Redefining the Production and Reproduction of Culture in Zimbabwe's Urban Space: The Case of Urban Grooves

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Introduction

Culture is conceptualized, presented and defined as a phenomenon whose existence derives from and is embedded in an historic past. In keeping with such a perspective Geertz (1973:89) defines culture as:

> …*an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of* inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about attitudes toward life.

Notably, most studies on culture present it as an unproblematic collective phenomenon, that is, as a form of property that belongs to the entirety of society as suggested in both classical and more recent definitions. For example, it is seen as 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits required by man as part of society' (Tylor 1956). Recent definitions concur with Tylor's classical definition and notion that culture belongs to all members of society and facilitates the social reproduction of society. Tischler (1993) posits that culture is 'basically a blue-print for living in a particular society'. The fact that all societies are stratified according to age, power, property and status (Tumin 1985) is often neglected in most studies on culture, and prominence is accorded to the harmony and social cohesion generated by culture.

In spite of such seemingly democratic perspectives of culture, the penchant emphasis of 'history', institutional memory, and the 'past' in the conceptualization and definition of culture inevitably privileges wisdom gained through age, and an intricate knowledge of the past. This inevitably consolidates adult worldviews while simultaneously undermining young people's participation in the production and reproduction of culture, and this also curtails any claim by young people of ownership of their societies' culture. Young people have thus, for a long time, been subjects of their society's culture (van Dijk 1998) rather than active and willing participants in the production and reproduction of their societies' culture. This situation has been more manifest in Africa due to the wide diffusion of patriarchy and the gerontocratic system of governance. Evidently, the production and reproduction of culture is not as inclusive as most definitions imply, rather it is value-laden and is about power and intense contestation (Christiansen Utas and Vigh 2006).

Culture is socially constructed on the basis of an alliance between gerontocracy and patriarchy and is buttressed by a complex web of ideologies that guarantee adult worldviews some degree of 'sacredness' while trivializing other statuses such as youthfulness and being female (Maticka-Tyndale et al 2007). This is apparent in the gendered deployment and use of language. This has led some commentators to argue that language is 'male' and denigrates other social categories. Sapir (1995) reveals the potency of language when he notes that it is a 'great force of socializa-tion, probably the greatest' not only because it ensures social intercourse but also because it is fundamental in the structuring of social relations and social institutions in society. The role of cultural gate-keeping is appropriated by adults because their age accords them the power to define the essence of culture in its purest form or otherwise. Young people are expected by society to imbibe 'this culture' and facilitate its reproduction. This has reduced culture to a possession of adults that can be mobilized, utilized, manipulated and exploited in diverse ways.

Culture has at various times been used to induce submission among young people, thus van Dijk (1998) argues that culture is also a weapon that can be wielded by the elderly against the youth for different ends. Until recently, the production and reproduction of culture has been a gerontocratic enterprise firmly in the hands of adults. In contemporary times, however young people, owing to their experiences during the colonial and post-colonial contexts as well as their exposure to globalization and technology, have engaged in struggles for visibility and simultaneously contested for participation in the production and reproduction of culture. The end result has been that young people have generated new identities as well as successfully penetrated the domain of the production and reproduction of culture. In Zimbabwe, these struggles for visibility have resulted in Urban Grooves, a music genre created by young people. Young people's appropriation of language and vocalization of social reality from their vantage point, as well as the attendant lifestyle and body language, have completely redefined the production and reproduction of culture in Zimbabwe.

Setting the Background

Contemporary research has revealed how "we are living in an era of significant change" (Long 1994). We are now living in a moment in history, a turning point, a time of transition and radical social change (Touraine 1984, 1989). Of great salience in this change is the locus of the rapid dissemination of scientific knowledge, technology, culture, communications and the fragmentation and reorganization of power dynamics leading to the emergence of new social, political and cultural identities (Long ibid). Technology is central in restructuring society, social relations and, more saliently, cultural and power domains.

The contemporary context is characterized by complex networks and webs transmitting visions, ideas, images and simulations across the globe. The entrenchment of globalization with the attendant intensification of technology has had a pervasive impact on young people (Holton 1998). Young people are exposed to diverse tastes and identities that are readily accessible and usually the click of a button away. Reality now exists to young people in different dimensions and derives from different contexts. According to Anthias (1999) information is ubiquitous which has a fundamental bearing

on young people's definition of themselves as well as their contexts.

Young people make sense of their contexts and derive meanings of social reality against a background where they have sampled other tastes, cultures and lifestyles and this global input plays a fundamental role in shaping the world of young people in Africa's urban areas. This is contrary to the scenario that was encountered by their adults for whom the local was the centerpiece of their existence. Institutions, social relations and social action have become more complex in the contemporary age where experiences of young people are informed by synergies and linkages between the local and the global as well as their own agency. Technology in both audio and visual forms has generated ideas, language, lifestyles and body language, among other modern facets that have had a fundamental impact on the conceptualization, reception as well as production of culture in Africa's urban areas. Siziba (forthcoming; CODESRIA) argues that:

> The contemporary world is fraught with new meanings, experiences and expressions of being young which are developing/unfolding on a daily basis. Unique body language, language, slang, dress and other youth protocols reflect the pervasive influence of globalization. There is a proliferation of young people's movements across the globe, which utilize internet and satellite technology to be part of the various events and struggles that young people in different parts of the world find to be of concern to them.

