Participants stated that soap operas successfully incorporated these everyday situations, providing solution scenarios or resolutional possibilities for personal problems. Tyler gave an explanatory example.

There was a situation in *Generations* recently where this woman is married to a guy who is a bit illegal. He has some unclear connections with crime through these bad people he hangs around with, plus he is unfaithful to his wife. Both these problems really trouble her because she is fully aware of them, and she doesn't know how to handle it. This best friend of hers gives her the courage to confront him and give an ultimatum that things have to change. It is him or her, as she puts it. He realises he loves her and he decides to reform. It actually works. I would never know how to deal with something like that, so the soap gives you options how to deal with your life. That can be helpful. I have a sister who had a personal relationship problem who got a lot of help on what to do from another soap. I think it was *Indian Love Story*. But I can't tell you about it, as its private

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Tyler discussed another explanation why soap operas were liked. This referred to the ideal of the 'supportive society' they portrayed. Geraghty (2006:222) argued that British soap operas focused on communities that provided moral and social support for fictional characters. Women were in particular depicted as beneficiaries of assistance networks. Tyler insightfully confirmed her recognition of this aspect, saying

> the places where people live in those programmes are supportive. Yes, you get bad people. But there are a lot of good people in them that help, and the characters go to them for assistance. They are traditional that way, like when the rest of the village comes out to help if there is trouble. We're losing those sorts of support now. People have become much more distant and disinterested in each other in many parts of Windhoek. I don't know that you could go and talk to a neighbour or a friend over the way easily now. But the soaps have that. Maybe we like them because we miss that support today?

Soap operas were therefore a form of self-help media. They framed fictional versions of people's lives using plot, dialogue and characters, and seemingly gave the viewer an 'authentic' version of real life that participants could relate to. They were a *symbiosis media* that spoke back to them by providing synergy and meaningful existential frameworks. Most participants saw them ontologically in this sense. Nigerian cinema productions were regarded similarly.

**5.6 Nigerian cinema as a source of ontological belonging: Representational media**

Nigerian cinema narratives, first discussed in Chapter 4, revealed similar ontological functions to soap operas for the participants. These were low-budget and low-production value films much like soap operas, which tend to be made cheaply and quickly within the bounds of fixed and predictable production formats. Their quality was rarely an issue that worried Windhoekers. Participants stated that they could relate culturally and socially to them in ways they were unable to do for Western cinema. A racial divide in interest appeared to suggest no white participants watched or valued Nigerian productions.

*5.6.1 "You know the places where the stories are set" (Selma)*

Participants saw Nigerian productions as having both cultural and personal value. Selma, an art student, gave an example of how Nigerian film could be allegorically a guide for shaping her existence. She discussed a film called *The President's Daughter* which she regarded as a wise morality tale against the temptation to seek wealth and power.

> You really see your own life in those [films]. They are set in a rural area often and many of us come from such places. So you know the places where the stories are set. There is a very good one I saw last week called *The President's Daughter*. There is this guy and he loves this poor girl from the village who is beautiful. But this girl from a rich family falls for him, and he has this choice. He discovers she is the child of the president. His parents want him to marry her. They are interested in the power and the money that will come, you see. But he is conflicted, because he loves the poor girl. And against his family's wishes he decides he will marry the poor girl. That is such a nice and wise movie. That if you want to be happy, it is not just about money or wealth. It is about where your heart takes you in love. It teaches you not to be too materialistic about the person you spend your life with. It teaches you a lot. Nigerian are such good stories.

She had previously expressed interest in American films and television, and was therefore asked what she preferred. In answer she said

> OK, I would go for the Nigerian for the message and the story. Then for entertainment, I go for the American movies. They are exciting, but more entertainment. But as an African I relate much more to African or Nigerian stories. They are closer to my culture.

While Mumba enjoyed films from the United States because they allowed individuals to escape reality temporarily, Nigerian movies were on the other hand cultural forms she felt empathy with. She insisted that they

> have such good stories, and I don't care how they are made. I can really relate to them as an African. The storyline is good, especially the comedies; they don't really have violence in them, they're more everyday and it really takes me back to my African roots. They're all about jealousy, personal conflicts, problems people have in their lives. American movies are more about 'action', a sort of fantasy thing to escape from things when you are tired. I relate to Nigerian programmes or films much more.

Nigerian films and television were *cultural empathy media* for many. They did not necessarily represent 'pure' entertainment for participants in the way American media did. Rather, they were a means to experience replications of an individual's culture reflected back at them, while Western media were seen as lacking this possibility for reflection and empathy.

### 5.6.2 Theoretical diversions: Representation, choice and determinacy

Bourdieu (1979:173) has argued that social actors choose symbolic products (including media) symbiotically in line with fields of their own social existence, culture and social

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position within the societal habitus. 'Position' effectively shapes how people engage with the objects of culture, and this disposition guided the choice and tastes of Windhoekers in respect of Nigerian media productions. From Bourdieu's standpoint, this is a 'forced choice' of which individuals are unaware. He says (1979:178)

> taste is *amor fati,* the choice of destiny, but a forced choice, produced by conditions of existence which rule out all alternatives as mere daydreams and leave no choice but the taste for the necessary. [This] can only be the basis of a life-style 'in-itself', which is defined as such negatively, by an absence, by the relationship of privation between itself and the other life-styles.

While Bourdieu may be correct in his argument on the social mechanics of choice, it ignores possible psychic needs of individuals to see their lives and cultural existence *represented in their cultural practices*. Soap operas and Nigerian dramas offer the possibility of cultural and personal representation lacking in the plethora of dominant global productions. Rather than marginalise audiences in Bourdieu's sense, McMillin (2007:193) states that it is necessary to 'essentialise' them by allowing their "interpretations to stand as the truth of the moment" (*ibid*. 193).

Psychic or emotional attachments to treasured media may, therefore, be seen as a search for representation, while audiences also interpret and justify their selections in research settings. This is how it appeared in the rationalisations of the Windhoek participants. Writing about the negotiative possibilities of American television, Ang (1996) has generally argued that culture must be seen as a much more contradictory and open process than writers such as Bourdieu allow.

## 5.7 Life projects and motivational media

Media could be used as a means to escape mundane local contexts as simple entertainment and fantasy, or as *motivational media* to inform life planning or life projects in Giddens's (1991) sense. Generally, participants broadly fell into these positions. How the research contributors talked about motivational media or practical media practices is looked at first.

### 5.7.1 Educational and motivational media: Tom and Diana

Examples of educative media practices among the Windhoek participants indicated a desire to pragmatically 'improve' or to 'develop' themselves through different media. Media was seen to offer educational possibilities, and in this respect was a practical or instrumental

resource. Yet education suggested deeper ontological factors such as the desire to develop existing identities using knowledge or information from television or more commonly from searching the Internet. A contributor credited television with helping her to learn to speak and write English, another with acquiring valuable knowledge and skills.

> Diane: I used to watch the cartoons on my own, usually in the holiday when there were a lot. I loved TV. That's where I really learned English, through watching TV. At school we weren't really taught English that well. I really learnt more from TV, particularly pronunciation.

> Mumba: I think school was where I really learned about media. We had TVs with video players, but also Internet there. That would have been from 2001 or 2002. I loved the Internet, although it was very slow. We had computers and everything at my high school.

Tom saw media as primarily informational. He was a very practical participant who used media for obtaining business ideas or for news, never for entertainment, he claimed. Media were to keep in touch with potential business opportunities in Namibia. He gave an example of the advantages of radio.

> I very much use radio and the media for my business to keep up. The other day, the CEO of TransNamib [state transport company] went public on the radio to announce that SMEs [small to medium enterprises] were needed for de-bushing for rail construction. They've got 4000 kilometres of rail so there is a lot of business potential there for people like me. I use media for that. I've also been eyeing the mining sector. I know they [government] have put a moratorium on mining licenses because they think that foreigners are exploiting our resources. But they will lift that soon, and I am waiting to be part of that business opportunity. Yes, media is a very practical thing for me.

Tom then discussed the practical business benefits of news print media.

> I prefer newspapers since I read them a lot. I like the *New Era* since I check the new tenders that I might apply for in terms of my business. I never miss these, as I tend to tender aggressively. I don't always get them. The paper gives the result of tenders, so I can see if my tender price was too high and off the mark a bit. I can correct for the future. *New Era* gives tender information every Tuesday and Thursday. If you are seeking something, it links you to someone who is far from you, but who can give you ideas. Like business leaders.

He worked hard utilising media as part of his entrepreneurial life-planning. He predicted that in several years he would be a respected business leader: "I know that I will make it. I will have money, not like now. But I will help other people by employing them. Yes, I can change

where I am now to something better." Media were practical and motivational tools to create future 'respected' identities.

Diana also sought success through media. Hers was a business oriented approach and partly philosophical. She sought 'positive thinking' and 'goal setting' through the inspirational possibilities of media. Media helped her to map her life. She spoke about the documentary film *The Secret* which was essentially a self-help motivational film, but with a conspiracy theory at its heart, this being that ordinary people were being denied the inspirational tools to be successful, and it was a matter of simply seeking inspiration to succeed in life materially and spiritually. The film has been described as "so transparently ugly and stupid that it seems impossible that anyone could take it seriously" (*The Guardian*, 27 April 2007). However, Diane on the contrary found it profoundly motivational. She had a strong loyalty to this film,

> I really liked a documentary called *The Secret*. I don't think you could call it a movie, it's more a motivation thing about how to live life to the fullest and about positive thinking, when you feel down how to uplift yourself. They talk about how it's important to visualise your goals in life.

The film had, as far as she was concerned, 'changed her life'. She criticised youth of her own generation for just "living for the moment and never thinking beyond today. I am very different to them." *The Secret* had been an inspirational medium which was responsible for her launching her thriving jewellery business on Facebook.

Tom and Diane occupied similar identity spaces. Their interviews revealed the resilient presence of motivational media in their life-planning; but also the desire to change themselves in terms of 'success' identities using strategies of self-improvement. Compared with Tom, Diane had taken this approach further, claiming a certain distinction over other young adults of her age. Hers was the most concerted example among the people interviewed to use motivational media to create a preferred *success identity* which appeared to be part of a form of cosmopolitan ontology.

## 5.8 Gendered media ontologies

Strong information about *gendered media* came out of the interviews with females in Windhoek. Gendered media can be described as media that carry a particular construction or discourse of men or women in terms of gendered identities. These may be positive, in the way Diane saw herself (as a motivated life-planning businesswoman); or negative: women as objects of sexual desire, men as bearers of masculinity. Gill (2006) argues that gender

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representations are today 'in flux', and this is nowhere more apparent than in media. Media texts have "for some time been actively constructing gender" (Gill 2006:7). More positive 'signs' of women had been displayed in media in recent years: strong and intelligent females, for example. Yet, older sexual stereotypes have returned. Gill says that today television, cinema and other media present mixed messages on gender. Windhoek participants were of a similar view. There were robustly critical comments on representations of women in television, cinema and particularly on the Internet. These were indicated as presenting 'objectionable' or 'disturbing' views of women to the Namibian public.

*5.8.1 Masculinity, pornography and media in Windhoek: "We all check it out" (Andrew)*

For some participants, sexualised ontologies were a key part of their masculine outlooks. Pornography[41] in media was raised as a particular problem for women. Falen was concerned at how 'easy' it was for men to watch pornographic content on the Internet. She believed that relationships between men and women were changing in Namibia due to pornography, saying

> the thing that really bothers me about media is pornography. I don't watch it. It's on the Internet. Male students are downloading it in the night, it's on their computers. It's a major impact. It's quite common. It teaches them really bad things affecting their lives. They sit at home watching that stuff and don't go out to meet real people; when they do, they want to try it out with women. It's bad, it creates a bad attitude; they want to experiment with what they are watching. Guys want to try it out on women, to do exactly what they've watched. It affects relationships.

Mary agreed with Falen, and believed that there was only one real reason why Namibian men used the Internet: "I know a lot of guys who only do it [the Internet] for this porn stuff. It's not a few guys who do that, it's most guys! They are all up to it. Porn is among us."

Werner as a soldier, a heavily masculinised profession, said that he and his colleagues engaged in collective television and video viewing at the Windhoek army camp. They liked action movies and various sports including boxing which was popular at the camp. In a frank admission, Werner stated that pornography from Internet downloads or DVDs was a regular part of their camp viewing.

> I see these things about sex, these porno things. I don't learn anything from them. I am from a deep culture, very traditional. We are not allowed to talk about sex. It is forbidden and I suddenly I come across this. I came across it first when I joined the

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[41] Matters of Internet pornography are discussed in more depth in Chapter 6. Relevant literature is discussed on this in that chapter.

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army. The soldiers love to watch that. They laugh and cheer at it, it's funny. But I think it influences them, they go and do it, try it. It's bad because a lot of soldiers are exposed to HIV, but they try that stuff and get infected. It stimulates them. They need training on HIV to make them aware, and we have that. The problem is that we are separated from the family [families cannot live with soldiers in camp], so they go with others and take risks. They are influenced or stimulated by that porn.

Andrew was very frank about viewing pornography. He admitted this was why he first decided to use the Internet. He said

we all checked it out. It still is a big thing with a lot of people I know. At first they used to buy [pornographic] videos, but then everything changed with the Internet. People used to buy videos from a contraband shop we knew. But Internet was easier and made it much more accessible. Yes, a lot of people I know check [pornography] out regular.

He became uncomfortable, so the subject was left behind. Tom was more open about it. He referred to it as a "natural thing with any young guy with racing hormones." It did not seem to be a problem from his viewpoint. He explained that all his friends

explored this stuff. At school there were these eight guys from different cultural backgrounds. One would plant this idea in one person's mind on where to get it, and it would go round like wildfire. They would then spread it around, a kind of influential thing. It was kind of habitual eventually, everyone knew about it. I'm not sure Internet [pornography] is all that influential anymore. People get magazines now from places like a grocery shop, or buy a video from some sex shop. They are there. If you can't beat them, join them.

Few other male interviewees were prepared to mention pornography. Those who did regarded it as normal for men, or as an unpleasant reality of male cultures in modern Windhoek.

*5.8.2 "Double standards" in gender representations*

Ndaka was critical of the way women's bodies were used for commercial purposes not only in Western but also in Namibian media: "the way women are portrayed! Not just the Western stuff, but here in Namibia. In the advertisements you see a woman half naked over a new car. Women are used to sell things. They are being used sexually."

Falen approved of what she had recognised as positive representations of women she had seen in cinema and television productions. She mentioned what she referred to as "that incredible kick-ass kid" in the movie *Kick Ass*. She liked to see women colonising areas

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previously associated with men, such as the action movie format. She referred to a recent American television series *Nikita*.

> *Nikita* is about a female assassin trained by the government. It's called the Company which trains young people to kill, but she leaves and becomes independent against the company. It's not too violent, so it's OK. It's great that you have a chick who's the hero instead of the guys; it gives women real power. It's a change. The other one is *The Game*, about footballers and their women. With movies I prefer ones with a lot of girls [laughs]. Movies with only one girl and lots of guys are boring. Guy talk is so boring.

This 'colonisation' of traditional male texts pleased many of the interviewees. Tyler complained about the 'double-standards' of public and government in Namibia, especially regarding official policies of women's empowerment. Sexual content and some degrees of violence in relation to children and young females troubled her, especially music videos.

> We let our Namibian children see anything: sex, violence, you name it. But I don't object if it is an adult. Look, we are not much better on our TV. Some of the Namibian music videos have these male singers up against the camera with half-dressed women surrounding them. Their only role is to shake their backsides at you and look as if they want sex immediately [laughs]! For a nation that is always going on about women's empowerment, most of the population – males anyway – are completely unaware of that policy!

Diana commented on the Internet, and talked of a problematic side of Facebook which 'irritated' her. It involved photographs which people tended to upload to each other from their accounts. She was particularly critical of younger women she thought 'over-sexualised' themselves online. She criticised Facebook, saying

> there are some things I don't agree with [on Facebook]. When you have friends when they load pictures of themselves, it pops up on your homepage: some of those pictures are just girls exposing themselves in a naked way, and when you read the comments it's usually guys uploading the pictures and saying that she's really nice and what, what, what. It's like selling yourself to men on the Internet and I highly disagree with that. When other girls comment why do you put a picture like that up, these girls say 'it's my body, I can do what I want'. For me, it's ways of seeking attention from guys. Some are young, they are sixteen.

The de-colonisation of women in media that Falen spoke of seemed to go into reverse gear here; women themselves rather than men provided sexualised representations, while men consumed. Both Diana and Falen were concerned given their support for changing the social position of women in Namibia.

**5.9 Markers of religious ontologies in media and identity**

Religiosity varied among interviewees and was apparent in the general social values they held. Some showed Christian beliefs that represented a significant marker in their personal identity ontologies while, for others, beliefs were much weaker or absent. Such beliefs were apparent in the general social values they held. Religion in complex and often hidden ways tended to shape the way media was used, as well as what was watched and listened to. Sometimes participants engaged in self-censorship where they thought religious values might be under threat.

They spoke of looking for media that confirmed 'faith'. Happy, when asked about the celebrities he liked, gave only gospel or evangelical examples. He did not like film stars, preferring gospel artists and evangelicalists: Kirk Franklin, a gospel rapper; online preachers such as the American Joyce Myer and Tibbi Joshua from Nigeria. He claimed that his religion did not interfere with the way he used media, but what he said contradicted this.

> I'm Catholic, so I go to Church quite a lot. If I don't have transport, I watch a service on TV. But I don't like the porn thing on the Internet, that's not very nice. It really brings out the controversial thing. When I see a site, I just stop there, I don't go in. But when you search for sites, you often get them [porn sites] inviting you to look at things. I have by mistake, but I come out. I don't like that. Some of my family and friends are religious, and they send me religious contacts: sites, scripture and stuff like that. That can be interesting and I check them. I suppose I use media for religion in that way.

Falen, like Crispin, was also a Catholic. Her beliefs tended to result in filtering what she watched in terms of her religious orthodoxy, even though her comments indicate that she was perhaps unaware she did this.

> I'm very much religious. I'm a born-again Christian Catholic. But I don't think it effects how I use media. I don't judge. Media stuff does offend me, but how can I change it? There's nothing that a movie or series can show that affects my Catholic religion, not at all. There are certain things that offend, like on Facebook when they say there is no God. But I don't respond to those comments. I do believe, so there's nothing they can say. I stay away from Facebook comments like that and from other things. There was a movie called *The Da Vinci Code*. I never saw it. I deliberately stayed away because it was so wrong. I did not want to go. I knew what it was saying, but it was best not to see it. Bad things came out of it for me as a Catholic.

Noting religious markers in media engagements was difficult to assess. The religious values of participants and what they considered sacred could not always be easily linked to their

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media actions. Concerns about sex, violence or insulting religion were the more obvious indicators. Here it was unclear if culture was speaking or religion. As Durkheim and Mauss (1975 [1903]) long ago argued, religion and culture are frequently enmeshed, although this is more common in traditional societies. Few participants revealed overt religious identities, although their frequent moral comments suggested underlying religious belief.

**5.10 Conclusion: Ontology and mediated centres**

When searching for texts on media and ontology, it was noticed that few tended to directly address the issues of meaning and existence with any degree of depth. Appadurai (1996) and Tomlinson (1999) have referred to the search of the local/global consumer for 'authentic' ontological versions of identities, of deploying global media as the means to acquire new or more significance ones in an epoch when identity is in flux or under threat. In this respect, individuals demand a return on time invested in media they consume: the payback must be meaningful at an existential level.

The interviews suggested not only that people felt a need for their lives, society and culture to be reflected back at them in a representational sense in their media; there was at the same time an emotional demand for some psychic connection with their chosen media practices that provided explanation about *them* on some level. Media that did not supply this was devalued, marginalised or ignored. Local as well as global media producers tend to assume that they serve the social and ontological demands of their audiences. This assumption is challenged by Couldry (2006: 46) who writes of the 'myth of the mediated centre', whereby "media claim for themselves that they are society's 'frame' [and that in] countless underlying media texts … there is a 'social centre' to be re-presented [by them] to us." Media makes claims to provide ontological meeting points and senses of belonging or representation. His theory of media rituals argues that television events such as public ceremonies, reality television or fictional series or film, suggest a bonding social role for media. Media, in effect, claim that they 'do society's job' of ritually connecting individuals and making degrees of social collectivity possible. This, for Couldry, is at the core of the manufactured 'myth' about media. He argues that through design or neglect, media do the opposite by potentially excluding groups or other cultures from representations.

There may be some truth in this. Media narratives and texts make enormous assumptions about providing existential and social *loci* of belonging for individuals. Yet it is social actors themselves who choose and decide if this is true. The participants certainly mentioned media

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(not only Western) that failed 'to speak to them'. A focus on ontological dimensions of media brought out participant concerns and expectations about needing media to be 'meaningful' and culturally 'representative'. A final point that emerged was that they expected or needed to 'feel part' of or emotionally attached to the media they consumed. Ontology, or the search for meaningful underlying values and belongings, was a noticeable element in Windhoekers' media engagements.

The main grounded theory concepts emerging from this part of the study related to: *self and ontology media* which arises from participant concerns with matters of cultural representation and belonging in local/global media; *practical or instrumental media* which represent uses of media for lifestyle or life motivational purposes directly feeding into identity negotiations; and *gendered media* relating to concerns about sexualised media connected to gender representation including negative identities . The next chapter builds on these ontological themes through accounts of Internet interactions and virtual connectivity.

# Chapter 6

# Self identities, the Internet and social networks

## 6.1 Introduction

The Internet was revealed in Chapter 4 to be an overwhelmingly popular new medium among a majority of Windhoek participants. It was used for reasons typical of international users: email communication; accessing and processing of information and knowledge; obtaining local and global news; entertainment, particularly downloading and viewing films and television; and, a relatively new practice in Namibia, social networking. The chief means to access the Internet was through a computer or a cell phone; low income groups relied on their cell phones, while middle or higher income individuals used both interchangeably. Less affluent participants had never experienced the Internet on a computer, while several had only limited encounters. However, they were unusual within the sample.

Few Namibian Internet studies exist beyond indirect mention in occasional academic papers, newspaper articles or basic statistical indicators. Mchombu (2007), for example, refers to the Internet only fleetingly in his discussion of knowledge growth and management in Namibia, but sees this medium as a preserve of professionals in business, government and academia. This narrow focus is apparent elsewhere (Wiik 2007; Chiwara 2006). Internet research in the country to date has not strongly situated itself within the media practices of general citizens, neither has it valued the Internet as a public resource or means to the self-development of actors. Internet engagements were strong among Windhoekers, and appeared to be part of what Archer (2007:54) has called greater "inducements toward increasing the scope and range of personal reflexivity".

## 6.2 Internet engagements

Windhoek participants gave various reasons why they were first drawn to computers and the Internet. Nearly all regarded them as a valuable resource, and they had begun to use the Internet for easy access to local and international news. Students in the sample began to use it when they went to university or college to find academic sources for writing assignments and studying in general. Social communication with others through email and social network sites figured as a primary rationale for first use, as did the desire to take advantage of novel exploratory possibilities they had heard about. On the fringe, a small number of males frankly

admitted that they were drawn to the Internet because of its sexual possibilities given that pornographic sites could be found there.

### 6.2.1 Getting "hooked into that world": Bertha

When Bertha, a non-governmental researcher, was asked which media were most important to her, she said: "It's definitely Internet. I have many friends and I am still making friends. I am a very sociable person. I find that Internet is perfect for that, for keeping in touch with as many people as possible." Social networks were her main Internet interest. Bertha first experienced the Internet in 2007 when she came to study in Windhoek from her village in the north of the country. She only had access to a 'poor' system, that suffered congestion from too many users, was slow and frequently off-line which made it difficult to enjoy the full benefits. Bertha's 'real introduction' did not come until two years later when she went on a student exchange trip abroad for six months to Sweden, where she had rich online encounters.

