An interpretive study of the representations of South African Zulu masculinities in the soap operas, *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya*

Melba Nzimande: 209534743

Supervisor: Professor Lauren Dyll

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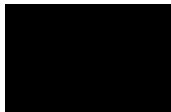
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my son Luthando Nzimande as well as to any children that I will have in the future. Do not let anyone tell you that you cannot do something. You can be anything and do anything if you work hard and believe in yourself.

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ABSTRACT

Since their origins in the 1930s, soap operas have been known as a feminine genre. Contributing to soap opera scholarship, this study explores the interpretations of masculinities that are presented in three South African soap operas by Zulu male audiences living in KwaZulu-Natal - *Uzalo*, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya*. A constructivist approach guides the study in understanding that masculinities are fluid and influenced by social and cultural factors. It articulates the complexity and ambiguity of contemporary South African masculinities, thus working against stereotypical representations of black South African men.

An indigenised cultural studies approach includes how the study's focus group participants read the soap opera preferred messages of Zulu masculinities and reasons for their dominant, negotiated or oppositional readings of these. This is enabled through a comparison of data collected through in-depth interviews with producers from each of the soap operas, with responses from 30 focus group participants in rural and urban areas of Durban and Pietermaritzburg. Data is analysed through the development of deductive and inductive thematisation where the relationship between the theme and international and local theoretical positions are explained.

Typically, soap opera scholarship argues that the genre subverts discourses of hegemonic masculinity. This study found that contemporary South African soap opera representations of masculinities both uphold and subvert dominant discourses of Zulu masculinities. The significance of this is twofold. Firstly, soap opera producers are creating narratives that no longer conform only to traditional soap opera codes and conventions. They encode messages through narratives that draw in male viewers and use the power of cultural proximity in representations, meaning that there is a move to the indigenisation of settings, storylines and languages to attract audiences. Secondly, male audiences decode the messages through parasocial relationships and cultural proximity. The study adds to understanding the specificities of viewing within the African context, and the importance of creatives to be aware of the ways in which these habits shape the meanings of the programmes they produce. In sum, the study contributes to African masculinity studies, but particularly masculinity studies in soap operas in terms of representation and audience engagement in a "post" era, from the perspective of the global South.

Key words: Active audience, cultural proximity, encoding/decoding, representation social constructionism, South African soap opera, Zulu masculinities, indigenisation.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CCMS - Centre for Communication, Media and Society

CCCS - Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies

EE - Entertainment Education

KZN – KwaZulu-Natal

SABC - South African Broadcasting Corporation

IFP- Inkatha Freedom Party

ANC- African National Congress

LGBT- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

VIU- Video Interface Unit

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Chapter One

Introduction

Zulu identities in their multiple manifestations have been a rich area for research in the wake of the Apartheid regime (Carton 2008: xviii). Debate on Zulu identities "show that there is an urgent need for established academic scholars to rejuvenate their intellectual engagement with Zuluness and for younger scholars to accord this subject new treatment and nuanced understanding" (Carton 2008: xvii).

The depiction of Zulu and black masculinities on television is a critical issue to South Africa because of historical events such as colonialism and Apartheid (Msibi 2009; Ratele, 2015; Viljoen 2008; Bantjes, Kagee and Meissner; 2016, Buiten and Naidoo 2013). These changes have affected Zulu culture and identities, politically, historically and linguistically (Carton 2009:3). Until recently there has been a paucity of literature referring specifically to South African masculinities, particularly as depicted on South African television (Ratele 2016:70). In addition, globally there is a lack of research on men and soap opera, as scholarship has centred on women (Geraghty 2005, Brundson 1995, Gledhill 2003, Ang 2007).

Literature review and problem statement

My interest in soap opera and Zulu masculinities was piqued during my master's study, when I wrote a dissertation titled *An ethnographic audience study of isiZulu-speaking UKZN students' responses to constructions of male characters in Muvhango* (2015). The master's research focused on the constructions of masculinities in the South African soap opera *Muvhango*, and presented the way in which male and female viewers were able to interpret and understand the constructions of masculinities. The research found that while male and female participants were expected to have different viewpoints, they did, in fact, reflect similar views and concerns about elements of gender and masculinity. This may be because the participants were students and "student life permits a less rigid definition of gender roles and opinions" (Nzimande 2015:143), as opposed to when viewers "are married, have children and are working" (Nzimande 2015:143). Perceptions may alter when using an older, more experienced group of participants, which is what this study intends to explore. The recommendation for future research was to use a different group of people that may elicit a wider diversity of observations.

This doctoral study aims to enrich the area of investigation by including more case studies as well as both the production and consumption of representations of South African Zulu masculinities. Other writers on the South African soap opera and audience studies have focused on both male and female participants. In her study, Van der Merwe (2012:6) focused on male and female viewers of *7de Laan,* the largest group being white, Afrikaans-speaking males. Tager (1997, 2010), in her study, focused on black male and female respondents and how they engaged with local and international soap operas. This study will exclusively sample black Zulu men and their interpretations of Zulu soap operas in a South African context. My unique contribution to literature is that my study will be the first to use males in a South African context for South African soap opera, thus enhancing local studies with local audiences.

The master's study focused on *Muvhango*, a Tshivenda soap opera, which portrayed predominantly Venda masculinities and which viewers were able to interpret according to their own understanding of the soap opera's discourse. The master's study used male and female UKZN students residing in Pietermaritzburg, whose first language was isiZulu. The current case studies specifically scrutinise Zulu soap operas that showcase the stories of black Zulu people residing In KwaZulu-Natal. These will be analysed by Zulu viewers, which is expected to generate rich 'insider' data about how Zulu culture is understood and represented, along with insight into how these representations are interpreted.

Some of the emerging elements of the previous study was how viewers held an emotional connection to the narrative (Tager 2010: 90–94; Tufte 2000:1; Nzimande 2015), which will be further explored in this study. One of the emerging themes was that of dress code and how each male character dressed according to the role they played (Nzimande 2015), which conforms to Judith Butler's (1999: xxii; 1988:521-522) argument of gender as a performance and construction (Salih 2002:55). Nixon (1997: 292-293) further maintains that dress code has been established as "a key term for coding of the 'new man' as a distinctive new version of masculinity". The notion of the 'new man' indicates changes in representations of masculinity, particularly that masculinity and masculine culture have a social relationship. For the master's research, major themes that emerged were issues of polygamy, male aggression and violence, the essence of what a 'real man' should or should not be, emasculated men and insecurities faced by black men. Focus group readings on these themes were typically similar, with a few disputes on polygamy, where one respondent felt that it constituted abuse to women. The current study will signal the possible emergence of these themes, among others, across a wider sample of South African soap operas, specifically *Imbewu, Isibaya* and *Uzalo*.

This study includes a different sample of participants, namely Zulu men who will share their thoughts on the representations of Zulu men on television. The study will assess which of the same themes may emerge and which new ones may be generated. It will then analyse what this may reveal about contemporary South African male audiences' readings of representations of themselves. It investigates whether these representations agree with or contradict their own sense of identity, and what the implications may be in the broader sense of the politics of representing Zulu men on television.

This type of study is important because it reflects "the cultural characteristics of and concerns arising from the disruptions present in the complex society" (Tufte 200:4). These kinds of representations also confirm "viewers' position in a social hierarchy, thus contributing to the maintenance of the status quo" (Tufte 200:4). This is because soap opera in Africa produces cultural meanings that "have become useful tools for effecting positive social change" (King'ara 2013:97). This has influenced not only cultural attitudes but also politics. In essence, "exploring the role of social and cultural processes in being and becoming South African can provide insight into how our conceptions of citizenship and belonging are affected by the way living with difference is constructed in contemporary South African popular culture and media discourses" (Milton, Wasserman and Garman 2013:3). This is why efforts to address such issues in local identities are crucial.

The South African Broadcast Research Council (BRC) statistics show that several divergent audience groups engage with selected soap operas. They also show that soap opera transcends both race and gender lines. Although usually considered a female genre (Geraghty 1991, 2005), 2018 and 2020 statistics from the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) reveal that almost an equal number of women and men watch soap operas (Uys, 2018; Pooe 2020). This illustrates an expansion of the audience for a genre that traditionally catered to women. It furthermore affirms the contemporaneity of this study's focus on representations of Zulu masculinities and the interpretation of such by male audiences. This study will therefore make a unique contribution to soap opera scholarship, because its objective is to investigate how male viewers observe and understand the representations of men on soap opera.

The value of this study on male self-perception in the media is important because it addresses issues of difference and works towards "an understanding of the construction and contestation of contemporary identities – including national identity, youth identity, race, ethnicity,

diversity and citizenship status (Milton, Wasserman and Garman 2013:3). Traditionally, soap opera focuses on the 'strong woman', which is why it has attracted a mostly female audience. However, recent soap opera has introduced storylines centred around male characters as a means to drawing a male audience (Feasey 2008).

Broadcasting soap opera during prime time promotes higher audience viewing. It also enables social interaction and provides opportunities for audiences to be able to locate themselves within sociocultural political networks (King'ara 2013: 90). One of the objectives of this study is to explore the ways in which new representations affirm, subvert or challenge popular and dominant current discourse on Zulu men in South Africa. Viewers use the soap opera as a tool to make sense of the world in which they live, because it is reflected back to them as stories (King'ara 2013: 90). Soap opera questions and reflects on the degree to which viewers understand their cultural practices while simultaneously influencing viewers (King'ara 2013: 106).

Cultural proximity is, arguably, one reason why soap operas are popular with both female and male audiences (Feasey 2008) "The examination of masculinity in soap opera is crucial due to the fact that a relationship can be said to exist between the relationship of men in the domestic drama and the status of men in the wider population" (Feasey 2008:7). This is one of the reasons why this study will examine masculinity in soap opera via Zulu male perceptions to further identify relationships that the representation of men in soap opera may have with men in society.

South African Zulu masculinities and the changing context
South Africa has undergone many shifts in its political, economic and cultural paradigms (Marx 2008:80) and, as time progresses, new identities and histories are being created. This has had a crucial influence on the role of media content in this country (Teer-Tomaselli, 2015:14,17). Since 1994, the soap opera has tended to adopt a transformational agenda in its attempt to show more nuanced representations of black people to South African audiences (Motsaathebe 2009: 431). Currently, the soap opera acts as a transformational voice for the ways in which people in society should behave and live (Tager 2010:99).

The portrayal of masculinities is a significant issue in South Africa, because perspectives of black men have undergone dynamic changes through historic periods such as colonialism and Apartheid (Msibi 2009; Ratele 2015; Viljoen 2008; Bantjes, Kagee and Meissner 2016; Buiten and Naidoo 2013). Other influential factors are at play in today's democratic regime. Some of the participants in Bantjes, Kagee and Meissner's (2016:3) study felt disempowered by the rise of femininity and the gender empowerment of women. Such factors affect the production constructs of masculinities on television. "From a gender perspective, the political changes that followed the abolition of Apartheid in the early 1990s resulted not only in the empowerment of women but also in a situation where previous masculinities no longer had a place in the new democratic political setup, and its implications" (Van der Watt 2007:104).

The psychological effects of colonialism and Apartheid have left many black men feeling powerless, which in some cases has been reflected in anger and rage (Langa and Kiguwa, 2013:23). For example, in Langa and Kiguwa's study, participants protested violently against the men they felt were emasculating them and who were financially better off than they were. In post-Apartheid South Africa, a small group of emerging black middle-class people enjoy wealth and power, while a much larger group of marginalised black men and women do not enjoy such luxury. For the marginalised groups, notions of liberation pervade their discourses (Langa and Kiguwa, 2013:24).