It is against such a backdrop of the intensity of visible and identifiable youth struggles that can now easily be transmitted through e-activism, cyber activism, the internet and satellite communication, for example, that the re-definition of the production of culture will be explored in Zimbabwe's urban area. There has also been an 'explosion of hip-hop music in South Africa, Senegal and Nigeria, among other African countries, as well as the development of music genres linked to young people such as rai in Tanzania' (Siziba ibid). Contemporary urban Zimbabwean youth like their counterparts in other parts of the globe are techno-centered and imbibe various images and contexts from the internet on a daily basis.

In spite of the pervasiveness of globalization, data on the phenomenon reveals that, while very imposing, it does not render local identity and initiative paralyzed. Thus, young people access and imbibe global tastes but this does not necessarily erase their local identity. Essentially, globalization is part of a broader mirror through which young people engage in reflections in making their choices. It is therefore not a mystery that young people in Zimbabwe view themselves as cultured young Zimbabweans, while they are at the same time proud of being articulate in a foreign cultural artifact. Globalization is thus a complex nexus of both the local and the global.

Jenkins (1996) and Barth (1967) aptly point to the elasticity and flexibility of identity. Identity can be clearly understood by appreciating diversity. In this manner, globalization has allowed the diversification of identity, culture and reality; and young people are currently at the center of this scenario. The redefinition of the production of culture by young people in Zimbabwe will be conceptualized against this visible 'compression of time and space and breaking down of geographic boundaries that have offered young people different possibilities of self as well as cultural definitions' (Siziba ibid). In spite of the pervasive influence of globali-zation, it is pertinent to note that the experiences of young people are far from uniform across the globe. It is apparent for example that because of differences in socio-political and economic contexts confronting young people in Africa, they constitute a different social category from their counterparts in the West. Further differences are also a reality among young people within African countries themselves.

Notably, young people in Zimbabwe exist on the margins of imperatives of government. They constitute a marginal group on the fringes of government's policy frameworks. They can be found in large numbers in statistics of the unemployed and under-employed. On the other hand, they can also be found in large numbers in exploited circumstances, such as being used in political violence and armed conflicts. Thus, young people are exploited for different ends, then dismissed by society as deviants destroying culture and the fabric of society. It is therefore of paramount importance that young people's activities and their contestations with adult-generated cultures, formerly presented as immutable, are afforded close attention. This study constitutes an attempt in this direction.

Literature Review

The bulk of studies on the production of culture in Africa, such as those by Mazrui (1995), Amin (1974) and Adjiboloso (1998) centre on the invasion of African cultures by external forces, particularly the 'Western'. Such work has gone further to set an agenda to not only differentiate between the local and the foreign, but to engage on reclaiming Africa's culture such as in Ngugi's 'decolonizing the mind' (Ngugi 1981). This mission is reflected in contemporary nationalist and pan-Africanist rhetoric as Africa grapples with creating the most desirable nation-state. Nationalism and pan-Africanism, with regards to the production of culture have subordinated other worldviews on the guise that reclaiming Africa and protecting 'the territory' is the most desirable process that should outweigh other priorities. While the production and reproduction of culture is set against such a noble and moralistic agenda, such perspectives push other fundamental concerns about culture to invisibility.

Notably, the production and reproduction of culture in Africa is a 'domain' that has been appropriated and dominated by the adult segment of society (van-Dijk ibid). The gerontocratic governance system in Africa privileges age, history and institutional memory at the expense of alternative perspectives. Thus, while culture is defined as a people's way of life', reflective of their worldviews and cosmos;- as a repository of ideas and knowledge based on African societies' interaction with their environment, there is a need to deconstruct notions that culture is neutral. Culture is not simply culture, rather it is about power, hegemony, ideology, contestations and struggles for supremacy. Vantage points from which social, political and economic capital are propagated have to be problematized. Discernibly culture, be it its production, its mobilization and usage does not derive from popular participation. Social institutions, social relations and social processes in Africa are based on a patriarchal gerontocratic system. African society is socialized to uphold these values and there are a number of social control mechanisms (see Durkheim 1981) that ensure the perpetuation of the status quo.

The position of women has drawn global attention and gender sensitivity in contemporary literature has become a cliché, both local and global. This has somewhat lent visibility to, as well as ameliorated,

the plight of women (Gaidzanwa 2002). Furthermore, advocacy by feminists has illustrated how social reality is experienced differently by different social categories (Geertz 1973). In spite of the resultant affirmative action, Amit-Talai and Wulf (1995) Siziba (ibid) note that 'Sociologists and anthropologists have concerned themselves mostly with women, to some degree with children and old people but very little with the youth.' Mead's *Coming of Age* (1928) is one of the classics that focus on young people. Where young people have been given attention, it is largely through instrumental as well as moralistic approaches. Often, young people are perceived as deviants constituting 'counter cultures and subcultures', tainting Africa's culture. Pertinent issues such as how young people experience, perceive and define their culture remain fleetingly understood. However, lately, scholars have attempted to interrogate how young people mobilize and exercise their agency. Among these are van Dijk (1998), Mate (2002) and Maxwell (1998) who:

> Historicize changing youth identity in the post-colonial urban setting and look at the development of new lifestyles emerging from the new urbanizing and modernizing environment (Siziba ibid).