> In 2009 I went to Sweden on an exchange trip, and it [Internet use] really took off. I had to join Facebook because the Swedish university [Linköping] used it for contact between lecturer and student. So I started to use it fully. That's how it began. You sent your lecturer your research papers and he sent comments back. It was normal. I also liked buying things like music and clothes online. You can't do a lot of that here [Namibia]. It is more limited.

She returned to Namibia with a laptop computer which her Swedish bursary had paid for. Bertha adds that discovering Facebook in Sweden had 'really deepened' her experience. However, her activities were much reduced on her return to Namibia.

> After Sweden, I do much less Internet on the laptop. I can't afford it so much now, but the phone seems to be affordable. I'm on Facebook five to twenty minutes each time. It's when you comment that you stay on it more, you get hooked into that world. The longest I am on is half-an-hour, no more. But I am doing it across the day. When you are into a topic [discussion] that is very interesting, you find you can be commenting and staying very long. You join a group discussion or you form a group, and you are discussing this thing for ages.

Bertha continued to be 'excited' about online media, but there was nostalgia tied up with 'how good' she remembers it was while in Sweden compared to the poor service now. She used the Internet regularly and it was now firmly part of her lifestyle.

Michelle, a secretary, used the Internet for social networking, with little interest beyond this. She enjoyed it, but

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it's not so much this informational stuff. It's really only social networks like Facebook. I do it mostly on my cell phone, or sometimes at work on their computer. I am on maybe three hours each day. I like the comments, play the games, edit and check the pictures, the games you can play. By that I mean the mind games you play with people. You can freak them out with stories and play with their minds. It's fun. I like the public aspect.

Michelle enjoyed its socialising aspects, which included jokey or playful encounters with both friends and strangers. For her, the Internet was just 'fun'. Other participants gave brief reasons for their attraction.

Happy: Internet is key in my life. Social media is the great media tool. As I said, I could not live without it really.

Falen: You need computers for fun but also for getting jobs today. Everyone is expected to know how to use them, to be computer-literate. We had Internet from an early date because my parents thought it important.

Martin: Basically, you are on and off line all day now. It's normal. That is how you live. It's a great resource, and that's really why I decided I should get used to it. I wanted to keep in line with everyone else.

These participant accounts of why the Internet was used underline the strong utility of this medium: it could be used to keep in touch, for studies and for information, but also for flippant or frivolous purposes. Many used it for all these, but some delved into cyberspace to fulfil overtly sexual needs and desires.

*6.2.2 Pornographic media: "a big buzz among my friends" (Andrew)*

Internet media tends to be heavily sexualised. Philaretou, Mahfouz and Allen (2005) and other studies have mentioned common and often heavy accessing of pornographic Internet sites primarily by men. Sensual or carnal Internet uses stand alongside educational, occupational and recreational ones. Men can sometimes invest an inordinate amount of time and effort, and sometimes money into cybersex activities (*ibid.* 152).

There was a substantial amount of such content on the Internet. Some studies argue that it has become more graphic and easily available, and the possibility of addiction more likely (Eberstadt & Layden 2010; Campbell & Park 2008). It was reported that of the fifty most successful global websites, four of these were pornographic, including the United States site Pornhub, a multi-million dollar concern (*The Guardian*, 11 February 2011). Some African studies have predicted that as Internet access expands on the continent such sites will become

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the norm among African males, transferring current dominant access among high income individuals to lower ones (Longe et al. 2007). Longe argues that the moral and cultural reaction of African societies to sexually explicit media is likely to be conservative and oppressive in legal terms. Pornography was discussed by other participants earlier in the context of DVD and video tape access.[42]

Given the prominence of pornography, it is unsurprising that it was a motivating reason for entry into Internet media. More surprising was that participants were open about mentioning it in a country that is conservative on matters of sexual culture (Fox 2005b). Andrew, a civil engineer living in Katutura, candidly stated his first Internet experience.

> I would say sixteen or seventeen. It was first at an Internet café in town [Windhoek]. I did it with a friend and we shared the cost. It really was like a new world opening up doing that. It's going to sound weird, the actual reason we wanted to check out the Internet was because we'd heard about the Pamela Anderson's porn movie [laughs]. Yes. That's how it started, but after watching it we didn't care so much. It was just intense curiosity. Then we moved on to chat rooms, movies, that sort of things. But the Pamela thing was a big buzz among my friends at the time.

Pamela Anderson had been a star on the popular American television series *Baywatch* in the early 1990s. A video of her engaged in explicit sex with her former husband Tommy Lee had been leaked onto the Internet in 1998; it became one of the most accessed sites that year. Williams (2004:16) refers to this as "one of the most watched home videos in recent memory" and represented the birth of 'celebrity porn'. She argues that it marked a focus for a substantial number of younger internet users to the presence of pornography in popular culture. Williams states that this 'media event' must be approached as a cultural phenomenon given the way in which it lodged in the memory of many people, and became a topic of public discussion.

The Pamela Anderson 'event' had made an impression also on the charity worker, Tom, who had watched it independently of Andrew and mentioned it briefly. Tom also said that pornography had been the chief reason to experience the Internet for the first time.

> Yes. Internet was great when I first encountered it. Well, at that age is when your hormones for guys are really messing with you, and you only use Internet for one thing and that's pornography. That was very much common with my friends. At school we used to watch pornography on some guy's laptop and then come with it on

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[42] The soldier, Werner, had talked about the collective viewing of pornography at the Windhoek army camp.

> our cell phones, and we'd exchange that stuff on other cell phones. Every 16 year old would be fascinated by it.

Tom made the link between pornography and his own culture where talking about sex was a strict taboo. He implied that one could 'find out things' which no one else in his community had ever been prepared to discuss. He said

> you hardly learn about sexual intercourse at school, so at that time when you talk about it in class [with school friends], you know. You don't talk about sex at home either, but now you know. It wasn't a shock when I first saw it. I was laughing most of the time. I was there with my big brothers watching this stuff, and they were like really intrigued, I laughed. Then we would go to school and tell the others 'hey, you guys should really log on to this website' and see this.

Sexual identities and beliefs were normally carefully guarded and regulated in 'traditional' Owambo culture (Fox 2005b). However, the Internet allowed access to sexual imagery and symbols that circumvented and directly challenged this, offering desire-fulfilment but also sexual knowledge. What is also apparent is how sensual information was passed down a grapevine and widely shared with other males, sometimes with females.

A brief point to add is that this study does not morally judge on issues of pornography. It remains a controversial subject, particularly in feminist studies where female identity is seen as subordinated and objectified by it, but where pornography is defended as well as condemned (Paglia 2001; Strossen 2000; Dworkin 1989). Rather, pornography should be seen as a discourse through which audiences live temporarily-idealised sexual and erotic fantasies, but also where hidden commercial and male-centred sub-texts are contained. At heart, they represent the neo-liberal profit motive working on desire, yet susceptible to inadvertently preaching a libertarian-conservative patriarchy (Attwood 2002).

### 6.2.3 Conspiratorial media: Andrew

While pornography was an early motivation for Andrew to introduce himself to the Internet, so later did online conspiracy theory sites deepen this experience. Clarke (2007) states that such sites have now become well-established. Conspiratorial media were discussed at length by Andrew who incorporated their stories into his ontological perception of the world; this being the idea that secret societies and powerful forces other than national governments effectively shaped global societies. Many of the conventional news sources were for him unreliable as they concealed information about 'what was really going on.' He was a regular visitor to numerous conspiracy sites: "There's Alex Jones' websites called *Info Wars*

[www.infowars.com] and *Prison Planet* [www.prisonplanet.com]. There is also conspiracy-net.com. Most of the conspiracy theories you discover online on such sites. They're the sort I go to a lot." He discussed several significant recent news events, and gave his own take on them. The death of Bin Laden in May 2011 was for him a 'staged event'; in reality, Bin Laden had 'died years ago' in American custody, according to the Alex Jones site. The civil unrest sweeping across the Maghreb and Arab states was a 'Western plot' in which foreign social media were implicated. Andrew mentioned a story that had recently broken: the arrest in New York of the International Monetary Fund director Dominique Strauss-Kahn in May 2011.

> Take this Strauss-Kahn thing, the guy who allegedly raped that woman. On Strauss-Kahn they are saying that he has been set up. He's a possible presidential candidate [in France], so why now? He's one of the richest guys in France; he can have any woman he wants, so why attempt to rape a maid? Something's going on. I like skating uphill, I would say. I don't like following the trend. There's more that I see going on than people think.

Apart from Facebook, news and seeking out conspiracy stories were Andrew's main Web searches. Underlying his interests lay a more general view of global 'cover-ups'. He mentioned that he was a fan of television series such as the *X Files*, *Prison Break* and the thriller *24* which contained references to dark forces or organisations manipulating societies. These covert plot-lines were transferred into his daily thinking and he appeared very serious when he stated

> it's my view that there's been groups or elites running societies for a while now. You see the governments as a surface thing. But what's underneath is more important. Governments have only half the power, maybe less. They're pulled this way and that by powerful commercial and other interests. They're used by these people or organisations. We only know half of what's going on. The Internet is really the first way we've been able to talk about this. Alex Jones really gives the game up to ordinary people. We can hear and talk about it now.

Online communities offered a means to talk to others about this 'problem' and he said allowed

> like-minded people who think like you to work out together the scale of the problem. Perhaps then we can do something. Because here in Africa, we think we are independent now, but we have very little power. It's not colonialism anymore but

something worse really that's pulling the strings. It's systems, conspiracies, lots of weird profound *kak*[43] really. We don't have a picture fully what it is yet.

Clarke's (2007) study of Internet conspiracy theories supports the existence of this type of Internet trend. He writes about the mushrooming of conspiracy chatter in recent years, while arguing that long-standing theories, for example about the Kennedy assassination in 1963 or the 9/11 attacks in New York in 2001, have been swamped by a plethora of minor ones which crowd the Web. Clarke says that conspiracy claims have now become so widespread as to effectively rule each other out.

## 6.3 Primary uses of the Internet

Participants' experiences of the Internet varied from being intense to shallow in terms of how deeply they explored. Financial factors determined intensity. Those who could afford to be online frequently took full advantage, yet nearly all tried to use the Internet within the means available to them no matter what their social background.

### 6.3.1 Internet accessibility strategies

Several participants could only access the Internet using cell phones. Affordability was the key factor restricting them here. Mary and Berns, the coloured shop workers, stated that they used the Internet, albeit narrowly. Mary said it was for her main interest, music.

> I have Internet, but I don't do these chatrooms. I just use it for downloading music which I like a lot. I listen to music to make the time fly sometimes, although the boss doesn't allow it while we are at work. My favourite music is Hip Hop and House. Also Kwaito, but I prefer House from South Africa. I like Liquid Deep, also Diamond Jimondo, D. J. Clio, the old guys who are good at it and know how to make it. Sometimes I like Namibian House, but not so much. I get my downloads from *Toxic Web*. It's legal [seems reticent on this].

Berns had more limited experiences. She could provide only one example of ever using it: "I did try Internet once with my sister-in-law when we checked wedding dresses. There was going to be a wedding in the family, hers actually. So we checked what they looked like online on her home computer. We checked out the pictures, but I can't remember if we found anything."

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[43] *Kak* is an Afrikaans word for excrement or 'shit'. It is used often in a derogatory sense to demean or devalue an object or person.

Tyler, the educational administrator, chose not to use the Internet in any regular way. She associated it with work rather than leisure and only occasionally used it outside her occupation. "That is not such a big thing for me. I email in my office all day which puts you off computers. Sometimes I check out *The Namibian* [newspaper] online plus some international news to see what is happening. That is about it. We have MTC 3G Internet at home, but I only check emails." If she did go online outside of the job, it was usually a shared experience with her husband.

> My husband uses it most of the time, not me. He is into this YouTube thing. He likes to find these funny videos they have. He is always calling me and saying 'come and have a look at this, it is so funny', and you watch some dumb guy leaping off a bridge and losing his pants. Something like that. They are amusing, but I think it's a bit trivial. Such a lot of Internet is trivial.

She added that she liked fashion which she checked out. She looked forward to Internet shopping in Namibia. The Internet was in her mind a 'plaything' outside of its occupational practicality.

> The only thing I like to do sometimes is check out the fashion sites for the latest clothes. I hear that in other countries you can buy the clothes you like online. There are online shopping sites. I would love it if they were here, but we don't have them yet. I have heard that they have started to come to South Africa. Maybe we get them next.

In Tyler's case, Internet media did not significantly shape her view of herself or serve as a resource to inform lifestyle in a major way except perhaps in a limited commercial sense. However, for Andrew, it appeared the shape his identity world view in strange and unexpected ways around conspiracy interests.

### 6.3.2 Concern about Internet costs and accessibility in Windhoek

Many middle and lower income participants complained about the high cost of the Internet. Many found it feasible to use it solely on cell phones. For the shop workers Berns and Mary, their phones were the only 'affordable' means to do so. More affluent individuals relied on parents to provide good Internet, if they still lived with them at home. Some of the comments offered about cost were as follows.

> Hilma: I check Facebook maybe two or three times an hour. I do it on my cell phone. I don't do the laptop or the 3G for it. The reason is that it's much cheaper on the

phone. It is faster than the laptop where you can be ages loading the page, and then you find your credit is gone.

Happy: My mobile internet device from MTC now allows me to go online when I want. But it's expensive because your credit goes 'just like that' [he clicks his fingers].

Bertha: Internet is really expensive. I have Netman [MTC service] pre-paid, so I only use it when I really have to or have something to say to others. It's often cheaper to do Internet and Facebook on my phone. Netman means that you must be very careful financially. I spend over $150 easily [per week]. But it's cheaper to use the phone. I dream of it being cheaper but also much faster.

Many participants made use of Internet 'free nights' offered by MTC from 12 midnight to 5.00 in the morning, neglecting sleep to take full advantage. Mumba, a student, said

we all Internet at night when it is free. We give up on our sleep. We can make it [sleep] up in the day. It's a matter of cost. There would be so much that we could not afford to do if it was not sometimes free at night from Leo or MTC [two service providers].

It was reported in the Windhoek press that Namibia had moved year-on from 22nd to 3rd place in Africa in cheap mobile phone costs, making phone Internet access the most affordable it has been to date (*The Namibian*, 8 July 2011). However, data costs through mobile Internet devices or fixed line remain high and out of reach for many, although since late 2010 prices have begun to fall through MTC. The majority of participants therefore chiefly or solely used cell phones for their Internet activities, with more affluent ones accessing through laptops or desktops on more expensive pre-paid or post-paid services.

### 6.3.3 Internet strategies for free media: Borrowing, torrenting and pirate media

Pursuit of cheaper Internet was also accompanied by strategies to access other forms of media, free or at modest cost. The Internet proved to be a major source for watching films, television, or listening to music. There were grapevines and networks among Windhoekers for sharing media cooperatively through downloads to memory sticks. A broad range of old and new movies or programmes were made available in this way. Watching television via the Internet was also a growing practice, an international finding of Nielson (2009). Almost no participants rented DVDs, there being little exclusive reliance on them to keep abreast of the latest productions.

Tiaan explained how he had shared a download of the science fiction film *District 9* in the week of its international release. Another saw the 2008 Oscar winner *Slumdog Millionaire* months before its African release. Mumba stated that there were always websites where such products could be downloaded for free. However, a fast and reliable (usually expensive) Internet subscription was needed. Recipients relied on someone down the line with this sort of access to supply downloads from the top of the friendship chain. Mumba said that: "I don't watch TV so much anymore. I would rather borrow a memory stick and watch a film or TV series. I used to rent DVDs, but now it's free from friends or their friends. I watch on my laptop." A culture of borrowing free media seemed well-established.

Werner similarly said that he shared from memory sticks 'illegally', but also downloaded using proxy services. These could provide content from television or cinema 'anywhere in the world', although he preferred English language content.

> I do share with people from memory sticks. I do too many sometimes and use up all my memory! There are a lot you can borrow from people. I also pay out some extra money for these movie download sites. You pay just a few American dollars for a portal and you get a lot. They are the ones I download after midnight when it is free. I have never been to the cinema. I see movies this way, only online.

Martin and Tiaan were asked to explain how they found the sites to download movies or television programmes. They mentioned 'torrenting' described by Tiaan as the practice of downloading pirated movies, television or music, through legal or illegal peer-to-peer file-sharing protocols. There has been a surge in downloading from such dedicated sites in recent years. Tiaan said

> we download TV, movies, games, that sort of thing. We have our sources. There is *piratebay.com*, but we are not as obvious as that. There are quite a few sites now. You can now get most things, and other people tend to tell you about them and how to get them. New movies that have been out only a few months or which have not arrived yet in Namibia, you can also get these by checking the torrent sites, finding them for yourself.

Elsewhere, the unemployed Mitch regularly downloaded torrent film, and he was engaged in doing so during the interview using the Wi-Fi zone in Maerua Mall.

> It's the main thing I do. I do quite a lot of downloading. Music and videos and stuff. I don't buy CDs so much anymore. I would rather get it from the Internet. There are these pirate sites. I am doing one now as we speak for my girlfriend [Michelle]. It's

the newest *Twilight* film from a site called *Kick Ass Torrent*. Sometimes I don't like to wait for the new movies to come, so I download.

Tyler admitted to buying hardcopy pirate films: "DSTV is very expensive, and I would rather spend the money on other things. No, now we would rather rent, or buy these pirate copies of the movies you can get in China Town in the Northern Industrial [area]."

Affluent and non-affluent participants were engaged in this type of 'free' media access. However, legally dubious torrenting sources on the Internet were the chief means to transcend accessibility problems, financial and cost barriers. There was a good deal of reflexive and canny Internet practices which represented a strategy of poorer as well as better-off participants to extend what they could get from what little they had. This could be described as *breaking into media*, by those locked in the wrong side of the so-called digital divide through cost and class factors (Jenkins 2006).

## 6.4 The Internet, social networks and identity

A primary research finding was that Internet social network sites were enormously popular in Windhoek. People of all income groups wanted to be part of them, and did so significantly through cell phones where they had no regular access to computers. Social network sites such as Facebook were revealed to be heavily situated in the lifestyle practices of a majority of participants who spent considerable time connected to them. Fuchs (2009:11) has said that social networks tend to involve the following: "Advertising, business, community, privacy concerns, politics, sex, love – these are issues that are associated with the term social networking platforms in popular media." All these factors arose within Windhoek participants' accounts of social network engagements.

It is argued here that participant identity profiles considerably invested into and fed off social network sites. Pronounced interactivity took place with people who shared their need for friendships or who provided confirmation of their views and values about the world. They pooled lifestyle interests and information about relationships, sometimes suggesting in their personal accounts that social networks changed them. Occasionally they criticised them when they felt available global cultures did not fit their local needs. Identities were resistant to or in subtle flux with the array of the interpersonal and intercultural possibilities presented in this largely unregulated international online terrain.

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*6.4.1 Participants' entries into social networked worlds*

Facebook proved to be the favourite social network site, although others mentioned were Skype,[44] Twitter and various personal commenting or blogging platforms. All interviewees joined Facebook after 2007, most from 2009. Its sudden popularity represents sharp and significant cultural change in individual media actions in Windhoek. Skype usage seemed to be not far behind, although problems with connection speed meant that audio rather than audio-video communication proved the only possibility for most interviewees. The rise of Facebook and similar sites owed much to improvements in Namibian telecommunications from 2007/8 in line with reduced tariffs, and the introduction of 3G connections (Larsen 2007). MySpace was barely mentioned; an indication of how such sites can rapidly decline and be superseded: a fate that Facebook itself could eventually experience.

Skype was favoured by several participants, but neither Internet speeds nor cost factors were necessarily compatible with using it to its full potential. Comments on this were as follows.

> Happy: Skype can be bad when the network is slow. But without it, it would be so hard. It's kind of like an addiction and I can't live without it [laughs]! I go on Facebook everyday and for Skype also. But Skype usually works only for sound, not image.

> Bertha: Sometimes I use Skype. I first did that in Sweden. I do that when Internet in Namibia is free from 12-5 a.m. I would love to do Skype again if it was cheaper. I miss it.

> Grace: I do Facebook and Skype. You can't do Skype in Katima [home town], but it works in the night [12-5 a.m.] here in Windhoek when Internet is free. Skype is good because you can see the person and they can't lie about themselves like on Facebook.

Facebook was the most popular social network site among Windhoek participants, and this is borne out by recent statistics. Namibia had 6.2% penetration or 134,140 Facebook users as at 31 December 2011. Globally, Facebook reports that it has 799 million users with its largest growth sectors being in the developing world (*www.internetworldstats.com*). Participants variously commented

> Jan): I have Facebook. Most of my friends do now, but only in the last year. It's very popular now just as I was finishing school. Some school friends said that it would be a

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[44] Skype is not strictly a social network, although participants considered it as such. It has video conferencing and voice communication capability but also allows texting.

way of ensuring that we stayed in touch. Windhoek is bigger now [in population], and it's easier to live here and not meet or even see each other. It seemed a good solution.

Happy: My friends don't use email anymore, only once or twice in a week. If you email me, don't expect a reply anytime soon. After 2009 when I joined Facebook I began to use email very little. I am addicted. It's essential.

Mumba: I first signed up to Facebook in late 2009. I only discovered it through a friend who said it was good. I tried it out and liked it within days.  You can get such a lot from it, pictures, news, and chat. I have 300 friends on it, but about 25 are close friends. Most are from here [Namibia] and I talk to them every day up to 3 or 4 hours. My friends group is also narrow: very few friends are from outside Africa, I don't span the globe like some do.

Cicero: I joined it 28 November 2009. Everyone was into it. At first I was hesitant; I thought it was a scheme to steal your personal information. But my girlfriend at that time was on it. I learned about it through my friends. It was seven months before I went for it. I heard that the world was on it, that you could get international friends.

Most used Facebook every day. Bertha, Diane and Michelle said they logged in from three to five hours each day, quite proudly saying they were 'addicted'. It was regularly referred to as 'cool'. While most liked the idea of social networks for keeping in touch with family members, not all favoured of it for this purpose. Rashida regarded Facebook as an ideal way to keep in touch with Namibian friends, and friends across the globe; but an interviewer comment that they could use it to communicate with parents was met with derision.

No, we contact them [parents] only by phone, or we SMS. It wouldn't be very cool if you had your parents as your Facebook friends! Not really. So we would not even mention Facebook to them. I have never told them about it. If they appeared on my page requesting to be a friend, I would reject them!

In this respect, it was regarded by many as a 'young person's thing', a term repeated several times. This veto on using Facebook for family contact did not operate where family members had emigrated, as will be seen. Its potential as *diasporic media* was a key value to some.

Andrew had quite different social network experiences to other participants, having been in Russia studying engineering at university from 2005-2009. While he liked Facebook, he also used a Russian social network site which his friends there preferred. He contacted them in both Russian and English.

I use a Russian site called Aska for contacting the people I used to study with, my Russian friends. Aska means a slang word for 'let's get together'. I use that as much

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as Facebook. People there like that, not so much Facebook, so I fit in. I like it. I don't want Facebook and the Americans to have the field to themselves. That's a bad thing.

Sites such as Aska were unusual. Blogging and Twitter as places for social network practice proved equally insignificant among research participants. Happy said: "I've done blogging and Twitter, but not very often. I've set up my own blog site, but only about eight people follow it so I neglect it." Jan knew of blogging practices, but showed disinterest: "I've never blogged, but a friend of mine does that. But he writes crap, I tell him that. But he keeps doing it, writing stuff about music. It doesn't interest me."