Since the end of Apartheid, the South African masculine identity has been characterised by struggle and post-struggle masculinities. Xaba (2001:112-114) explains that the masculinity that existed under the Apartheid regime could be defined as *struggle masculinity,* while the nature of masculinity that appears to be pervasive in contemporary society can be defined as *post-struggle masculinity*. Struggle masculinity is characterised by opposition to the government system, which suggests an aggressive anti-authoritarian form of behaviour. This became a lifestyle among young African men under the Apartheid regime in South Africa (Xaba, 2001). Many men gave up their opportunities for education and a normal family life to dedicate themselves to the liberation struggle for freedom in South Africa.

Men who dedicated their lives to the struggle today find themselves in an isolated social and economic system in which their skills are no longer relevant – they had chosen a political avenue to fight for freedom instead of following the proscripts of the Apartheid regime. These men have been honoured by their communities for the brave acts they had performed in the name of freedom. Today, they struggle to exist within a non-violent and peaceful iteration of

masculinity, because all they ever knew and all they were exposed to socially, historically and economically was the harshness into which they had been born – a racist and violent South Africa, filled with Apartheid ideologies (Xaba 2001:112). Similar to Xaba's argument, some of the participants in the Bantjes, Kagee and Meissner (2016: 3) study felt disempowered by the rise of femininity and the gender empowerment of women. Such factors affect the production constructions of masculinity on television.

Post-struggle masculinity is the state in which the men who fought during the Apartheid era find themselves today. Many of these men are without work because they do not have much of an education. The current South African government enforces ideas of gender equality, favouring women when it comes to job opportunities because they had been even more disadvantaged previously. This has further affected men, who have difficulty understanding their place in a South Africa that subscribes to new ideologies about manhood and womanhood. The Bantjes, Kagee and Meissner (2016:3) participants went through similar struggles, as described by Xaba (2001). Chapter Three elaborates on struggle and post-struggle masculinity.

Because of these identity conflicts, many men need reaffirmation of their masculinity and understanding of how to survive and exist in this new society. In post-Apartheid times, these men have created groups in which they can closely relate to one another and coexist. In their attempts to survive, some have turned to criminal gangsterism, while others have resorted to violent criminal behaviour such as rape, murder, and assault. Many of the incidences of criminal behaviour may have come about as the result of having been left far behind as South Africa evolves politically, socially and economically (Xaba 2001:114). This study takes cognisance of both the shifting identities and new representations. In a new and contemporary South Africa and masculinities, the study anticipates that the male respondents may provide insight on post-struggle masculinity and how they may or may not perceive themselves to be a part of the post-struggle regime or a new regime with new identities and representations.

In spite of varying understandings of Zulu masculinities like any cultural group, this identity is ambiguous and complex. Thus, this study will show the complexities and ambiguities working against stereotypes.

South African masculinity on television

Men have been represented in a variety of ways in soap operas. Some have argued that they identify with other characters in the genre only through action and aggression (Feasy 2008). Other theories suggest that the soap opera has encouraged men to talk and express their emotions, especially to other men (Hobson 2003:99). However, South African television, soap opera in particular, has merged these two dynamics, relaying instances of soap opera characters who are unable to articulate their emotions and the situations in which they find themselves. These scenarios usually play out concurrently with the generalised aggressive stereotypes who struggle to share what they feel (Thibedi, interview, 8 April 2019).

What also needs to be taken into consideration is that men on television are presented along racial stereotypes (Luyt 2012:45). The representation of black men in South African soap opera, specifically, is "uniquely South African and is the result of the current transformation ethos and pressure for racial and transformation of local institutions" (Milton 2008:264). Luyt (2012:47) maintains that, on South African television, white men are represented generally as being more powerful and in positions of authority over black men. In contrast to this, he argues that black men are represented mostly as aggressive and socially and emotionally remote. Milton (2008:264), in her study, also shows that black men on the soap opera *7de Laan* were depicted as more problematic than white men. However, television is currently showing black men in a different light. This study may add to our understanding of these changes in media representations of Zulu men.

South African television presents a collection of different types of men portraying an array of characteristics, some of which include varying dispositions of power. These visual representations and their readings are created through discursive practices (Hall 2013:1-3). Discourses also play a major part in how representations are constructed, governed and interpreted (Hall 2013:29). In other words, for any meanings to be understood, they are derived from discourse. This study intends to analyse what the contemporary representations of masculinities may be through understanding the discourses/representations and interpretations of the focus-group respondents. It explores the ways in which South African Zulu masculinities and identities are represented and interpreted in three monolingual (isiZulu) soap operas across South African television. Although a substantial body of research exists on South African soap opera (Tager 2010; Milton 2008; Teer-Tomaselli 2005 and 2015; Gibson 2018 *et al*, King'ara; 2013), there is a paucity of literature that refers specifically to South African masculinities in

particular studies that focus on masculinity as depicted on South African television and soap opera. The study aims to make a unique contribution to South African scholarship with its focus on Zulu male readings of these depictions, while providing broader comment on the ways in which discourses on South African Zulu identity may or may not have changed. With this in mind, the study addresses four primary objectives.

Research objectives

1. To explore the representations of Zulu masculinities in South African soap opera;
2. To identify and analyse the ways in which the preferred messages on Zulu masculinities are decoded by different male audience groups;
3. To explore the ways in which new representations affirm, subvert or challenge popular and dominant current discourses on South African Zulu men.

Research questions

The study is guided by the following key questions:

1. What forms of Zulu masculinities are represented on the soap operas *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya?*

   - What characters represent these various forms of masculinity and what evidence supports it (setting, status, wardrobe, discourses/script, role in the narrative)?
   - What are the reasons for these representations?

2. How are the representations of Zulu masculinities on *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya* interpreted by black male audiences from different sociocultural backgrounds?

   - In what ways do the audience groups hold a dominant and/or negotiated and/or oppositional reading of the representations?
   - What factors can be identified as influencing these interpretations and why?
   - What other forms of masculinities are possibly not included in the soap opera representations and why?

3. In what way do these representations subvert, challenge or accept popular and dominant discourses of South African Zulu men?

- What does this imply about changes in South African society?
- What does this imply about the productions?
- What does this imply about the audiences?

Introduction to case studies

Uzalo, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya* are the recipients of numerous television awards because of their reach to an extensive amount of audiences. For the purpose of this study, the 2019 audience viewers will be displayed as that is the year that the data was collected. According to the BRC's programme performance for 2019, *Uzalo* has 9,137,762 viewers. *Isibaya* has 833,429 viewers (BRC, 2019[1]). According to the South African BRC (2019), *Imbewu* has 4,445,762 viewers.

Uzalo

Uzalo first aired in 2015. It is the flagship soap opera of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) Channel One. SABC 1 dominates the South African television market in showcasing predominantly local programming (Gibson, Dyll and Teer-Tomaselli 2019:145, Teer-Tomaselli 2005:558). The channel has the largest footprint and broadcasts in mostly the Nguni languages of isiZulu, isiXhosa, Tshivenda and Ndebele (Teer-Tomaselli 2005:558, Gibson, Dyll and Teer-Tomaselli 2019:145).

Uzalo endorses the core of the channel's mandate as it is shot locally in KwaZulu-Natal in a township called KwaMashu, F Section (Gibson *et al*. 2019). The initial storyline was of two families – a gangster family and a church family. The two mothers each give birth to a baby boy in the same hospital and the babies are accidentally swapped by hospital nurses. The child of the pastor is thus raised by the gangster and the son of the gangster is raised by the pastor (Onuh 2017:3). The current storyline is based on the lives of people from local businesses, the church, politics, and gangsters who live in KwaMashu (Mpanza 2018:3). The various sectors intertwine to make a riveting story that has attracted many South African viewers.

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[1] Broadcast Research Council (BRC) of South Africa, 2019. Television Research [Online]. Retrieved from https://brcsa.org.za/february-2019-top-tv-programs/

It is produced by Duma Ndlovu, Pepsi Pokane, Gugulethu Zuma and Mariki Van der Walt. Notably, it is monolingual (isiZulu), representing a distinct cultural (Zulu) identity, but does provide English subtitles. The soap opera is aired every weekday at 20:30, rebroadcast the following morning in the general production period and again back-to-back as an omnibus on Sunday afternoons.

Isibaya

Isibaya is a popular South African soap opera aired on DStv on the Mzansi Magic channel at 20:30 every day of the week, with an omnibus slot on Sunday afternoons. Mzansi Magic is M-Net's local offering to the South African market. Available on the DStv compact channel 161, Mzansi Magic's identity lies in broadcasting local stories, telenovelas, films and reality shows (Gibson, Dyll and Teer-Tomaselli 2019). DStv is a Sub-Saharan African direct broadcast satellite service owned by MultiChoice[2] (Gibson, Dyll and Teer-Tomaselli 2019:144; Teer-Tomaselli 2005:558). The channel aspires to become the entertainment provider of choice in Africa. It strives to appeal to all race and age groups, and showcases programmes mostly in the English language, since it airs both local and international content.

The story is set in the Thukela Valley in KwaZulu-Natal. It is the story of a family feud between two powerful families, the Zungus and the Ndlovus. *Isibaya* portrays the taxi industry and politics that exist in the rural areas and townships of KwaZulu-Natal. *Isibaya* is an exclusively Zulu language soap opera with English subtitles. It is produced by The Bomb Shelter under the helm of Desiree Markgraaff, Angus Gibson and Teboho Mahlatsi.

Imbewu: The Seed

Imbewu: The Seed is a popular monolingual soap opera created by Duma Ndlovu. It airs on eTV on weekdays at 21:30, with an omnibus slot on Saturday afternoons. eTV is one of the largest independent television channels in South Africa and the first and only privately owned free-to-air television station in South Africa (Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019:144; Teer-Tomaselli 2005:558). The channel airs both local and international programming (eTV, 2019). *Imbewu* first broadcast in April 2018. *Imbewu: The Seed* is produced by Grapevine

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[2] MultiChoice is a South African broadcasting company that operates the DStv Satellite Television Service, 2019. [Online]. https://www.multichoice.com/

Productions, a joint venture between Anant Singh's Videovision Entertainment, Duma Ndlovu's Word of Mouth Pictures and Luyks Productions with Leleti Khumalo as executive producer. The soap opera is set in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, with a riveting storyline that is set in the parts of the uMlazi and Chatsworth townships as well as in some rural parts of KwaZulu-Natal.

It tells the story of the cultural legacy of two brothers, Phakade and Ngcolosi Bhengu, particularly how Phakade betrays his brother Ngcolosi by sleeping with his wife, secretly fathering her four children. Everybody assumes he is unable to have children of his own. Later, when the truth emerges, difficult, controversial questions about legacies and inheritance crop up. *Imbewu* is aired in isiZulu, the ethnic focus being primarily Zulu. The soap opera also showcases an Indian family who has a relationship with the Bhengus. This angle may have been brought in because of the multiculturalism in South African soap opera, which plays "an important part in the imaging of a post-Apartheid national identity and culture (Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019:142). Similar to *Uzalo* and *Isibaya,* the production provides English subtitles. The soap opera showcases the hybrid cultures that promote social cohesion in South Africa today (Onuh 2017:4).

Differences and similarities exist between the three chosen case studies. A major similarity is that all three soap operas are constructed around patriarchal figures. This is illustrated in Table 1.1 which is listed below and will be elaborated on further in Chapter Two. Further similarities are that all three have storylines set within the KwaZulu-Natal region. *Isibaya* is the exception, in that some episodes offer a brief glimpse into Johannesburg life, when some of the male characters do business in that city.

