

Preface

Scholars from a wide range of fields continue to explore the social, political, economic, and cultural dimensions of new communication technologies (NCTs). A cursory look at the existing literature on NCTs shows that most studies have been focusing on NCTs potential to alter existing social-political categories that border on economic class, social status, race, gender, and ethnicity. While some of these studies illustrate how certain identity makers are potentially concealed by and through the traditional media, others examine the role of NCTs in bridging economic disparities, promoting social justice, and nurturing infrastructure conducive for democratization. But in as much as NCTs have revolutionized our representation capacities and capabilities, facilitated instantaneous transfer and exchange of information, and developed and expanded hybrid ways of communication, much that defines the traditional media is conspicuously manifested in new technologies. Little wonder that the aegis of “new” in NCTs has invited newer ways of examining whether these new technologies are changing the way we do things without altering the things we do.

But there is one area that has not been adequately examined: the intersection of NCTs and the ideological hegemony. In the following chapters, experts drawn from different disciplines engage in a debate that variously examine the extent to which NCTs are co-opted by the hegemony. This book is made up of chapters whose content is drawn from sub-Saharan Africa, North America, China, Pakistan, and South Korea. Specifically, the book seeks to:

- a. Analyze the intersection of new communication technologies and culture, and its role in cultural development
- b. Analyze the dynamics informing the techno-cultural landscape and its impact on political and ethnic structures
- c. Examine the relationship between the use of new communication technologies and the existing ideological hegemony

There is a common motif among authors in their interrogation of the diagnostic degree to which the use of NCTs is demonstrative of the users’ imaginary relations to imaginary reality, their thoughts and perceptions. As Ndirangu Wachanga, the editor of this volume demonstrates in chapter 1, NCTs technologies are seamlessly co-opted by the design of the hegemony; the use of new media technologies can be traced to causes rooted in both ideological and informational characteristics of a particular historical period. Wachanga illustrates how Kenya serves as an example of bottom-up model, which is a challenge to traditional media hegemonic practices, especially when placed in a historical-political framework. By analyzing 110 cellular phone messages circulated during the Kenyan 2007/2008 election violence,

Wachanga sheds light on the vulnerability of NCTs to manipulation and co-option by the dominant. He nonetheless presents NCTs as a conduit with potential to alter hegemonic designs.

Echoing Wachanga's sentiments are Ogechi and Ogechi who submit that NCTs have revolutionized the way of doing things in Kenya, including politics. Ogechi and Ogechi delineate how traditional communication technologies are being complemented by the new technologies, which are now taking over and which can be used to negotiate both narrow ethnic-blocks and national identities. In their chapter, Ogechi and Ogechi show that NCTs are not always used to portray and perpetuate narrow ethnic identities; rather, instances exist when the users want to project professional and national identities. Supported with data that focus on the Kenya's pre- and post-2007 elections violence, Ogechi and Ogechi argue that inasmuch as NCTs continue to be considered emancipatory, great caution should be exercised when using them since unchecked use might bring untold suffering to society.

But whether more caution is required in some societies than in others is a question addressed by Njoroge, Kimani, and Kikechi as they outline and discuss the intersection between NCTs and ethnicity in Kenya. In their chapter, they investigate ways in which the new media reinforced issues relating to ethnicity in Kenya prior to the 2007 presidential election. In demonstrating the nexus between new media and ethnicity, their chapter posits that the upsurge of ethnic animosity in Kenya before, during, and after the elections was, by and large, instigated by the influence of the new media. This chapter attempts to investigate how the new media covered ethnic topics. While the contributors admit that the new media have opened new spaces for debates formerly suppressed, they show their participation in churning predatory messages. The chapter concludes that there is an urgent need for the new media in Kenya to help the citizens to redefine the status of ethnic relationships through the recognition of ethnic differences and the re-discovery of equitable ways to accommodate them for; after all, there is more strength in these differences.