*6.4.2 Facebook 'interactivity': "I learn such a lot about outside" (Jan)*

What do Windhoek participants do with online interactive social networks? They were utilised for novel and playful interactions, or for more personal even intense communication with others. Many enjoyed them in both ways, depending on what had happened in their daily life. Facebook provided the opportunity to share problems and get personal. Cicero said that he had used Facebook for advice, explaining

> when my girlfriend left me,[45] people then started giving personal advice. I took it, but unfortunately it didn't work. It hurt, but I moved on. It was mostly from girls, there was good advice, not so positive from the guys. The advice I was getting was that I should change my ways to try to get her back. The guys just said 'enjoy yourself' or 'just get a few more'.

Jan gave an example of how social networks might be used to terminate rather than provide advice on relationships.

> My friend recently dumped his girlfriend on Facebook, and he did it so everyone could read it. It was so cruel. She was very upset, but he's not so sensitive that way, a bit rough. He's the other one [his friend] who likes Zef music, he sort of lives it more and more.

Jan mentioned that he planned his social life through Facebook, using it for organising a meeting at someone's house, or a day or night out.

> Facebook really is essential and cool to me. I really need it. We arrange our social life around this contact, this and through our cells, which are also important. We have relatives in other parts of the country. We keep in touch that way. My dad also uses it, but I try to keep him off my page!

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[45] For playing computer games too much, as earlier reported.

This last comment echoed Rashida's view that social networks could not be intergeneration particularly when it came to parents. Jan valued Facebook interactivity in a much wider geographic sense. Jan kept in touch with Afrikaner friends in South Africa and ones who now lived in other countries. Problems of getting news about 'the Republic' were overcome because of Facebook. He referred to 'being global' now.

> I have friends in South Africa and ones who live in London. It's a good way of finding out what's happening in these places. London is cool, I'd want to live there for a while one day. Not forever, just a while. But Joburg and Cape Town are also pretty cool. It's the only way you can keep the link with what's going on there. We [Namibia] used to be part of South Africa, but you can't find out anything of what goes on there on TV, nothing. Facebook contacts tell me a lot of how it is there. Yes, social networking helps a lot to overcome the isolation we suffer here. I learn such a lot about outside.

The interactivity of Michelle, the secretary, was less conventional, more mischievous and playful than other interviewees through her 'vampire interest'. She was influenced by films and television such as the *Twilight* movies and the series *True Blood* with strong vampire themes. Michelle claimed she was a 'devil' online.

> By that, I mean the mind games you play with people. You can freak them out with stories and play with their minds. This vampire thing I am into. I present myself in my profile as though I am a vampire. I tell them I was 'turned' some years ago. Some people get really freaked by that. Others contact me and say they are vampires, and they want to be in touch with the ones like them. So it's Facebook as a sort of vampire get-together. Facebook has that opportunity for people with weird ideas. I get off on that sort of stuff. But apart from the advantage of downloading TV and movies, it kills me. I have no interest in searching all over the Web, unless I really need to. I prefer it for being with people online and meeting friends. The fun is a lot in that.

However, there were voices critical of Facebook and similar sites. A minority of interview participants were unable to understand the opportunities or the advantages that others clearly saw. These tended to be the older ones. Tyler, the administrator, saw social networks as essentially a juvenile activity, saying

> I know of them [social networks], but don't use them. My husband joined MySpace a few months ago, but he has not shown much interest in it, and hasn't really gone back. Then there is this Facebook which all the learners seem to like to use. But it is not for me. I have heard of some of our work staff doing that half the working day instead of their job. But I shouldn't tell you that! My younger sisters are doing Facebook and are obsessed with it, but that is some schoolgirl thing, I think. Maybe they will grow out of it.

Facebook was regarded by Tyler as for teenagers, in her view, and she had not as yet come to value new media in the way younger participants did. She was unusual.

Members of Focus Group Four specifically debated the value of Facebook, providing this exchange:

> Sonny: This Facebook, you go there and you wonder: what is this thing all about? Why would I want to sit doing that all day just chatting with people?
>
> Rianna: But that is an interesting thing to do! It is! You also get a lot of news from doing that. It is not just idle things.
>
> Sonny: OK, but it's not for me. I'd rather scan the radio news stations for the latest news, checking this and that. Then I am updated by talking to others [direct].
>
> Petrus: It's such a good platform, the way I can show myself to the rest of the world and my friends. There are such good exchanges on things like music. I have such deep discussions with people across Africa and the world. I tell them about Namibian music and send them sound files sometimes. I then have good exchanges where we analyse, criticise, explain what is good or bad. I defend my tastes. This is the perfect place to find people like me who want to talk this way. There are also some [Namibian] politicians. They are there on Facebook and you can contact them. You ask them things and they speak to you.
>
> Rianna: Sometime in the past there were these family or foreign friends that you could not talk to. To phone was so expensive and unaffordable. But now there is this [Facebook]. There is this easy contact. It really is ideal and affordable. You can know about your friend's culture in another country or region, and you say to them 'you can do this and that, but it is not allowed in our culture', and so on.

Disagreeing with the more conservative Sonny, who used mainly radio and print media, the other group members were incredulous of his criticisms and inability to see what they thought were the obvious advantages of Facebook. They tended to see him as 'backward' in his views, and missing an opportunity. Sonny was one of the participants most resistant to Western media. He spoke several times about Namibian culture and 'appropriate' (his word) content and behaviour in media, on one occasion suggesting the need for state regulation to ensure that national values were protected from unsuitable foreign electronic influence. Namibian youth were being adversely influenced by the 'bad' things that foreign media were bringing, he stated. A small core of participants (chiefly Robert, Hilma, Lebius and Tangeni) agreed with these views on negative global media incursions into local culture. This theme is discussed at length in Chapter 7 in the context of mediated power narratives.

Facebook was a primary means of what can be called *media interactivity*. This is defined as actional media practice that transcends conventional, less flexible older media where response to content is considerably delayed or denied. It represents possibilities for dialectical engagement between actors in real-time, in contexts where time-space compression occur (Miller 2011; Freedman 2006). Older media are by comparison linear or undeviating rather than dialectical, being prone to produce passive audiences. Castells (2009) sees this immediate and 'instant' communicative power of the Internet and social networks as potentially reversing centralising trends in global communication development over the last one hundred years, making possible a revitalisation of citizen democracy through new means of online contact. The 2011 revolutions in the Arab world,[46] and use of social network sites for coordinating the protests (Salem & Mourtada 2011), appears to confirm Castells's (2009; 2004) arguments for the liberationist potential of new media, although he chiefly sees resistance as being against global forces rather than oppressive localised political power.

In terms of the Windhoek participants, little political use of social networks was noted. Political identities seemed markedly weak among younger participants, as Keulder's (2006) study of media had noted. Defence of cultural or social identities was more likely than any articulated political position. This does not mean that social networks will not be used for this purpose in the future as the means for electronic protest are firmly in place.

### 6.4.3 Self-celebrity: Presentations of self online: "They don't want to see the real you" (Diane)

One of the chief attractions of Facebook for participants was the opportunity to engage with a type of media that allowed the self and 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 these shows combine "ordinariness and celebrity" in similar ways to social network sites. Members of the public are able to present themselves as a personality to everyone else. 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.

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[46] Civil protest broke out first in Tunisia in January 2011 resulting in the overthrow of the government. Unrest in Egypt rapidly followed, then spreading across the Arab world with varying degrees of success or repression. Social networks such as Twitter and Facebook were regarded as central to the spread of information and calls to demonstrate (Salem & Mourtada 2011).

Goffman's 1959 thesis, that people in their daily public relationships 'present' themselves in the dramaturgical manner of an actor on stage, takes on a new dimension in social networks. Goffman (1998 [1959]: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 public identities. He states that

> contrived performances we tend to see as something painstakingly pasted together, one false item on another, since there is no reality to which the items of behaviour could be a direct response … If a performance is to come off, the witness by and large must be able to believe that the performers are sincere … Some performances are carried off successfully with complete dishonesty, others with complete honesty; but for performances in general neither of these extremes is essential and neither, perhaps, is dramaturgically advisable.

The best of ourselves is displayed while the worst is hidden in a performance that is always a contrived social drama. We are never entirely honest or dishonest in our presentation to others, and a certain degree of veiling of ourselves, Goffman says, is essential for self-security and goal success. He used the metaphor of 'masks' as a way to describe concealment of real identities, with presentational strategies in public determining success or failure of actual performance, manipulation of others never far away. Such strategies of Windhoek participants to present idealised selves and unspoiled identities were apparent in their Facebook presentations. Twama said that self-display was one of the obvious purposes of Facebook and social sites. She liked this aspect, stating "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 that "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. We like to upload pictures of ourselves and say 'here we are'. It's showing off really, but it's fun. People want to be popular."

Diana confirmed that 'presenting yourself' was a primary motivation to use Facebook.

> The thing I find really interesting is 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. Like, I have no makeup at the moment, and I wouldn't want them to see this. They don't want to see the real you.

She added an eccentric example of one of her online friends from South Africa who liked to present herself as though she was in one country one day and another the next. She had got the idea from a French film called *Amelie*.

> I know this girl who puts fake pictures on [Facebook]. The other day, she had this photo of her standing by the Eiffel Tower, and she said she was there. The next day the photo was of her in New York. But she wasn't. She just edits the picture and puts her face there. I don't know how she does it.

Sonny, the conservative participant in Focus Group Four, disliked this type of exposure and openness of identity. 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.

Grace had a different concern regarding negative presentation she had encountered. She discussed the problem of male displays that sometimes occurred. Speaking about Skype, she said that

> [men sometimes] strip off their tops when you are speaking and show themselves and I say you cannot do that in our culture. Men like to show themselves, their physique to you. Some men only use Skype for sexual reasons. So I cut them off. There was this old man on Skype who once said to me that he wanted to see my ass [is embarrassed], so I cut him off. Women also show themselves more on Facebook where they show their bodies in mini-skirts and brief clothing. But it's hard to avoid that.

Some sought fame through online display. Mumba said that she sent sound files of herself singing through Facebook. She hoped that a record producer would hear and see her so that she could 'become famous'. She said that she had heard it had happened. Diana critically commented at the lack of pragmatic use of the Internet, saying that: "many don't use it that practically. They mainly show themselves off and think they'll be famous."

## 6.5 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.

*6.5.1 Insight media: "We are culture sharing" (Grace)*

The possibilities for these intense international interactions frequently gave insights into how people lived elsewhere in the world. The participants became roving anthropologists or ethnographers discovering ways of life that were sometimes a revelation to them. They 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, the intense situationality of Hindu beliefs in the lives of many, and about social problems such as intense poverty for many Indians. She had also become aware that it was a major emerging economy. She admitted that she 'knew nothing' about India before this 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."

In their joint interview, Charlotte and Rushida, both chemistry students, stated that the culture sharing aspects of social networks interested them most. They 'loved' having international friends who told them the following things.

> Rashida: I do it [Facebook] with friends all over the world. There are friends and relatives and people I have not met. I like talking to people in America and China to see what people do that side. I like to see their side of their lives.
>
> Charlotte: We are learning a lot, for example from people in the USA who I speak to a lot. They tell us things like 'we are going to town shopping', things like that. They talk about how they dance when they go out at night. We compare our lives and their lives, their style and ours. They are not really different from us, but it sounds a bit more fun. They show you their pictures and you see their clothes and how they look, and you realise that side is a little cheaper than this side. They show the scenery of their cities or their towns. I would love to go there.
>
> Interviewer: Do you tell them about Namibia?

Charlotte: We tell them about Namibia and show them pictures of our ocean, our sea and coastline. They say that they would love to come and see it here, how it is. They know of these [film] stars that have come here and films that have been made here and they ask if we know these places. They want to know which places here the movies are shot, where the stars are staying.[47]

Discovery of other things such as insights into economic catastrophes in rich nations emerged. Talia 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 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 some specifics on cultural differences which were the topic of conversation. She said of social networks

I do it to find out about other parts of Africa. Like the weather: I ask is it raining, snowing, things like that. I ask about their cultures also. How do they dress, what do they eat. I know this Chinese guy who tells me about these disgusting fish they eat, I don't know what they are called. He shows me pictures of it and I say 'I can't eat that'! I see that they eat with those [chop]sticks, and I say 'do you really eat with those'. They also ask a lot about Namibia. What is here, how do we look, what are the beautiful places if we come to visit, and I tell them. As you might say, we are culture sharing.

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 (2008:94) 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. These writers do not, however, address the impact of social networking which seems a different order of cultural possibility altogether.

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[47] Namibia has become a frequent location for making Hollywood films. Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt came for three months in 2006 for the birth of their child which was widely reported globally.

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*6.5.2 Family interconnectedness through social media: Resolving diaspora*

Participants used social networks to keep in touch with family members in other parts of the world. 'Keeping in contact' was an important ontological and emotional need. Social networks and the Internet were found to be a means to overcome diasporic displacement and dispersal of family members through emigration, a means to reconnect and to establish interconnectivity with relatives thousands of miles away. According to the International Organisation for Migration (2010), emigration out of continents such as Africa achieved historic proportions from 2000 onward.

Many Windhoek participants had friends or family abroad. Most used the strategic opportunity of social networks to re-establish or maintain contact. Happy explained the advantages for him.

> 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 only three weeks ago. 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 belonging.

Strong evidence presented itself that participants used social media as a counter-diaspora strategy. This explains why Facebook is experiencing a greater expansion in 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 new diasporic landscape. Crispin described how contact was established with his own dispersed kin, explaining

> I look on Facebook for family names that are the same as my family name, just to see if they are related. Sometimes they are; you find lost family members, family who have moved, even gone out to Europe. Some are in England, four cousins and an aunt are there. There was no communication from her for four years. Then she saw my name on Facebook and contacted me thinking it was my dad. But my dad had died, so I said no, he is deceased, but she kept contact with me. Most of my family, uncles and aunts, contacted me through Facebook. I didn't contact them, they just found me. It's so useful for that. It brings our dispersed family together. It's really changed everything.

In their joint interview, Guido and Julia, girlfriend and boyfriend from a white Afrikaans background, differed in their Facebook connectivity. Julia contacted her 'white' diaspora, while he solely used it to keep his Windhoek friendship network active. She said

> I joined [Facebook] in 2008. It's a good way to stay in touch with friends and family overseas. We have German and Swedish family on my grandparents' side and we can talk regularly and share stories easily. It's better than email. The broad international side of my family makes it stretch between here and Europe. We are speaking to each other nearly every other day or at least on a weekly basis.

It follows that an important function of Facebook is to bring the diasporic global family virtually together. Adeyanju and Oriola (2011) show 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. Sites like Facebook create the online space to maintain regular family contact and share news. Presentational matters, in Goffman's sense, are vital to the migrant. Diasporic Africans use social sites to communicate legitimising performance impressions of their 'successful' lives abroad, while needing at the same time to suggest they maintain 'culturally appropriate' lives away from home. This ensures that parents, friends and peers approve of their new existence. Some of these aspects were present in Windhoek in communications with friends and family who had emigrated elsewhere, exhibiting achievement symbols while not wishing to display excessive distance from custom and tradition.

Miller's (2011) Trinidad Facebook study expressed similar diasporic and presentation patterns. Fuchs's (2009:108-109) quantitative Austrian survey, which included immigrant Africans, found that social networks were predominantly used to keep in touch with existing friends and family at home and abroad (59.1%), and one third (30%) used them for establishing online friendships in other parts of the world with people who they were possibly unlikely ever to meet. Fuchs (2009) and Miller (2011) emphasise the importance of this global means of instant interactive communication and the impact social networks are having in changing lifestyle patterns of youth. Both writers regard it as positive and educational beyond mere entertainment. However, both stress the harsher side of online contact, which Windhoek participants strongly noted.

**6.6 Abrasive media in online encounters**

An area of cultural conflict on social networks arises from how people address each other, converse or generally interact on them. Namibia is a country where formality is carefully maintained in social encounters. Online commentaries often display a raw approach to criticism and unrestrained prose, including abusive or bad language (*The Guardian*, 24 July 2011). Other 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.

*6.6.1 Abrasive interactions: "What do you fucking know?" (Andrew)*

As was reported, Andrew liked to comment on conspiracy matters on the Internet, but also on news stories in general. He showed some unease at the reactions his online points of view sometimes led to. He found these encounters harsh, and hard to take at times. He provided an example based on a news event of which he had commented.

> After the alleged assassination of bin Laden, I commented [on Al Jazeera]. 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."

Bertha enjoyed rough Internet characters who were sometimes interactively 'amusing'. She mentioned a Windhoek man who she said was widely known among friends and acquaintances on Facebook for being aggressive and outrageous.

> There is this person's wall I always read, and that person is always, always swearing! He's in Windhoek, but he is not my friend, I didn't request him, he's just appeared on my page. But he knows everything, what's going on where, everything! He's always the one to know people's weakness, always the one to know who did what, always the one to publish what's going on in Windhoek. He's just not polite. If you criticise him, he comes back at you and is very nasty. That's why I would rather read him than

reply! People are afraid of him, but also there are a lot who support him. He is quite popular.

Lebius 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 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. Happy stated

> while I like Facebook, I don't like the way it's not moderated. Some postings are quite vulgar. I absolutely didn't know when I joined that it would be like that, with people so easily writing things. It would be wise to have moderation. Language like that [he reluctantly mentions asshole, fuckers, shits] is easily picked up by the young users, and it needs to be improved a bit on the language problem.

Mumba said she believed that such language contradicted the behaviours and expectations of her own culture. People did not swear in public according to her Kwanyama tradition, unless they were drunk or 'not responsible' for themselves. She said

> in some ways, things like Facebook are creating a culture clash, we are changing. The language is also bad, a lot of swearing in comments, really hard comments. They get angry about something and swear endlessly. Many of my friends do that, and I complain. But they say it's not my business.

It was culturally difficult for participants 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 coyness when it came to internet strangers.

### 6.6.2 Talking to strangers

> 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]:98).

Windhoek participants were often reserved individuals yet they had the courage to be interviewed in depth by a stranger about their lifestyles, and were able to engage with

unfamiliars in the global outside. Simmel regarded the stranger as a fact of modern life. In large-scale societies where impersonal social relations had become the norm, so too had strangers. They were people we meet in passing, that come and go in our lives or are glimpsed from a distance. They are those we can never entirely comprehend. They represent what Simmel calls 'the larger unknowable' or greater society beyond the immediate locales of 'familiars' such as family, friends and work colleagues. Simmel says we are curious and wonder about them, because they are also 'us', we too are strangers. Maybe the Internet is changing that, as the unknowable 'other' is increasingly integrated unpredictably into our online lives.

Talking to strangers on social networks fascinated the Windhoek participants. It represented novelty, but also a connection to 'out there'. Many of them chose to maintain contacts with people as far away as possible from their own nation and culture. While intimate contact with family and friends was desired and valued, so too were remote encounters with 'exotic', but sometimes alarming, strangers of the global outside. They had online friends 'who were not quite known' to them from India, China, the United States, Sweden, Britain, Kenya, Angola and South Africa, to name the most cited homes of these strangers. Social networks brought them to their laptop or their cell phone from great distances. As Simmel said: strangers are close to us and far from us. The Internet offers the option to bring them intimately close. Hilma said

> maybe they are strangers, yes, but I feel I know them well. They share my interests such as music or fashion. One of them is quite religious, so I write to him about the Bible and share religious views. He's quite nice. He's an American. I chat about anything with them: music, my problems, anything big that has happened. They like to hear a lot about my life here. They tell me what their lives are like. They live in United States, but one is a girl from Brazil, another from Japan.

Mumba said that she tried to use Facebook and the Internet to obtain information on fashion and lifestyle issues. People or friends that could provide this were favoured, and she said that she did not always want to become as intimate with them as other account users tended to be. There was a reason for this. She kept discussion strictly to her topics of favoured conversation because strangers could be deceptively more than the way they presented themselves. They materialise as another side of *abrasive media*, even representing an occasional threat.

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*6.6.3 Online predatory encounters and cyberstalking*

Several female participants mentioned uncomfortable experiences on Facebook involving implicit or explicit sexual suggestions from people they had never met. 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). Diana complained that Facebook was unable to keep predators off its site.

> They latch on to you. I got a message from a guy in Angola, and he was writing that I like your face, you are so beautiful. He said he was coming down to Namibia to see me, and he wanted to meet me. This sometimes causes a problem, because if my boyfriend happens to see these messages, he gets the wrong idea and he thinks I am using Facebook to get in touch with men. He thinks I am encouraging it. There is nothing that I can do about it, except ignore them.

Rianna in Focus Group Four also reported being contacted by 'weird' individuals.

> I get these strange guys. They say [exaggerated tone] that they like your hair, they like your eyes. Some will even inbox you with messages saying that 'I have just seen your profile picture. Oh, you are so beautiful, I want to meet you! I'd like to marry you'. Sometimes they are Namibians; they say that they don't care what my tribe is. They just pop up. I sometimes reply and say I am a married woman, and they don't care. They are saying these things to hundreds of other people, one day telling this person they love them, the next day they love another. It is just going on and on [smiles wryly]. These characters have proposed to a thousand others before!

Most participant experiences did not result in a face-to-face meeting: in the case of Mumba, it did, and she explained a disturbing encounter with a male Facebook contact she had included in her list of friends.

> I had one unpleasant experience on Facebook. It was awful. It was a request from a stranger. He said he liked me, wanted to know me, to date me, things like that. 'Can you be my girlfriend', things like that. He would keep checking my profile and writing, a bit like a stalker. He was always there when I went into my page. It went wrong when he wanted to meet me and I stupidly did so. When I met him, it was really an awful experience [becomes uncomfortable]. I don't want to talk about it. It was very bad. I cut him out all together after that. Since then, I am very careful about new strangers, as I don't want that to happen again. Apart from that, I like Facebook, but I don't want contact with such people.

This account points to the dangers and personal security risks that social network users confront, of which Livingstone (2010; 2006) has warned for children and young adult social network users. Livingstone argues that better media literacy is needed to raise awareness of

predatory online encounters in terms of possible social and physical dangers, including learning strategies of effective response. In Mumba's case, she was clearly not fully cognisant of the dangers.

Boyd (2008b) has written of the radical implications of social network sites for previously held social norms 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: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". An experience 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 personal information. This particularly relates to its News Feed system, effectively engaging in surveillance and exposure of account users to the stage where it becomes very difficult for them to control personal online zones. Boyd raises an important point, but one which does not perhaps sufficiently recognise actor possibilities of reflexive counter-strategies toward this trend.

Hookway (2008:106), in an Australian study on blog and commentary sites on the Web, shows that use of a pseudonym has become widespread to protect authentic identities. No matter what opinion or information is revealed, a fictional online identification rather than the real one protects individuals. This chapter earlier revealed use of online names as a convention in Internet multiplayer video games. This strategy is increasingly being used on social networks, although there is a tension between the desire to display one's identity and to manage and protectively conceal it against privacy attacks (Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin 2008).

**6.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has attempted to establish a picture of Internet and social network engagements within Windhoek through the accounts of the participants. The conclusions reached are that the Internet has moved decisively into the media engagements of Windhoekers as a resource, as entertainment, a window into other cultures, for novel ideas, experiences and sensual

attraction. New media represented a portal to a vast global arena of intriguing possibilities, at the same time becoming a normal part of everyday experience. The Internet was widely favoured over older media chiefly for its non-passive, strongly interactive social character. It was a medium that widely made possible *virtual connectivity* through which global links with other cultures, nations and individuals could be instantly and immediately established. The Internet is decisively the most immediately global of all media forms, although it is argued to undermine valued face-to-face interactions and weaken 'real' society (Turkle 2011).

These participatory opportunities widely appealed in Windhoek. The Internet was capable of lifting participants out of parochial and into cosmopolitan culture, enabling instant communication with people, ideas or symbols from Western and other cultures. Not everyone was comfortable with this. Mutual contact between local and global was potentially the transformative *locus* for lifestyle patterns, and, more importantly, for existing ethnic and national identities. Some participants were conscious of the Western and American corporate media empires at the heart of the production and distribution of their favoured media. Nevertheless, media's appeal in terms of utility and entertainment overcame such reservations. A core of participants was critical of the over-public aspects of new media, and voiced challenge to the perceived 'Westernisation' it threatened. There were, to use an earlier term, *lines of resistance* from such individuals.