All three case studies centre on family feuds and all are in isiZulu with English subtitles to accommodate non-Zulu audiences. The main difference in these soap operas is that they are aired at different times of the evening and by different broadcasters. *Uzalo* flights on SABC's Channel 1, *Imbewu* on eTV and *Isibaya* on DStv's Mzansi Magic. Furthermore, *Uzalo* is the flagship soap opera for the SABC, while *Imbewu* and *Isibaya* are not flagship soap operas for their respective channels. These soap operas were deliberately selected for their popularity and the fact that each takes place in a Zulu environment.

Soap operas may differ radically in form and purpose. As a result, researchers have identified a number of models. Liebes and Livingstone (1998:4) identified three models of soap opera. The Dynastic Model, Community Model and Dyadic Model.

The Dynastic Model focuses on one powerful family that has connections with outsiders, all of whom are connected to the main family. *Imbewu* is an exponent of this model – everything revolves around one main family, the Bhengus. All the other characters are linked to the family in a multitude of storylines, be they business, friendships or intimacy. The storyline around the Bhengu brothers, one a pastor, the other a businessman, involves many family secrets within the two families, which affect their business relationships and family life. The Indian Rampersad family is often shown on *Imbewu* as having strong family ties to the Bhengus.

The Community Model is characterised by many characters who operate as equals within the storyline. They are typically middle-class individuals who live family lives. These individuals are mostly not romantically involved, but they do all live in one neighbourhood (Liebes and Livingstone 1998:4). *Uzalo* and *Isibaya* are examples of this model – most community members are based in and around the KwaMashu and uMlazi townships, some being loyal to one another, others in fierce rivalry. *Uzalo* and *Isibaya* do not entirely conform to the Community Model. The model states that individuals are mostly not romantically involved, yet some of the characters are. These are the very elements that give these two soap operas their local favour.

The Dyadic Model consists of a network of (young) people who are interconnected and continually reinventing kinship relationships (Liebes and Livingstone 1998:4). While *Uzalo* shows characteristics of the Community Model, it also has some elements of the Dyadic Model. This is because it shows young people in various contexts such as the hair salon, the car wash, the church, the *shisanyama* (restaurant or bar), where several dynamics of the model unfold.

While the Community Model often implements specific pedagogic aims, the Dyadic and Dynastic Models portray patriarchal structures of power that appeal to the viewer's fantasy (Liebes and Livingstone 1998:4). For example, *Uzalo* and *Isibaya,* representative of the Community Model, depict several male characters and their associated dynamics as aspects of masculinity in a typical township and rural area in South Africa. *Imbewu* portrays the Dynastic Model in patriarchal structures of power as represented by the two brothers who are the lead characters. Generally, since *Imbewu* is centred on two brothers within one family, most of the action involves them. Both brothers are married and wield patriarchal power in their homes and businesses, while their wives and children are subservient. While, in some scenes, women and children act rebelliously, the conflict is generally resolved and they end up going back to their designated positions of submission.

All three soap operas have displayed a dense representation of male figures in their storylines. This is new to soap opera, since the genre historically catered to female audiences (Geraghty 2005, Brown 1994). The initial storyline for *Uzalo* depicted two male characters as catalysts of the storyline when the son of a gangster and the son of a pastor were born and swapped at birth. *Imbewu* shows how family culture can tear families apart when one Bhengu brother impregnates his brother's wife against all odds – he'd been perceived as being unable to father children. *Isibaya* shows the dynamics of the Zungu and the Ndlovu families and how the men are able to make important decisions that can alter the storyline.

Uzalo, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya* depict several types of Zulu men, some adhering to patriarchal structures, and others who do not wield any power and are dominated by women. These soap operas also show how strong cultural roots are maintained and respected, for example issues of polygamy are raised in *Isibaya* and *Uzalo* where men can marry more than one wife.

Soap opera	Channel and broadcast times	Production company	Viewership	Language	Setting	Centrality of male characters to the narrative	Model: Dynastic/ Community/Dyadic
Uzalo	SABC 1: 20:30	Stained Glass Productions	9,137,762	isiZulu	Township	Two men (gangster and pastor)	Community Model Dyadic Model
Isibaya	MZANSI MAGIC: 20:30	The Bomb Shelter	833,429	isiZulu	Rural and urban	Two taxi owners, Zungu and Ndlovu	Community Model
Imbewu	eTV: 21:30	Grapevine Productions	4,445,762	isiZulu	Rural, urban and township	Two brothers, Ngcolosi and Phakade	Dynastic Model

Table 1.1: The three case studies

Framing the study: Theory and methodology

This study is situated within the interpretive paradigm, which can be understood as a study of understanding the nature of human experience (Thanh and Thanh 2015:24). Decolonisation of research methodologies is a critical element in understanding indigenous ways of communicating. Particularly in the social science field, indigenous projects are inclusive of storytelling, democratising, testimonies and reframing as a part of their methodology (Dyll 2020:3). Thus, this study adopts indigenisation and decolonisation as a means of drawing transformative research.

This allows for the study to seek an understanding of realities through noting the participants' views along with their experiences (Govender 2018:359). How the viewers of *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya* construct, understand and interpret masculinity and gender is analysed against the backdrop of their sociocultural experience and discourse. This attempts to address research question two by unpacking how representations of Zulu masculinity on *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya* are interpreted by black male audiences from different sociocultural backgrounds. Research question two is also addressed by the focus group interviews to come to an understanding of the ways in which these representations subvert, challenge or accept, and affirm popular and dominant discourses around South African Zulu men.

Using the information provided by the participants, the researcher constructs her own understanding from the gathered data, informed by selected theories. The interpretive paradigm recognises that certain ideologies influence the way in which meaning is made. This paradigm is also rooted in beliefs that are socially constructed (Thanh and Thanh 2015:25). As such, the study conducts focus-group sessions to elicit similarities and differences in Zulu men's understanding and interpretation of the representations of Zulu men on soap opera.

Expert interviews and focus groups

To collect data to address research question one, expert interviews are conducted with *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya's* production staff, including directors, writers and producers. Gatekeeper permission letters were secured from all three production companies. For the purposes of this study, one production staff member is interviewed per soap opera, rendering a total of three expert soap opera interviews. All participants have been provided with an informed consent form. Interviews are conducted at the convenience of the production staff and at a venue that is convenient to them.

To address research question two, focus group interviews have been conducted. Between 30 and 36 people in five focus groups have participated. This is the acceptable sample size for ethnography and ethno-science research (Bernard 2000:178, Morse 1994:225). Each of the focus groups comprised six to eight male members. The sample was drawn from Pietermaritzburg and Durban in KwaZulu-Natal, because this area is convenient to the researcher in terms of location. It also has a broad enough sample to study, not to mention the fact that KwaZulu-Natal is where the Zulu Kingdom originated in the 19th Century (Houston and Mbele 2011:43-45). Focus-group members were aged between 20 and 35 years, because SABC statistics show that this is the largest age demographic that engages with soap opera (Uys, 2018). It also serves to "demonstrate some of the relations between sociodemographic factors such as class and age" (Morley 1992:69).

Reception and interpretation studies refer to "the way in which people make sense of their lives and the events, actors, processes and texts that they encounter" (Livingstone and Das 2015:1). Audience reception studies focus on the interpretation of various texts by the viewers in an ethnographic context (Livingstone 1988:2). As such, reception studies contextualise the role of active audiences as meaning makers (Pitout 1998:65).

The value of conducting a reception analysis for this study is that it allows for the analysis of the complexity of signifying how audiences negotiate and process texts (Pitout 1998). Reception theory and the active audience theory play a tremendous role in understanding the text in both the context of the readers and the author, especially "the ability of readers to interpret a text in terms of their specific circumstances" (Pitout 1998:65). In this study, for example, both the author (encoder/soap opera producer) and the reader (decoder/Zulu men) of the text will be considered when establishing any relationships of data and interpretation between the two.

This study will be guided by two theoretical frameworks:
1. Masculinity theory
2. Active audience theory
   - Cultural studies and cultural proximity (active audiences influenced by cultural context)
   - Encoding and decoding (encoded messages by production, decoded messages by audiences)

Masculinity theory

Masculinities are practices, values and behavioural patterns exhibited by men in social and private settings and can "differ according to gender relations in a particular social setting" (Connell and Messertschmidt 2005:836). These patterns and values are culturally and historically constructed (Ratele 2016:9). This study can be located within a qualitative paradigm, because it is embedded in a research design of viewers' interpretation of soap opera texts.

Four major models are generally accepted as being of value in carrying out research on men and masculinity. These are biological models, anthropological models, psychological models and sociological models. The models will be elaborated upon in the theoretical framework chapter. For the purposes of this study, masculinities will be argued to be affected by anthropological and sociological models. Many of Connell's (2005) theories are applicable to this study about masculinities, since they are based on social construction. Connell suggests three important aspects associated with male behaviour, namely that:

      i) there are physical attributes to masculinity that presume machismo

      ii) masculinity is not fixed and is constructed within a social context, and

      iii) men use violence to reinforce their dominance (Connell 2005a: 63, 65, and 83).

"The social construction of masculinities in South Africa is a subject that has gained attention with feminist and gender studies" (Buiten and Naidoo 2013:196). As a result of this attention, historical and traditional forms of masculinity are being contested (Nixon 1997:295, Butler 1999:6). Although many of these constructions are being challenged, they also "work as a background for one another, and they often find their most powerful articulation through one another. [Data is analysed through] multiple lenses at once and the analysis surely illuminates the limits of gender as an exclusive category of analysis" (Butler 1999: xvi).

The media contributes to messaging about masculinity and masculine culture (Nixon 1997: 295). This has led to the concept of the 'new man', who exerts several social variables that are not tied to a single version of masculinity, but is based instead on how cultural factors such as ethnicity, race and the generation they are a part of affect masculinities (Nixon 1997:295).

This study subscribes to the idea that multiple influences on masculine identity exist and it addresses these in the focus-group interviews. Butler (1999: viii) and Nixon (1997: 294 – 295)

describe gender as a concept that cannot be confined to a specific definition, suggesting that gender is a multifarious field. Popular culture and the media aid this process of meaning making by offering cultural aids to contest such concepts (Buiten and Naidoo 2013:197; Nixon 1997:293). The social construct of masculinities is a continuously developing process that cannot be tied to a singular event or an individual. Instead, these social constructs are multidimensional and influenced by ideological and practical implications (Thole-Muir 2014:1). Such implications may determine a person's experiences and gender relations. For example, some masculinities in South Africa have been affected by its history of encountering colonialism, Apartheid and socioeconomic inequalities (Ratele, 2015:47). This is relevant to this study, because such implications may determine how each participant answers questions pertaining to masculinity as these pertain to their experiences, which may be directly or indirectly affected by inequalities and historical circumstances.

This study explores soap opera as a genre that may challenge gendered meanings and representations and how audiences may discover identity in such. Some of these gender representations are "reinvented and represented" to maintain male dominance in a changing culture and social formation (Dipio 2018:174). This is embedded unconsciously in the narratives of telenovelas (Dipio 2018:174). Landers (2018:54) argues that South African identities are particularly complex, especially around narratives of race and gender. Some of the nuanced meanings and representations come in the form of gendered stereotypes. Others come in the form of race (black/white) and yet others from traditional notions of gender.

Ang (2007:4) maintains that it is important to study not only how audiences make sense of the soap operas with which they engage, but also the kinds of social and cultural implications the genre has for their lives. These play a significant role in the viewing experience, after all. This study explores the ways in which viewers consume and decode *Uzalo, Imbewu and Isibaya* in terms of the portrayal of contemporary Zulu male identities in South African television.