Globalization has created a window and a gazing effect that allows young people to observe, imbibe, learn as well as sample other tastes, cultures, values and ideas. In contemporary times this has led to Africa's crisis of 'a rebellious youth'. Young people are increasingly claiming spaces in which to exercise their agency and they have through music, language, art and lifestyle generated their own identities divorced from adult imperatives. The place of young people in the production of culture remains to be fully understood. This study explores how young people have, through the exercise of their agency, redefined the production and reproduction of culture. Focus is on Urban Grooves, a music genre developed by young people in Zimbabwe and how it has transformed and redefined the culture landscape.

Conceptual Framework

A great problematic confronts contemporary research on African youth, that is, there is the paucity of a solid, rigorous, relevant, identifiable and visible conceptual schema that addresses the social reality of African youth as it obtains. Contemporary research on African youth still heavily relies and centers on classical theoretical perspectives. Inevitably, African youth are denied and deprived their uniqueness as a distinct social category of young people on one hand, and of Africans on the other. They are viewed and presented according to contextually tangential methodologies and theoretical frameworks. While African youth constitute a distinct social category from Western youth, their experiences are measured according to the prescriptions of Western science. Contemporary work on young people is thin on 'concepts that capture the African-ness of African youth yet acknowledging their global experiences in a rapidly urbanizing continent.

This conceptual oversight creates a dilemma whereby notions of African youth are a mere duplication of experiences of youth in other parts of the world, particularly those in the West.

Conceptually, structure and agency theories have been religiously worshiped with regards to understanding young people and their activities. Theorists such as Giddens (1981) and Merton (1957) set the individual against societal structures seen as informing the resultant behaviour and response from individuals. Simultaneously, young people are also perceived as active social actors who interpret their contexts and innovate around or within structural constraints. While structures are viewed as constraining, they are simultaneously viewed as –in essence– imbued with agency; thus they are both constraining and enabling. On the other hand, a continuum of possible responses to societal structures is posited by Merton (ibid) which includes rebellion. On the basis of such theorizing, young people are often viewed as 'reactive' and rebellious to structural constraints to their activities.

In spite of these contextual concerns and limitations these conceptual viewpoints have been of great utility in understanding social reality. They also point to the need for self introspection among African theorists in grappling with their concerns as Africans. Scholars of the postmodernist orientation such as Baudrillard (1989) and Lyotard call for the celebration of difference in the discernment of social reality. They seek to deconstruct the established world-views of social life (Scott 1995) that, among other things, maintain that they can be a single source of truth of understanding social reality. These considerations are pertinent in seeking to understand individuals in their uniqueness and as they exist in their diverse environs.

Language is also defined and perceived as value-laden by Post-modernists. It is perceived as the tool that is mobilized to set parameters as well as value judgments of what is acceptable and unacceptable (Fuss 1991). The definition of what constitutes 'proper practice and systems' reflects the language of defense and protection (Siziba ibid). Society is presented as unified and the dominant language of adults is propagated as society's voice, thereby setting a boundary against alternative voices, as those of the youth which are seen as not embedded in culture, thus potentially tainting. Language can thus be used as an asset to extol the vantage points of adults while denigrating those of young people. Foucault (2003) also explores repression with a particular emphasis on language, sexuality, body language and expression. He argues that society is constantly engaged in surveillance of individual behaviour and sets sanctions to independent 'in-appropriate' behaviour. Society seeks to generate uniformity and acquiescence to standardized behaviour.

Structural Functionalist perspectives argue that the individual is situated within a structural web of roles which generate social cohesion. Emphasis is on the integrative function of roles (Scott 1995). Young people notably have been utilized on the basis of what they can contribute to society. This is particularly evident when one explores the role that they played during Africa's liberation struggles. However, certain roles are viewed as dysfunctional and in Africa this has largely been young people's activities that are in conflict with the dominant hegemonic adult worldviews.

Bourdieu has received limited audience in youth and cultural studies. This may be due to the density of his thesis. Bourdieu (1993) offers a powerful treatise of society through his theory of the field and the habitus in which he argues that society is a field of contestations.

> Diverse forms of capital, that is, the social, economic, political, symbolic and cultural capital [or habituses] engage in combat for dominance. These forms of capital further structure parameters for the production and reproduction of material space (Siziba ibid).

Political, social, mental, abstract, political and geographic or physical spaces derive from these contestations. Various social categories occupy different spaces, and may aspire for alternative spaces, because there exist dominant spaces occupied by a hegemonic elite. The notion of domination is further explored by Althusser and Gramsci (1991) who focus on ideology and hegemony. They argue that the dominant social categories mobilize ideology as well as repressive state apparatuses to maintain the spaces they occupy. In spite of this, there is always the existence of contesting social categories with their own ideological orientation and seeking hegemonic influence.