Further conceptual structures of grounded theory emerged out of these discussions on Internet and social networks. *Virtual connectivity* allowed participants to experience Thompson's (1995) idea of *symbolic distancing*, which allowed entry beyond actors' immediate locales into virtual conversations, friendships and information-pooling, providing global connectivities of *culture sharing* and *presentational media* strategies, including possibilities of *self-celebrity* within social network sites such as Facebook. Encounters over the Internet were sometimes harsh and unpleasant, exposing participants to *abrasive media* contacts. These encounters represented crisis points where media starkly brought cultures into opposition and tension, highlighting what was different rather than what could be shared. The Internet could be a severe terrain of discussion and debate, but also a rumour mill of conspiracy and conjecture.

The Internet proved to be one of the strongest media engagements of the Windhoek participants. It revealed the rapid *convergence* character of contemporary media practices whereby social communication, access to online television, film and downloadable music,

newspapers and books, were merged into daily Internet practices (Miller 2011; Lüders 2008; Jenkins 2006). Media convergence meant that a large proportion of participants were beginning to abandon the way they had previously consumed older media, adapting to new practices in the course of local and global connectivities and identity constructions.

# Chapter 7

# Grounded narratives and institutional power: Lines of resistance and expropriation in local/global media

## 7.1. Introduction: Three reflexive positions on global media

> 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)

Previous chapters established patterns and core themes of media engagement in Windhoek, and degrees of situationality of media in the lifestyles and identities of participants. This chapter shifts the focus to institutional media influence and power 'from the ground' through participant perceptions, as McMillin (2007) recommends. 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. McPhail states that Western global media are commercially very powerful, but it is their cultural dimension that requires primary investigation. He argues that there should be three levels to such an enquiry. First, how foreign media content is absorbed and contained within local culture. Second, how it is transmitted in terms of favoured types (the Internet, television, and so on). Third, how domestic cultures and languages change in the face of increasingly rapid and intensifying media inflows. Others posit a vital fourth level: what are the *reactions* or lines of resistance to global media in the reception countries (McMillin 2009; Abélès 2006; Appadurai 1996)? At this point, challenges to power and defences of local cultures come into play, albeit in complex ways.

There was uneven awareness among Windhoek participants of media's capacity through power narratives to shape opinion or shift lifestyle and identity in the face of new global cultural possibilities. Some sensed or explicitly noted institutionalised media power agendas,

but only when these conflicted with their own entrenched values and cultural sensibilities. On such occasions lines of resistance emerged, and some participants directly attacked what they saw as the corrosive effects of Western media agendas on their society. Participants had ambiguous relationships with mediated power. Those who glimpsed or overtly recognised power narratives in what they saw or listened to responded in diverse ways to them. 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 tend to downgrade local power discourses and the way these complicate general flows of power, and actors' responses to them. Local culture is frequently relegated to hybrid status in an underplaying and neglect of any sufficient analysis of actual mediated conditions.

In Windhoek, people reacted in different ways to local and global institutional influences. Participants varied from regarding international media as providing lifestyle opportunity or as liberating them from oppressive, stifling local culture, or as seeing media either as threatening traditions or denying representation of valued indigenous culture or their social lives. A challenging picture therefore emerged from accounts of participant responses to power in mediated environments, establishing three general positions, with each representing diverging relationships with media power: *cultural expropriationists, cultural traditionalists* and *cultural representationalists.* These are discussed next.

### 7.1.1 'Cultural expropriationists': Cosmopolitan media

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. For example, Diane used Internet sources to design jewellery which she advertised and sold on Facebook; students read widely from the Internet rather than being dependent on conventional libraries; and social network users shared international cultures with one another. The attitude was not so much one of 'giving in' to the allures and seduction of media, but rather one of expropriation and incorporation of mediated symbolic goods for minor or major localised lifestyle projects, in

Tomlinson's sense (2003). It was a strategic option for them, representing opportunity for new outlooks and identity negotiations that transcended local possibilities.

McMillin (2009:26) has condemned this line of thought for what she calls its "romanticization of agency". She regards accounts of globalisation as a possible empowering space, as a neo-liberal market discourse which ignores the power of media to manipulate 'subjects' into consumer positionings which reinforce neo-colonial culture. This analysis, however, underplays the desire of women and men to rise above the structural confines of conservative patriarchal culture and negative socio-economic conditions, often of poverty and social marginalisation. Diane, from a relatively poor social and ethnic background, was creating a different life for herself by expropriating global symbols and information. Postcolonial arguments are valuable in defence of difference and expositions of power, but underplay what people can gain from global media. Thompson (1995) argues that media have resulted globally in an expansion of consciousness and experience among contemporary actors, allowing vastly new opportunities for post-traditional cosmopolitan self-development. Similarly, modern life has been described as offering fields of action that contain enabling as well as constraining rules and resources (Giddens 1991; 1984). 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, writers like Tomlinson downplay the rapidly corrosive effects of global media on local culture and identity, that may itself lead to genuine ontological crisis and insecurity for more traditional actors. Choosing 'tradition' over global culture is itself a reflexively valid standpoint, no less so than cosmopolitanism, although these positions are diametrically opposed to one another.

The cultural expropriationists were usually the youngest participants, often middle class from higher income backgrounds. Most white interviewees were in this group, but it did significantly include black lower income individuals actively seeking upward mobility and expressing views that firmly placed them in this category. Cultural expropriationists were not automatically pragmatists: a few can be described as avid consumers of novelty, even frivolity, in their chosen mediated practices. They sought diversion or escape from dull lives, wanted entertainment at the end of a hard working day, or instinctively followed leisure patterns of friends. For some, social networking activities, for example, represented 'fun' rather than deep or serious engagement with the global outside. This type of participant was prominent in the cultural expropriationist category; they were the least likely to engage in

organised or planned lifestyle projects, or to reflexively recognise the presence of power in mediated engagements. Their expropriational activities were therefore significantly different to those of the more obviously pragmatic cultural expropriationists. Yet both types were *expropriationist* in their mediated actions.

*7.1.2 'Cultural traditionalists': Appropriate media*

In polar opposition, cultural traditionalists 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. They were mainly in the upper age range of the sample, being what might be termed 'middle class', sometimes as a result of socio-economic position gained by their parents as many families had social links to recent rural origins, or were beneficiaries of rapid social mobility through acquiring government jobs or patronage. Some participants in this traditionalist position were, however, from black working class backgrounds.

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. Banning of material was cited as a further strategy for cultural preservation. This group were critically vocal of the popular Namibian singer, Lady May, who was widely discussed in interviews, typifying the struggle over what media discourse including celebrity should be in the country, with traditionalists using her as an opportunity to forcibly state their position. Lady May is discussed in detail later in the chapter. Williams (1995:600) has argued that social outlook may be narrowly conditioned by entrenched systems of tradition or customary discourse, while Bourdieu (1979:45) indicates that position within social habitus cognitively predisposes actors to legitimise and approve certain lifestyles and cultural tastes, while rejecting others. Elsewhere, Bourdieu (1990:130) sees certain powerful groups as possessing sufficient cultural or symbolic capital to impose definitions of 'correct' culture; in Namibia, patronage of the state may provide the means to this. Tomlinson (2003) has spoken of reactionary forces aligning against the opportunities globalisation can potentially bring. Cultural traditionalist positions may seek to prohibit possibilities of opportunity and change to other groups. This aspect was apparent in Windhoek participant accounts where tension over culture was evident. 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 victims or dupes of local culture over global. Their doubts or hostile actions toward media are not viewed as driven by blind adherence to false, oppressive tradition cut off from reflexive possibilities. Rather, it is possible to see reactions ontologically as well as politically. On one level, the existential security of a cherished traditionalist worldview was under threat, and they responded disapprovingly, with trepidation at future uncertainties. Yet, accelerated media entry into Namibian society had begun to break up the state and local institutional authority's coveted control and manipulation of flows of information and opinion, challenging ability to define and operationalise 'authentic' Namibian culture. Media were criticised for undermining this possession, opening up worrying civic possibilities for disruption of the status quo. Reactions of cultural traditionalists can in this respect originate from a political policy rather than an ontological agenda. Hostility to media may represent a reflexive political strategy, becoming so when it leads to legislative control or regulation of communications. In this sense, cultural traditionalists can be as manipulative or pragmatic toward media as cultural expropriationists in their collective or organisational defence of political and cultural values. Their rationales of control reveal *resistance identities* as earlier discussed by Castells (2004). Cultural expropriationists, on the contrary, have weakened, or in certain cases severed, their links with official tradition; defending freedoms to engage with global media, or simply ignoring official disapproval of cosmopolitan practices.

### 7.1.3 'Cultural representationalists': Confirmative media

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. 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. There were too few indigenous local productions or production quality was too low to acceptably and convincingly meet

existential needs. South African soap opera productions and the occasional film were 'next best' media, as they could hear local languages such as Afrikaans spoken, and relate to fictional lives in dramas set in familiar rural locations or cities such as Johannesburg or Cape Town.

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). They are *confirmative media* required for ontological affirmation, although the commercial imperative of media business environments tends to manipulate such public requirements, as argued for the South African context where senses of South African identity are encouraged and exploited by advertisers and programme makers for profit (Narunsky-Laden 2008). In line with the assertion of postcolonial theory, representationalists desired preservation and display of those symbols that represented and asserted cultural uniqueness and familiarity.

To summarise, participants aligned themselves positionally in three ways to local and global media environments. The cultural expropriationists seized media content that were practically useful or novel to them, despite such actions compromising cultural values acquired from earlier upbringing; although it should be noted that they were neither necessarily anti-tradition nor pro-Western. Cultural traditionalists defended their culture against incursion. They were preservationists of what they thought of as 'Namibian culture'. Their position sometimes coincided with official Namibian government ideologies where media were viewed as a tool of the state. The cultural representationalists also worried about culture, but only in terms of local absences. They desired or needed cultural representation where images, symbols and language were displayed in their media; they looked for 'signs' and depictions of self and community. Where society and culture was not satisfactorily represented, they asked why.

## 7.2 Power discourses: Participant orientations to Western media

All three participant positions represent distinct responses to or reflexive receptions of media presence in Windhoek. Participant reactions were a way of articulating how they felt about media cultures in Namibia, ranging from hostility or a sense of nostalgic absence, to positive affirmation. Interpretations of what media represented usually stopped short of recognising power discourses, except in the case of cultural traditionalists who were strongly conscious of the disembedding effects of global media for their world (Giddens 1990). There were,

however, indications that other participants caught *reflexive glimpses* of mediated power presences, while revealing uncertainty as to how they might respond, as in the case of cultural representationalists. First cultural expropriationist participants are discussed.

### 7.2.1 Western media and expropriational strategies: Talia and Diane

> Talia: African stuff, including a lot of TV in English or Afrikaans, is so bad.

> Diane: Tradition now is mainly for tourists.

Cultural expropriationists were mainly instrumental about media. It was a means to meet lifestyle goals of self-improvement entailing moderate to high degrees of immersion in (often) Western culture. Such participants were sceptical about tradition because they regarded it as restrictive, with female participants being most likely to cite negative experiences of customary patriarchal restraint. They thought that national culture would benefit if Namibia became a post-traditional state, in the sense Giddens describes (1996). Such participants were 'expropriational' of media and their content. Media was something to be engaged with and used. Miller (2008) writes that material culture needs to be taken seriously in studies of everyday social practices, and argues that consumption of objects or 'things', and ways people 'use' these, are at the heart of the constitution of contemporary lifestyle and identity. Material life is too often judged in moralistic or condemnatory terms; 'things' are not only consumed, but shape linkages and relationships with others who engage in similar valued consumption practices. He says (2008:46)

> material culture matters because objects create subjects more than the other way round. The closer our relationships with objects, the closer our relationships with people.

The Internet, for example, was a 'thing' used to create social connections and to provide satisfying practices that fed into identity building. Miller believes material culture is expropriated by individuals and incorporated into life patterns in important social and personal ways. Cultural expropriationists were divided in terms of how media could be utilised. For some it was for entertainment, diversion, sensual pleasure or curiosity, while others used it pragmatically for life-planning or negotiation of new individualised identities.

The Afrikaans-speaker Talia favoured Western media as an essential source of entertainment, but were equally vital for her informational needs. She found local Namibian media of the type broadcast by NBC and One Africa 'very limited' by comparison.

I prefer Western media. I'm from a mixed English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking family. We've always spoken both languages. I also learned German at school. So I lean toward the Western media. I enjoy films and TV in English. African stuff, including a lot of TV in English or Afrikaans, is so bad! I dislike the African side of the media. I have no problem with Western.

Her family watched American or European television or cinema most of the time, and valued the Internet for sites such as Facebook. Talia and her family shared similar views about what were 'best' media. She was in some ways influenced by her father who believed that people in Namibia were too isolated from what was going on outside, and that Namibian media failed to adequately connect the country to the rest of the world. The only alternatives were Western media to ensure international linkage.

Diana from an Oshiwambo family in Katutura valued Western media, proving to be one of the most practical participants who used media for fashion and business information, as well as entertainment. She was a strong-willed and 'modern' individual who wanted to 'go places' and 'be rich' one day. Namibian media failed to give her the information and motivation to attain these goals. She thought the country needed to 'get modern' and emphasise tradition much less. She provisionally valued traditional culture, but believed it was holding things back. She referred to NBC television programmes that showed badly made and 'boring stuff' about tradition. She said

> they [NBC] keep showing stuff about people in remote villages dancing and playing music in traditional dress. They look so self-conscious. So few people live like that now, and we need to move on. We can't pretend that nothing has changed from the past. Tradition now is mainly for tourists. I do dress traditionally when I go back to the other family members in the north, but only for festivals or to please the relatives.

Diane had loosened her connection with the traditions she had grown up with, resulting in tensions with her mother. She explained directly, even harshly

> I prefer Western stuff, but I clash a lot with my mum over that. I was brought up in such a way that you can't argue with your parents. But with me I'm more liberal, like I ask why is it like that, and she says you don't have manners, that you don't go about it in any other way. But for me, I can say that I'm more informed than she is; she doesn't know what's going on beyond the borders of Namibia or beyond how she lives. Things have changed since her day, and those ways of living are over. It's not OK with me. She's getting used to my way of thinking now, the way I dress, the way I talk. Her point doesn't count any more. It's the way I am.

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She was unsentimental toward her mother when it came to defending what she wanted from media and her life-planning. Diane was fiercely resistant to the authoritative demands that tradition, through her parent, tried to place upon her. She wanted the freedom to 'move forward', in her words. Western media was instrumental to achieving this. Yet, she was careful to emphasise that she would not watch just anything. She was a selective viewer or listener. While she loved soap operas and popular American movies, most of her choices were for practical life-guide purposes. Global media were a resource that she felt did not negatively influence or control her.

Both Talia and Diana viewed media as something to be expropriated for this goal or that. They recognised the Western lifestyle options media presented, and accepted the resultant discarding or marginalising of local cultures, Oshiwambo or Afrikaner, so long as media appeared to serve and inform self-improvement or entertainment goals. Both participants were reacting decisively to the confines that local culture placed on them.

Giddens's (1991) theory of self-identity, grounded in modern life projects and goals, seemed strongly reflected in these expropriationist accounts. Whether this represents a 'romanticization of agency' as McMillin (2009) has called it, misses the point that such practices might empirically exist. Her view that actors are being unreflexive to power discourses during instrumental consumptions of media, ignores that they may be capable of cynically 'using' Western media, while at the same time discarding, neutralising or down-sizing power narratives. Expropriation of media symbols, values and knowledge for personal goal-fulfilment may in itself represent a form of resistance, although one that postcolonial theory is reluctant to recognise.

### 7.2.2 Representational media: "That's what I mean about relating." (Jan)

Jan, the urban Zef music fan, could be classified in the third category as a cultural representationist. Highly enthusiastic about American cinema, he made a point of seeing all the 'big blockbusters', as did his white and black friends. He usually went weekly to Windhoek's only cinema at Maerua Mall. He complained that a large number of 'vital' movies never came to Windhoek, so he either downloaded them from torrent sites or rented them as a last resort.

Jan came from an affluent Afrikaner family with strong cultural roots reaching back to a very traditional grandfather. He associated him with old folk songs and stories about white South

African culture in the colonial past. This background was something of an embarrassment to Jan and a point of contention with non-white friends who joked about alleged racism in his family. Despite this, he admitted to a provisional Afrikaans identification that connected with this past, while rejecting its conservative discourse, and to contemporary South African youth sub-culture. Johannesburg Zef music and style had come to form the framework he felt comfortable with, rather than American and European popular music most of his friends liked. However, outside music, his film and television tastes were predominantly American. He had a foot in two worlds: Afrikaner and American in uneasy symbiosis.

Jan's enjoyment of American cinema was not problem-free. While it was 'fast and exciting' he admitted to missing something of his own society and lifestyle when he watched them. While it was interestingly different, American culture was not always familiar or understandable. He said: "they're OK when the action is happening. But I don't always get what they're talking about. I suppose you would know if you were from there [United States]". The absence of familiar locality and community troubled him. Jan gave concrete examples of what he hoped for or expected to find in the films, television and music he consumed. He mentioned two films which represented aspects that he could recognise and empathise with: *10,000 B.C.* and *District 9*.

> Well, we usually get only American stuff [here in Namibia]. I like it, but I like it more when TV and movies are about the people and places I know myself. We are trapped with American. But when you see *District 9* or similar, or even *10,000 B.C.* that was made here by Hollywood [in 2006], you have a totally different link with it, you can relate more. You recognize the types [personalities] or the places. I saw *10,000 B.C.* at the cinema in Windhoek. When they showed the scene with the warriors walking past Spitzkoppe [an iconic mountain near the town of Usakos], everyone cheered in the cinema! That's what I mean about relating. I dislike that there's not always something to relate to in the American stuff, fun though it can be for me.

Representational media, including media that reflected a person's social and cultural background or language, were highly favoured and appreciated, although frequently missed in the media experiences of most Windhoekers.

*7.2.3 District 9 and possibilities of representation and belonging: "It reflected our recent history" (Tyler and Tiaan)*

The science fiction film allegory *District 9* was mentioned too frequently by participants not to ask why. It was a common reference for participants who hoped to see something of their

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world in the media they consumed. The film had been produced by Peter Jackson (the New Zealand director and producer of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy) and directed by the South African, Neill Blomkamp, using the informal settlements of Johannesburg as its setting. In its story, the latter served as a containment camp for stranded aliens, reimagining recent apartheid South African history where the visitors had been relegated to subject status, exploitation and poverty. Johannesburg as an archetypical southern African city was a setting that the participants were surprised to see on the big screen. The smatterings of Afrikaans language within the mainly English script proved sometimes startling.

Tiaan from the young white participants that made up Focus Group Five[48] said he made a point of seeing films produced in the Afrikaans language in addition to popular Hollywood film. He said

> I liked *District 9* which was in some ways a South African film in that it showed the South African scene very well. Something you could relate to, and very well made. It was South African inspired, but not made with South African resources, I'd say. But a lot of South African talent was in that film.

Tiaan sought reflections of his own linguistic cultural identity in South African cinema. Even though Namibian by birth, like Jan, his orientation to Afrikaans language revealed a strong bond with South African national culture. *District 9* fulfilled a quality requirement he found wanting in most regional film and television productions. In effect, he demanded a regional film culture that matched Hollywood in terms of quality or 'being well made'. Martin was similarly proud of *District 9* in this respect, regarding it as essentially South African, and transcending low or mediocre regional production standards. He said

> with *District 9* the director [Neill Blomkamp] who really conceived and planned that film was South African. He was also the writer of it, so I see it as a South African movie, absolutely. Sharlto Copley [a South African actor] was even the star. The American money doesn't equal the talent behind it. The talent was South African.

*District 9* was a production 'model' to follow, but also a reflection of a society he knew very well and identified with. In this form, it was *representational media*. Tiaan, as the most vocal participant in the focus group, revealed the sense he had of his emotional connection and cultural identification with South Africa. When asked if he felt Namibian or South African he

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[48] They were first-year students studying chemistry in South Africa, interviewed in Windhoek during their mid-year holiday.

said: "Namibian of course! We are Namibian, but we still see ourselves as South African!" The other participants in the group agreed. They then explained why, saying

> Tiaan: A lot of people in my community regretted that break with the republic [South Africa]. We have family and friends down there. That is why we study down there. You have to understand that there is a very strong connection still if you are a white Namibian. It doesn't mean that we aren't proud of our Namibian nationality, but we still have strong links with down there.

> Martin: Well, you see that a lot with the Boks rugby [laughs]. White people here go crazy if the [South Africa] team wins. Yes, we still have the connection with them.

The discussion around *District 9* brought out subtle nuances about their identities. They were Namibian and white, all from affluent backgrounds, all born in Namibia. They regarded (mainly white) culture and language 'down there' as equivalent to 'here' (Namibia). The diasporic scattering of their families between the two countries reinforced this outlook. Social representations in film of places like Johannesburg reflected elements of life and identity they well understood, but their assessment was that this scale and quality of representation was too rare.

Tyler as a coloured Afrikaans-speaker, referred to *District 9*. She liked to hear her own language spoken in film or television drama, saying that: "I don't deny that I like that and can relate to it a lot more. Well it's my language, of course! I grew up with Afrikaans as my mother tongue, even though I now have English. Imagine if you never got to hear and see films and TV that had your own language and culture? That's a hard thing." She then mentioned seeing *District 9* which she was "dragged to see" by her husband at the cinema.

> I was not keen at first. When I sat there watching the start, I was hearing all these people in this Hollywood-type movie speaking Afrikaans in Joburg. I could not believe it, and I had to laugh. The film was very good. It was like the soaps that change languages from time to time. I liked that film a lot, even though it was very hard and a little cruel. But its heart was in the right place and I liked the way it reflected our recent history. It felt like a much better local film, not a Hollywood one really.

John (1), the bank clerk living in Khomasdal, said that he preferred American film and television only because there were so few acceptable Namibian productions. He asked why the country had limited or poor film and television. He said

> I liked *District 9* such a lot because you related to it so much. Joburg is in many ways like Windhoek including the people who live there. It felt good to have a movie that

was much like a Hollywood film, but where the people in it were like you. The bad guys and even the main good guy were like the Afrikaner boys we have here. I would like there to be more movies like that. Why we can't do that more, I haven't a clue.

*District 9* proved to be iconic among several of the participants. It was 'local' despite its Hollywood pedigree and financing. It largely satisfied ontological representational needs, partly replacing the usual absences they experienced in global audio-visual products. From their point of view, to see yourself and your culture confirmed in your media practices was satisfying, even empowering. To be excluded from its symbols, language and culture implied power that denied and enforced loss. Postcolonial theorists make the struggle for inclusion and representation one of their central arguments in relation to media (Ashcroft 2001; Appadurai 1996).

The views of the cultural representationalist participants strongly confirmed this argument. The expropriation of the American science fiction format by converting it from American text to local southern African realities and identities, created a forceful identificational response from Windhoek participants. Empathy was immediately established through this cultural transformation to local familiarities. While McMillin (2007) regards this as disguising global cultural imposition, it can be viewed as *the reclaiming of the local* from global Hollywood film. Soap opera genres may be similarly assessed wherein an essentially foreign format is taken and flooded with local stories and characters. Expropriation of media in this manner for representational purposes may retain original ideological and commercial power narratives, but allow for powerful degrees of *reflexive retrieval* of indigenous cultural symbols.