Active audience theory

Culturalist audience studies draw on the active audience tradition, arguing that audiences are "active producers of meaning from within their own cultural context" (Barker 2013:339). In other words, audiences are not perceived as passive, but are active in their consumption of the media texts. The way meanings are constructed and interpreted differ from one individual to the next depending on gender, class and cultural community (Barker 2013:340).

Cultural studies and cultural proximity

The concept of cultural proximity in television means that "the broadcaster and the target community both share a set of cultural referents and values" (Castello 2010:207-208). When audiences engage with television programmes, they "actively seek cultural proximity in their cultural consumption". In other words, cultural proximity not only examines the language elements of a media text, but also its religion, culture, audiovisual production, and humour (Castello 2010:207-208). This study examines how audiences interpret representations of masculinities, which may be linked to their environment, culture, language and religion. The official institutionalisation of this type of cultural-studies investigation was undertaken by the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham University (Hall 1997, Fiske 1997, Morley 1998). Culturalist audience studies take into consideration the type of people who are used in a study, the quality of their lives, along with their attitudes and discourse, against the background of mass publications (Storey 1997:52). This study samples Zulu men in the form of focus groups selected across different communities and townships within KwaZulu-Natal, to ensure diversity in their background.

Cultural studies developed at CCCS supported Marxist tradition, reflecting the ideas of ethnography and structuralism. The viewpoint was that culture is closely linked to social structure and history. In other words, for a person to experience any set of social relations, they need to create meanings and frameworks they can relate to (Fiske 1982). This places the emphasis of cultural studies on the circulation of meaning and understanding within societies (Fiske 1982).

It is intended that the present study of *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya* will follow a similar line of investigation, since it will attempt to understand viewers' understanding of the representation of Zulu men on South African television, while also attempting to understand why the producers of those representations portray them in the way they do.

Cultural studies therefore engage a rapidly shifting ground of knowledge and debate about society and the culture that exists within it. This field seeks "new questions, new models, and new ways of study, testing the fine lines between intellectual rigor and social relevance" (Hall 1997:337). The study is influenced by this framework because of the diversity of the population of people who are interviewed. While all the participants are black, the sample will represent groups of men that exist within different cultural practices, discourses and frameworks that shape the way they think and perform (Hall, 1995).

Encoding and decoding

Stuart Hall's model of communication for encoding and decoding is particularly useful in comprehending how senders (producers/creators/writers) and receivers (audiences) of texts understand messages. This is mainly because senders encode messages according to their own views and ideological standpoint. Audiences, in turn, decode these messages according to their own understanding (Hall 1993:91).

Hall identified three positions that account for the ways in which audiences decode messages and texts. The first is the *dominant hegemonic position.* This is when the viewer assumes the dominant point of view and articulates the intended message (Hall 1993:101). Here, virtually no or very little misunderstanding creeps in between the sender and the viewer. The second is the *negotiated position*, which allows for the viewer to receive and decode messages from the sender. The messages are understood and articulated by the receiver according to their own understanding, viewpoints, cultural context and discourses (Hall 1993:102). The last position is the *oppositional view*, whereby the audience member is able to understand and decode messages intended by the sender, but the message is clouded by personal experience, cultural beliefs, and discourses that distort or come across in unintended contexts (Hall 1993:103).

Another important factor is that members of one cultural context who share similar discourses and cultural orientations may decode messages in a similar way based on shared cultural codes, but in different ways based on individual current and past experiences. This is because certain messages are read and interpreted from cultural practices that are embedded in each individual social structure (Morley 1992:81). This aspect is explored in the study because all the participants share some elements of cultural practices because they are all Zulu men living in KwaZulu-Natal.

Since this study explores interpretation as well as representation, both the senders and receivers of the texts will be interviewed to determine whether or not the message is received as it has been intended, or whether the text is understood differently to its intended context. This will be done because audiences respond "actively and even argumentatively to the messages of the media. Because we all view media messages through the discourses and sets of representations which affect our lives, these messages do not confront us in isolation" (Morley 1992:70). Instead, these messages are constantly negotiated and contested, intersecting with many other messages that we receive.

A basic content analysis was conducted by the researcher to select the episodes that were screened in focus groups. A thematic analysis, which is a method for identifying and analysing patterns and themes in qualitative data (Braun and Clarke 2006: 79), is used to organise the data. Data is therefore organised thematically to identify repeated themes, both in what the experts identify as the encoded Zulu masculinity and what audiences decode in terms of Zulu masculinity. This study applies a combination of theoretical/deductive methods with inductive methods (Schreirer 2014:173, Braun and Clarke 2006). Themes that are aligned to the study's theoretical or analytic interest in masculinity are identified and are therefore more explicitly analyst driven in being directly guided by the study's key research questions and the relevant literature that has previously identified themes. However, in order to contribute new knowledge from the participants themselves, themes are also inductively generated from the data.

The identified themes are then critically discussed in terms of how a sociocultural context may affect masculinities, their presentation, and the ways in which the audiences read these, as guided by the encoding/decoding model (Hall 1993:101). As such, the study explains the reason why audiences may hold either: 1) dominant and/or 2) negotiated and/or 3) oppositional readings (Hall 1993:102) of the presented Zulu masculinities. It also offers a critical discussion on the ways in which popular or dominant discourses of Zulu South African masculinities may be affirmed or subverted in the study. The study's literature, along with theoretical concepts of active audience (Barker 2013; Pitout 1998) cultural proximity (Hall 1997; Fiske 1997; Morley 1998), are mobilised to explain some of these reasons academically.

Dissertation structure

This thesis is divided into seven chapters.

Chapter One provides a comprehensive introduction into Zuluness, masculinity, gender and soap opera, outlining the problem statement and the study's objectives. It introduces the soap opera case studies *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya*, providing broadcast and viewership information for each.

Chapter Two reviews the relevant literature that contextualises the study. By reviewing studies on soap opera representations and South African television (Tager 1997, 2010; van der Merwe 2012; Teer-Tomaselli 2005, 2015), as well as international and national soap opera audience studies (Pitout 1996; Geraghty 2005; Ang 2007; Brunsdon 1995), it also identifies the gaps that exist in masculinity studies on soap opera. This includes soap opera scholarship, both global (Pitout 1996; Geraghty 2005; Ang 2007; Brunsdon 1995) and local (Tager 1997, 2010; van der

Merwe 2012; Teer-Tomaselli 2005, 2015). It further presents an overview of the South African television industry inasmuch as it relates to soap opera (Msibi 2009; Ratele 2015; Viljoen 2008; Bantjes, Kagee and Meissner 2016; Buiten and Naidoo 2013; Tager 2010 1997; Geraghty 2005, Allen 2004) as well as the representations of men on South African television (Luyt 2012; Nixon 1997). The chapter shows how soap opera has emerged and changed over time, and their relationship with the South African audience (Milton, Wasserman and Garman 2013:406). The chapter also highlights how the target audience for soap opera has evolved over time (Tager 2010:102, 1997:6). Lastly, it highlights the extent to which South African Zulu masculinities have been affected by historical changes such as Apartheid and colonialism (Msibi 2009; Ratele 2015; Viljoen 2008; Bantjes; Kagee and Meissner 2016; Buiten and Naidoo 2013).

Chapter Three provides a theoretical framework in which this study can be placed. The study is guided by masculinity and active audience theory and shows how masculinities are both culturally and historically constructed. The chapter shows how fluid masculinities are, illustrating four major models that contribute to masculinity studies (Connell and Messertschmidt 2005; Beynon 2002; van der Watt 2007; Connell 2005, 2002). The chapter also provides theoretical frameworks on cultural audience studies (Buiten and Naidoo 2013; Thole-Muir 2014; Hall 1995; Hofstede 2011). These include the concept of cultural proximity (Castello 2010) and the encoding and decoding model (Hall 1993).

Chapter Four describes the methodology and the sampling of the study and where it is situated within an interpretative paradigm (Thanh and Thanh 2015). It provides the qualitative research approach applicable to the study, taking the form of a reception analysis (Livingstone and Das 2015). The chapter also delineates the data collection techniques employed and the sample for the interviews and focus groups. It ends by discussing the ethical considerations taken in conducting the study.

Chapter Five critically analyses data from in-depth expert interviews. A thematic analysis follows to organise the data so that it can be assessed and then analysed in the context of relevant literature and theory.

Chapter *Six* is a continuation of chapter five that expands on the analysis from the viewers perspective. A content analysis on the selected episodes is also conducted. The chapter has a thematic analysis of all the date retrieved from the focus group settings as well that the themes that emerged from it.

Chapter Seven is a short, concluding chapter that delivers logical comment to the dissertation. The chapter summarises and synthesises the main findings in response to each of the key research questions and then draws conclusions from all the other chapters. It also highlights any implications and contradictions, interesting observations and areas for possible further study.

Chapter Two
Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant research that has been conducted about television in general and soap operas in particular, including research pertaining to audiences. The chapter also reviews literature that contextualises the study's enquiry into the representation of masculinity on television, particularly Zulu masculinity (Viljoen 2008; Bantjes, Kagee and Meissner 2016, Buiten and Naidoo 2013). To fully explain these representations; understandings and articulations of male Zulu identity in South Africa are included (Msibi 2009, Ratele 2015).

South African television has experienced shifts that have shaped some of the practices in the local television industry in terms of politics and belonging (Milton, Wasserman and Garman 2013:406). Concomitantly, the soap opera has experienced changes over the years (Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019; King'ara 2013; Milton 2008; Teer-Tomaselli 2005, Tager 2010). A short description of the origins of soap opera is included, followed by an explanation of the genres, codes and conventions – key features that make soap opera what it is – and the type of audience for which it caters. As the study's primary objective is to conduct a reception analysis with male audiences, this chapter provides a deeper discussion on soap opera audiences. For a long time, studies have concluded that soap opera caters predominantly for women (Geraghty 2005; Brundson 1995; Gledhill 2003; Ang 2007) However, as years have passed, it has come to cater increasingly for women as well as men (Tager 2010, 1997; Gauntlett and Hill 1999).

Once the history of soap opera and South African television has been explored, the chapter presents a discussion on the role of men on television, because representations of men on television and the media at large communicate messages that are continually challenging gender traditions and driving social change (Luyt 2012:35). "Both gender and race relations in SA have traditionally been marked by extreme inequality… These differences in representation reflect an intersection between traditional gender and race relations" (Luyt 2012:35). In essence, this study specifically investigates the representations of Zulu men and their masculinity on soap opera presentations in television.

Masculinity and gender

Masculinities are practices, values and behavioural patterns exhibited by men in social and private settings and can "differ according to gender relations in a particular social setting" (Connell and Messertschmidt 2005:836). These patterns and values are culturally and historically constructed. This study can be located within a qualitative paradigm, because it is embedded in a research design of viewers' interpretation of specific texts.

Popular culture and the media aid this process of meaning-making by offering cultural aids to contest such concepts (Buiten and Naidoo 2013:197). The social construction of masculinity is a continuously developing process that cannot be tied to a singular event or an individual. Rather, these social constructs are multidimensional and are influenced by ideological and practical implications (Thole-Muir 2014:1). Such implications may determine a person's experiences and gender relations. For example, some masculinities in South Africa have been affected by their history of encountering colonialism, Apartheid and socioeconomic inequalities (Ratele 2015; Morrell and Lindegger 2012).