All these conceptualizations of reality are fundamental in uncovering some pertinent aspects of young people's initiative and movement particularly within the realm of the production and reproduction of culture. However, the understanding of social reality cannot be based on a single background, in this case the Western context which pervasively permeates youth and culture studies. In recent times, the dynamism and intricacy that underlies initiatives and movements by African youth point to the need for more contextually sensitive conceptual frameworks and methodologies that are grounded in the activities of African youth and not on imported concepts. Thus this study, while borrowing from the traditional theoretical frameworks as discussed above, also opts for grounded theory, that is, theory that develops as the researcher grapples with the research problem as it exists. Zimbabwean young people will be viewed as such in this study, with a focus on how they have,through their music and corresponding lifestyles, redefined the production and reproduction of culture in the country.

Statement of the Problem

Young people in Africa are increasingly exhibiting that they are a unique social category that cannot be simplistically defined according to adult hegemonic cultural standpoints. While proving to be global individuals, they simultaneously appear African in their own right and self definition, hence the complexity confronting African society (in particular adults) in understanding them. In spite of this realization, young African people remain fleetingly explored particularly with regards to how their activities are shaping modern and urban African society. This has seen youth activities being simply dismissed as cultural decadence. There is a fundamental need for an indepth exploration of how young people's activities challenge the dominant hegemonic worldviews in Africa and offer alternative voices as well as ways of experiencing social reality. This study is a step in this direction and it explores how young people, through Urban Grooves music, have redefined and continue to redefine the production and reproduction of culture in Zimbabwe.

Justification and Purpose of the Study

Young people in Africa constitute the majority, yet very little research has been done in the way of understanding their lived realities. Young people also constitute part of the marginalized social categories. Culture and its production to date has been informed by patriarchy and gerontocracy and this has disadvantaged young people. The emphasis on age and wisdom simply dismisses the aspirations of young people, their experiences and their possible contribution to Africa's progress and development. There is the need for a new and alternative discourse on culture that acknowledges the contribution of young people in the generation of Africa's reality, and that also further acknowledges that culture is much broader than a single, one-dimensional perspective of the adult world.

Africa's current search for solutions to its development problematic also calls for the generation of knowledge that is relevant to Africa's needs in the broadest sense. There is thus such a need for research that deconstructs simplistic views and assumptions about Africa and challenges confronting the continent. Empiricism and indepth scientific observation have to be the basis of telling stories about Africa. Culture has proved to be dynamic and always in a state of flux and this necessitates the development of equally dynamic and sophisticated methodologies and conceptual frameworks to interrogate culture. It is therefore necessary to address the paucity of knowledge on young people, particularly how they can be situated in contemporary culture discourses. Siziba (ibid) notes that:

> Such a corpus of knowledge should capture youth identity from the vantage point of the youth themselves so that young people's voices are not submerged beneath wider society's speculations and pre-occupation.

Current culture studies freeze culture into an immutable and unchanging force while simultaneously simplifying young people to sub-cultures and counter-cultures whose activities decay Africa's culture. It is notable that this conceptualization of young people is not a unique Zimbabwean phenomenon but it is an African reality (Siziba ibid). In a context of subjugation and domination, young people as active social agents have mobilized themselves and engaged in struggles for recognition. This is reflected in the proliferation of typically youthful movements that mobilize various forms of capital to assert, specifically, youth identities (van Dijk ibid).

It is anticipated that this study transcends traditional perspectives on culture and young people and generates innovative ideas relevant to Africa's contemporary context. This is in the light of the current search for alternative knowledge that derives from social reality as it obtains, rather than unquestioned assumptions and simplistic conceptualizations. Governments are also searching for relevant policy frameworks that can allow young people to play more meaningful roles in their societies. Such research can offer salient insights that can be utilized by both politicians and policy makers. Furthermore, this study should set a tone for further research on young people and culture in Africa. It should also lead to the building of a body of literature on themes largely marginalized in research that can lead to the development of Africa.

Study Objectives

The major objective of the study was to explore how young people through Urban Grooves are redefining the production and reproduction of culture in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, this study also explores and analyze the nature of the emergent culture. Specifically the objectives were;

1. To find out and analyze facets that define the production of culture;
2. To find out and analyze how young people's initiatives such as urban grooves are impacting on the production and reproduction of culture in Zimbabwe's urban space; and
3. To find out the nature of the resultant culture in Zimbabwe's urban space.

Methodology

Intimate studies, such as those on culture, ideology, young people, identity and other aspects to do with human behaviour evoke a pertinent need for methodologies that afford the researcher close proximity to the research problem. In order to capture the lived realities of Urban Grooves artists and get close to the domains of the production and reproduction of culture in Zimbabwe, this study is qualitative in nature. The flexibility of qualitative research allows the researcher room to perceive social reality as it obtains, without the complexity of rigid boundaries imposed by other less intimate methodologies.

The central theme of the study, that is, how young people in urban Zimbabwe are engaged in a process of 'redefining the production and reproduction of culture' is rooted within a particular and specific local, global, socio-economic, political and cultural milieu. The interrogation of the central theme should therefore begin with an indepth appreciation of such realities. These realities can only be fully understood by employing ethnography that explores social reality as a form of communication and a discourse of diverse dimensions. In this sense social reality through the 'researched' is allowed to tell its own story, grounded in the experiences of those living this social reality.