## 7.3 Feared absences: Missing the local in 'local' media

The comments and discussion above bring issues of power and representation to the fore. Lukes (2005) has argued that power is not exclusively the influence and prestige that some groups have over others. Power can involve denial or suppression of opinion and representation. While people enjoy glimpsing and sharing in other cultures on the Internet or in popular cinema and television, they also desire 'their time' and their rightful inclusion in these. They demand that their identities and cultures be portrayed to some degree.

The source of this denial was not only through global media, where usually limited representational possibilities existed, but also in local productions of culture. State television was criticised for failing to fill spaces of 'absence'.

*7.3.1 Scarce local production: "We must try to make Owambo movies" (Selma)*

Selma was an articulate arts college student who missed both 'authentic' Namibian media and hearing Oshiwambo spoken in film or television. She was not against English language popular films or programmes from abroad, but did miss her mother tongue, Oshiwambo.

> I really am [worried]. There is a lack of our own films and programmes. The Americans are proud to make movies in their vernacular, in English. But we don't have the confidence to do that. Here over half of Namibians speak Oshiwambo, yet we don't make movies in that language. We need to do that, or it will be American things that we will watch into the future. It will undermine my language and our culture. We must try to make Owambo movies.

Gloomily, she was not hopeful that this would ever happen given the dominance of English in the country's media. She blamed the state broadcaster NBC for its 'poor' track record in investing in programmes and films in local languages. They had introduced television news in the main indigenous languages in 2002, she said, but no further initiatives had followed. She was suspicious of what happened to all the state funding the NBC received given that so few local productions had been forthcoming.

Hilma also bemoaned the lack of local Namibian programme-making in the country, being less concerned about language even though she shared Oshiwambo with Selma. A vibrant production base for film and television sponsorship by the NBC was urgently needed to counter foreign media. She had once been in South Africa and been impressed by strong local programming there. There were local soap operas (which she enjoyed) and magazine programmes that looked at life problems of youth, which she thought: "seemed quite good, but we don't have anything like that in Namibia." It may be recalled that Hilma disliked popular American film and television which were, in her view, 'too dominant' in Namibia. Hilma is mentioned again later in the context of declining local culture due to the effects of Western media.

However, other participants showed an acceptance of the situation. Ndaka expressed a tolerance of Western television and film.

> I like a mix [of African and American]. Africa Magic [on DSTV] shows that mix, African, American. With the African stuff, the actors are real people. They are usually real people who act. You can understand them better. The Western stuff is a different thing. It's a sort of expensive pretend. They are done very well, but you see the difference strongly. But you can relate to the African on a real life level better. I rarely

have a problem with the different cultures even though I came from a rural background originally. I accept it.

She mentioned Nigerian cinema as important and, despite quality gaps, Ndaka preferred African media as a 'more real' representation of life. It 'spoke to her' much more. However, many participants complained about limited or poor Namibian media that gave no real depiction or image of contemporary Namibia. There was 'no excuse' for exclusion, they said.

## 7.4 Lines of resistance and defences of 'tradition'

As discussed at the start of the chapter, there were traditionalist positions among participants where what was conceived as 'traditional culture' was vigorously defended against Western incursion. Participants did not define culture in itself, but in relation to the negative: what it was not. Foreign media provided the undesirable reference point, contrasted with which, they acquired the perception that tradition and older identities were under pressure. This appears to confirm Tomlinson's (2003:273) argument that globalisation has created awareness of identity where none existed before, where abrasive dialectics of local and global sharpen senses of older identifications, as well as stimulating forceful defences of them. Interviewees revealed genuine fears that Namibian culture was 'under threat' from Western lifestyles and values, although there were those who strongly challenged this. One of the research focus groups engaged in an intense exchange over the issue.

### 7.4.1 Traditionalists versus Pragmatists: "Trying to make us like them" (Lucas)

Focus Group One,[49] which discussed global impacts on values and tradition in Namibia, were sharply divided over the cultural implications of Western global media. Maria argued forcefully against the more traditionalist Lucas, who criticised indulgent 'modern' values of young Namibians who embraced Western media and lifestyle. This signified a clash between town and country: Lucas came from a well-off conservative family, moving to Windhoek from a rural area just two years before the interview, while Maria had grown up in Windhoek, revealing a rural-urban divide in outlook and consciousness.

> Maria: But lifestyle is also about living. What's wrong with trying to look good and interesting? As long as you don't hurt others, there's no harm.
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> Lucas: There is [exclaims]!

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[49] Chemistry students.

Maria: Media is a lot of fun. You are so free with it! Free in what you can do with it, what can be seen. There are wonderful things to find. You learn such a lot, news, information. As a student, you almost don't need books, it's all there! With Internet you have the world out there. We don't just walk around being immoral, because media is making Namibia a better place.

Lucas: Never, no! This Western stuff you are underestimating. It's not neutral. It's trying to make us like them. We need to resist this. Enjoyment and looking good isn't neutral. It's underestimating our Namibian culture, it seriously is doing that.

Maria: Look, I come from a poorer family than you. My mother had nothing when I was a child, nothing. Things have improved, and there is so much there on offer. I love media, particularly TV and Internet. My mother loves TV also. It's such an opportunity for someone like me, not a threat like you say. Culture declines because of people, not media. Blame people! [To Lucas]: You are such a traditionalist! Guys like you would have me trapped at home with some primitive husband! It is not like that now. Women as well as men can now be free to do things. I like what there is now, and media are so much part of that.

Lucas disagreed, but chose to say no more. This fierce exchange neatly revealed the dividing line of cultural pragmatist and cultural traditionalist positions within the interviews.

*7.4.2 Moral rectitude in media: Sex, violence and the 'culturally inappropriate' (Falen and Mumba)*

Perhaps the issue that participants debated most was sex and violence seen in foreign media in Namibia. Some thought that Namibian independence from colonialism had opened doors both to good and bad influences. As mentioned in earlier chapters, gender and sexuality had a long history of communal regulation and control. Talking about sex openly in formal or informal settings was taboo. Tom had explained, as did others, that they had grown up knowing very little about sex and partner relationships. He had said: "I just had to find out from when I was a teenager and learn as I went along. My parents nor anyone would tell me about it." Tom claimed to have learned more about this subject from Internet pornography than from any relative, even though this cannot be strictly described as 'sex education'.

Falen and Mumba were the most vocal on such issues. There was a belief that sexual and violent media content had increased in Namibia in recent years, both on state and commercial television, but with the Internet representing the most serious problem. Mumba said

some DSTV [MultiChoice] movies can be bad. They're more like porn movies which kids can watch too easily when parents are not home or have gone to bed. All they

have is an age restriction, but they still show it, and anyone can see it. My other problem is with Internet which makes it too easy to get sexual stuff. Back home [in the north], most kids between 13 or 16 can get porn Internet sites. It's too easy.

Falen raised concerns about this easy access to sexual content, commenting

with Internet, it's a problem for kids who have access to too much sex now. They see it in soaps, but there's such a lot available on the Internet. This is why most kids tend to have sex at a tender age, say 14 or 15. They see it and want to go out and try it, to experiment, most kids I know. I think a lot of this influence comes from the Americans, sometimes South African programmes. They just show sex because of the American influence. It's culturally inappropriate.

Mumba was worried specifically by violence in media. Cinema was a 'big' problem'. Levels of violence there were too high. She said that

some action movies I don't like because they show terrible things; it's hard to watch them. I don't like those action movies. Examples would be *Sin City* which I saw a year ago from a friend's memory stick. Some of the violence in that was horrible like a dog eating a man when he was alive [is smiling but is quite agitated]! I had nightmares about that. The characters were so brutal, even the women in it – although I liked the fact that they were as dangerous as the men. But that side was all I liked. It was meant to be a comic book film [based on comic format] but I've never seen any comic like that when I was a child. I hate that type of film, it made me feel sick.

This example represented content that for her was entirely 'inappropriate', a term cultural traditionalists critically employed against bad cultural influences. She believed there needed to be more government monitoring of media to ensure such things were not shown. Falen agreed with Mumba, her chief concern being that children could be psychologically affected. She believed some television and film to be damaging their socialisation. Falen said

I know media generally has a bad influence on kids. What they watch is what they believe. Say they've been watching something violent, some movie: they get up the next morning and they start beating up on some other kid at school because they're over-stimulated. I used to be a bit like that, but I've grown out of it.

Female participants were most likely to complain about sex, violence or bad language in media, as were cultural traditionalists generally.

### 7.4.3 Transformative media: 'Losing your culture'

The belief that collective culture was being eroded or lost was mentioned many times. Some did not perceive this in crisis terms, looking forward to a more modern and individualistic

Namibia. Others revealed a sense of nostalgia or loss for what they thought was 'passing'. Traditionalists sprang into defensive postures and advised strategies to sustain and enhance Namibian culture.

Bertha specifically blamed Western culture for making Namibians lose indigenous values. She blamed the youth for uncritically adopting foreign, mainly American or European lifestyles in terms of dress, behaviour and demeanour. Bertha expressed the following view of cultural 'deterioration'.

> I know people here like it [Western media]. They dress like Westerners, copy their talk, they watch their stuff. They're swearing a lot. It's imitation. But it doesn't look good to us. It's culturally showing a gap between them and the elders. Culturally, there is no gulf between young and old. But when you copy that [Western] style, you create a difference. You can't speak that way or dress that way, because people here will say 'what is happening to you', that you have no respect. These people are trying to be more American than Namibian. American culture is the opposite of how we do things. You are violating the rules. But our culture is dying out. It is now much more Western. Our girls wear these mini-skirts up to here [gestures to the top of her legs], and that is not how we have done this.

Bertha sees the breakup of the Namibian society she grew up in, fearing the emergence of a 'generation gap' where young and older people lose the ability to relate and communicate. Her greatest concern was that media caused cultural deterioration in social relations. There is something of a dread here about threats to culture that reflects Stanley Cohen's classic argument about moral panics in times of societal change or shifts. Cohen (2002:1) defines a moral panic as "[a] condition, episode, person or group of persons emerg[ing] to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests." He adds that moral panics tend to encapsulate 'predictions of disorder' (2002:26), as comments of participants themselves frequently implied. The Lady May affair, discussed below, typifies this type of societal panic.

Selma agreed that cultural change was taking place. However, she regarded it as an urban phenomenon, something occurring in the larger towns of Namibia. She had moved to Windhoek from a small village outside Ongwediva in 2009 and had been immediately surprised at the different ways of living and behaving compared to her 'very traditional' rural home. It was a difference she found attractive, unlike what she had known before. Of all media, she believed cinema to be at the heart of how younger people liked to live now, describing American culture as significant, in that

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there is all this American media here, but I like the American movies. I like how they look, how they dress, how they speak. Friends of mine even copy their style of culture. They do this 'yeah' style of language, try to speak like them. It is really starting to change our culture here. I really notice the difference here in Windhoek. The town is so different culturally.

She mentioned what happened when she went back home to visit her parents. Their view of her was that she had been made 'different' by living in Windhoek. While she enjoyed this novel way of behaving in the city, she admitted to worrying about what it was doing to her culture. Selma said

> my parents say 'you have been changed by that place' when I go back home. 'You even talk different!' they say to me, although I was not aware of it until they said it. With the Americans we tend to take their style, it has come here. It is not appropriate for our culture, nor the language. Some people cannot understand what these American-influenced people are saying! But I know that I also am being like that. I can see the attraction, and you are influenced by your friends who do it. I admit that American style is attractive, but I am worried by my own culture. There are conflicts there, and I am concerned that it will suffer.

Larkin (2008:11), writing about Nigerian cities, speaks of the 'technologisation of urban space' whereby social practices of media have come to shape new urban cultural realities. This has resulted in gulfs between rural and urban consciousness, with ontological outlooks occupying different, sometimes conflictual, spaces. Media technologies, through their cultural impacts, have been argued to fundamentally define urban life and culture in the African city, being transformative of actors' outlooks and expectations. Larkin's study reveals similar generational and spatial contradictions to those found in Windhoek. Grazian (2008) sees media as shaping youth lifestyle in the unique cultural processes of the city; in his example, through urban nightlife leisure which he says is sharply defined by popular mediated youth culture. Generational struggles were again present, driven by a distinct urban-ness that had broken previous rural social patterns.

Many participants, even those who were highly favourable to Western media, raised concerns about inter-generational conflict or tensions that were arising. Many regretted that disjunctively different outlooks to their parents were evolving. Some like Selma felt guilt regarding this, while 'modernists' like Diane bluntly believed parents needed to accept change as part of Namibia's development.

When Hilma was asked if she saw Namibian media as reflecting traditional Namibian culture, she stated with a little bitterness

> no, not anymore. Cell phones and TVs have replaced fire and drums [she laughs]. Technology is causing the change. Tradition is stronger in rural areas, but not the towns like Windhoek. Radio does more to promote tradition because that's all most people have access to in the villages or homesteads. They [rural people] like the NBC radio programmes in their own languages for a few hours each day. I have relatives in the north who never see TV, or when they do they don't understand its value and don't get on with most of it being in English. If they can't understand, then it can't give them their Namibian culture. No, I don't see media here as strengthening the culture. Too many people copy music and film stars. They don't want to be who they really are. They forget their own culture for something that really isn't that important

Hilma therefore saw culture as being lost in two ways: first, through Western or global media incursions; second, through inadequate or 'limited' local media production which insufficiently represented Namibian culture. As a result, global media was transmuting Namibian society as she knew it. It represented culturally *transformative media*, but for her in a highly adverse sense. There is nostalgia in Hilma's interview for the demise of traditional worlds, as elsewhere expressed by Laslett (2000) who wrote of a vanished pre-industrial English culture destroyed by nineteenth-century economic change and the rise of mass culture, depicted as 'the world we have lost'. Traditional participants were troubled by a similar social demise in their own time. What many participants sought was a cultural synergy with media, where television, film, and the Internet reflected a harmony of cultural expectations rather than disruptive or 'inappropriate' content and subsequent behaviours.

Interviewees who feared cultural change and those who glimpsed new and vital possibilities contrasted sharply, revealing tensions between them. This was apparent between Focus Group Six members who explained what they needed culturally from media, reflecting discoursed elements of all three participant cultural positions. They said

> Artus: We used to learn more of our own cultural things. So why today can't we show our culture in these media? Why not state our own cultural things? People from abroad can easily express their own cultural things. Why can't we say it also? It is largely absent from our TV and film. Why is that? We need to show off our culture in our media so that we can also be interesting like them [Westerners]. We have a lot to show.

> Interviewer: Do you miss your own lives and cultures in the American TV or film?

> Jerry: Yes I do. We miss our history and culture. That's why I don't enjoy them.

> Tuleli: But you should not be so culturally narrow. Just because we need a better media here in Namibia, it should not be about rejecting other cultures. We need both to be strong and available.

Those who demanded cultural representation did not always hold the multicultural views Tuleli expressed. Cultural traditionalists attempted to restrict or censor symbols or indications of over-assertive Western culture. The Lady May affair is a valuable case-study to explore tensions between what can for convenience be called 'cosmopolitans and traditionalists'.

## 7.5 Lady May: Judging 'appropriate' culture

Participants in Chapter 4 discussed their celebrity choices, and the popular Namibian singer Lady May was frequently cited as a favourite music celebrity. Speakers of Oshiwambo and Oshikwanyama were particularly enthusiastic given that her songs were often in their languages, although also in English. Her style can be described as a mixture of Afro Pop, House and Rhythm & Blues. While her music owes only a partial debt to Western popular styles, her performances on stage and in video are a hybrid reference to Western black female singers, particularly from the United States. Participants such as Berns stated that she "dances funny, but I like it. She makes it sexy for everyone." Mary added that "she is like the American singer Lady Gaga". Participants who mentioned her said that she put a lot into her performance.

### 7.5.1 Disrespecting culture: "I did everything wrong" (Lady May)

Lady May was born in 1986 in Angola within a sub-group of the Oshiwambo peoples, the Kwanyama, which geographically straddles north Namibia and southern Angola (Pendleton 2000). She became known with the launch of her album *Kamali* in 2004, a winner that year at the Sanlam-NBC Music Awards (*Wikipedia* 2011). From then on, she gained a strong fan base among the young Namibian public, also gaining international recognition. She has performed in South Africa and Britain. Further awards were earned for her videos on the South African based satellite music station Channel O. She is signed to a South African label, Big Ear Records.

On 4 June 2011 at the Namibian Music Awards (NAMA) in Windhoek, Lady May offended members of the audience and the broader general public. The show was broadcast nationally on NBC state television and widely reported (*The Namibian*, 6 June 2011).

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> The NAMA awards were held at a Windhoek hotel on Saturday, and broadcast live on NBC television. Lady May, who won the award for 'Best House' for her song '*Zoom Zoom*', committed the foul sin during her acceptance speech. Clad in a fur coat, the pint-size artist said: "Love me or hate me but I'll forever be Lady May," before flashing her middle finger. After thanking her God, her management and her fans, she then said "Good night mother f\*@#ers" and walked off stage, leaving the audience reeling in shock and surprise.

The event made the front pages of the national daily newspapers over two days. In a similar popular music ceremony in the United States or Britain, it may have gone unreported. The reaction to Lady May's 'symbolic' public defiance is of considerable interest not strictly in itself, but for what it says about cultural positioning within modern Namibia. It sparked both a response and debate about what was acceptable cultural behaviour, as well as what could be aired in television entertainment. It revealed the frictions between perceived tradition and emerging modernity within in the country.

Lady May's alleged deviance resulted in the official withdrawal by the sponsor MTC of her music award for her song *Zoom Zoom*. Further, the Director General of the NBC Albertus Aochamub announced the banning of her music from NBC broadcasts for the foreseeable future (*The Namibian*, 6 June 2011). There was conditional support for Lady May according to *The Namibian*.

> Former Miss Namibia vice chairman Gladwin Groenewaldt said that although he doesn't condone Lady May's actions, he would put the blame partially on the NBC. "It is a pity that in this modern day of technology NBC doesn't have basic equipment like time delay to avoid situations like this one. What Lady May said is not good, but come on, we have heard worse than that before. In addition, I am strongly against banning her from NBC TV and Radio. She is an artist who earns her living from music. How do they expect her to promote her music?"

On Monday (6 June 2011), at a press conference in Windhoek, Lady May publicly apologised: "The environment that night was highly charged emotionally. I was caught up in a moment of excitement … Everything was so beautiful. But I did everything wrong … I failed them [the youth] on Saturday night." (*The Namibian*, 7 June 2011)

### 7.5.2 Defying 'official' tradition: "Being appropriate"

Participants interviewed at the time of the Lady May incident had the affair strongly in their minds when they were asked to comment on what it meant to them. They were divided both over views of the rightness or wrongness of Lady May's actions and over the way authority

had dealt with her. Matters of cultural behaviour and modern celebrity aligned against each other in their accounts. Her harshest critics were the older participants, often men.

Grace was asked what she thought of the incident. Her answer shows admiration mixed with some disapproval. She asked

> why did she do that? What was the cause to say what she did? The news didn't give her side. When they were talking about it on Radio 99, they were favourable to her. They played her music, unlike on the NBC where her music is now banned. They like her. They said it was simply a matter of the generation gap where the older people disapprove of her and the younger ones love her. On NBC they are calling her all sorts of names. They are so traditional and see her as a betrayer of tradition. But everyone else is playing her music, they admire her. It's supposed to be about tradition, I suppose. A clash of cultures.

Twama was cautious. She liked the star's music and approached the story with caution.

> I don't judge her for what she did. She was over-excited, it happens in life. When I listen to American music, what she did would be normal. That is how music stars are there. But here, we are not used to it. I don't agree with this banning of her music on NBC just for what she did. It is too extreme. She is just trying to express her life, to work on it. She has not done this before.

Twama was asked why she thought there had been such a reaction. Who were the people now criticising her? She explained that it was the government and its close supporters attacking her through the NBC. She implied that the state itself was going after Lady May. She was being used as an example, to force others to 'fall into line': 'line' being obedience and tradition.

> It's really a big insult what she did. In our culture, you cannot say that. It is people in our tradition who are attacking her, telling her that this is not the acceptable way. I don't think she did it for publicity, I think it was something else. It was some weird star behaviour thing. You know, she dresses strange, she dances weird. It's her. I don't think she has lost any fans over this. Most people are understanding of her. I think it is the elders, the leaders who are most upset. They are out of touch with music and things. They are most vocal. They will be the ones who told the NBC to ban her music; people in government who are not tolerant of her.

The emphasis on officialdom comes out here, as it does in the focus group discussion below. Participants had an awareness of the generational differences that had emerged in Namibia. They saw the affair as a reflection of this, although here the government itself had intervened through the NBC, treating it as a moral issue involving deviant behaviour, not to be tolerated.

Cohen (2002:26) characterises such reaction as one of 'the powers that be' seeking to control aberrant conduct along the following lines: "an initial act of deviance, or normative diversity, is defined as being worthy of attention and is responded to punitively. The deviant or group of deviants is segregated or isolated and this operates to alienate them from conventional society." Deviance theory serves to explain the reaction to Lady May, although this is most useful when refracted through the prism of emergent cultural struggles in which the Namibian state itself increasingly intervenes.

Mary and Berns were strongly sympathetic, although this was again conditional given that they sensed how far they were able to support Lady May in relation to convention. In their joint interview they presented the following discussion.

> Mary: I wouldn't agree on what she did, but I wouldn't disapprove either. Because we don't know what it was about that night or why she reacted that way. Maybe she was high on drugs or something. It was really bad for her reputation and also for the country. I saw it live on the TV.

> Berns: I asked myself at the time 'what the hell is she really thinking'? I wondered if I had heard her right. My mum was watching and when she heard, she said: 'look at that, and you still think that you like her music'?

> Mary: She can never take back what she said, and she has to remember that it was us who first made her.

> Berns: But she's one crazy woman. Out of the ordinary.

> Mary: Those older people overacted. She did not deserve to lose her award and be banned from the TV. That was a lot unfair.

> Mary: She is like our Lady Gaga.

> Berns: God! I love that woman! Lady May is our Lady Gaga!

Like many others, the reaction of officialdom through the state NBC and the commercial sponsor MTC was thought draconian. That MTC was majority owned by the business arm of government (Larsen 2007), reinforced the sense of (in participant views) a disproportionate state reaction against one individual. Participants tended therefore to be sympathetic: the opposite of what NBC and MTC intended.

*7.5.3 Discourses on Lady May: "Important people were shocked" (Petrus)*

Focus Group Four discussed Lady May at length. This group tended to have strict conservative opinion on the story. However, a point of contention was raised about the

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damaging effects of the ban on the development of Namibian popular music. Lady May was among the most important local musicians, and currently the most exportable. She was in a position to put Namibian music on the international stage more than most, as Petrus pointed out. He disapproved of what she had done at the Awards, but criticised the wisdom of the ban. Sonny was more damning of her. Petrus and Sonny engaged in this exchange.

> Petrus: I watched it live on TV [NBC]. I saw what the reaction was from people on the screen, and the other artists on the stage. The whole nation was shocked. For me it was not OK. The whole nation was watching, and most of her fans are children or very young people. It was not a good image to her fans. There were also a lot of big government officials in the audience, important people like ministers, important people who were shocked by what she called them. Namibia is a very culturally conservative country, and we are not used to this kind of irresponsibility. People have to understand that Namibia is not America

> Sonny: I disagree with those who defended her and said 'she is only a rock star'. It's a really bad image for this country. It was right to ban her on TV and radio. It was a good and proper measure taken. That will put her in a position where her career is on the line. It will be challenging to get her to come to the position where she can be called to order, and show that she has reformed. She must show improvement.

> Petrus: No, I think the banning was too quick, too premature. I am not supporting that. Maybe she was not herself that day. There should have been more thought. They came in too hard at her. She is an important musical figure in our country who is starting to be known outside. She is improving our musical culture and our music image. What do the authorities do? They ban her. That cannot be good for the progress of Namibian music! This is not a good situation. They are dictating to us as youth.