This study will also explore the soap opera as a genre that may challenge gendered meanings and representations, and how audiences may relate to these. Ang (2007:4) maintains that it is important to study how audiences make sense of the soap operas they engage in, as well as the kinds of social and cultural implications soap operas have for their lives, because these play a significant role in the viewing experience. This study explores the ways in which viewers consume and decode soap operas. This is achieved through scrutinising the selected soap operas as case studies on the portrayal of contemporary Zulu male identities in South African television.

The interplay between gender and masculinity

The ideals of masculinity are closely linked to culture and social dimensions that present themselves to men. South African masculinities are made up of traditional and modern versions of the notion. Traditional or hegemonic forms of masculinity can be defined as "a pattern of practice" (Connell and Messertschmidt 2005:832), which not only entrenches male dominion over women, but also subjects subordinate masculinities to oppression (Connell and Messertschmidt 2005:832; Ratele 2014:118; Morrell and Lindegger 2012:11). While Demetrio (2001) agrees with Connell and Messertschmidt's (2005) thoughts, he further argues that hegemonic masculinity cannot be so simple. He says "gender is not a fixed set of social norms that are passively internalised and enacted, but it is constantly produced and reproduced in social practice" (Demetrio 2001:340). This, then, suggests that gender is something a person does and not necessarily what is socially expected (Demetrio 2001:340).

Modern interpretations of masculinity do not fit into the structure of hegemonic masculinity (Demetrio 2001:342). Gay men, for example, "are subordinated to straight men not only in terms of social status and prestige but also by a series of material practices, which include political, cultural, economic and legal discrimination" (Demetrio 2001:341). Black masculinities, too, are marginalised (Demetrio 2001; Hooks 2004). In essence, subordinated masculinities are ranked according to gender hierarchies and ethnic groupings. This is the interplay between gender and masculinity (Demetrio 2001:342). These constructs of traditional and modern versions of masculinity are men's responses to the changes that continuously unfold in culture and society (Brown, Sorrell and Raffaelli 2005:587). This study focuses on traditional as well as modern versions of Zulu masculinities as these become evident in the selected case studies. This is crucial to fully understanding masculinity because, while some men have come to embrace modern and redefined forms of modern masculinity, others are very protective of traditional forms of masculinity because they are so attached to them (Thole-Muir 2014:17).

The movement from traditional to modern forms of masculinity has come up against resistance from some traditional men. The prevailing resistance even affects power relations and issues of gender inequality, with men feeling the need to dominate women. This means that while some men support challenges to the status quo of unequal gender relations and the enablement

of transformation, many react with violence, still believing in stereotyped gender relations whereby men execute power and authority over women (Thole-Muir 2014:18).

Some men, within the working class, find it extremely difficult to embrace changes to the masculine experience in society, especially when required to acknowledge women's rights (Dworking *et al* 2012:97). In essence, no one type, nor two types of masculinity exist. Instead, an array of masculinities appear on a continuum in the form of hierarchies in relation to dominant and hegemonic masculinities. These masculinities emanate from historical and cultural settings (Connell 2005a:37).

Three components aid a deeper understanding of masculinity and gender, and how society places these in culture:

- *Masculine gender roles* answer the questions of what men are, how they have to behave and what attitudes they need to portray. These are constructed by specific groups. For example, a group of men who behave aggressively will have attributes of aggression as a part of their masculine gender role (Van der Watt 2007:80; Clatterbaugh 1990:3). Thus, men are able to construct male gender roles according to social and cultural experiences and practices. One may also argue that while this is accurate for men, women too are able to perpetuate traditional gender roles according to sociological and cultural influences.

- *Stereotypical masculinity* is how most people think men should be and behave (Van der Watt 2007:80, Clatterbaugh 1990:3). If the belief is held that men should be the head of the home and leaders of commerce and industry, then that shared belief determines the stereotypical role of masculinity. This belief prevails irrespective of the *masculine gender role*.

- *The gender ideal* is what a society believes men should be (Van der Watt 2007: 80; Clatterbaugh 1990:3). If the belief is held that all men should be educated, middle-class, and own houses and cars, this will form the bedrock of the gender ideal. Societal and cultural thoughts will differ about what men really are and what society thinks they are.

Like masculinity, stereotypical and gender ideals are, socially, culturally and historically constructed (Morrell and Lindegger 2012, Demetrio 2001, Hooks 2004). "Black males who refuse categorisation are rare, for the price of visibility in the contemporary world of white supremacy is that black male identity be defined in relation to the stereotype whether by embodying it or seeking to be other than it. At the centre of the way black male selfhood is

constructed in white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy is the image of the brute – untamed, uncivilized, unthinking and unfeeling. Negative stereotypes about the nature of black masculinity continue to over-determine the identities black males are allowed to fashion for themselves" (Hooks 2004:x). This thought is address in research question 3, which aims to understand the way in which male representations subvert, challenge or accept popular and dominant discourses of South African Zulu men. This reflects what specific groups of people believe and think within the discourse they know and are exposed to. Ideals of masculinity evolve and change over time (Demetrio 2001). If a belief prevailed that men had to be dependent in the 1930s, completely different ideals might be held in 2020 about what men should be like, because the times have changed. Many women are now liberated – in the 'ideal' sense of the word – and independent. This will of necessity affect ideals of masculinity (Morrell and Lindegger 2012).

Zulu masculinities

Masculinity in South Africa is affected by its history of colonialism, Apartheid and socioeconomic inequalities (Ratele 2015:47; Morrell and Lindegger 2012). The problems faced by black men post-Apartheid are evident from the effects of Apartheid and colonialism. These problems are not only local – they are universal (Ratele 2015:47). As these problems accumulate and compound, and because socioeconomic injustices are not addressed systemically, many black men have struggled to reach social cohesion. Some resolution is evident here and there, but in South Africa we cannot overlook the fact that "blacks as a group run government, yet whites as a group run the economy" (Ratele 2015:48).

Many government departments have launched initiatives and programmes that aim to promote social cohesion in South Africa (Ratele, 2015:48; Viljoen 2008:156). Many private companies have also tried to promote social cohesion to enable a better South Africa for all. However, these interventions have failed dismally. In fact, the country has seen an upsurge of black men participating in violent acts, among these xenophobic violence, where black men in South Africa act violently against black persons from other African countries (Ratele 2015:48). This type of expression of masculinity can be argued to be a key element in understanding the violence that exists in men (Ratele and Suffla 2011:260).

As mentioned previously, South Africans have experienced multiple violence-related traumas (Ratele and Suffla 2011:262), which may cause men to act out violently. A significant factor in the violence of South African men is the existence of gender-based hierarchies (Ratele and Suflla 2011:263).

The unequal relations between male and female groups "perpetuate unequal relations", which may result in violence (Ratele and Suflla 2011:263). Notions of inequality, along with Apartheid and its impact are further evaluated in this chapter because these play a significant role not only in the constructs of masculinity in South Africa, but also in how the media interpret these constructs and create identities for audiences.

"There is no one typical South African man" (Morrell 2001:33). Instead, a range of different types of men coexist for the common goal to survive. Morrell and Lindegger (2012) argue that at least three forms of hegemonic masculinity are present in South Africa. The first is:

> white masculinity (represented in the political and economic dominance of the white ruling class); an African rurally based masculinity that resided in and was perpetuated through indigenous institutions (such as chiefship, communal land tenure, and customary law) and finally a black masculinity that had emerged in the context of urbanisation and the development of geographically separate and culturally distinct African townships (Morrell and Lindegger 2012:12).

Media texts communicates specific messages about men into the post-Apartheid economy while at the same time modifying certain values to suit different races (Viljoen 2008:154). Television today streams messages of ideologies that represent elements of the post-Apartheid economy and also those of traditional and hegemonic ideologies (Buthelezi 2008:23).

What also needs to be taken into consideration is that men are represented on television in a manner determined by their specific racial groups (Luyt 2012:45). Luyt (2012:47) maintains that, on South African television, white men are represented generally as being more powerful and in positions of authority over black men. In contrast, he argues, black men are represented mostly as aggressive and socially and emotionally remote. Ratele (2017) maintains similar ideas by stating that the broadcasting media's representation of white men as being powerful is "not a blunder", but rather "colonial blindness, white men rule". However, some

representations on television has portrayed negative representations of white men as being stupid of late (Wood 2013), suggesting that this is a significant area for further research.

South African television presents various types of men as displaying numerous characteristics, some of which include different depictions of the power of men, many of these stereotypical.

In the province of KwaZulu-Natal, the cradle of Zulu masculinity, "politics of cultural nationalism" (Buthelezi 2008:23) complicate an ideal unity. This is mainly because the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) has encouraged its followers to promote the voice of Zuluness and to preserve it across South Africa (Buthelezi 2008:23). The IFP supports its leader, Mangosuthu Buthelezi in the ideology of promoting and legitimising Zulu greatness. His vision is based on South African perceptions of King Shaka, the original Zulu king and founder of the Zulu kingdom (Buthelezi 2008:23, Carton 2008:xiii). The IFP leader "enforced monopolisation of the construction of patriarchal Zulu culture, which extended the life of a moribund homeland system while nurturing embryonic violence that threatened political transition to an inclusive democracy in South Africa" (Carton 2008: xiv). The mere mention of Zulu politics created fear in people that reflected stereotypical characteristics of Shaka's nation. Thus, Zulu identities have learned from "both the recent political transformation, as well as the challenges that continue to confront the South African nation-building exercise" (Carton 2008:xviii).

Write in a linking sentence or two that 'shows' the reader the logical link between the above section/paragraph and the following one.

Masculinity stereotypes
Male characters are often stereotyped in film and television along racial lines. While this is frequently the case, many other stereotypical representations of men occur. In essence, "masculine identity in South Africa is affected by the political shift from a patriarchal regime of oppression to a system that attempts to represent and valorise the disenfranchised" (Viljoen 2008:156).

In effect, "white men have become the subsequent poster children for a past of infamous hostility and domination" (Viljoen 2008:156). Stereotypical portrayals of black men are generally representative of the concept of black masculinity held by many rural communities in South Africa, where being fearless is a compelling stereotype of manhood (Ratele 2010:20).

South Africa's colonial past, with in its history of repression, Apartheid and the migrant labour system, has clearly influenced notions of masculinity in the country (Bantjes, Kagee and Meissner, 2016:2). Hegemonic masculinity, which embodies patriarchy and the subordination of women (Luyt 2012:47), was originally defined as the ideal. Masculinity in South Africa embodies the importance of 'control' and men being 'tough' and physical (Luyt, 2012:47). Several authors have been inclined to produce stereotypical versions of what constitutes acceptable masculinity. Bantjes, Kagee and Meissner (2016:2) argue that young Afrikaans boys have been encouraged within social structures to play aggressive sports like rugby, while for black men the 'tough-guy' image is that of working in the mines under harsh working conditions, which propels them into aggression. These images of men may be accurately attributed in different circumstances, yet it should still be challenged as stereotypical representations of men.

A study conducted by Bantjes, Kagee and Meissner (2016:3) shows that some South African men feel pressured to fit into the parameters of hegemonic ideals – that a man has to be aggressive and strong because that is what is expected by society and the media as the norm. A number of the participants in that study felt that society expected them to restrict their emotions and to be brave. One homosexual man in Bantjes, Kagee, Meissner's (2016:3) study argues that it is a characteristic of homosexual men who do not conform to hegemonic ideals to express their emotions about how they feel and what they want. This, in turn, is a stereotypical observation of homosexual men, since not all homosexual men are expressive of their emotions. Ratele (2010:20) reached the conclusion that very few men can elucidate confidently about their identity and how to coexist with other men, let alone women and children. This is because of the confusion and loss of traditional manhood ideals over the years as a result of industrial revolutions, anti-colonial wars, Apartheid (locally), and the emancipation of women. This study considers these arguments because they influenced the questions that were addressed in the Focus group interviews as well as how the participants to this study relayed their understanding of hegemony, homosexuality, issues of identity as well as Apartheid and the elements that came with the regime.