Culture has always been a complex area in social science research. Focusing on young people and their contribution to its production and reproduction further compounds the issue. Most researches on young people and culture have utilized superficial methodologies and conceptual frameworks that merely scratch the surface, largely because of the distance imposed by rigid frameworks on the researcher and those being researched. Qualitative research transcends these rigidities and rather offers the researched involvement in the study as active participants rather than as subjects. This was of particular salience in this study of the production and reproduction of culture and of young people who are at the centre of the redefinition of culture in Zimbabwe's urban space. Capturing the nuances of Urban Grooves artists' lifestyles (within broader national and global processes) and how they have impacted on the social, cultural, political and symbolic spaces could only be achieved by exploring the lived realities of the research subjects (Ulin et al 2002: 4).

Research Methods

Data was largely collected through the following methods. Firstly, an intensive literature and documentary review was employed in order to situate the study within existing and obtaining searches for knowledge on young people and the production and reproduction of culture. Unstructured interviews were then conducted with Urban Grooves artists in order to capture their lived realities, lifestyles and culture and draw on synergies with broader cultural concerns in Zimbabwe's urban areas. Focus of this research was Harare because, as Zimbabwe's capital city, it constitutes the epicenter and leader in the latest trends and activities of diverse proportions. Urban Grooves was actually birthed in Harare and the concentration of Urban Grooves artists is in Harare although it also quickly diffused and became a movement across all of Zimbabwe's urban areas. Furthermore, the researcher has previously conducted research in Harare on the identity of urban grooves artists and has generated very useful data as well as networks on the research problem.

Ethical Considerations

A fundamental component of all human research is the informed consent of the participants Ulin (2002:61). This is actually the starting point of research and Rubin and Rubin, (1995), note that ethical responsibility goes beyond the simple statement of informed consent. The researcher has to ensure that study participants come to no emotional, physical, professional or financial harm because of participation. Grappling with culture and how it is produced and reproduced, ideology and general struggles for hegemony rendered the study complex because these issues also border on an interrogation of the socio-economic and political aspects of Zimbabwe. Although no harm was anticipated, participants were made aware of the study imperatives. Pseudonyms have also been used to ensure anonymity and protect the identity of those who participated in the study.

Presentation of Findings

This data derives from interviews conducted with 5 Urban Grooves artists in Zimbabwe's capital city of Harare. The researcher has had previous association with these 5 respondents in a study on youth identity. Unfortunately, a further 2 respondents who participated in a previous study could not be located to collect their views in time for this paper. However data from the previous study on youth identity by the researcher entitled : *The Politics of Urban Space and the 'Paradox of Identity': The Case of Urban Grooves Artists in Zimbabwe* was also of some utility. The findings below reflect the central arguments proffered by the 5 urban grooves artists. Their other ideas are incorporated into the discussion of findings in order to allow for a coherent and thematic analysis of the research problem.

Profile of 7 Urban Grooves Artists

Chief

According to Chief, time is never the same or constant and life is always changing and this has been the case with urban grooves.

> Patakatanga ku-reciver attention ne-airplay ndopatakaziva kuti tapinda tapinda (when westarted receiving attention and airplay that's when we knew that we were in) and it was inevitable that our music change the face of Zimbabwe. This is exactly what is happening in SA, hip-hop is in full swing. You can no longer take it for granted that when someone says music in SA they are talking of mbaqanga…actually they are likely to be talking of Pro-Verb, Pro-kid or the other young cats who got it going on at the moment.

Furthermore Chief notes that Urban Grooves brought with it a new lifestyle characterized by previously tabooed dress and body language. These changes to him reflect a response to the changes in culture by young people. Essentially young people are also engaged in producing a culture that (matches the obtaining context. He thus argues that the emergence of urban grooves brought in a 'new flavour' that has also been embraced by adults as well.

Nelly

Nelly argues that Urban Grooves is distinct from other music genres in Zimbabwe. This is in the same manner that urban youth are a distinct social category.

Slang reflects our time in the same way that Mbira reflects a certain time in the history of this country. That is why there is the old school and new school…For sure...it's life...this the natural movement of life. Urban Grooves is reality as we see

it). Thomas Mapfumo and them..vana Oliver (Mtukudzi) had, and still have, their own reality but that reality cannot necessarily be my reality.

For Nelly, culture is thus accompanied by changes and 'things' as well as people make way for one another in this chain of change.

> What is, is what it is and Urban Grooves is what it is… you know. Kudhara vanaBlazo vaishana (In the past brothers used to shine) with they Afros and life had its own flow.. its own type of groove back then. But try to groove like that now and you kinda miss the point.

Berry

It's ok for some people to feel uncomfortable about Urban Grooves…that's when you know you've made an impact. Now, whenever anyone speaks of Zimbabwean music they mention Urban Grooves. It's now a very important part of Zimbabwe. You can see it in the way that people have responded to it. Unonzwa zimdhara richiimba (You hear an old man singing) Sugar Mama (song by popular Urban grooves artist known as Maskiri) coz it's the in-thing but there'll always be haters ... they went on about … hey… music yacho ayisi (the music is not) traditional but really what's traditional about Sungura. Nothing … it's all the same with music … its about preference.

BC

For me, culture is what's got society going at any moment. The ideas that people share.The difference is that modern society is more honest, unlike previous societies. Kudharamudhara ayigona kuti vana vakadka mazai vanorwara. Kana kuti nyama yakan-gokodzerakudkiwa nevanu vakuru. (In the past, a man could say that children get sick when they eat eggs or say that meat is only fit for adults) This was greed and hypocrisy because adults, particularly men, did not want to be questioned. Now, we know eggs and meat are for all..not zvemuto (not mere soup). It's the same with culture, man, lies are told for the benefit of adults. Now, you cannot just say this cannot be done by young people because they'll want to know why… culture should also be about truth … tisavarane (let's not mislead one another). If young people are allowed to, they excel.

