Navigating Cultural Hybridity in the 21st Century: New Perspectives and Applications

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Abstract:

Cultural Identities in a Global World: Reframing Cultural Hybridity engages in a thought-provoking debate on the meaning and place of cultural hybridity in the twenty-first century. The authors in this volume provide their definitions of the concept, rethinking it through theoretical, methodological, and social frameworks to redefine it and open space for the social, political, and cultural entanglements of each society. This book is a must-read for those who seek to find new meanings and applications for this ever-changing concept.

Kulturelle Hybridität im 21. Jahrhundert navigieren. Neue Perspektiven und Anwendungen

German Abstract:

Cultural Identities in a Global World: Reframing Cultural Hybridity bietet eine anregende Debatte über die Bedeutung und den Stellenwert kultureller Hybridität im 21. Jahrhundert. Die Autor_innen legen ihre Definitionen des Konzepts vor, und unterziehen es einer kritischen Überprüfung unter theoretischen, methodischen und sozialen Gesichtspunkten. Dieses Buch ist eine Pflichtlektüre für alle, die nach neuen Bedeutungen und Anwendungen für dieses sich ständig verändernde Konzept suchen.

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Hybridity has been redefined multiple times in different disciplines across the world. From its original meaning in botany to refer to the mixture of two plants, or crossbreeding, to its usage in cultural studies following Homi Bhabha's seminal work, hybridity is constantly expanding in meaning as culture and societies evolve. This edited volume presents different definitions and applications of hybridity in the study of religion, literature, fashion, photography, and other fields of study that focus on cultural identities. With a foreword by the late Pnina Werbner, who argues that in today's globalized world, intentional hybridity must be disruptive, *Cultural Identities in a Global World: Reframing Cultural Hybridity* provides readers with interdisciplinary approaches to hybridity as a theory and a research method.
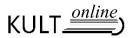
The first section highlights the various ways cultural hybridity can be redefined in this digital, globalized age, uncovering new ways to apply it to cultural identity research. For example, R. Daniel Shaw proposes a move beyond religious syncretism, arguing that applying indigenous mythology to readings of the Bible can be valuable to missionaries, thus recognizing hybridity as a cultural space where traditional rituals and experiences can exist with biblical teachings. Similarly, Laura Popa suggests that through considering hybridization as a global historical process, scholars are able to reconsider Protestantism in today's age by focusing on Pentecostalism, the largest Protestant sect in the world.

In the literary field, Clara Verri proposes that intensification in hybridity allows two elements to acquire the characteristics of the other without losing their individuality, exploring the literary genre of autofiction, a mixture between autobiography and fictional novels. Meanwhile, Iyari Martínez Márquez proposes an appropriate word to use when referring to the hybridization of

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cultures in literature: 'invader species.' This term, the author suggests, enables a nuanced perspective on understanding cultural encounters as "long-term negotiations" in colonial contexts (p. 85).

In order to address the paradox of hybridity as an essentializing and homogenous concept, Andreas Langenohl proposes approaching hybridity through its economic dimensions, building on Richard Harris' work on transculturation, and questioning whether transculturation can be thought beyond essentialism. Langenohl suggests a valorization and appreciation of hybrid identities, arguing that engaging with hybridization is an active decision that requires an investment.

To close the first section, Luisa Conti, Fergal Lenehan, and Roman Lietz, approach the question of "to what extent can postdigitality be understood as 'lifeworld hybridity?'" (p. 87). This essay presents thoughts, ideas, and new perspectives on cultural hybridity that emerged from discussions at a workshop held during the conference that gave rise to this book. Participants reflected on digital ubiquity, cultural shifts in the postdigital sphere, "the impact of digitalisation on economic and political systems" (p. 88), and the existence of a homogenized culture. The essay provides an overview of the discussion, highlighting the digital nature of the conference itself in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the intensification of technology in today's society, guiding the reader to reflect on the homogenization of culture as they move to the next section of the volume.