A chapter by Musambira and Muwanguzi departs from an examination of Kenyan politics to one on the role played by NCTs in relation to Uganda's central government and four of its kingdoms: Buganda, Bunyoro-Kitara, Busoga, and Toro. Their analysis is placed in the historical context, within which, each kingdom has pursued a strategy for preservation and development of its people's unique culture and ethnic aspirations. A convergence of cellular phone and FM radio designed by the Buganda kingdom to confront the central government with specific demands and the government's response are examined. The less combative use of NCTs by Bunyoro-Kitara, Busoga, and Toro kingdoms is described. An analysis of how each antagonist uses NCTs for a hegemonistic agenda is presented and cast against the application of NCTs for good governance and the prosperity of citizens.

Kang'ethe Iraki investigates the extent to which the cell phone technology has impacted the lives of young Kenyans, especially within the context of a university in Kenya. Noting that Kenya has had a tremendous technological leap from the 1990s where landlines were the main tools of communication, to mobile telephony where people can now communicate any time, any place, Iraki investigates the ramifications of such a new and stunning technology on a young nation like Kenya, especially if there are pernicious effects emanating from the novel technology. Iraki's chapter results from a study that involved 100 university students at the United States International University in Nairobi, Kenya. The questionnaires were randomly distributed and collected after a week. The findings point out that mobile telephony has become an indispensable tool for most youth providing them with a great sense of control and freedom. However, the technology is also rife with concerns about personal autonomy, dishonesty, breach of cultural norms, personal security, and security of others, especially when texting while driving.

Unlike most chapters in this book that focus specifically on one country, Onyebadi and Kalyango Jr. widen the scope of their focus to accommodate three East African countries: Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. In their co-authored chapter, Onyebadi and Kalyango Jr. set out to ascertain the use of and dependency on new media technology for political communication by voting-age citizens of these three East African countries. While they emphasize the importance of new media communication opportunities towards the struggle for liberal democracy, demonstrated by the unanimity of respondents' attitudes that their governments suppress political discourse, they are quick to note that the degree of use and dependence on these new media instruments are not uniform across the region. Gender and the level of education are two salient factors that create these differences in the use of and dependency on new media technology for political communication in East Africa. But their findings have no bearing on the authenticity of the messages sent through these new media technological devices, or the extent of divisiveness or unity that such messages might engender among citizens in the region in times of political crises. These scholars' primary contention is that such citizens now depend on these technological devices to serve their informational needs more so when political and other forms of national emergency situations arise. This dependency phenomenon is partly the consequence of the existence of media laws enacted by governments in the region to hamstring mainstream media houses.

In this section, we include two chapters examining the impact of NCTs on the media landscape in Zimbabwe, a country whose press freedom and other civil liberties have deteriorated over the years. In his chapter titled "Whose TV Is It Anyway? An Examination of the Shift Towards Satellite Television in Zimbabwe," Rick Malleus argues that the rise in popularity of satellite television in Zimbabwe was not mainly driven by the capabilities of the new technology, but by dissatisfaction with Zimbabwe Television (ZTV). His chapter begins with a discussion problematizing the idea of what constitutes new technology in the African and Zimbabwean contexts. Malleus' focus then moves to the content broadcast locally and how a segment of the Zimbabwean population have turned away from ZTV to have their media needs and gratifications met from satellite TV. There is an extended discussion of propaganda and quality of programming, which are hypothesized as the driving factors for satellite TV's rise in popularity. A discussion of the cultural influences that satellite TV programming has on the Zimbabwean viewing public is included, and the chapter concludes with some thoughts on the future of satellite television in Zimbabwe if changes in local broadcast TV programming come about.

Still on Zimbabwe, Hayes Mabweazara uses a qualitative case study approach to critically examine the appropriations of the Internet by Zimbabwean mainstream print media journalists. In his chapter, Mabweazara draws on social constructivist approaches to technology and the sociology of journalism to highlight the impact of the Internet on practices and professionalism. He argues that the deployment of the Internet by Zimbabwean journalists (and indeed in Africa at large) is relative and contingent upon the 'internal' newsroom context(s) and the wider socio-political and economic circumstances in which the journalists operate. Among other functions, the technology shapes the mainstream press' news agenda as well as avails information often censored by government. This chapter concludes by demonstrating how the use of the Internet is replete with ethical and professional implications.