The effects of colonialism and Apartheid on masculinity

Gender is not the only form of subordination. Race and class further contribute towards the construction of violent masculinities in South Africa. (Luyt 2012:47; Langa and Kiguwa 2013:21). "In patriarchal culture, all males learn a role that restricts and confines. When race and class enter the picture, along with patriarchy, then black males ensure the worst impositions of gendered masculine patriarch identity" (Hooks 2004:x). The ideals of masculinity in South Africa are associated with financial stability, employment, running households and being an emotionally available father to children (Langa and Kiguwa 2013:21).

This poses great challenges to black men, because many of them are unable to find stable occupations and receive quality education to achieve such goals. In a study conducted by Langa and Kiguwa (2013:23), some participants struggled with the concept of 'ideal masculinity' because they were unable to get married because of financial constraints in trying to pay *lobola*[3], not to mention being able to afford and maintain a household.

The lack of education and work for today's black man emanates from the impact of colonialism and Apartheid, both of which conspired to create an environment where black men are disempowered and marginalised. As a result of this disempowerment, black men who have felt constrained now compete to "occupy different positions of power through subordination of other men and women" (Langa and Kiguwa 2013:21).

"From a gender perspective, the political changes that followed the abolition of Apartheid in the early 1990s resulted not only in the empowerment of women but also in a situation where previous masculinities no longer had a place in the new democratic political setup, and its implications" (Van der Watt 2007:104). The psychological effects of colonialism and Apartheid have left many black men feeling powerless, which frequently spills over into anger and rage (Langa and Kiguwa 2013:23). Some of this outrage has led to violent protests (Langa and Kiguwa 2013:24). The participants in Langa and Kiguwa's study were protesting violently against the men they felt were emasculating them and against the men that were financially

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[3] *Lobola,* among Southern African people, is a bride price. Traditionally one paid with cattle. A prospective husband or head of his new family would undertake to give the head of a prospective wife's family an agreed-upon number of heads of cattle in anticipation of customary marriage (Parker 2015).

better off than them. In essence, a small group of emerging black middle-class people enjoy wealth and power in post-Apartheid South Africa to the exclusions of a larger group of marginalised black men and women who do not. For the marginalised groups, rhetoric around notions of liberation permeates the discourse (Langa and Kiguwa 2013:24).

As a result, many men need reaffirmation of their masculinity and insight into how to survive and exist in this new society. In post-Apartheid times, these men have created groups for themselves where they coexist and relate closely to one another. In their attempts to survive, some have joined or started criminal gangs, while others have even resorted to criminal behaviour such as rape, murder, and assault. Many incidences of male criminal behaviour may well be the result of having been left behind unjustly in South Africa, politically, socially and economically (Xaba 2001:114).

The dynamic interplay between white men and black men
It is no secret that white men reigned supreme during colonial times and under the Apartheid regime in South Africa. They were in positions of power and held sway over the lives and livelihoods of the black population. They were 'all powerful' – black people were marginalised and emasculated under their rule. Since white men initially held positions of power, the dismantling of Apartheid posed radical problems for them (Matthews 2015:113). White masculinity experienced an identity crisis because white men were no longer certain of their roles and identity in South Africa.

During the Apartheid regime, it was compulsory for white men of a certain age to serve in the South African Defence Force. This conscription contributed immensely to the formulation of masculine ideals of control, power and dominion (Bantjes, Kagee and Meissner 2016:2). In essence, the history of South Africa has nurtured hegemonic forms of masculinity that are dependent on physical strength, fearlessness, and the use of strategy (Bantjes, Kagee and Meissner 2016:2).

The male 'problem' in South Africa today is that both black and white men struggle to find their identity in this new democratic and liberal country (Bantjes, Kagee and Meissner 2016:2). For many years, the South African man had to conform to a certain way of life, one that was highly regulated. Incongruences have long existed between general life values and attitudes. This has caused significant confusion for all. Also important is the state's failure to transform

and equalise the South African economy. This has left many people, including black men, disillusioned, because they are denied equal access to tertiary education and an efficient healthcare system.

Bantjes *et al* (2016) found that in spite of the socio-political transformation in South Africa, some young men may not feel as liberated to diverge from traditional norms that are considered to be quite rigid in terms of gender roles. Irrespective of gender equality and the equality of racial groups, notions of masculinity still seem to be restrictive, which causes disillusionment among some men. Even progressive, middle-class men still feel marginalised (Bantjes, Kagee and Meissner 2016).

Masculinities on television

South African television presents various types of men displaying numerous characteristics at various levels of power. These visual representations and their readings are created through discursive practices (Hall 2013:1-3). Discourses also play a major part in how representations are constructed, governed and interpreted (Hall 2013:29). In other words, for any meanings to be understood, they are derived from discourse. This study aims to analyse what the contemporary representations of masculinities may be through understanding the discourses, representations and interpretations of the focus-group respondents.

Men have been represented in multiple ways in soap operas. Some have argued that they identify with other characters in the genre only through their actions and aggression (Feasy 2008:10). Other theories suggest that the soap opera has enabled men to talk and express their emotions, especially to other men (Hobson 2003:99). However, South African television, and the soap opera in particular, has integrated these two dynamics, relaying instances in soap opera where men are unable to articulate their emotions and others where they are. These dynamics are aired in parallel with the aggressive stereotypical actions of men who struggle to share what they feel (Motsaathebe 2009).

What also needs to be taken into consideration is the fact that men are presented along racial stereotypes on television (Luyt 2012:45). Luyt (2012:47) maintains that, on South African television, white men are represented as generally being more powerful and in positions of authority over black men. In contrast, he says, black men are presented as mostly aggressive and socially and emotionally remote. However, television is currently showing black men in a

different light. The soap operas selected for this study represent storylines driven by black men. This already accounts for a shift in popular culture, since storylines had been Afrikaans-oriented, catering to the national identity of Apartheid times (Milton 2008:256).

Uzalo, Imbewu and *Isibaya* represent Zulu men in positions of success and leadership, upholding values of protection and honour. Not all Zulu men are portrayed this way in other television productions and popular culture.

While soap opera is a global format and genre, this study and the specific cases under scrutiny are derived from local context. But intertextual links between global and local formats of soap opera do exist. In her study, Onuh (2017) was able to establish that the representations of female characters in *Uzalo*

> conformed to both international and local conventions of matriarchal depiction but were subverted due to their construction within the South African KwaMashu township context that is defined by its Zulu culture. The decisions and actions of two [of] *Uzalo's* matriarchs depict their similarity to both international and local matriarchal soaps, however, [sic] their construction as Black African matriarchs distinguishes them from international matriarchs, and their setting within [the] township reveals their uniqueness from local South African soap operas (Onuh 2017:v).

The general (global) overview of men on soap opera was that they are in professional positions, notably law and medicine (Modleski 1979:13). Black people and other minority groups were generally excluded from these professions (Modleski 1979:13). British and American soaps portray "the negotiation of patriarch authority" (Feasey 2008:19), which refers to instances where male characters are shown to be negotiating the traditional representations of hegemony and the dominant role of men.

Storylines pertaining to issues of paternity are a typical example of when hegemonic representations are negotiated (Feasey 2008:7; Geraghty 1991:68). Geraghty (1991) puts forward similar arguments as Modleski (1979) about the representation of men as professionals and businessmen on soap operas. Geraghty draws her conclusions based on characterisations in the soap operas *Dallas* and *Dynasty,* where the business role accords the man status. She argues that in US primetime soaps, the positioning of men appears to be reversed in that men are consistently trying to take their power back. While characters in soaps are able to show

dominance and power, they are also able to show care for their families. In other words, "rampant male virility poses a threat to domestic order" (Geraghty 1991:63). *Dallas* and *Dynasty* both offer versions of how power may be curtailed. Thus, hegemonic masculinity or patriarchal power is challenged, asserting a sense of dominance and therefore emphasising no single hero, since the hero is unable to maintain the role of hero (Geraghty 1991:63). When hegemonic masculinity is excessive, it poses a threat to the generally held domestic notion that the soap opera is a feminine genre that depicts a subverted version of hegemonic masculinity. In other words, soap opera will show forms of hegemonic masculinity, but it will simultaneously subvert these since soap opera is a feminine genre that is meant to portray men in a way that plays into women's emotions. For example, in *Uzalo*, the character of Nkuzi, the gangster, will burn down his wife's club and kill people who show aggressive, hegemonic ideals. At the same time, he will break away from the hegemonic ideal, showing love and care for his family, thus subverting the ideal.

Geraghty (1991:64) also discusses representations of passive men on soap operas. These men are considered gentlemen who do not take much action, although they are responsive when required to be. They are quick to express love and affection, while appearing tame and domesticated. Hegemonic forms of masculinity that are overly virile are not perceived to be positive. What needs to be noted about male representation in soap opera is that it is difficult for one character to be good all the time – even the best men have moments of aggression and displaying excessive virility (Geraghty 1991:64). Geraghty (1991:65) sums up her argument by stating that

> the ideal position for the hero in patriarchal melodrama is a static one, at the apex of family and the business, uniting both into a single entity in which the separate spaces of the home and office are merged. This work is never achieved; the patriarchal hero never reaches the position of absolute power. Domestic harmony is always challenged by business attached; public power by family dissatisfaction with the means by which it has been achieved." Frequently, those that challenge this order are women.

While some local representations of men follow similar storylines, others show black men in a different light. Some local representations of black men account for male aggression (Luyt 2012). This is because Apartheid created a system that scared black men. In his study, *Disappointed men: Masculine myths and hybrid identities in Windermere,* Field (2001) interviewed 54 Cape Town men who had been affected by the Apartheid regime (Windermere).

Field argues that "the rigid cultural boundaries that these men lived across created uncertainty and doubt over their self and masculinity. Their hybrid cultural identities was not only anathema to Apartheid ideology, but also seemed to contradict puritanical masculine myths about being man enough" (Field 2001:220). As a result, the men in Field's (2001) study found themselves disappointed and emotional because they had been unable to resist the inflictions of the Apartheid system or to meet some of the expectations they had set for themselves because of these inflictions. This is why, to some extent, the South African media are still streaming post-Apartheid messages about the nature of some black men (Vijoen and Buthelezi 2008).

This is clear in the selected case studies. For example, in *Uzalo* the gangster known as Nkunzi (leading male character) has breakfast with this family. He shows concern about how his family is doing, he loves his wives and cares very much for his children. In *Imbewu,* Ngcolosi (leading male character) also has dinner around the table with this family and breakfast. This type of behaviour is atypical of Zulu men and Zulu masculinity (Ndlovu, interview 12 June 2019). Such atypical representation of Zulu masculinity conforms to the codes and conventions of soap opera narratives in the sphere of fantasy.

Representing black masculinity: Focus on Zulu identity

Gender roles on soap opera have for many years been stereotyped. Representations of women are associated mostly with emotions, common sense and submission. Male representations are associated with being competitive, driven and ruthless. Masculinities in South Africa are frequently represented in a manner dictated by the race of the character (Luyt 2012:35). Hegemonic masculinity was originally regarded as the legitimate way in which men were expected to behave. This embodied patriarchy, which endorsed the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Connell 1995:77). Men were historically dominant and socially admired for this. Male dominance was maintained, not only in men's relationship with women, but along hierarchies of race. During Apartheid-era South Africa, for example, white men dominated black men. These hierarchies are usually evident or determined "along the axes of social class, race and sexuality" (Luyt 2012 :36).

