

# **Generation X people's development of cyberspace culture: a psychological perspective**

by

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**Opgedra aan my Hemelse Vader -**

**wat my geleer het om nooit my talente onder 'n maatemmer weg te steek nie**

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**SUMMARY**

The 21st century can be defined as the fast paced information age wherein people establish another dimension to living; existing and interacting as multiple pseudopersonalities in cyberspace. The main aim of the study is to provide a description of a group of people known as 'Generation Xers', who develop cyberspace culture whilst interacting in chat-rooms. It is a two-fold process; firstly they create on-line 'pseudopersonalities' different from their off-line 'normal' personalities, and secondly they share unique values that characterise cyberspace culture globally.

The research process starts at the microlevel where individuals interact with each other in chat-rooms. On the mesolevel unique interaction patterns develop in chat-rooms that differ from traditional face-to-face interaction patters. On the macrolevel, cyberspace culture and specific values develop that Generation Xers share on a global basis. During the research process quantitative and qualitative methods were combined in order to compliment the limitations imbedded in each methodology.

Summarising relevant theories, on a microlevel the developmental process of pseudopersonalities is described by starting with its manifestation in the off-line world. The Johari-window and Roger's person-centred approach are used to describe the same process in the on-line world. On a mesolevel, differences between computer-mediated communication and face-to-face communication are discussed within the Cyber Psychology paradigm. On the macrolevel, the Internet experience is described by means of the Symbolic Action Theory.

The All Media and Product Survey (AMPS) database forms the basis of the longitudinal, statistical profile of the South African Internet-user population. Currently Internet access figures remain low at around 7-8% of the total population. South African Generation Xers, aged 16-49, are the richer and more affluent part of South African society, living in major metropolitan areas, earning R12 000+.

A qualitative content analysis of chat room behaviour in 384 chat-rooms sheds light on the dynamics behind their usage patterns. The .co.za-dictionary reflects the creative way in which .co.za-emotion and memory are expressed and negotiated. Pseudopersonalities that are at play in the borderless world of cyberspace continuously reflect issues, problems and struggles of everyday life in South Africa such as racial tension, political struggles and sexual interaction governed by the following cultural values:

- Respect
- An openness to the unknown
- Looking towards to the self (not governing bodies) for direction, resulting in;
- Liberty with responsibility towards the common good, the core of every society across the globe.

Finally the applicability of the Internet chat-room as a psychological research tool is explored within the South African context. It seems that although an effective tool for international surveys on sensitive topics, the South African research market is not ready for this tool to be implemented. South African Generation Xers perceive themselves as part of a global cyberspace culture and any distinction between the virtual and the real, does not imply a privilege to either, but rather a connection between the two. In this digital era, cyberspace is an electronic reflection of the way people communicate, interact, share and live life.

#### **LIST OF KEY TERMS**

Chat-room	Generation X
Computer-mediated communication	Internet
Content analysis	On-line
Culture	Pseudopersonality
Cyberspace	World Wide Web

**Generasie X mense en hul ontwikkeling van kuberruimtekultuur: 'n sielkundige perspektief**

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**OPSOMMING**

Die 21ste eeu kan gedefinieer word as die blitsnelle inligtingsera waarbinne mense 'n ander dimensie van leef ontwikkel; die bestaan van en interaksie met meervoudige pseudopersonlikhede binne kuberruimtes. Die studie poog om 'n beskrywing te gee van 'n spesifieke groep mense, bekend as 'Generasie X' wat 'n 'kuberruimtekultuur' ontwikkel as gevolg van interaksie in kubergeselskamers. Dit geskied volgens 'n tweeledige proses: eerstens word kuber- of pseudopersonlikhede ontwikkel wat verskil van hul 'normale' persoonlikhede, en tweedens deel hulle unieke waardes binne die kuberruimtekultuur op 'n globale basis.

Die navorsingsproses begin op die mikrovlak waar individue met mekaar in interaksie tree in kubergeselskamers. Op die mesovlak ontwikkel unieke interaksiepatrone in hierdie kubergeselskamers wat verskil van tradisionele, aangesig-tot-aangesig interaksiepatrone. Op die makrovlak ontwikkel die kuberruimtekultuur asook gepaardgaande waardes wat Generasie Xers deel op 'n globale basis. In die navorsingsprojek is kwantitatiewe sowel as kwalitatiewe navorsingsmetodes gekombineer om die leemtes eie aan elke metode te komplementeer.

Relevante teorieë kan as volg opgesom word. Op die mikrovlak word die ontwikkelingsproses van pseudopersonlikhede beskryf deur te begin by die manifestasies in die aflyn-wêreld. Die Johari-venster en Rogers se persoongesentreerde benadering word gebruik om dieselfde proses in die aanlyn-wêreld te beskryf. Op die mesovlak word die verskille tussen rekenaarondersteunde kommunikasie en aangesig-tot-aangesig kommunikasie beskryf binne die Kuber-Sielkunde paradigma. Op die makrovlak word die Internet ervaring beskryf by wyse van die Simboliese Aksie Teorie.

Die 'All Media and Product Survey' (AMPS) databasis vorm die basis vir die longitudinale, statistiese profiel van die Suid-Afrikaanse Internet gebruiker populasie. Huidiglik is Internet toegang syfers laag rondom 7-8% van die totale populasie. Suid-Afrikaanse Generasie Xers, 16-49 jaar oud, is die ryker, meer welvarende deel van die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing wat in die groter metropolitaanse areas bly en R12 000+ verdien.

'n Kwalitatiewe inhoudsanalise van kubergeselskamergedrag in 384 kubergeselskamers het lig gewerp op die dinamika agter hul gebruikspatrone. Die .co.za-woordeboek reflekteer die kreatiewe wyse waarin .co.za-emosie en gedagtes uitgedruk en onderhandel word. Pseudopersonlikhede aktief in die grenslose wêreld van kuberruimtes reflekteer kwessies, probleme en worstelinge van die alledaagse lewe in Suid-Afrika byvoorbeeld rasse spanning, politieke worstelinge en seksuele interaksie. Dit word beheer deur die volgende kulturele waardes:

- Respek
- 'n Openheid vir die onbekende
- Verwysing na die self (nie regeringsligame) vir rigting wat kulmineer in 'n;
- Vryheid met 'n verantwoordelikheid teenoor 'n algemene goedheid, die kern van elke samelewing wêreldwyd.

Laastens is die toepaslikheid van die Internetgeselskamer as sielkundige navorsingsinstrument ondersoek binne die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks. Al is dit 'n effektiewe instrument vir internasionale opnames oor sensitiewe onderwerpe, is die Suid-Afrikaanse mark nog nie gereed vir die implimentering van hierdie instrument nie. Suid-Afrikaanse Generasie Xers beleef hulself as deel van die globale kuberruimtekultuur en enige onderskeid tussen die virtuele en die werklike, impliseer nie 'n voorkeur vir een van die twee konsepte nie, maar eerder 'n verband tussen die twee. In hierdie digitale era, is kuberruimtes elektroniese weerkaatsings van die wyse waarop mense kommunikeer, in interaksie is met mekaar, die lewe deel en leef.

### **LYS VAN SLEUTELTERME**

Kubergeselskamer	Generasie X
Rekenaarondersteunde kommunikasie	Internet
Inhoudsanalise	Aanlyn
Kultuur	Pseudopersonlikheid
Kuberruimte	Wêreldwye Web

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