In the second section of this volume, we focus on the NCTs, language, and health communication. Mahiri Mwitwa examines theatrical and cultural texts that are performed through a Theatre for Development (TFD) rubric known as Magnet Theatre, which uses theatre-based outreaches to mobilize people in low-income communities into forums that discuss HIV/AIDS and how its problems manifest in their localities. Using examples from performances of four theatre groups that operate in Nakuru and Mombasa towns of Kenya, his chapter examines how the performances textualize, thematize, and theaterize the main

issues in HIV/AIDS as seen through the perspective of the performers and how the targeted audience reacts to these “AIDS performances.” Beyond studying the theatrical outreaches, the research for this chapter surveyed communities in which these performances have taken place to further appreciate how the motifs discerned from the theatrical outreaches compare to realizations of the AIDS problem in the communities.

Just as worrying as the HIV/AIDS pandemic is the Malaria scourge, which kills more than 3,000 children in Africa on a daily basis. While most African governments and health institutions invest in protecting and nursing mothers and children, other demographics left rather vulnerable. Citing the case of Nigeria, Nwachukwu Egbunike examines how NCTs are gradually gaining ground as dependable means of meeting the communication needs of young Nigerians. His chapter discusses how the potential associated with the Internet and social networks can be tapped into and be adopted by the Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) to help Nigerian youth. Egbunike suggests solutions and recommendations based on the concept of participatory development communication.

If most of the contributors to this book point to the revolutionary potential of NCTs, to paraphrase Crystal (2001), then, that revolution is predominantly linguistic. This is partly demonstrated by Githinji, who examines the process of translanguaging in imagined communities as a form of style-shifting that reproduces hegemonic structures that dominate national discourse. Githinji examines ethnicities and identities as negotiated by Kenyans through the digital media. He argues that whether operating at national or local level, linguistic performance of positive and negative identity practices results in community members aligning themselves with those with whom they agree while alienating those with whom they disagree. While this alignment may at times validate existing social identities, it sometimes results in creating new identities that challenges the status quo. However, since these new identities are grafted on existing social categories, they are not radically different from the parent structures they seek to replace. He discusses the extent to which interlocutors who employ communication technology on the Internet or mobile phones constitute communities of practice through their linguistic practices. Although he draws parallels between broadcast media (especially community radio) and digital media, he pays more attention to NCTs. This, he argues, is because the Internet has become an important discourse site that competes with face-to-face interactions both in dissemination of information as well as in cementing bonds of social solidarity. But if NCTs comprise of leading edge in social interactions, they are increasingly serving as a central site for excavating the invisibility of covert ethnicity and race relations.

In her chapter, Harper investigates how covert whiteness (a tacit form of racialized consciousness), which does not manifest itself at the surface level in the same overt manner that extreme white cyber hate “imagined communities” do. By applying Critical Race Theory and Black Feminist methodology-based discursive analysis, Harper investigates performances of whiteness in a vegan/animal-rights-oriented website called Veganporn.com. As a progressive forum associated with social justice, this site provides a radically different environment in which to examine white supremacist ideologies; ideologies typically found in more overtly-racist, “extremist” online dialogues already examined by critical research.

Discourse analysis of a specific Veganporn.com forum topic revealed three major themes in the computer-mediated discussion: (1) discursive patrolling of epistemic borders to “protect” Standard English and colorblind expressions (whiteness) of veganism/animal rights from non-Standard English and non-white racialized expressions; (2) the use of blackface *cyber-minstrelsy* to reinforce the “superiority” of Standard English (whiteness) over the “inferiority” of speakers of Black English and Ebonics; (3) the premise among several white-identified Veganporn.com participants that a vegan- and animal-

rights ideology is “colorblind” thus making invisible the current socio-historical implications of power structures created around white skin color.

Though Harper’s thesis focuses on one discussion within a forum, the analysis of this event offers insight relevant to understanding whiteness as a system, an ideology, and a structure. Specifically, by employing certain theoretical components of critical race studies (racialized consciousness, social ontology of whiteness, and racial mapping), this analysis reveals how the World Wide Web can be an effective site for *cyber-ethnographers* focusing on “decoding” whiteness within progressive social justice movements.