The media have played a tremendous role in the way masculinity is portrayed on television and how it maintains and achieves hegemony. Representations of masculinity generally reflect how people think men may or may not behave. Television uses symbols such as language and shared

discourses to convey messages. The media also stream the complexities, enrichment and freedom of gender constructs post-Apartheid (Ratele 2016:7; Buthelezi 2008:23) and how these still need to be a part of society today. This is because South Africa, in its post-Apartheid incarnation, is seen to be a coherent entity (Buthelezi 2008:23). "Print and broadcast media … promote the image of a rainbow nation". This applies to the KwaZulu-Natal province as well (Buthelezi 2008:23).

The impact of Apartheid on masculinity is nowhere more viscerally evident than in the mining industry and the migrant labour system. Black men were forced to leave their wives and children to work away from home (Rabe 2006: 14). Labour legislation further oppressed and controlled the living conditions of black people. Earlier, long preceding Apartheid, the Land Act of 1913[4] was passed to regulate black people's occupation of land. This meant that Africans could not purchase land in the rural homes from where they originated, which was one of the reasons for the absence of fathers (Rabe 2006:21). Laws such as the Mines and Works Act of 1911 were enacted to regulate working conditions. This law ensured that no black man could be promoted into a senior position in the mines. Even earlier, in 1894, the Glen Gray Act, a precursor to the Mines and Works Act, forced adult black men to pay tax if they were not employed. This meant all black men were forced to seek work (Rabe 2006:21).

In contemporary South Africa's post-struggle masculinity, there exists more than one type of masculinity (Morrell 2001:33). There is a range of different types of men who coexist with the common goal of living. The media conveys specific messages about men into the post-Apartheid society (Buthelezi 2008:23), while at the same time modifying certain values to suit different races (Viljoen 2008:154). *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya* broadcast messages that represent elements of the post-Apartheid economy such as black men in business and power positions, along with those of traditional and hegemonic ideologies in patriarchal positions.

This study examines traditional and non-traditional hegemonic ideologies as represented in the selected soap operas. It considers the ways in which representations of Zulu masculinity may

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[4] The Natives Land Act of 1913 was passed by the Union Parliament. The main aim of the act was to regulate the acquisition of land. The act decreed that black people were prohibited from buying land from white people and vice versa. Any exceptions needed to be approved by the governor-general. This meant that Africans could not purchase land in the rural homes from where they originated, which was one of the reasons for the absence of fathers.

be affected by the societal changes and concomitant identities discussed above. "The South African population are still searching for a way to understand how to reconcile individual human rights with collective cultural belonging. This is best illustrated in the unfolding drama around issues of Zulu culture, history and identities" (Carton 2008:xv).

Each of the selected soap operas airs on a specific channel and each channel has its own mandate and target audience.

Uzalo airs on SABC 1. The channel is a public broadcaster focused on "a post-Apartheid national identity and culture" (Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019:142; Teer-Tomaselli 2005). Productions like *Uzalo* "can be categorised as primetime, public service, realist …" and fall within the *Community Model* soap opera (Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019:142). This affects characterisation because as a community soap opera, *Uzalo* "is played out by a community of central characters in a core location where action occurs [in] both domestic and public settings" (Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019:143). During an interview with the executive producer of *Uzalo*, it became clear that the SABC plays a crucial part in making suggestions about what is aired on *Uzalo*. Mmamitse Thibedi said, "the SABC is different to MNet, for example, because they are a public broadcaster, so they do have a social messaging mandate as a public broadcaster" (Thibedi interview, 8 April 2019).

Imbewu airs on eTV, a commercial free-to-air channel. eTV also broadcasts on DStv/MultiChoice (Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019:145; Teer-Tomaselli 2005:558). eTV airs both local and international programming. *Imbewu* showcases a local South African family. It also illustrates the hybridity of cultures in that the Zulu family has a friendship with an Indian family. The multiculturalism and hybridity of cultures promote social cohesion (Onuh 2017:4, Barnard 2006:49).

Isibaya airs on the DStv channel Mzansi Magic, which broadcasts extensive local programming showcasing various cultures (Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019:145). The approach taken with *Imbewu* and *Isibaya* is different, since they do not air on the public broadcaster. Storylines are driven independently, with no interference from the channels. The channels are permitted to make suggestions, but these have no influence and are in no way binding (Ntshangase, interview, 13 March 2019).

Since this study embodies notions of Zulu masculinity, one cannot overlook the turbulent and radical changes in the history of black men when analysing the characters in *Uzalo, Imbewu and Isibaya*. This study is there cognisant of Ratele's (2016:2) suggestions that "[c]ritical discourse, cultural and psychological analysis (and other critical analytical methods) are a handy tool to understand formative narratives on manhood" (Ratele 2016:2). A man cannot be fully understood in the absence of his social relations with other men, women, children, and society at large. This is reiterated by Ratele (2016:9) who explain that "[c]ritical studies of men and masculinities have established that masculinity is a set of historically and culturally contingent practices … the contingency of masculinities implies that what is understood as manhood changes over time and across different cultures".

A man cannot be fully understood in the absence of his social relations with other men, women, children, and society at large. A man is influenced not only by his surroundings, but also his past. Historically, a successful black man was considered to be one who is wealthy and able to provide for his family (Malinga and Ratele 2016:112). This is why polygamy was a very common practice among some wealthy black men. Well-off black men are to be admired and esteemed. Poor black men, in other words most black men, and those who are unemployed struggle to live up to accepted ideals of manhood and to provide for their families as breadwinners.

The harsh reality of not being able to conform to standard practices has created 'masculine anxiety'. Over and above this pressure, television programming that further emphasises how men should be has further pressurised black men to work hard and achieve economic freedom so that they may be considered successful (Bantjes, Kagee, Meissner 2016:3). A tendency in television policy to favour women over men economically adds to this pressure (Malinga and Ratele 2016:112).

Uzalo, Imbewu and Isibaya offer representations of male as well as female characters. Some Males and females are equally strong-willed in all three soaps, mirroring the traditional and non-traditional Zulu principles. This indicates that the country has progressed past the Apartheid era the objective being to rise above the past and illustrate how different cultures, in this case Zulu people, are adapting to the realities of the 21st Century (Onuh 2017:10, Barnard 2006). "Literature suggests that the construction of femininity in popular South African soap operas is premised on dualisms. The first dualism is the male/female power relationship and

the second dualism is the black/white power relationship. The simplification of identities could potentially produce new hegemonic relationships" (Landers 2018:57-58). The case studies for this thesis demonstrate the dualism of male and female power.

The storylines in the selected soap operas centre around men. In the first season of *Uzalo,* two boys are swapped at birth – the son of a pastor and the son of a gangster. The pastor raises the gangster's son and the gangster raises the pastor's (Onuh 2017:5). The *Imbewu* storyline concerns the legacy of two brothers and their constant disagreements on issues of masculinity such as how to handle family decisions and marriages. *Isibaya* is a highly traditional soap opera centred on the Ndlovu and Zungu families. Both families are led and dominated by strong male heads. *Isibaya* and *Uzalo* both endorse patriarchy in its representation of polygamy. In each of the two soap operas, the women are depicted variously as being subordinated or, at other times, being liberal and not in subordinate relationships. This could be because a great "significance of active feminist and progressive voices [are] entering into the media space to challenge stereotypical stories about men, women and other genders, as well as to create media images and narratives that install new models of masculinity and femininity" (Ratele 2016:3).

Soap opera

The soap opera has always been a popular genre of broadcasting, one that has evolved over many years. The 1930s radio soap opera series began in America (Geraghty 2005:6) when radio became a mass communication and entertainment medium. The British soap opera "can be fitted into the schema developed from this originating point, partly because British soaps were developed in deliberate counterpoint to the US" (Geraghty 2005:4). In the 1980s, producers of American and British soap operas extended the soap's terrain into television, which led to the mass production of the televised soap opera (Geraghty 2010:11). Its core task was to present a long series of episodes that would promote product loyalty with viewers and transform the genre into mass media (Harrington 2016: 109). In the United States, the soap opera became "one of the most effective broadcasting advertising vehicles ever devised" (Allen 2004: 242). It drew many audiences because of its distractive characteristics of avoiding closure, chasing multiple plotlines and scenes, and its emphasis on dialogue and problem solving (Harrington 2016:110). The genre eventually spread to developing countries like South Africa, but only much later, when television was introduced in South Africa in 1976 (Tager 2010). This research focuses on the South African soap opera, but it also offers a general view of soap opera as a genre to contextualise the content.

The soap opera as a female genre

Initially, soap opera catered mainly for women, especially housewives, who were based in the domestic sphere and were, therefore, able to follow a series of episodes on the radio (Geraghty 2005:6). The reason was that soap operas usually portrayed stories of female characters who were often powerful and professional, and held working positions outside of the home (Harrington 2016:110). This presented an appealing fantasy for the housewife who would be home all day but secretly aspired to a professional life.

Another way the soap opera appealed to the audience was that it portrayed fictional and non-fictional representations of everyday lives (Harrington 2016:110). One of the biggest draw cards of the soap opera was its depiction of a range of characters and how audiences would relate to them, either by recognising characters similar to themselves or people close to them, or by the way characters played out fantasies that did not exist in their everyday lives.

Another reason why women are drawn to watching soap opera is that community soaps "are likely to problematise gender issues in their conscious attempt to transmit social messages" (Liebes and Livingstone 1998:5). Gender relations in community soaps may depict scandals of older men having affairs with younger women (Liebes and Livingstone 1998:5). This is shown in *Imbewu* when Ngcolosi has a sexual relationship with Zandile who is perceived to be younger than his wife. In *Uzalo,* again, the doctor has a relationship with Nonka who is a schoolgirl. In *Isibaya* the roles are slightly reversed in that an older woman has a relationship with a younger man, when Jabu has a sexual relationship with his father's ex-wife. These examples attest to the hybridity of the South African soap opera and how the roles are constructed to appeal to viewers.

Soap operas appeal to female viewers also because they are broadcast during primetime, which Dunleavy (2005:13) argues shows "local authenticity of the community". Depicting the essence of community and localness is what made one of the first primetime soap operas, the British Coronation Street, very popular (Dunleavy 2005:13). The success of a primetime soap rests on a combination of localness, its significance as a flagship for the relevant channel and its scheduling profile.

The three South African soap operas selected share the findings of Dunleavy (2005) in that they display the localness of Zulu culture and the authenticity of the language and discourses shared by many people. This is what appeals so strongly. It is the common draw card for all three.

Uzalo, Imbewu and *Isibaya* tell stories that really exist within communities across KwaZulu-Natal. Viewers take this very seriously, to such an extent that if any inaccurate statements are made in the portrayal of culture, viewers are quick to complain. A recent interview with one of the writers of *Isibaya* revealed that some audiences were not happy about a particular scene where young women entered a Zulu kraal. This is because, traditionally, women who are menstruating are not permitted inside the Zulu kraal. It illustrates that viewers are attached to the authenticity of culture and community and are not afraid to voice their disapproval when they believe something is culturally misrepresented (Ntsangase 2019).