> Sonny: But they must! There are cultural standards. It is a matter of being appropriate. The ban will teach her things. Maybe she will improve. This is not America, there were children listening. It was totally shocking. Lady May knows our culture, so she also knows that you do not traditionally do that. She knows!

> Petrus: I understand all that. But it's this long-term banning. I cannot go along with that. Look, this was the first time she ever said this. I think she must be given a second chance. Lady May did not commit a crime, and now she is banned from doing what she does! Even the commercial radio stations are being told not to play her music. I cannot be for that.

Both argued strongly for traditional values, but Petrus was suspicious of a state agenda in a way that Sonny was not. Petrus was not prepared to tolerate intrusion by 'elders' and government elites in the affairs of the youth. There were limits to his commitment to

tradition: music and placing Namibian musicians on the map were his more important priorities. Sonny revealed a deeper conservatism that revealed political links. It transpired that he had relatives in government, and that he had 'followed their lead' (his words) over the Lady May affair. This placed him in the official, political camp of the cultural traditionalist.

*7.5.4 Contested terrains of culture*

The Lady May story has the value of consolidating and articulating tensions over culture and media in the Windhoek matrix. It exposed fault lines among participants, and brought to the surface variations in loyalty both to official and more general conceptions of traditional behaviour. Participants appeared more shocked by the punishment of Lady May than by the incident itself.

This pointed to a conflict over the protection of symbols and representations of Namibian culture. Most interviewed were broad and inclusionist over what constituted culture, others narrow and exclusionist. Lady May was too heavily associated with Western culture for some, paralleling Western celebrity in unacceptable fashion, even though in international popular music culture people expected music stars to be colourful and outrageous. Traditionalists sought to sanction and suppress, others to defend and support. A struggle over culture appeared to be in process in Namibia, much in the way it has emerged in other regions in the face of global incursions through media. Mohammadi (1998) writes about 'culture wars' in the Middle East and Islam as a response to Western cultural incursion of music and film, leading to conflict and violence between traditionalists and cosmopolitans. Namibia may be showing elements of concern, although the research is cautious on the extent of this, preferring to characterise it as possible tension over culture.

**7.6 'Flawed media', bad media**

As was seen above, the local Namibian media industry came under much pressure and criticism from just about all participants irrespective of their cultural alignments. Both content and quality were seen as a problem, especially for NBC radio and television, but also for the private television station One Africa. Participants questioned quality and the perceived mis-match between public requirements and what broadcasters were prepared to offer in scheduling. The considerable influence of government over the NBC was further cause for concern, with official state news and programmes seen to preclude a diversity of social and

political viewpoints or alternative visions for the country. Criticisms of censorship or self-censorship were raised by participants, although others confined concerns to quality matters.

*7.6.1 Disrespecting media: "NBC, it's complete kak" (John (1))*

John (1) was very harsh, even abusive about the state broadcaster's performance. For him it was able neither to entertain nor inform. He said

> we rarely look at NBC, its complete *kak*. Why? The programmes are endless repeats of previous bad stuff. It's so preachy, man. HIV this, HIV that. It talks to us like children. It doesn't want to entertain you, as though that's a bad thing. The news itself is propaganda: tell me one time it was ever critical of the government? They make so many mistakes and failures, yet you never hear of it, never once. They treat people like fools.

On the other hand, Diana the cultural expropriationist felt that when it came to news, media tended to over-localise viewers and disadvantage them: "On NBC you can't find out what is happening in the rest of the world. There's nothing." Other participants' interviews referred to the 'closed' character of the NBC programmes, especially news. They felt it limited or filtered stories from outside Namibia. Zimbabwe, for example was rarely mentioned, even where international news had blanket coverage on a political or social issue arising there, a point made by Happy. Local television contrasted badly compared with the Internet where participants valued its capacity to reach out to and open up other societies and cultures.

John (1) supported this view, saying

> NBC, that station really offends my intelligence. It's just about putting the government in a good light, and hiding all the bad and useless things they do. One Africa can also be accused of that, but at least you get more information and more of a neutral position. Our news is so bad here.

Talking about NBC state news, Abby reported that it did 'not do its job'. She had family in north Namibia when the floods came in March and April 2011, and she could not find out if they were safe. There was no news on which places were affected, and where people had died. It was often impossible to phone relatives to see if they had survived because the disaster had suspended the service. NBC had not filled a much-needed information gap, she said. News was too much about politicians, not enough about important stories involving ordinary people. She complained that items were often about conferences and workshops rather than the situation in the country. There was not enough discussion of crime and social issues in news programmes. Abby said that many of her neighbours and friends in Katutura

were affected by crime, yet their cases had never been reported. She stated: "There are housebreakers and serious attacks on neighbours. A friend of my mother was assaulted in her own house by an intruder. That was never mentioned on the NBC, nor made it to the newspapers. The NBC news is very bad, very bad. You must report that [direct to interviewer]."

Werner criticised the NBC for ignoring the youth: "NBC is the national TV. But it is so boring, it is doing a disservice. It might be OK for older people, but they are ignoring the majority of the youth who don't watch it. There must be things for the young." He feared that it had 'lost them' as a potential audience due to dull programming and generally being out of touch with them.

NBC was therefore regarded as no better in reflecting and presenting Namibian local spaces than global media, being inadequate in providing relevant stories, opinion, local and national news on Namibia. Participants felt that political control over information flows was the main cause of this; others put it down to low professional media skills.

### 7.6.2 Attacking print media

From a standpoint favourable to Namibian government elites and business figures, Tom was critical of print journalism such as *The Namibian* or *Informanté* which exposed local and national figures in government and private sectors for corruption, cronyism and scandal. He himself came from a government background given that his father was connected to government circles. He accused the print media of exaggerating stories and slandering 'important' individuals unfairly. The tabloid newspaper *Informanté* came in for special criticism because of its direct assault on and moral exposure of public figures. As reported earlier, *Informanté* seemed to be modelled on the highly popular South African tabloid *The Daily Sun*. Wasserman (2010) argues, such tabloids represent much more than frivolous, libellous and sensationalist journalism, and so could be seen as a voice for poorer individuals unable to express effective opposition to malpractices of powerful elites. Wasserman states that such newspapers serve to shape new civic outlooks and identities, contributing to movements of change. However, Tom did not have this view. He said

> [*Informanté*] will publish something which is not really what it is. They will get advantage out of tarnishing someone's reputation. I don't want to read something misleading and get misinformed. You might tell people what you have read and they

will be annoyed and say that you are making a fool of yourself telling me that. You start to wonder what the media is doing.

Hilma disagreed with Tom, saying that the press was needed to ensure that government did 'not control the truth'. She added: "I think politicians manipulate us. They try to use media to hide their failures, to pretend that all is well. They boast about their achievements when they have so few." Despite being a cultural traditionalist, Hilma wanted a free press. She supported tradition, but not government control, an indication of an important division in this group.

Participants complained about the quality of newspapers. Print media were sometimes 'bad' media. While John (2) enjoyed reading newspapers, he was critical of their reporting styles. He mentioned *The Namibian* which he admired for its critical stance toward government, but complained of the 'obscurity' in its reporting style.

> I don't like the way it presents stories. You often don't know what they are writing about, they don't explain well. They assume you know something about a story when you can't possibly know.

He was asked for examples, and responded saying

> well, there was a corruption case where some fat cat was stopping the court from reaching a conclusion and sticking him into prison. *The Namibian* assumed you knew the mechanics of the law that was delaying justice. But it wasn't obvious to the reader. So many stories like that often don't make sense. Who does that paper think it is writing for? It tries to go over the heads of ordinary Namibians and doesn't want to explain properly in simple words. I don't think it knows itself what most of its stories are about

Falen raised concern about what was 'true' in news, and when audiences might be misled in reporting of current affairs. She thought all journalistic media 'had power' and were able to manipulate the public, whether state or private, because they controlled the flow of information. She had no opinion on what might be done about this.

Participants sometimes only reflexively glimpsed forms of power in media, but at other times saw it clearly, and responded. Power encountered could be culturally systemic and global, or flowing from dominant institutions such as local state or other bodies. Participants were divergently oriented to these according to their chosen reflexive cultural positioning.

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**7.7. Conclusion: Patterns of power and agency**

The specific forms of power overtly or covertly reflected in the accounts of the Windhoek participants now require more focused discussion, as a conclusion. Foucault's (1980; 1977) theory of power tends to be deployed in studies of media. His concept of discourse neatly analyses patterns of domination in particular epochs, explaining ways of thinking and acting within institutional systems of knowledge of which 'subjects' (rather than agents or actors) are often barely aware. Discourse analysis has been widely applied to studies of modernity and globalisation, including postcolonial media analysis (McMillin 2007; Tomlinson 1999; Appadurai 1996; Bhabha 1994). However, Foucault's theory of power has been described as over-disciplinary, narrow and one-dimensional in ways it purports to shape society and identity (Joas & Knöbl 2009:342). It offers a restrictive framework that does not easily sit with actional possibilities of agents, which appear as heavily and irrevocably conditioned.

The three dimensions of power offered by Steven Lukes (2005) suggest other explanatory possibilities for understanding power and media in Windhoek, providing a more flexible paradigm than that of Foucault. Lukes's theory combines elements of pluralist and elite political theory and Marxian notions of ideology with aspects of Foucault's own discourse theory. In this approach, power operates on three planes.

Power is: *first*, embodied in groups struggling over issues or demands, and those who get their interests recognised and implemented by definition have power. Lukes says that conventional theories usually stop at this point, although power operates in other crucial ways. *Second,* power is the ability of influential groups in business or politics (or media) to restrict potentially conflictual issues or controversies from becoming public. Certain lines of argument, opinion or events are suppressed and excluded from public discourse and representation: "it is crucially important to identify potential issues which nondecision-making prevents from being actual" (Lukes 2005:23). Issues or concerns in this sense are suppressed and never allowed to reach public consciousness. *Third,* power is the capacity or ability to shape public opinion to reflect the thinking and interests of the powerful. Lukes (2005:28) explains this by asking

> is it not the supreme and most insidious exercise of power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as

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natural and unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial?

Applying these three levels to the cultural positions of the Windhoek participants helps articulate and explain how power might operate in mediated social settings. These dimensions of power apply just as well to institutional power in localities (state, local media), as to global institutional media that produce, export, transmit and disseminate symbolic cultural goods.

Lukes's second dimension of power, prevention of certain social and political issues from being made open and represented, characterised the concern of the cultural representationalist position. Participants missed seeing their culture and society displayed in dominant (mainly American) global media, although local media was also thought to exclude an 'authentic' ontologically satisfactory portrait of Namibian life. There was an inclusive need to see 'their' significations rather than those of 'others'. The common response to the film *District 9,* by contrast, revealed surprise and pleasure in seeing a world that participants could relate to. In terms of local state media such as NBC, Windhoekers complained about exclusion when they said that only information and themes that matched the government's own political and social agenda were aired. NBC was regarded as giving only an official picture rather than an open, full depiction of the diversity of Namibian civil society. Robert made this point most clearly.

> With news and the NBC, the [Namibian government] ministers try to take it over and make it their mouthpiece. News is mainly government information. There is no competition. You need a broad perspective of views in this society which we don't have. You don't even have that in many other African news channels.

Robert also mentioned this 'isolationist' stance of Namibian media generally. He thought that commercial providers such as radio stations and One Africa television engaged in 'self-censorship' so as not to incur government criticism. All media were seen as restrictive in this way, colluding to supress important issues and information about Namibia. Lukes's exclusionist dimension of power was clearly operating here.

His third level of power, the shaping of thinking and beliefs about the world so it is seen by actors uncritically and naturalistically, arose in several ways in the interviews. Cultural traditionalists fiercely defended conventional viewpoints in the face of foreign global media, frequently complying with state attitudes regarding how society should be perceived. It was 'their' reality against global cultural incursion. Hilma, like them, reacted to ideological aspects of media which were 'trying to change you'. She said

> yes, media perpetuates myths in society. It makes things sound true that are not. Particularly global TV related to entertainment. There's always this expected point of view that it seems to be telling you that you must have.

Andrew, the interviewee who liked conspiracy theories, took the most radical view of media power. Media institutions had come to dominate the world for him. People were now subject to them.

> Just like they say, that history is written by the victors, so is what we encounter on the media. The media is a control tool. I would say it is bringing us down, de-humanising us, and making us like sheep. We do what the elite tells us to do.

This mass culture-like analysis, strongly reflecting the thesis of the Frankfurt School (Adorno 1991), rarely arose in other interviews. Many participants avoided such overt recognitions of media power. Media were for them neutral instruments of entertainment, knowledge or education, reflecting the effects of Lukes's opinion-shaping third dimension of power. Absence of representations of culture and identity were noted by many, even those who regarded media practically or benevolently. They sensed something was wrong, but put the problem down to excessive presences of global media, inadequate local media or bad government media policies. The cultural traditionalists proved the most vociferous critics of global, particularly American, media. They judged them strictly in terms of the perceived break-up or weakening of local culture. However, not all participants in this group were themselves removed from or objective of government policy, which appeared actively to limit and regulate media available in Namibia. The 'isolationist' stance of government, criticised by interviewees, denied the public, while global media's narrow Western discourse proved even more deeply constricted culturally.

Media power narratives were reflexively glimpsed by participants. They noted them in global or Western media as transformative forces through entertainment and commercial forms, suggesting the concept of *disembedding media* as tradition was felt by actors to be 'loosening' or being undermined by globalisation, itself advocating a *transformational media* character. This insight derived from Giddens (1990:21), but came to be empirically noted in Windhoek narratives. In local Namibian media, the influence of government and political agendas in state media gave rise to the theoretical conceptions of *restrictive media* or *curbed media*. This led to derogatory views of restriction in the ideas of *flawed media or bad media* whereby production-quality or representational roles were questioned, and those managing broadcasts were seen as abusing their profession by making poor programmes. In other ways,

media were frequently criticised by conservative respondents as *culturally inappropriate* regarding news and entertainment content. This led to the concept of *trusted versus distrusted media*. Here, participants in trust terms graded the media they put faith in, as opposed to downgrading that to which they gave low trust.

To summarise, participants fell loosely into three groups in response to mediated power: *cultural expropriationist, traditionalist and representationalist*. Each typified distinct responses to power narratives to which each sensed they were exposed. Cultural expropriationists responded to the power of perceived restrictive national or traditional culture in favour of global-oriented lifestyle choices or opportunities encountered in media. Media was perceived as benign and 'useful' or merely as novel. These participants expropriated power and subverted it for individualised personal goals and lifestyle projects, or they less pragmatically sought novelty in entertainment. Cultural traditionalists expressed a negative response to Western-global media when it appeared to challenge local tradition and authority. They disapproved, or actively engaged in a cultural defence of the local against incursion of the global. Cultural representationalists occupied a middle position which revealed a general favourability to mediated culture, but they were actors who lamented social and cultural under-representation in emergent Namibian cultural landscapes.

Lines of resistance, dispute and tension around matters of culture were developing between participant standpoints. Culture appeared to be evolving as a site of struggle over who should legitimately possess modern Namibian symbols and values, with the state increasingly intervening to articulate its version of national 'tradition'. While this can be portrayed as an alignment of traditionalists against cosmopolitans, it needs to be seen as a more complex process, suggesting instead a dialectically driven logic toward a hybrid outcome of all three reflexive cultural positions. Whatever form this amalgam comes to take, it seems likely it will result in shifts in culture and identity which will first become visible among youth at the abrasive edge of movements of mediated cultural change (Boyd 2008a; Buckingham 2008; Rantanen 2005).

The final chapter will now bring together the main compass points of the complete grounded theory, and outline the primary findings of the Windhoek research.

# Chapter 8

# Conclusion: A theory of mediated interaction in Windhoek

## 8.1 Constituting a grounded theory of media

A theory of media emerged through the narrative accounts provided by the Windhoek participants. The theory was suggested through interview statements and commentaries providing or suggesting initial concepts which explained practical or ontological relationships with media. After completion of fieldwork, theoretical or advanced codes were constructed which formed the central elements of the general grounded theory. Theoretical codes abstractly captured overall patterns of media engagement among Windhoek participants, revealing processes of which they themselves may not have been aware. The core theoretical codes were: *formative media*, *media engagements*, *instrumental or practical media*, *ontological media*, *virtual connectivity*, *mediated power narratives*. Participants were generally coded as *cultural expropriationists*, *cultural traditionalists* or *cultural representationalists*.

This final chapter clarifies and abstractly unites the theoretical codes first discussed in the four findings chapters where they were used to organise actors' narratives of media processes. The original goals of the research will be revisited and contrasted with the findings on the ground. Goals represented the initial thrust of the study, which was to understand the relationship between media and actors' lifestyles and identities, to discover how social and personal biographies of young adults were being shaped by an increasing pervasiveness of media in Windhoek. They aimed also to establish the reflexive dimensions of identity: how participants negotiated and 'read' media, and their degrees of recognition and responsiveness to symbolic and ideological texts and codes openly or covertly embedded in local and global productions (Hall 2002[1974]; Morley 1980). This aspect addressed issues of power. The discussion outlining the grounded theory will address these goals and determine how far they were met. Participant interpretations are used to illustrate the general grounded theory that arose. The main theoretical codes are italicised in the discussion, as are the sub-categories or properties of the theoretical codes.

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### 8.2 Formative media

*Formative media* were defined as media that made impressionable impacts on actors at an early stage of biography during childhood or early teens. Radio and television were influential. All recalled radio broadcasts from their first years, while television was a later novelty for many. A few took television for granted as 'always there' with no memory of first use, while others vividly recalled their first viewing as 'an event'. Formative media gave insight into social backgrounds of class, ethnicity and gender: early degrees of affluence or deprivation, ethnic advantage or disadvantage, patriarchal control and exclusion in relation to media accessibility.

Formative media revealed patterns of *parental gatekeeping* where fathers would determine when television or radio could be watched or listened to. Parental practices revealed *lines of resistance* to television especially where parents were traditionalists, objecting to certain programming on grounds of sexual or cultural unsuitability. As a child, Crispin had liked Hip Hop music and wanted to adopt the dress style of artists he had seen in videos, but his guardian disapproved; he had to hide this interest. John (1)'s father had restricted television use because he saw it as 'rubbish'. Gail could never watch the programmes she liked because her father and brothers decided what to watch. Participants from professional white or black families usually enjoyed broad access to what they wanted to see or hear; however, for others it represented *restrictive media* or curbed media access. For some, early media accessibility was limited to radio on socio-economic grounds.

Some spoke of media as *child-minder media*. They recalled being left alone at home with radio or television when parents were absent for work or other activities. In other contexts, formative media involved *collective media practices* with family or neighbours, a shared experience where the routine was to congregate to enjoy a favourite radio or television broadcast. Communal media practices were strong among black participants in childhood. Formative media captured biographical stories of first media use and situationality of media in childhood. It laid the basis of media positioning in later life.

### 8.3 Media engagements

*Media engagements*, one of the more descriptive categories, built on and developed from formative media practices. Media engagements represented people's practical, but also reflexive, relationship with media in lifestyle and identity terms. This brought into play

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dialectic structurations of agency and socialisation where self-preference or choice was expressed alongside and sometimes in opposition to socio-cultural or ideological structures. Preference was sometimes shaped by cultural or political outlook; not necessarily through creative agency as this might be curbed by presences of *media power narratives*. However, media engagement was overwhelmingly an opportunity for *reflexive creative potential* on the part of participants, this being the capacity to assess and filter, accept or reject media content in terms of ideas, symbols and values embedded in entertainment or information. Reflexive identities were sensitive to recognition and comprehension of commercial-ideological agendas present in media. Participants glimpsed manifestations of power, particularly in Western culture, some objecting to its 'invasion', or criticising perceived *absences of the local* in what they watched or listened to. Others consciously chose to incorporate globally transmitted foreign lifestyles and values into their identity positions through *expropriational* strategies. Such participants did so frequently in response to supposed oppressive or restrictive aspects of local tradition, reacting to being told to live 'authentic culture', especially when state authority sought to impose official definitions. Female participants regarded global culture as liberating from older patriarchal culture. Responses to local or global media were usually rationalised and made clear to the interviewer. Reflexivity was recognised as strong rather than weak in the research, tending to contradict the cautiousness of the thesis title, referring to '(un)reflexive' negotiations of young adults.[50]

Media engagements involved a complex interplay of self and social identities in the Windhoek research setting. Certain participants consciously transcended social and cultural background or identity, spurning the demands older identifications made on them. Orientation to tradition was at times rejected, and those who did so were called *cultural expropriationists*, being people who used media for cultivating identity image or for planning lifestyle goals (Giddens 1991). However, mediated engagements were not in all cases utilitarian, instead involving utilisation of media for *novelty and play* through entertainment as an escape from mundane life. Thompson's (1995) term *symbolic distancing* expresses this as a self-strategy to lift individuals out of immediate social environments and into alternative global imaginings through Hollywood movies and television, with the Internet extending this immensely through entry to other cultures via social network sites. *Participatory media* like the Internet were overwhelmingly favoured by Windhoekers. Sites like Facebook represented

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[50] The research had started out with the assumption that Windhoek actors might reveal entirely unreflexive relationships with media. This possibility was left open until the very end of the research investigation.

virtual meeting places for networks of local and global friends to share philosophies and lives. New media had become entrenched in participants' habits in ways not realised at the onset of the research.

*Cultural expropriationists* demanded maximum exposure to global media through meaningful and practical engagements, using strongly reflexive open-access strategies that overcame severe local limitations. Participants 'torrented', a term used for downloading global media productions, sometimes through pirate sites to obtain the latest video game, film, television series or music. Downloading transcended cost and access barriers. Other participants looked for *relational* or *representational media*, being productions that conveyed signifiers of their own cultural and ontological outlooks, and they were disappointed when they did not find them. Nigerian cinema and soap operas, or films like *District 9*, were favoured here for representational qualities. Participants who sought representation were called *cultural representationalists*.

Affordability issues limited media possibilities for lower income individuals, but without denying them some form of participation. Poorer interviewees reflexively looked for the cheapest and best means to get what they could. *Mobile media* like cell phones were used to text, access the Internet, download music for mobile listening or (more commonly) for entry to radio broadcasts. They looked for the cheapest practices to ensure participation. There were no participants approached who had no form of media engagement. Those with little income tried hard to be involved as best they could.

## 8.4 Instrumental media

The idea of *instrumental media,* touched on above, represented the utilisation of media for short or long-term practical goals. Participants used media pragmatically to shape image or lifestyle, plan futures and negotiate new identifications while occasionally relinquishing former ones. The idea of *project identities* expresses this well (Castells 2004; Giddens 1991). Participants like Diana and Tom used media pragmatically for business initiatives or as life-motivational tools, and in this sense they encountered *motivational media*. For them, media was for accessing strategic options, opening up spaces of possibility. Instrumental media could also be *educative media*, deployed as a source of information or knowledge in the way that university and college students used it.

Instrumental media practices could take place within entertainment contexts. Soap operas were more than diversionary for some participants, being seen as *learning dramas* that provided windows into understanding sexuality and advice and models for existing or desired relationships. This should be understood in the context of Namibian cultures that have traditionally restricted access to sexual knowledge and advice on matters of intimacy for children and youth (Gauntlett 2008; Fox 2005b; Talavera 2005). Social networks represented a similar resource for relationship and sexuality issues through interactive online discussions.

Instrumental media were for national and international news using newspapers, television, radio and the Internet, allowing participants to know 'what was going on'. *Filtering practices* were noted as part of news: few read every word of newspaper or online stories, as they skimmed and selected news they wanted. Filtering media preserved and established personal preference or political and cultural outlook. Sometimes it might change established viewpoints. Media was instrumental for acquiring family news or maintaining emotional connection though phones or particularly the Internet. Instrumental media created family connectedness. Diaspora situations where family has migrated worldwide particularly required instrumental media (Miller 2011; Fuchs 2009).