Yardsteppa

I dress the way I do coz this is me rasta. My music expresses who I am and what I believe…the same goes for my clothes. It's not just about the bling. You gotta know what you thinking before you make people believe in you. See… Urban Grooves has changed the way people in Zimbabwe think about music, dancing and life in general. Some of the tracks coming out are purely about youth fun but some of the tracks are deep and they get you thinking. Now, look, even Mtukuzdi sang with X… that's heavy men. People have been forced to accept and now they understand. Different traditions are now mixing…

Discussion of Findings

Situating Urban Grooves within Zimbabwe's Cultural Discourses

In different social settings, music is in essence the vocalization of diverse social, cultural, economic and political issues. Social reality, as it occurs, is celebrated, appreciated, debated, discussed, discouraged and embraced through music. Social mores, morality and desirable societies are 'constructed' through music (Askew 2002; Turino 2000). Music is thus a forum for dialogue and critical discourses on issues pertinent in social reproduction.

Hip-Hop in the Cape-Town flats in South Africa reveals how social categories on the socioe-conomic, cultural and political margins of society mobilize music as a way of vocalizing their marginalization. Such social categories simultaneously contest their marginalization by hegemonic cultural elites as well as re-interpret their existence and generate alternative cultures in which they exercise various degrees of power (Haupt 2001).

In a like manner, young Zimbabweans, through a music genre they developed, articulate their concerns, aspirations, tastes and preferences, and contest for visibility. Berry notes that challenging the status quo often results in the discomfiture of those in positions of authority. Young people have grappled with their reality and, in the process, they have challenged entrenched value systems in Zimbabwe. Yardsteppa's care-free attitude in describing how his dressing portrays 'him' as 'he is' alludes to young people who are no longer a creation of society but who are engaged in the process of creating themselves. Furthermore, his reference to thought processes informed by his own conscience indicate a break from adult ideological standpoints.

In lthe light of the density of the area of culture this study breaks attempts and thematic discussion of issues with the incorporation of data gathered from the participants in the research. In this way, it is anticipated that the most salient issues are given visibility and fully discussed.

Table 1

Name	Sex	Age	Educational Background	Urban Grooves Classification	Body Markings and other Characteristics	Family Background
Chief	M	29	Tertiary	First Wave/ Pioneer	Very Short Hair	Middle Income
Nelly	M	30	Secondary Education	First Wave/ Pioneer	Short Hair,	Low Income
Yardsteppa	M	27	Secondary Education	First Wave/ Pioneer	Long Locks, Left ear stud, tattoo of lion on left arm	Middle income
Berry	M	26	Secondary Education	75% Local content era	A mixture of plaits and locks.	Low Income
B.C	M	26	Tertiary Education		Long Unkempt hair.	Low Income

Language

Language is a key and central cultural artifact that has proved to be a powerful tool in the hands of hegemonic elites. Young Urban Grooves artists have successfully contested the mobilization and deployment of language in Zimbabwe. They have appropriated this cultural artifact and used it to deconstruct a diverse range of cultural stereotypes as presented by patriarchal and gerontocratic Zimbabwean society. African language has been noted to be, not only gerontocratic, but male as well (Caplan1995). This is easily notable in the gendered structure and style of language. For example it is a common cultural saying among the Ndebele that *indoda libetshu lomziki*, meaning that a man is a sexual predator. Another familiar proverb is that *inkunzi ibo-nakala ngamanxeba ayo*, meaning that scars borne from STDs and STIs are a testimony of real manhood. Among the Shona, the equivalent is *bhuru rinorwa rinowonekwa nemavanga aro*. This enshrines the sexual permissiveness of men in Africa. The culture of any society is created, defined and affirmed through language.

Ndebele and Shona languages are saturated by ideological intonations that are the basis of socializing young people into a culture of subjugation and servitude. For example, among the Ndebele, a central theme that guides the relationship between young people and their elders is the enduring proverb that *izwi lomzali aliweli phansi* (whatever adults say can only be ignored at one's peril because of their age and wisdom) while the equivalent among the Shona is *mukuru mukuru hanga hayigari pfunde* (an adult is an adult regardless of circumstance). The production and reproduction of culture as reflected in the mobilization and deployment of language in Zimbabwe is based on a deification of adult worldviews and the denigration of alternative perspectives. Further social control mechanisms are put in place to hedge against the interrogation of the verity of culture as defined by adults. Urban Grooves music questions the singularity of this 'adult' truth and the immutability of adult perspectives.

By contesting the monopoly that adults had over language, young people have deconstructed the notion that culture is a domain exclusively adult in orientation. Sexuality and sexual relations are redefined by artists such as Decibel, David Chifunyise and Plaxedes Wenyika. Decibel chastises male sexual permissiveness and sugar daddies in his song 'Madhara'. The song importantly also warns young women and society of the predatory nature of relationships between young women and elderly (usually) married men. Chifunyise and Wenyika, on the other hand sing about the complications of multiple sexual relationships and how they disadvantage the remaining offspring upon the death of the parents (usually the father). The cultural prescriptions and definitions of sexuality, masculinity and femininity that privileged the adult male are deconstructed. Young Urban Grooves artists, by vocalizing social reality as they see it and contesting adult imperatives, have pushed the moral boun-daries of inclusion and exclusion in the production and reproduction of culture.