Loosely tied to Harper’s analysis is Mohochi and Wachanga’s study, which analyzes the extent to which East African hip hop artists have managed to maintain a balance between educating and entertaining society at the local level, while keeping abreast with emerging global trends and influences. These scholars, firstly, strive to show how the young generation of East African musicians uses music to sensitize the public by serving as critics of the management of public affairs, and how this has contributed to political change. Secondly, they seek to investigate the effects these emerging practices have had on the use of African languages in the performing arts

The third section of this volume focuses on the impact of NCTs on the media in other part of the world. We include in this section a case study from China, an analysis from Pakistan, and another one from South Korea. An intriguing chapter in this section is on African Diaspora. Also, in this chapter, we include Adedayo Ladigbolu Abah, examination of the role of Nigerian video film in mediating the twin issues of culture and identity among African immigrants in the United States. For this chapter, Abah interviewed African immigrants, their children, and friends living in the Dallas/Fort Worth area of Texas, USA on the role of the nascent Nigerian video industry and the way these immigrants sustain and straddle their multiple identities and culture in the host nation. Abah found out that most of the immigrants view the videos as affirmation of the values they grew up with and with which they still subscribe to. This is in direct contradiction to the professed cultural denigration immigrants feel in their everyday professional lives in the United States. Most of the younger immigrants and first generation immigrants view these videos as a convenient way of accessing their Africanness as part of their multi-stranded identity and culture.

From a discussion on dynamics informing immigrants in the United States, we turn to James Schnell who addresses mass media and cultural identity dynamics that impact U.S. military policy in the execution of the Iraq war and related cross-cultural communication issues that have evolved during the course of the war. Schnell has completed primary levels of Professional Military Education (PME), and this context provides him with ample opportunity to become familiar with military doctrine and, after the start of the Iraq war in 2003, to observe how primary tenets of established military theory have been consistently ignored. He argues that the U.S. invasion/liberation of Iraq has been executed as a case study for future students to review and learn how not to address such a challenge. According to Schnell, the inability to consider, let alone plan for, cross-cultural ramifications has been a central communication failure that has proven tremendously problematic. The mass media, via traditional channels and NCTs, have been keen to report on these matters which, in turn, have modified public understanding of the matters being reported. Mass media messages have been vital in creating and impacting this phenomenon. This phenomenon has been equally true among traditional media channels and the new communication technologies

The last three chapters of this book are drawn from Asia. In their co-authored chapter titled “New Media and Hegemonic Discourse in Pakistan,” Talib and Gardezi problematize the emancipatory promise of NCTs. They argue that the effects of the ‘new media’ may not be what we expect with respect to

the democratization of society. Their analysis shows that ideological hegemony is not only alive and well, but might even thrive in these new media. To scrutinize these effects, their chapter focuses on the impact of Pakistani cable television on identity and culture discourse through the lens of three topics: identity and the new communication technologies; ideology, power, and the new media; and new media and new popular cultures

Taking the cue from Talib and Gardezi is Siho Nam who summarizes certain main debates regarding the role of the Internet in promoting or hindering democracy by paying close attention to recent spate of regulations regarding Internet content in Korea. Nam seeks to shed light on how the Internet is re-configured as a new site of cultural politics and democracy. This argument is picked by Jiafei Yin who investigates the social conditions and ways in which NCTs are transforming the politics, culture, and the society in China, the largest Internet user in the world. China had 384 million of its citizens connected to the information super-highway by the end of 2009. Yin analyzes the use of the Internet, different roles played by the traditional and the new media, cases that were catapulted to the national media spotlight by the online community, and government laws and regulations responding to the development of the Internet through contrasts with the roles new communication technologies play in western and African societies. Also, this chapter attempts to examine the factors that have made such transformations possible and the implications of these transformations

The diverse nature of this books' content is invaluable in the overall attempt to place NCTs in a context that recognizes their seamless co-option into the designs of politics, culture, ethnicity, and the ideological hegemony.

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