## 8.5 Ontology Media

*Ontology media* importantly conceptualised media practices around existential or phenomenological positions of participants. Insights into culture and personal life emerged in interviews, and out of these, values and philosophies of what were acceptable or unacceptable ways of life. The symbolic qualities of media were frequently judged in relation to participants' ontological outlooks. Participants looked at media for confirmation of their personal and cultural standpoints, sometimes being defensive or resistant where media appeared to challenge these. They revealed anxieties at the perceived demise of traditional culture through global media and Westernisation, some demanding culturally *symbiotic media* that reciprocated and reinforced existing life courses, and that reflected Namibian or African empathies. *Representational media* was important here, being media that existentially reflected cultural codes and symbols of community and self. Ontology media directly shaped cultural position, in Bourdieu's (1979) sense, and expressed the need for *linguistic identification*: people desired to hear their mother language in television or film, or be free to use it in online discussions, so confirming the powerful linkage between language and culture (Van der Waal 2008; Wasserman 2003).

Others sought mediated ontologies that explained the meaning of personal life and offered role models for living. They spoke of using media for *life-matters* that taught them about life and offered guiding principles that they could follow. Hilma discussed this, saying that television and the Internet were good for *learning things about life*, although her ambiguous relations with media resulted in her disparaging popular media culture because it demanded *perfect representation* of individuals, especially women, which could not possibly be lived up to. While media gave her good advice, in her view, it contradicted and undermined her self-worth. She disapproved of *sartorial identities* on social networks and in popular entertainment, where mediated gender narratives forced self-displays of female sexuality.

Participants overtly revealed *individuation ontologies* where emphasis on body cultivation and lifestyle presentation were central (Bauman 2001). Media were used for checking fashion and discussing dress online as a prelude to exhibition or *self-celebrity*. Construction and negotiation of image identities proved a prime concern for many Windhoek participants, particularly (but not exclusively) women. Ideally being liked, desired, befriended and discussed on and off line appeared important. This did not necessarily mean a break with parental or traditional culture, although it revealed distinct diversions from former cultural positions. Personal ontologies and self-identity demanded recognition and acceptance from others in media landscapes.

*Fantasy ontologies* were lived out in online social networks and in multiplayer Internet gaming. Several male participants occupied temporary *online identities* fighting, competing or cooperating with virtual others through interactive video games. They were able to act out characters they could not possibly embody in real life, and invested considerable time and effort into these identifications. Participants called the Internet generally, and gaming in particular, *addictive media* in which they might immerse themselves for twelve hour stretches, Cicero and Tiaan being typical examples. Gaming worlds were not necessarily unconnected with real life. They represented educational or *learning media* for some, and Tiaan spoke of them training cognition and developing decision-making skills that were transferable to everyday life. Gaming ontologies offered ultimate immersive symbolic distancing possibilities for participants.

Ontology media practices tended to reveal the fault lines and lines of resistance in media engagements. Perceived threats to existing culture, or the lure of extraneous lifeworld alternatives, divided the Windhoek participants revealing opposing cultural and ontological

positions around local and global power narratives; among the participants these produced *cultural expropriationists* and *cultural traditionalists*. 'In-between' identities were found that favoured global culture, while at the same time doubting it and expressing anxiety toward it; this group of participants ontologically craved representation in popular mediated entertainment, and were called *cultural representationalists*. These were neither ostensibly for nor against Western media, but demanded, or desired, to see their own culture or society in what they watched or listened to. The value of ideas of *hybrid culture* or *hybrid media* arose at this point (Aboul-Ela 2007; Prabhu 2007; Beckmann 2004; Kraidy 1999). Given the weak production base in Namibia for television and film compared to other nations, participants sought representation in 'next-best' alternatives. Hybrid film such as *District 9*, *Blood Diamond*, the African identifications of Nigerian cinema, or 'localised' soap opera programmes such as *7 de Laan* or *Egoli* were revealed as valuable. These expressed Bhabha's (1994) 'third space' of 'liminal' cultural production, offering participants ontological satisfaction through depiction of familiar local worlds.

While the research noted participant positions of resistance to global culture that postcolonial authors write about, the research determined that this, while of value, was essentially too one-dimensional in that it failed to capture more multi-dimensional complexities of media reception. Representational or expropriational responses were felt to be marginalised or excluded in postcolonial frameworks, although they defended cultural 'difference'. This research is in sympathy with Kraidy's (1999:475) demand for studies of mediated culture to evolve past a narrow resistance focus, leading to a

> re-formulating [of] intercultural and international communication beyond buoyant models of resistance and inauspicious patterns of domination.

This thesis supports such an extension of thinking. *Hybrid media*, as positive cultural constructions, proved deeply significant and representational for many of those interviewed, and must be regarded as a core finding and pillar of the grounded theory.

## 8.6 Virtual connectivity

*Virtual connectivity* extends Thompson's (1995) concept of *mediated interaction*. While the latter refers to ways in which face-to-face interaction is generally supplemented by the interventions of mediated ones in globalised lifestyles, virtual connectivity deepens interaction through advances in Internet communication and social network sites. Virtual connectivity in Windhoek conceptualised instantaneous communication with distant

individuals in far-off cultures. Such virtual practices were common among participants, with most having Facebook or similar accounts which were extensively used on a daily basis. Many stated the Internet to be their primary media.

*Culture sharing* was a common practice whereby participants compared cultural narratives with online friends. Jan and Grace spoke of 'learning a lot about other societies'. This deepened knowledge and sensitised them to alternative values and ways of life. Transcendence from local culture was possible through global culture sharing. Others *lifestyle checked* international fashion, sharing ideas with people in their own country, and in the 'global outside' (Miller 2011). Virtual connectivity made possible *presentational media* practices. Selves were exhibited on websites or social networks via biographical profiles and photographs for mutual admiration. A further level of presentation was *self-celebrity* for *identity displays.* Participants spoke of 'looking good' to others and possibly becoming famous. Perfect image (recalling Hilma's critique) was expected, and Diana stated that "they don't want to see the real you." A degree of idealised perfection was expected in self-celebrity practices in line with presentations in global popular culture (Boyd 2008a; Paglia 2001). Windhoekers relished the self-presentational possibilities of social networks, confirming and extending the applicational relevance of Goffman's (1998 [1959]) dramaturgical theory for an online world.

Virtual connectivity produced darker dimensions of contact with *virtual strangers*. Participants could not always confirm the identities and motivations of those they were in communication with in their social network practices. Interactions were sometimes unwanted and involved sexual overtures. They referred to *online predators* and, like Mumba, recounted similar unpleasant experiences discussed by youth in other countries that could alarmingly spill into their non-virtual private worlds (Livingstone 2010; Boyd 2008b). Strangers could be abusive, resulting in *abrasive media encounters* for the Windhoekers in their Internet conversations. Namibian manners customarily dictate formal politeness in discourse that was not automatically the norm online, where harsh comment prevailed for controversial subjects. Participants were frequently shocked by reactions to what they had written, as in the case of Andrew who had tried to argue that Osama bin Laden's killing had been a fiction.

A pivotally important aspect of social network interconnectivity was found in the use of Facebook for uniting scattered or diasporic Namibian families, a finding also of Miller (2011) for his Trinidad study. Windhoek participants sought and maintained communication with

family who had emigrated, usually to Western countries. Social sites appeared to have become crucial in global migratory contexts, confirming Appadurai's (1996) idea of *ethnoscapes* where migrants seek to maintain cultural linkages (actual and emotional) using media. Social networks were an enormous attraction for this familial function. The term *diasporic media* was established here.

Interactivity, as previously mentioned for online gaming, was addictive. *Addictive media* were media such as the Internet that became difficult to relinquish once connected to them. Participants would be engaged with them for many hours, staying up through the night using Facebook or surfing the Web. Campbell and Park (2008) argue that the notion of 'addiction' can be explained by the idea that virtual connectivity disrupts patterns of time, which become desequenced or compressed through the intensity of practices, and this appeared to be happening with research participants. Downloading audio-visual content for future consumption was a further reason to stay online for long periods. Participants frequently spoke of *living online* or of the Internet *eating up time*. Most said that the Internet had become more important than other media, and was now *essential practice*. Bertha explained this well, stating that she was now "hooked into that world".

## 8.7 Mediated power narratives

*Mediated power narratives* were expressed, sometimes reflexively recognised or glimpsed, through the statements of participants. Media theory tends to see power as inherent in institutions of media, through the products they disseminate and embodied in acts of engagement. Bourdieu (1991) wrote of power being present in all cultural practice, partly with the practitioner, although primarily located within processes of cultural production. Media represented *symbolic power* within the Windhoek setting, being described by Thompson (1995:17) as "the capacity to intervene in the course of events, to influence the actions of others and indeed to create events, by means of the production and transmission of symbolic forms."

Windhoekers responded to power narratives primarily when their own cultures were challenged or threatened, or when local culture was unrepresented or absent from the media they consumed. Then they were nostalgic for it or demanded protection and presence, asserting local identities and lifestyles. They were frequently aware that global media represented a force for change. Resistance identities as described by Castells (2004) materialised in interviewee accounts where *cultural traditionalists* demanded reassertion and

protection of official or personal versions of culture. They insisted on *appropriate media* encapsulating acceptable local values and moral rectitude. Overt depictions of sexuality and violence or unwarranted behaviour, were rejected as inappropriate. Tradition represented a *line of resistance* in media engagements. Such a resistance might be conceived in Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992:108-109) sense as a defence of vested interests, that is, of political and cultural capital perceived as under threat from the global outside. They argue

> social agents are not "particles" that are mechanically pushed and pulled by external forces. They are rather bearers of capitals, and depending on their trajectory and on the position they occupy in the field by virtue of their endowment (volume and structure) in capital, they have a propensity to orient themselves actively either toward the preservation of the distribution of capital or toward the subversion of this distribution.

Cultural traditionalists sought to manage and retain the cultural and symbolic capital they felt they still had. Cultural expropriationists, sometimes excluded from economic and social capital due to class position or remoteness from influential political or social groups, reflexively utilised media to subvert and establish their own means of access.

*Cultural representationalists* proved less vociferous than traditionalists, asking for television and cinema that reflected Namibian rather than American lives, and they bemoaned *local absences*. Ontologies of representation proved important in the constitution of identity (Kitter 2009; Haack 1993). Yet representationalist and traditionalist positions both sensed power that potentially denied or undermined their ontological security, and they recognised disembedding characteristics of global media institutions. *Disembedding media* were media that 'dug out' or weakened the former bedrocks of traditional and national society, problematising it through incursions of global or Western mediated symbols (Giddens 1990). Participants revealed awareness of disembedding processes. Cultural expropriationists were sensitive to the socially transformative character of media: Crispin spoke of 'cultural loss' saying: "I cannot live without media now, but things are being lost."

The Lady May affair (Chapter 7) was widely discussed in interviews, and represented a struggle of cultural traditionalists and 'Western-favourable' (rather than pro-Western) cultural expropriationists. The event revealed an emerging controversy over what was 'acceptable' popular culture. The official support of traditionalist positions through state institutions such as NBC gave added strength to the cultural traditionalist position. They approved of the sanctions against Lady May and the banning of her music because she had

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displayed 'foreign bad habits'. However, other participants objected to and condemned state intervention in their musical tastes. Interviewees protested when officialdom curbed or banned artists on their behalf. Not only cultural expropriationists condemned the treatment of Lady May; others who had reservations about media defended her. The case revealed Namibian culture to be an increasingly divided and contested terrain.

News was an area where participants strongly recognised power agendas. They revealed reflexive practices toward either *trusted* or *mistrusted media*. American and European international news stations such as CNN and BBC were watched but mistrusted by some; others such as Al Jazeera being used as reference points to check reliability of stories. Those who liked news engaged in *checking and filtering practices* to ensure integrity of information. One respondent spoke of international news media as 'not telling the whole story'. They were critical of the reporting of African news, and spoke of bias: land reform in Zimbabwe was cited as an example of misreporting. There was a tendency to doubt and denigrate local news from NBC or One Africa, and foreign stations were sometimes trusted more, rather than less, despite general reservations. The problem was perceived to be not one of propaganda, but of local quality in terms of poor journalism and bad production. Some participants did, however, see NBC as a tool of government, but these were few. The *quality issue* (rather than power) was prominent in interviews: people demanded better television and radio, and professional news, as McMillin's own international studies of developing societies elsewhere have shown (2009:162).

Other power narratives existed outside media, systems of sexuality and religion shaping how media was consumed by participants (Zegeye 2008). Religiosity led to participants filtering or rejecting films or books, and they engaged in *self-censoring practices*. Petrus and Happy avoided over-sexualised media content and anything that offended Christian principle. Books and films like *The Da Vinci Code* were condemned for offending Catholic belief. In terms of gender, female participants objected to *sexualised media* that they saw through popular television and cinema entertainment, but also through Internet pornography which was regarded as negatively affecting male behaviour. Male participants sometimes admitted to consuming graphic sexual media, confirming these perceptions. Patriarchal power was recognised by Diane as pervading media, even though she valued media practically; while Bertha talked about the need for the 'de-colonisation' of women in media. Several women thought media needed more positive, creative and empowering representations of women than was currently the case. While Western popular entertainment was accused of negative

depictions, local media were seen as little better. Namibian music videos were mentioned for showing women as 'sexual decoration' around older male music stars.

Media narratives were not regarded automatically as negative forms of power. Media were a resource for many participants, and something to use and expropriate. *Cultural expropriationists*, in particular, approached media in this way. They used media for lifestyle projects, self-presentation, life-planning and for motivational purposes. Westernising agendas were either not recognised or were reflexively incorporated into lifestyle choices. Others just resisted and condemned Western media. Responses to media power were therefore divided and uneven among Windhoekers, some being favourable and expropriational, others reflexively springing into culturally defensive positions.

Descriptions of power from postcolonial theory (McMillin 2009; Appadurai 1996; Bhabha 1994) were glimpsed in participant accounts. Windhoekers demanded media representation of their worlds, and they recognised the power narratives present in globalisation, including erosions of local cultures. Yet postcolonial theory did not appear to leave room for the reflexive opportunity of local/global media, and writers such as Bhabha allow only for possibilities of subaltern resistance to the 'outside', rather than the creative lifestyle projects presented in the sociologies of Giddens (1998; 1991) and Bourdieu (1990; 1979). Yet participants showed highly practical expropriations of media symbols and narratives for their own purposes, while revealing reflexive awareness of subliminal power. Media could be instrumental, and power agendas filtered and discarded to some extent (Fiske 1989a). Such reflexive practices are dismissed in postcolonial theory as a Marxian form of 'false consciousness', and postcolonial 'subjects' themselves relegated to the subservient neo-colonial status of victims of globalisation. Such theories underplayed expropriational strategies of agents in the face of global incursions, and seemed too essentialist to be a consistently valid view of global power.

**8.8 Final remarks**

This grounded theory of media within the Windhoek matrix captures a rich if fleeting portrait of lifestyles and identity in relation to media. The research picture, to use Mead's (1967 [1934]:174) metaphor of society as a river in constant flow and change, has in this sense already moved on. New practices are already taking place alongside new inputs. Yet the research established media as well-entrenched in the lifestyles and identities of Windhoekers, despite the uneven degrees of access and divergent levels of reception that existed. As an

urban phenomena, media had 'normalised' in the lives of many, and no participant was without some form of mediated engagement.

Many participant practices were rich and deep. They used media creatively and reflexively, reaching into other societies a long way from their own through entertainment, or directly and interactively through the Internet. Media literacy was high, and Windhoekers were 'quick learners', overcoming former historical restrictions to media access. They confounded the assumptions of media theorists about power in global culture: power narratives were not invisible to most, and becoming subject to such narratives was not inevitable. Participants were flexible and creative users of mediated technologies and the cultures they carried.

Young Windhoekers were strongly divided over their vision of how a future Namibian culture should be. Traditionalists sought a media culture that maintained emotionally and ontologically satisfying elements that incorporated conservative principles assumed to have been agreed and entrenched sometime in the past; while other participants looked forward to a remaking of culture combining previous practices with new values, or which decisively reconstituted novel ones favouring individualistic goals and initiatives. A majority of interviewees appeared to align themselves with the last project. Few wanted a traditionalist model of social lifestyle, or of restrictive traditional identities, preferring new constructions of self-identity. Women especially saw limited personal advantages in maintaining dominant patriarchal traditions. Mediated culture offered too many other possibilities to ignore, and it had evolved into a vital social resource. However, most hoped that diversified cosmopolitan media would adapt Namibian culture to a new dispensation that provided greater social choice rather than entirely abandoning the past: no participant was overtly anti-traditional. Several interviewees were nervous that the government would somehow restrict change, and the Lady May affair was a cause for concern for many. There were fears that the cultural traditionalist position, more or less supported by the state, would restrict change and opportunity. Regulatory measures on the part of government toward media compounded this fear. A few participants were not, however, averse to media control through legal and political means.

In sum, Windhoekers had strongly embraced the developments that had occurred in media in their country. Media had become strongly positioned in their lifestyles. They were maintaining existing identities through old or new media, yet many young people were fashioning new self-identities, to the exasperation of others. Participants recognised media's

liberationist potential, while being far from ignorant of power agendas and the problematic cultural incursion media potentially threatened. The media's power to *exclude* their own personal and social lives proved to be the greatest complaint. Many used media for practical ends, but also wanted audio-visual forms to reflect something of themselves and their world, a level of reflexive awareness that was most shared by the cultural representationalists.

What are the implications of this research for identity construction and negotiation? The original research goals and questions aimed at understanding and capturing a picture of what was happening with identity in the Windhoek matrix. What was found proved complex, but with clearly-emerging ideas about the processes and flows that were responsible for the shifting identities in the city. Many identities exist, with an array of localised varieties prevailing through freely-held or ideologically enforced conceptions of 'traditional' or of national identity. However, mass media are responsible for complicating the situation. The enormous opening up of possibilities that media, especially the Internet, provides has allowed significant degrees of symbolic distancing to be engaged in on the part of citizens, while matters of class and socio-economic position continue to strongly regulate the political economy of access. In participant statements, factors of race appeared to be mentioned or alluded to much less than factors of class, although race and ethnicity undoubtedly remain important forms of social division and inequality. Yet in cities like Windhoek, a desire to use media 'to belong' to emergent cultural processes was strong, and the media were often cited as a vital practical and symbolic resource to change lifestyle and life-chances in pragmatic ways that transcended class and racial barriers.

People were acutely aware of the opportunities and advantages that media offered. Mediated ideas and symbols represented cultural capital for changing existing identities by looking to the outside, even of directly and in real-time 'talking' to it through Internet social networks. Much of this contact was commercial and material in character, with media being used for shaping identities of lifestyle image and self-presentation. Not all used it exclusively in this way. Others looked for knowledge or information to confirm or change existing beliefs and values, even to change their culture and personal outlook. For some the potentially narrow social and cultural confines of Namibian society created an ontological need to do this. However, these types of contact with global culture were only occasionally accompanied by distinct recognition of the power narratives overtly or covertly contained in their mediated encounters.

What comes out strongly from the comments of participants was a sense of the emerging divisions between traditionalists who sought to guard and protect older cultures and expropriational individuals within the general public who had discovered the possibilities of self-identity and lifestyle-building alternatives through media. The Lady May affair proved an instructive means to view these divisions first-hand. It remains to be seen which cultural constituency prevails in upcoming struggles, if indeed cultural oppositions develops further.

Grounded theory, as theory, social philosophy and method, was used to delve into the Windhoek matrix and seek out patterns of contemporary identity change or maintenance through media. What of the researcher's own situational reflexivity in this investigation? At no time was any assumption about objectivity or 'distance' from the research setting made. In line with Riach (2009) and Charmaz (2006), interviews were regarded as reflexive exchanges between two identity locations (participant and researcher) whereby information generated was a joint enterprise. There was no substantial void between these positions and the generation of emergent knowledge, and the resulting research outcome might be termed 'enmeshed knowledge'. Of course, the scholar recognised the unequal power relation in being ultimately privileged in shaping and claiming responsibility for its final theoretical formulation. His own 'middle classness', gender, ethnic and national markers of being white, male and English all intervened, as did the imposed discourse of the 'academic field' itself (in Bourdieu's sense) which predisposed him to undertake the research in the way he did. All these aspects were therefore present, and the research attempted to be as reflexive in recognising the influence of these on the research as was achievable.

Ultimately, the findings are the interpretation of the individual researcher rather than participants. There may have been other ways to present and analyse the information they provided, but grounded theory is an imaginative more than a purely scientific method. These are the conclusions that occurred at the time, and the researcher attempted to provide as comprehensive an account as was possible.