Slang - Construction of an Alternative Language

A popular UB 40 song about apartheid in South Africa entitled 'Amandla' says that '*we'll sing our own song and we'll build our own society'*. The song goes on to point out how singing '*our own song and building our own society*' gives power to the people engaged in the struggle against apartheid. Ownership of language is fundamental in maintaining a people's power, hence the notion that:

> The social character of language and its function – as the key transactional instrument for human groups –makes it both the supreme divider and at the same time an invisible instrument for uniting people. Language is the central feature of culture (Sapir ibid).

Barth (1969) notes how the creation and espousal of certain characteristics by a group of people is central in the social construction of culture. These characteristics become fundamental features that facilitate the identity of these people. Urban Grooves artists have gone further in their contestation of language by generating language that reflects their own worldview. Through the mobilization of slang, young people in Zimbabwe are in a constant process of writing and rewriting culture and history. This is evident in that Urban Grooves has carved a niche for itself in popular culture. As BC notes 'urban groves language is now the dominant language in Harare':

> *Zvana shamula* (go, going or leaving), *zvakapressa* (things are uncompromisingly tough), *kukiyakiya* (unorthodox means of achieving something or engaging in behaviour that is not based on protocol but is more of a gamble for success) ndezvedu zvese izo. But now madhara are also chanting it. (We created words like shamula, *zvakapressa, kukiyakiya* and all that but now even adults are chanting it).

The wide diffusion of slang and how it has reconfigured Zimbabwean culture is notable in the Minister of Finance's (Tendai Biti) recent statement in reference to how government sourced funds to pay civil servants (The Herald July 23). Asked about the source of funds to pay civil servants Biti responded '*takakiyakiya*' (as defined above). The continuous compression of time and space means that culture is in a state of constant flux and new and relevant cultural devices are necessary to capture these changes. Nelly, an Urban Grooves artist, concurs with such a perspective when he argues that slang reflects his environment or context. He notes:

> Basically, slang reflects our time in the same way that Mbira reflects a certain time in the history of this country. The difference is that our language, like our music, is about the here and now….Its not about the past.

The use of slang also indicates an attempt by young people to circumvent social control mechanisms that are embedded and rooted in gerontocratic language. The general espousal of this slang by Zimbabwean society may also indicate the repressiveness of language as constructed by hegemonic elites. Myths that are propagated by gerontocratic and patriarchal worldviews can be comfortably debated, interrogated and even derided through the use of slang. Sexuality is for example explored by Decibel through the use of slang. Some lines of the song go:

> *Vanokunwisa doro* (they get you drunk)
> *Chinangwa chavo chirichekukuyisa nyoro* (their aim is to have unprotected sex with you).

Using proper Shona would have made it impossible for Decibel to explore these themes on sexuality without sounding vulgar. Slang is thus an alternative language that is used to contest conservative culture. It is also language generated to capture the elusiveness of meaning in this globalizing world, fraught with struggles for power and visibility. There is the constant demystification of the view that there

can be rigid centers of power that produce culture without any alternative voices pushing for contestation and visibility.

Dress and Body Language

Pierre Bourdieu (1993) argues that dress and body language are fundamental resources that not only generate an identity in a dense cultural maze populated by struggles for hegemony, but they also point to ensuring hegemonic contests. At any given point, non-conformity or conformity to set dress codes indicate an intricate cultural duel. Body language and dress are forms of capital that can be mobilized to enforce as well as challenge the cultural hegemony of any social fraction in any given social context. Dress and body language are cultural artifacts that are value laden and saturated by certain ideological standpoints.

These cultural and ideological contestations can be noted in the body language and dress sense of Urban Grooves artists (and consequently in those who have adopted the lifestyle). Formerly tabooed and stigmatized modes of dressing now pervade Zimbabwe's urban area, courtesy of the deconstruction of ideology and the revelation that patriarchal gerontocratic power is both mortal and fallible. While globalization has heavily informed the culture industry in Zimbabwe particularly regarding body language and dress, urban grooves artists can be credited for being the fore-runners in subscribing to tastes and lifestyles that defied Zimbabwean society's convention. A popular sight has been of male Urban Grooves artists with plaited hair, pierced, tattooed and marked bodies as well as earrings/ear studs. Female artists have been no exception and now grow dreadlocks, bald their heads and wear dress as previously defined as male.

New body movements, hand signs, appellations, gaits and dances have also now firmly taken root in Zimbabwean society. Chief thus argues that the input of urban grooves in the 'urban scene' has been momentous. The urban context has been completely transformed and a totally new culture has taken root.

> Urban Grooves *yakawuya neflavour yakapenga* (came with a crazy flavour) that is irresistible. Everyone's been caught in the groove. Its not been only about music…mafesi nemachicks (guys) don't walk these days.. they step. Nowadays that's how people walk up in here and that's how we came up. What's worse, you check out a barley facing the other way stepping you can't tell if it's kalightie (a young man) or a big barley (an old man). That's how crazy this is.