The second section highlights hybridity as a methodological tool in academic research, with scholarly work stemming from the fields of literature, art, fashion, and religion. The articles in this section apply the concept of hybridity within the framework of a highly connected world and critically analyze how identities intersect in both the private and public sectors of life, breaking down power asymmetries and hegemonic ideologies. Roeland Goorts, for example, identifies hybridity as part of the collective identity and the reason for the coexistence of different cultures and sects in historical societies, while Jana Tiborra argues for the application of hybridity to critically assess the asymmetrical power between photographers and the subject and as an effective tool to break down dominant discourse in art education.

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Brahim Benmoh employs hybridity to highlight that the socio-political position of the diaspora in the host society shifts the effects of belonging and unbelonging and suggests that diasporic literature can be useful in providing alternative narratives to the hegemonic ideologies of migration. Elif Süsler-Rohringer re-creates Turkish design patterns to reflect on the "ambiguous relationship and tensions between the power structures and public archives in Turkey" (p. 159). Through the interventions and modifications on the designs, Süsler-Rohringer creates a hybrid piece of art and is able to critically reflect Turkey's relationship to its past and the elite's creation of an imagined national history.

In analyzing the history of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in the two volumes of *Resistance of a People Up in Arms*, Juan Camilo Brigard, employs the grafting model and hybridity to critique the narrative of Farian Chasqui, which is at odds with historical events, and to demonstrate how indigenous identity was grafted into the group to maintain the propaganda of the FARC.

Finally, the third section looks into hybridity as a social practice in everyday life. From museums to gender and sexual identity, traditional versus modern [Westernized] practices, marketing strategies, and transnational identities, the articles in this section highlight the hybridization of culture in different parts of the world and how it may be applied to inform (Zhang), profit from (Puccini-Montoya et al.), or politicize issues (Şeref, Athira).

X. Amy Zhang analyzes the display of Islamic art in museums in the West and Middle East, and argues that the lack of a specific space for Islamic art (Met); the mixing of Islamic art with Middle Eastern and North African (LACMA); and the secularization of Islamic art (MIA) leads to a "confused status of cultural identity and culture hybridity within contemporary art museums" (p. 199). The author highlights the uneven distribution of power and motivations for applying cultural hybridity to their displays, in attempts to either challenge adverse social narratives or create new ones.

Gender and sexuality norms in a globalized world are discussed by Egzi Şeref and Athira B. K.'s articles, where the hybrid nature of the Turkish and Indian states opens space for a questioning of what is traditional and what is modern in both societies. While Şeref argues that the hybrid

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nature of the legal system in Turkey allows the government to "(re)shape the norms and hierarchies of gender and sexuality as they influence both local and global politics" (p. 214), Athira B. K.'s digital ethnography of wedding pictures during the COVID-19 pandemic from the Malayali-speaking region of Kerala, India, shows that cultural identity is bound by local social, political, and religious fixtures.

In a highly globalized and connected world, marketing strategies and national identities are both influenced by cultural hybridity. Memes as marketing strategies of Netflix are the object of study of Alessandra Puccine-Montoya, César Mora-Moreo, and Enrique Uribe-Jongbloed, who argue that the streaming service uses glocalization within the 'transduction' process based on the hybridization of cultural elements to generate local interest in its international catalogue. Seeking to understand the national identity of the Eusebio Meuse-Rhine region in Europe, Nicole Basaraba demonstrates the potential of hybridity in enabling relations among this region that shares traditions and multicultural identities through digital place-making.

Overall, the authors in this edited volume are influenced by Homi Bhabha's work on cultural hybridity. However, there is criticism of accepting hybridity as an "affirmative dimension" (Brigard, p. 182) or a "benevolent phenomenon" (Zhang, p. 207) with the argument that it could be counterintuitive in a highly globalized, postdigital world, where hybridity is taken for granted (Conti, Lenehan, and Lietz). This means that hybridity is viewed in this book as a result of asymmetrical power in a globalized world and forced upon by oppressive forces (Brigard/Zhang) and must be engaged with intentionally in order to be redefined. As Werbner points out in her foreword, intentional hybridities, as the ones shown in this book, are meant to be thought-provoking, reflexive, and challenging to dominant hegemonies. And that is what the authors in this edited volume achieve.