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## Appendix A: Participant biographies

| Name | Sex | Age | Main language | Occupation | Background |
|------|-----|-----|---------------|------------|------------|
| Abby | F | 25 | Oshikwanyama | Supermarket worker | Moved to Katutura in 2006 from a village near Oshakati. Achieved grade 8 education before leaving school to help her mother at home after her father's death. She sends part of her small income of N$60 a day to support her parent. |
| Andrew | M | 26 | Oshiwambo/ English | Civil engineer | Lived in Katutura with his parents who both work in government. Comes from Oshakati, but his family moved to Windhoek in 2000. He won a scholarship to study civil engineering in Russia from 2006-2010, and now works for a local engineering firm. |
| Anika | F | 23 | German/ English | Student | Studying psychology. Was briefly interviewed on Internet use. Interview curtailed due to time constraint. |
| Artus | M | 24 | Oshiherero | Accountant | Lived in Hochland Park with his wife. Works for the Namibian government. He was interviewed as a member of Focus Group Six at Maerua Mall during his lunch hour break. |
| Berns | F | 22 | Afrikaans | Shop worker | Lived with her working class parents in Khomasdal where she grew up. She was a supervisor in the confectionary shop where she worked. She described her family as 'not poor, but not well-off'. She left school after grade 9 hoping for further studies, but could not afford to go to university. |
| Bertha | F | 24 | Oshikwanyama | NGO | Lived in Katutura. Comes from Omalala near the northern town of Ongwediva which she left when she moved to Windhoek in 2005 to take a degree in psychology and sociology. She graduated in 2009 and now works as a social researcher at an NGO. |
| Booysen | M | 21 | Afrikaans | Student | Music student interviewed at a local college. He was originally from Keetmanshoop (south Namibia). Provided a discussion on music and the Internet. |
| Crispin | M | 26 | Oshiwambo | Student | Lived in Katutura with his aunt. Originally from the mining town of Tsumeb where he was brought up by his grandfather following the |

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| | | | | | divorce of his parents. The grandfather was a local businessman with connections to SWAPO. He was in his final year of studies. Crispin was interviewed individually and later as part of Focus Group Three. |
| Charlotte | F | 19 | Afrikaans | Student | Left the eastern town of Gobabis in 2010 to study chemistry in Windhoek. Her family lived on a smallholding outside the town and they were funding her studies. Being in Windhoek was her first time living outside Gobabis. |
| Diane | F | 20 | Oshikwanyama | Student | Lived in Pioneers Park, and was studying sociology and psychology. She was originally from a small village on the Namibian-Angolan border, and had moved to Windhoek to live with her older sister in 2005, hoping for a 'more interesting life'. She was a business woman as well as student, who made her own jewellery which she advertised and sold from Facebook. Diane was interviewed individually and later as part of Focus Group Three. |
| Cicero | M | 24 | Afrikaans | Student | Lived in Suiderhof with his parents and was in his final year of studies in sociology and psychology. He and his family had lived in Windhoek all their lives, although their grandparents had originally moved from Rehoboth. |
| Esau | M | 23 | Oshikwanyama | Security worker | He had moved to Windhoek from a small town near Ongwediva in 2009, and worked for a local security company as a guard. He found the job hard, having to work most nights which separated him from his girlfriend. |
| Falen | F | 22 | Oshikwanyama | Student | Lived in Katutura with relatives, although her family remains in Oshakati. Came to study in Windhoek in 2009. |
| Gail | F | 21 | Afrikaans | Student | Lived in Khomasdal with her parents and was studying business. She and her family were originally from Rehoboth, but they moved to Windhoek after the death of the patriarchal grandfather in 1998. Her father had been a builder, but later became a government housing |

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| | | | | | inspector. She was the only daughter, and mentioned that her family was dominated by males. |
| Grace | F | 23 | Caprivi | Student | Lived in Katutura since 2007, but is originally from Katima Mulilo in the Caprivi. She came from a traditional background which had taught her an interest in traditional arts. She was studying music at a local college. |
| Guido | M | 18 | Afrikaans | Unemployed | Lived in Klein Windhoek with his family. His father was a sales manager in a car showroom. He had finished school in late 2010, and was trying to find a place at a South African university to study mechanical engineering, as yet unsuccessfully. He was interviewed jointly with his friend Julia at Maerua Mall. |
| Happy | M | 25 | English | Student | Lived in Pioneers Park, but his family was originally from a small town in rural Zambia. His family moved when he was nine to north Namibia where his Namibian mother had originally lived. Unlike many, he was brought up to speak English. His family moved to Windhoek in 1999, and he studied media and sociology at degree level from 2008. Happy was interviewed individually and later as part of Focus Group Three. |
| Hilma | F | 24 | Oshikwanyama | Researcher | Hilma grew up in a black middle class family in Oshakati where her father was a manager in an insurance company. Her background was affluent, although she was raised with a traditional outlook. The family moved to Windhoek in 1998. She studied sociology and psychology from 2006-2009, thereafter being recruited to work in a government ministry as a research assistant. She is currently a team manager for the 2011 National Census. |
| Jacob | M | 24 | Afrikaans | Student | Lived in Klein Windhoek, sharing an apartment with his friend Pietre (2). He was from a mixed-race coloured family. His middle class father worked in government. Jacob was an engineering student. He was interviewed as part of |

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| | | | | | Focus Group Two having lunch with fellow students John (2) and Pietre (2) at Maerua Mall. |
| Jan | M | 18 | Afrikaans | Gap year | He had grown up in Klein Windhoek in an affluent white middle class business family. The father had an import-export company. He had strong friend and family links with South Africa, mainly Johannesburg, and this shaped his outlook and interests beyond his immediate Namibian context. He had finished school at the end of 2010, and was in his gap year before leaving in 2010 to study structural engineering at a South African university. |
| John (1) | M | 25 | Afrikaans | Bank clerk | Lived in Khomasdal with his wife and child, having achieved grade 11 at school, but deciding not to go to university. John (1) had been born in Windhoek, and had come from a relatively poor 'coloured' family which had valued reading and encouraged his education. He worked at a bank in town. |
| John (2) | M | 23 | Afrikaans | Student | Lived in Hochland Park with his coloured parents. He was an engineering degree student. He was interviewed as part of Focus Group Two having lunch with fellow students Jacob and Pietre at Maerua Mall. |
| Jerry | M | 24 | Oshiherero | Accountant | Works for a government ministry. Lived with his girlfriend in Hochland Park, but had moved from Okahandja (where his father runs a garage) in 2005 to study accountancy in Windhoek. He was interviewed as a member of Focus Group Six at Maerua Mall during his lunch hour. |
| Julia | F | 18 | Afrikaans/ English | Unemployed | Lived in Klein Windhoek with her family having finished school at the end of 2010. She was planning a gap year visit to family in Sweden before attending university in South Africa in 2012. She hoped for a place at Stellenbosch studying African literature. |
| Julius | M | 23 | Oshiwambo | Security guard | Lived in an informal settlement in Ombili, Katutura. He was single, and spent most of his day and evenings working. Julius hoped to |

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| | | | | | buy a plot and build a house as soon as he had saved enough. He was interviewed at an ATM cashpoint while listening to the radio on his cell. |
| Khoeseb | M | 20 | Damara | Car washer | Worked at a car dealership cleaning vehicles. He was interviewed about his cell phone usage during his lunch break in Windhoek's southern industrial area. |
| Lebius | M | 23 | Oshiwambo | Student | Lived in Katutura where he grew up from childhood when his family moved there from the north. Several family members including his father worked in government. He had inherited a very traditional outlook from them. Was studying painting at college. |
| Lucas | M | 25 | Oshiwambo | Student | Lived in Hochland Park with his parents. Lucas was born in Katutura, and his family were well-educated and politically connected. His father was a middle-ranking government official and member of the ruling party SWAPO. Lucas was culturally conservative, being critical of many fellow youth whom he regarded as 'forgetful' of the ideals of the liberation struggle. He was currently studying chemistry. Lucas was interviewed in Focus Group One. |
| Maria | F | 22 | Oshikwanyama | Student | Lived in Katutura where she was born and grew up. She was part of Focus group One. |
| Martin | M | 20 | Afrikaans | Student | He was a second year student studying engineering at a South African university, but temporarily back in Windhoek visiting his parents in Ludwigsdorf, an affluent part of the city. He showed very strong media interests, particularly in the Internet and gaming online. Martin was interviewed as part of Focus Group Five at Maerua Mall. |
| Mary | F | 20 | Afrikaans | Shop worker | Lived in Khomasdal with her low income family, currently working at a confectionery shop. Mary was interviewed jointly with Berns at Maerua Mall during their lunch break. |
| Mayunga | M | 23 | Oshiherero | Security guard | Lived in Katutura since 2009 in an informal settlement with a friend, |

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| | | | | | having migrated from a village near Omaruru. Mayunga was single. He was interviewed while guarding an ATM machine at Maerua Mall, and spoke about his cell phone use. |
| Michelle | F | 20 | Afrikaans | Secretary | Lived in Windhoek West with her parents. Her family could be described as working class Afrikaner given that her father was employed as a head garage mechanic. She had not done well enough at school to go to university. Michelle was interviewed jointly with Mitch at Maerua Mall. |
| Mitch | M | 18 | Afrikaans | Unemployed | Lived in Olympia with his white lower middle class parents. He had left school in 2010 and was briefly employed as a shop worker between February and June 2010 when he was fired 'for taking too long to serve customers'. He was unsure what he would do for his future. He was interviewed jointly with Mitch at Maerua Mall. |
| Mumba | F | 23 | Oshiwambo | Student | Lived in Pioneers Park close to where she studied as a final year media and sociology student. Mumba came to Windhoek in 2008 from a low income family in a village close to the northern city of Oshakati. She was by her own definition a 'media freak' particularly of the Internet, being a heavy daily user of Facebook. Mumba was interviewed individually and later as part of Focus Group Three. |
| Ndaka | F | 26 | Tswana/ English | Student | Lived in Olympia with her husband and child, but was originally from north east Namibia close to the Botswana border. She studied sociology and media, while her husband worked for a telecommunication company as a manager. |
| Nora | F | 22 | Afrikaans | Secretary | Worked for a medical practice in Maerua Mall. Interviewed during her lunch break on her interest in film and music. She was unable to give up much of her time, and the interview was curtailed. |
| Petrus | M | 20 | Oshiwambo | Student | Lived in Pioneers Park sharing a |

| | | | | | house with other students, having come from Oshakati in 2009 where his parents still lived. He was currently undertaking business studies. He was interviewed as part of Focus Group Four, and was a strong advocate for local Namibian music. |
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| Pietre (1) | M | 21 | Afrikaans | Student | Lived in Eros. He was studying engineering at a South African university, but had returned to Windhoek to visit his white middle class parents. He was interviewed as part of Focus Group Five outside the Ster Kinekor cinema at Maerua Mall who spoke of film and online video gaming. |
| Pietre (2) | M | 24 | Afrikaans | Student | Lived in Klein Windhoek with his friend Jacob. His background was mixed-race coloured and his family background appeared middle class. He was a degree engineering student. He was interviewed as part of Focus Group Two. |
| Rashida | F | 20 | Afrikaans | Student | Lived in Pioneers Park, but came from the eastern town of Gobabis in 2010 to study chemistry. Her family were smallholder farmers of a mixed-race coloured background. Rashida was jointly interviewed with Charlotte. Both spoke of new novel experiences of going to the cinema. |
| Regan | M | 20 | Afrikaans | Waiter | Lived in Khomasdal. He was a waiter at a steakhouse in Maerua Mall and resided with his mixed-race coloured parents. His family were low income. He was interviewed at Maerua Mall during his lunch break. |
| Rianna | F | 23 | Oshiwambo | Student | Lived in Pioneers Park. She was undertaking business studies. Rianna was interviewed as part of Focus group Four that discussed music and Lady May, vigorously defending the singer. |
| Robert | M | 26 | English | Librarian | Originally from Harare, Zimbabwe, he had left to undertake a degree in library studies in 2002. On graduating he had stayed in Windhoek due to the political situation in Zimbabwe, and gained employment as a librarian. He is a permanent resident married to a |

| | | | | | | Namibian. |
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| Selma | F | 23 | Oshiwambo | Student | | Lived in Katutura, but had moved to Windhoek to study in 2009. She was studying music at a local arts college. Her views on living in a 'modern' city were ambivalent: she enjoyed the 'variety' that urban life offered, but was conscious that her traditions were weaker there compared with in her rural home. |
| Shikongo | F | 24 | Oshiwambo | Shopworker | | Worked in a clothes store in the Wernhil Centre. A short interview during her lunch break about cell phone uses. |
| Sonny | M | 21 | Oshiwambo | Student | | Lived in Katutura, but was originally from a small town outside Ongwediva which he left in 2010. Sonny was one of the most conservative and traditionalistic participants. He was interviewed as part of Focus Group Four who spoke about Western media influence. |
| Subeb | M | 25 | Oshiwambo | Car guard | | Briefly interviewed at Maerua Mall about cell phone use. Came to Windhoek in 2009 seeking work. He was listening to cell phone music downloads while protecting cars outside a supermarket. Interview was short due to limited information being forthcoming. |
| Tangeni | M | 25 | Oshiwambo | Student | | Lived in Katutura where he rented a room with other students, having come to Windhoek from Oshakati in 2009. Tangeni was from a conservative and government-connected middle class family. He currently studied chemistry. He was interviewed as part of Focus Group One. |
| Taria | F | 23 | Oshiwambo | Student/ Waitress | | Lived in Hochland Park and came from a low income family in the north of the country. She currently studied chemistry, but worked evenings as a waitress in a bar to fund her studies. She was interviewed as part of Focus Group One. |
| Tiaan | M | 20 | Afrikaans | Student | | Lived in Klein Windhoek. He was studying engineering at a South African university, but had returned to Windhoek to visit his white middle class parents. He was interviewed as part of Focus Group |

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| | | | | | | Five outside the Ster Kinekor cinema at Maerua Mall. |
| Talia | F | 21 | Afrikaans | Administrative assistant | | Lived in Klein Windhoek with her white middle class business parents who ran a computer company in town. She had been working for them for two years, but intended to study at a South African university in 2012. |
| Tjaverua | M | 23 | Oshiherero | Student | | Music student interviewed at a college. Interview curtailed at request of the student, lasting only a few minutes on music interests. |
| Tom | M | 26 | Oshiwambo | Charity worker/ businessman | | Lived in Katutura where he had been born and grew up. He worked for a cancer charity, but was also part of a business consortium that included his father; they tendered for government contracts. Tom explained that his father had been a liberation struggle soldier and was now well-connected to SWAPO party. He hoped to 'be rich' and respected one day. |
| Tuka | M | 23 | Oshiwambo | Car guard | | Lived in an informal peri-urban settlement called Babylon on the edge of West Katutura, one of the poorest areas of the city. He protected cars at the Maerua Mall shopping centre, a job that he found tedious. Listening to radio on his cell phone alleviated the boredom. He supported a wife and child. |
| Tuleli | F | 25 | Oshiherero | Student | | Lived in Katutura. She was interviewed as part of Focus Group Six. |
| Twama | F | 21 | Oshiherero | Student | | Lived in Katutura but was from Okahandja which she left to study music in Windhoek. Her background was low income. Twama hoped to become a popular musician and liked singing. |
| Tyler | F | 25 | Afrikaans | Administrator | | Lived in Khomasdal with her husband. She worked in an educational establishment in a job she described as 'boring'. She can be described as lower middle income, and a mixed-race coloured participant who liked cinema and radio, although had limited experience of the Internet. |
| Victoria | F | 18 | Afrikaans | Student | | Lived in Pioneers Park with her lower middle income coloured |

| | | | | | | parents. She was studying English. |
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| Werner | M | 26 | Oshiwambo | Soldier | | Lived and worked in Olympia in an army base. He was originally from Eenhana (north of Oshakati) where his wife and child still lived, given the rule that family could not reside with soldiers in camp. He spoke of the idea of having a 'double-identity' in that in town he was urban, and back home he was expected to be traditional. He was an interesting participant in that he had a foot in modern and global culture. |
| Willem | M | 23 | Afrikaans | Student | | Studying music at a local college. Briefly interviewed about local music and Lady May. Curtailed due to time pressure on his part. |
| Yefet | M | 25 | Oshikwanyama | Car guard | | Lived in Katutura, having moved to Windhoek in 2002 from a small village outside Oshakati. He and his wife and three children survived solely on his earnings from minding people's motor vehicles at the Hidas shopping centre in Klein Windhoek. |

## Appendix B: Research questionnaire and explanation of question goals

Grounded theory is essentially a reflexive and dynamic investigation, and neither the research framework nor the interpretation of respondents' contributions remains static. Questions are required to be general at the start of research pending their *evolution* during comparison of interviews and concomitant coding processes (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Questions evolved from one interview to the next in response to in-coming information from participants. At the start of the research, the questionnaire was a flexible tool rather than rigid and unchangeable, however, questions did not change radically, and worked well in their original formulations for some way into the interview schedule. The questionnaire was designed to instigate information and code gathering on media and identity negotiation, beginning with basic informational questions:

**Section One: General autobiographical information**

1. *Gender;*

2. *Age;*

3. *Main language group;*

4. *Occupation;*

5. *Area of main residence (which part of Windhoek);*

**Section Two: Audio-visual media use**

*Question 1: Tell me when you first became interested in any type of media? How old were you when you first encountered such media? What impression did it make on you?*

The intention was to obtain biographical detail of the actor's early engagements with media to allow insight into the first phenomenological impression media made on them. Livingstone (2002) argues that it is also a means to assess media-literacy, that is, how media has been 'learned' as well as experienced, and with what degree of critical cognition. New media such as the Internet, including the growth of social networks, is 'changing everything' according to Gauntlett (2008; 2002). This question unearthed early engagements with media and biographical detail emerged on social background as well as the formative impact of media on childhood. The concept of 'formative media' was established by this question.

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*Question 2: Describe for me a normal week in terms of your uses of media: what sort of media activities do you like to engage with?*

The rationale was to learn what type of television programmes, music, film, Internet or other forms were consumed to indicate media preferences and general tastes, and also gave rise to attitudinal patterns or process of media selection in relation to global or local media. Masenyama (in Alexander et al. 2006) refers to the efforts of television producers and commissioning editors in the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) to increase the quantity of local as opposed to global programming to create a South African identity to "generate for ourselves a space that is big enough to tell our own stories" (Alexander et al. 2006:163). NBC has the same goal, but is hindered by a serious budget deficit and limited on-the-ground production expertise which is reflected in public dissatisfaction with the quality of broadcasts (*The Namibian*, 6 March 2009). Global media are pervasive in Namibia (Fox in Winterfeldt, Fox & Mufune 2005), although it does not follow that people fully accept it. The question helped to draw out participant relationships with local/global media.

*Question 3: What do you dislike about programmes, films or any media you have recently encountered?*

It was not sufficient to know what content was enjoyed; feedback on negative reactions to local or global media was needed. The combination of Questions 2 to 4 allowed the social, cultural and ontological orientations of interviewee to be gauged.

*Question 4: Can you tell me what are your favourite media? Do you prefer television, radio, cinema? Which do you watch/listen to the most?*

It was necessary to discover at an early stage of the interview the participants' preferred media form, and to get some rationalisation for the choice. Questions 1 to 4 helped to capture a picture of the intensity of media uses, likes and dislikes, and establish general media orientation and values as a solid basis for exploring further through the next questions.

*Question 5: Do you watch or listen to television, films or shows much with friends, family or with others in public or private places?*

This explored the presence of shared media engagement and consumptions. It sought to overcome individualistic assumptions about media use, and assessed communal interfaces with media inside and outside the home. Many public places in Windhoek such as

restaurants, bars, and student centres have television and radio. Sports, music, news and general programmes tend to be left on during the course of eating, drinking and socialising in such places: a common African strategy which circumvents the financial difficulties of owning or accessing media (Nyamnjoh 2005). Mans (2004:118) has referred to the 'active identification processes' that pervade Namibian cultures whereby people share music and other cultural forms rather than experience them individually. Mans adds that few Namibians are 'unicultural' as the bonding effect of a growing national identity brings them together. However, Strelitz (2002) argues that collective television viewing can reveal resistance to multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism, reflecting degrees of ethnic separateness. Through this question, the interviews attempted to bring out communal aspects of media engagement.

*Question 6: Do you like to read? What have you read in the last two weeks? What language do you prefer to read in?*

This was a marker for discovering insights into language and media. It tried to access reading habits where these were present, and how language enhanced or limited how much and what was read. Namibia has frequently been characterised as lacking a reading culture (Diener 2001:210). Most print is in English and Afrikaans, with very few of the other ten languages being available. It helped explain why, as well as how, proficient people were in their reading cultures.

*Question 7: Have you ever participated in the media in any way? For example, appeared on TV or in radio phone-ins and written to newspapers or SMSed them?*

This tried to gauge non-passive, participatory engagement with the media in terms of media participation and critical contribution. Reference to SMS text messaging relates to the introduction of SMS pages in *The Namibian* newspaper in late 2007 when readers were invited to post brief comments on political and social issues. This has proved very popular as an instant democratic means to access print media on any chosen topic in a nominally liberationist manner in Castells's (2009) sense. Gauntlett (2008) celebrates the participatory character of the Internet, arguing that new media negate the one-way consumerist position of actors in favour of more interactive, exclusionist forms. However, criticism from sections of the ruling party (SWAPO) has demanded an end to newspaper SMSs because of criticism of government in their content (*The Namibian*, 3 February 2009).

*Question 8: Do you use Internet social network sites such as Facebook or Twitter, or have you ever blogged?*

Pilot interviews at UNAM (Fox 2010) revealed much interest in social networks. Follow-up (unscientific) snap-polls in classes with approximately 400 students showed over half of these students had Facebook accounts. Livingstone and Brake (2010) have argued that new media of this type are becoming rapidly central to the lives of young people, and are as yet poorly understood. Social media represent both dangers and opportunities to those who engage with them on the Web. This question was later included to establish participant rationales for this type of media in Windhoek.

*Question 9: Where do you get your ideas for fashion from?*

This aimed to get participants to talk about lifestyle tastes, and to discover how media were involved in influencing these. Fashion seemed a good subject to assess lifestyle, particularly in terms of youth who are arguably more interested than older people in fashion issues. The assumption was that media might be used to inform individual taste and style. Gauntlett's (2008) studies argued this to be the case with British youth, but it also emerged as central for the Windhoek participants.

*Question 10: Is there a celebrity you admire or enjoy to watch or listen to?*

This assessed the influence of media role models on participants. The sway of celebrity on their values and self presentations was sought in line with the aims of other studies (Gauntlett 2008). Imitation of celebrity was also looked for, and suggested Goffman's work on the presentation of the self and the idea of performance (Goffman 1998[1959]). Kurzman and Anderson (2007) regard celebrity as central to many people's media interests in contemporary societies which frequently takes on exaggerated proportions where people regard certain celebrities in reverential terms. Modern celebrity has been called "status on speed" (Kurzman & Anderson 2007:362). Couldry (2003) indicates the active interest of audio-visual media organisations in promoting celebrity, and places it at the core of his argument about media rituals and the myth of the mediated centre.

*Question 11: Do you prefer Namibian and African films and shows or American and European? What do you like or dislike about either of them?*

It was a central aim of this research to encourage participants to contrast local and global media content to assess loyalties and tastes, and to discover their consciousness of global media interventions. Reflexive engagement and critical opinion on the issue of indigenous as opposed to global media became apparent through this question. Support of and opposition to foreign media emerged in the different participant views. Information of how people use or expropriate media rather than be a cultural victim of it also emerged. Stadler (2008), for example, has shown how American or Western media content has been subverted by consumers for hybrid identity reconstitution in the South African context. This idea of 'media subversion' in Namibian urban settings was explored.

*Question 12: How often do you talk to other people about what you have seen, read or heard in the media? What do you discuss?*

Knowledge on how people socially debate media content was sought by encouraging responses about public discussion of media which tends often to be ignored in individualistic media studies (Nyamnjoh 2005). Africans, like other peoples, engage in 'culture talk' around media matters. The question attempted to capture this type of talk. For example, the Lady May case where she had insulted her audience at a televised music awards ceremony in June 2011 was widely discussed by participants in response to this question.

**Section Three: Media, social values and politics**

*Question 13: How religious are you? If you are, does what you see and hear in the media support your beliefs? Do you think media are useful or not for your religion?*

This attempted to gauge cultural influences from areas other than media. It sought markers of religiosity, and tried to determine if there were compatibilities or conflicts between media and the religious values of participants. Religiosity was thought to have possible impacts on how media were used and assessed. In certain instances, this was found to be the case.

*Question 14: Are you politically-minded? Do you tend to trust or distrust what media tell you about political and social issues?*

This assessed political trust issues vis-à-vis the media. It indicated how political media content and news generally were reflexively perceived and encountered, and revealed patterns of partisan/non-partisan thinking on national and international political and social issues. Namibia has experienced increasing interference in press and broadcast media from

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government. A popular NBC radio phone-in, *Chat Show,* was cancelled because callers were critical of government performance; and the newspaper *The Namibian* has been politically pressurised by government to terminate its public SMS comments page. The press as a whole has been legally subject to a media regulation act which became law in 2011 (*The Namibian*, 16 December 2010). This raises issues about free political information and editorial freedom, and reliability of news and information: participant discussions on politics and media were sought through this question, although several were reluctant to offer open opinions.

*Question 15: Do you live all the time in Windhoek? If not, when you go home do you watch or listen to as much television, radio and other media as you do while in Windhoek?*

A large proportion of Namibians have migrated to Windhoek since independence in 1990. They and their families tend to be dependent on Windhoek for work and education. Some are temporary residents while others are permanent, yet many still regard their original place of origin as either their main home, or somewhere that remains important to them in ethnic and cultural terms (Pendleton 2000). This question sought to gauge urban-ness and the extent to which media consumption was essentially an urban phenomenon for Windhoek participants from recent rural backgrounds. In Namibia it has been estimated that nearly half of Windhoek's current population settled in the city from 1998, migrating from rural areas of the nation (Mufune 2008). King and Wood (2001) show how migrants and migration are embroiled in communication media to keep connections with their original culture. Media fulfils a deep-seated need to 'find a cultural place' in their new urban environment, not necessarily for assimilation but also for defence and identity assertion to create hybridised social identities and a sense of 'belonging'.

*Question 16: Can you offer any final comments? How important would you say media are to you as a resident of Namibia? Do you think they currently give you access to the information on your country and region, as well as the entertainment programmes you like?*

This sought any opinion the participants wished to make that had not yet been raised, but it also asked them to comment on whether media in the country was giving them what they wanted in terms of information, entertainment and culture. It gave rise to much critical discussion on the quality of media in Namibia, particularly that provided by the state.