Interestingly, as noted by Chief, this culture has not been limited to young people emulating their role models, rather it has also diffused to the adult generation. Even the elderly can tap into the vitality and youthful energy exuded by young people by immersing themselves in the vibrancy and tempo of youthful lifestyles. Dress and body language can be argued to be a reinterpretation, reconfiguration and redefinition of culture. Beyond being trendy and moving with the times, dress and body language indicate a socialization into a particular status in society. This can be noted in Military gear and prison garb. Van Dijk (1998) notes this symbolism and acculturation when he notes that in order to 'instill discipline and submission' among young people in youth wing, Kamuzu Banda introduced a uniform that had different meanings to different social categories in Malawi.

Dress and body language constitute a form of institutionalization that is used to condition individuals. According to RZA the leader of the Wu-tang Clan, a pioneering American Hip-Hop super-group, the expensive chains and necklaces worn by artists are very symbolic. They symbolize the inversion of a culture of bondage that once confronted black people. Expensive jewels worn by Hip-Hop artists symbolize how black people used to be in chains of bondage but now they have transformed this slavery to ambiance and affluence. In the lyrics of Methodman 'we used to be in chains now we rock chains' (Lyrics from the Songs Do You Really in Wu-Tang Clan's album-The W).

The production and reproduction of new cultural mores, with regards to dressing and body language, has broken the firm control of young people's expressiveness and particularly the control of women's sexuality (Caplan 1995). The supremacy of adult ideology has often been presented as natural but notably struggles by young people have allowed them to break down these myths and redefine culture (van Dijk 1998; Little and Price (1973). In any particular context dressing is presented as an ascription to cultural prescriptions. However, an indepth analysis of how various social categories are expected to dress by their 'culture' be they leaders, women, men or young people, constitutes a dense text depicting power relations.

An Integrated Picture of Urban Grooves as a Cultural Discourse

The entrenchment of globalization, urbanity and modernity (Little and Price 1973; van Dijk,1998; Maxwell 1998) and how these have impacted on culture, particularly with regards to young people, has been note. However, certain fundamental aspects remain fleetingly discussed with regards to young people's movements. Data on Urban Grooves reveal that young people's movements are not only about youth aspirations and identity, but they importantly also constitute a cultural discourse that indicates that culture is continuously being written and re-written. Urban Grooves in Zimbabwe reflects a new cultural dispensation and text on culture whose authors have created their own spheres of *cultural autonomy.* The cultural shackles that bound young people to servitude as in the case where they were conceptualized as 'D7' tractors in Malawi (van Dijk 1998 Siziba ibid) have been challenged.

A new forum for cultural intercourse has been created in which the power matrix and cultural landscape has been revamped. The distinct cultural artifacts of language, body language, dress sense and other symbolic facets have been redefined. Cultural notions and conceptualizations of 'young' as a perpetual state of waiting to graduate into an adult world (Kuczynski 2002) have been dispelled. The production and reproduction of culture has been made more elastic and flexible, thus in the process, young people in Zimbabwe have democratized the culture industry.

Conclusion

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the experience of Urban Grooves in Urban Zimbabwe. First and most overarching is the fact that Urban Grooves has redefined not only Zimbabwe's urban space but also the production and reproduction of culture in Zimbabwe. This has resulted in the wide diffusion and visibility of alternative cultural artifacts such as language, lifestyle, dress and body language. There is also the audibility of voices depicting the culture and state of being urban in Zimbabwe. There has also been the deconstruction

and inversion of previously unproblematized 'cultural truths' such as the social construction of manhood through geron-tocratic and patriarchal excerpts of sexual permissiveness and gender violence. The singularity of truth and its immutability have been challenged through music and there has been a redefinition of manhood, youth, femininity and indeed a redefinition and reconstruction of society.

As noted by cultural theorists such as Bourdieu, Althusser and Gramsci, culture is an ideological resource utilized by hegemonic class fractions to ensure domination. Urban grooves has thus uncovered the presumptive notion that culture is neutral and for the good of all members of society. Rather, the underlying politics of inclusion, exclusion and social control have been exposed. Spaces that embody culture such as the political, abstract, psychological, geographic, symbolic and physical spaces in Zimbabwe's urban area have been democratized.

From the data, it can also be argued that exposure to the 'global' does not result in any form of cultural incapacitation. Rather, globalization can be usefully concep-tualized as one of many dimensions that inform the construction of culture in different contexts. Social intercourse between different societies is an ancient phenomenon yet culture remains a key differentiating factor among different people. What is apparent from this study is that there has been a deterrito-rialization and breaking down of cultural boundaries and formerly disenfranchised social categories are now at the centre of the culture industry.

It can therefore be noted that the transformation of Zimbabwe's urban context, and indeed that of the African landscape, is the culmination of cultural contestations by young people. Central to this has been Urban Grooves music that has allowed the vocalization, re-articulation and negotiation of social reality by young people as they experience, live and perceive it. In the same manner that the racialist and separatist cultures of colonial African societies had to be redefined (incidentally through the wide participation of young people), the exclusivist patriarchal gerontocratic culture has been transformed. The production and reproduction of culture is no longer an exclusively male adult enterprise.

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