What also needs to be noted is that the telenovela addresses gender identity differently to the soap opera. Tufte (2000) argues that to understand the telenovela, one needs to understand "the role of gender in codes of conduct" (Tufte 2000:186). In the telenovela "the women have their specific spatial and temporal circles in which they move. Within the household, the kitchen, bedrooms and backyard are predominantly women's areas" (Tufte 2000:197). The men are seen in bars, on street corners or verandas. This may attest to the fact that women and men each have separate domains to which they are affiliated and where they can operate. Telenovelas also allow for there to be a hybrid space in which both men and women can "meet and create a mutual space of social interaction" (Tufte 2000:188). In this hybrid space, power struggles will ensue since there is no clarity on whether the space falls within the jurisdiction of the male or female domain (Tufte 2000:188).

The power struggle of the genders is evident in *Uzalo* as well. *Uzalo* has been called both a telenovela and a soap opera. But as mentioned in Chapter One, for the purposes of this study, it will be termed a soap opera. In *Uzalo,* one of the gangster characters, Nkunzi, burns down his wife's nightclub, because he believes her place is in the home. He expects her to be a homemaker and not spend her time in a place of business and drinking. This correlates with the hybrid space Tufte (2000) describes.

Soap opera characters grow and develop over long periods of time. As such, loyal female viewers develop a deep viewer engagement with the characters, their stories and experiences (Harrington 2016:110). Here, Harrington (2016) argues that this is true of female viewers. "Soaps depict a landscape in which women and their concerns occupy centre stage, blurring traditional public and private spheres by transforming every setting, whether it be an office or a hospital lounge into a domestic one" (Harrington 2016:111). This study adds new knowledge to soap opera scholarship by analysing the ways in which male viewers engage with the male characters as presented on *Uzalo*, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya*, and how they interpret the representations of masculinity in both the private and public spheres.

Soap operas portray the ideas of popular culture and they also explore the politics of sex and gender. Soap opera has also emphasised the rise of feminism in that it has "traditional feminine principles as a course of legitimate pleasure within and against patriarchy" (Harrington 2015:111). Brundson (1995:62) argues that audience research has contributed towards the potential of soap opera being a feminist genre, which could account for "some of the simplicities and blindness of second-wave feminism". This is because male representations may be interpreted as they relate to female characters. This study widens the investigative ambit of the soap opera by seeking to understand the significance the genre has in representing contemporary black Zulu masculine identities and the interpretations of such.

Soap opera as a male genre

The genre of soap opera has revised its target to accommodate other followers. "This opening up of the address of soaps can be identified in changes in storylines and characterisation and in the presentation of different points of view which involve a shift away from women and give a great prominence to men, adolescents and children" (Geraghty 1991:168). Also, this non-traditional space that is airing men within primetime soaps is identified in "storylines and in the way that they look to more masculine genres for their narrative references" (Geraghty 1991:168). Geraghty's argument addresses the hybridity of the soap opera genre, and how it is able to borrow aspects of other genres to appeal to other viewers. In essence, "while personal relationships are still at the heart of the programmes, they have been supplemented by plotlines that deal more generally with the public sphere and emphasise the male grip on themes of business and work" (Geraghty 1991:168).

The modern soap opera has taken a direction that has both changed and expanded its audiences

(Gauntlett and Hill 1999:246). Over time, academics have begun to explore the changing nature of soap opera and to whom it caters. Gauntlett and Hill (1999:246) argue that "academics should stop talking about soap opera as a women's genre".

Male audiences are now attracted to soap opera to the same extent as female audiences (Frisby 2002:56). There are many reasons why male viewers watch soap operas. These include entertainment, fantasy, escapism and relaxation (Frisby 2002:56, 57). Male participants in Frisby's study (2002:56) enjoyed soap opera to the extent that they would prepare themselves mentally to be entertained. Some found soap opera to be generally entertaining, while others sought humour and 'the surreal'[5] to add to their overall viewing experience. Some of Frisby's participants even enjoyed the gossip generated among soap opera viewers. Many viewers valued the pedagogic element of soap opera, which encouraged them to engage in conversations with both males and females within their environment.

In short, confirming Frisby's (2002: 61) analysis, men watch soap operas to forget about their everyday problems, as a topic of discussion, and for its entertainment value.

Dyadic models are post-modern. It contains infusions of the community and the dynastic models, but achieves those unconventionally. Patriarchal power is erased and the status of characters becomes equal and interchangeable. Dyadic models redefine 'family and community', yet they also bring about "the destruction of each as a stable environment and framework" (Liebes and Livingstone 1998:14). Here, "the soap is one-generational" (Liebes and Livingstone 1998:15) and thrives on individual fulfilment at the cost of community and stability. The storylines in this study are constructed around patriarchal figures, even though patriarchal power is erased from time to time, allowing for some equality among the characters, along with continuous interchangeability. At several junctures, the plotline sees the destruction of stability on the soap opera, which serves only to make the storylines more riveting and enjoyable.

The South Africa soap opera enjoys a diverse demographic audience. In her studies, Tager (2010:16, 117) shows that soap opera in South Africa has a substantial following among both

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[5] Surreal is a feeling or experience of a fantasy. In this context, the viewers enjoyed the fact that they could fantasise while watching soap opera and forget about their daily lives.

male and female viewers and that it is viewed communally most of the time, in the company of either friends and family or colleagues.

In summary, Frisby's (2002:61) findings reveal that people watch soap opera for three reasons:

     i) as a means of escapism

     ii) as a useful aid to engage in conversation, and

     iii) as a means of entertainment.

This study explores and expands on these findings. It offers an analysis beyond establishing soap opera audiences' uses and gratifications (Katz *et al* 1974). Instead, it provides an analysis of the active interpretations of black masculinity by the male participants along with possible reasons for these interpretations. In so doing, the study also compares the similarities and differences in the representation of black masculinities across the different channels.

Stereotypes in soap opera

Gender stereotyping has been an ever-present reality since the inception of television in America in the 1940s. Male stereotypes are associated with traits of aggression and individualism, and these are depicted in many different ways. Women are depicted as being gentle and emotional (Motsaathebe 2009:430). Television portrays highly stereotyped renderings of men and women and some researchers maintain that if this practice is perpetuated, South African television will never be normalised (Motsaathebe 2009: 434). Motsaathebe's argument is that if television continues to portray negative stereotypes of men and women, this could have an impact on societies. During a recent interview with the executive producers of *Uzalo*, it became clear that audiences are not easily swayed. People actively choose what to accept and what to reject. Motsaathebe makes a valid argument but it does have loopholes, especially in the current state of South African soap opera. The overall conclusion on these stereotypes is that women are submissive to men and that male characters hold dominion over female characters.

To understand the manner in which gender roles are negotiated in the soap opera, it is necessary for the narratives of the soap in question to be analysed. Baker and Raney (2007:39) argue that "the ways that the characters on television are stereotyped should be brought to the attention of writers and producers, because it is only when they understand the implications of what they are doing that they can make an effort to minimise these portrayals."

The use of stereotypes in soap opera has invited considerable criticism. For many years, theorists have maintained that the soap opera does not show realistic representations of women (Gledhill 2003:346). Rogers (1995: 326) supports these arguments, stating that soap opera stereotypes the roles of both men and women. Rogers' (1995: 326) argument is that while many representations of men and women are employed in soap opera, women always come off as being subservient to men, even when they are portrayed as powerful. Marx (2008: 88) agrees that, in soap opera, "male dominance is ideologically perpetuated by emphasising that women's main purposes are childrearing and childcare" (Marx 2008: 88). Similarly, Motsaathebe (2009: 445) identifies a few stereotypes in South African soap opera. He argues that male characters are usually shown to be more dominant and powerful than women characters, while also frequently being regarded as heroes by female characters. He argues that female characters frequently need the assistance of male characters to overcome their problems, while male characters are able to overcome their own problems without the help of female characters. Motsaathebe gives a general overview of stereotypical behaviour on television with reference to the South African soap opera *Generations*.

Motsaathebe's (2009: 44) conclusion on stereotypes on soap opera is that "soap opera can stimulate and inspire viewers through the real-life situations that are portrayed. Thus, it is necessary that stereotyping of images and roles can be avoided … soap operas need to make sure that programming is free from any stereotypical or destructive negative overtones." It is crucial for producers to do extensive research when presenting gender stereotypes, particularly since passive audiences are involved and may interpret stereotypes negatively in the belief that the stereotypical behaviour is real. Some viewers think that what they view on television should inform their lifestyles, and how they should live and interact (Malinga and Ratele 2016:109).

Uzalo, Imbewu and Isibaya include stereotypical characters and gender roles. This can be seen in the representation of women in rural areas – in how they have to cook and clean – and how the men have to work in the yard and do the gardening. In the urban areas, too, women still need to prepare meals and set up the table while men explore the business world and provide food and stability for their families. This reinforces the stereotype of men being powerful and dominant while female characters are required to obey whatever is demanded of them.

These stereotypes emphasise traditional gender roles. In South Africa, these roles are entrenched in many aspects of society. In Zulu culture, men are usually placed higher in the

hierarchy than women, because the traditional norm is for men to be dominant over women (Hadebe 2010:73). Zulu culture also promotes pre-colonial homestead living, which separates the roles of men and women (Hadebe 2010:74). This suggests that gender is socially constructed and people make up the rules as to who has access to power and resources along the way. This results in unequal access to power and decision-making. "Differences between women and men are socially constructed and thus subject to change" (Van der Watt 2007:53).

However, there are exceptions to this perspective. In the last 26 years, South African programmes have constructed black men in different positions. In *Isibaya,* for example, the character of Mkhabayi is depicted as a strong woman with the ability to lead her family, and handling a gun and war as easily as any man. *Imbewu* similarly shows how the character of MaNdlovu presides over all the male characters. She is also able to influence her children's marriages and businesses. This is also seen in *Uzalo*, where the character of MaNgcobo is able to run businesses as well as her new husband, Khathaza, who nurtures her needs and allows her to grow. These alternative constructs run not only in the selected soap operas but also in many other South African soap operas. For example, in *Isidingo* the Sibeko family allowed their daughter, Nikiwe, to run the family business, while Zeb Mathabane, a strong-willed patriarch, gave his wife the space to run her business. In this regard, the narratives around Zulu masculinity are fluid. The representations of these male characters are constantly evolving, enabling the progression of female characters.

Gender roles are challenged when it comes to power relationships. Marx (2008) argues that gender boundaries in soap opera are at times unclear. She states:

> Candy, a character in *Egoli*, and a realtor by profession, dresses up as a male while showing possible buyers around available homes, claiming that it is a man's world and she sells more houses in her guise as a male than as herself. Although the situation is portrayed in a humorous way, this comments on the fact that the business world is still largely patriarchal and males are taken more seriously in a professional context than females (Marx 2008: 90).

Women become villains to overturn traditional feminine characters when they want to protect and empower themselves to defeat male characters on soap operas. Modleski (1979:16 – 17) and Fiske (1995:346) explain this representational strategy:

> the villainess is able to transform traditional feminine weakness into the sources of her strength … the villainess seizes those aspects of a woman's life which normally render her as most

helpless and tries to turn them into weapons for manipulating other characters … The villainess thus reverses male/female roles: anxiety about conception is transferred to the male … she tries to gain control over feminine passivity (Modleski 1979:16 – 17).

The villainess turns traditional feminine characteristics (which are often seen as weakness ensuring her subordination) into a source of strength. She uses pregnancy (real or alleged) as a weapon, she uses her insight into people to manipulate them, and she uses her sexuality for her own ends, not for masculine pleasure. She reverses male and female roles … above all she embodies the female desire for power which is both produced and frustrated by the social relations of patriarchy (Fiske 1995:346).

Also, the 'macho' characteristics that Fiske (1995) describes as villainous within the representation of dominant masculinity are evident to an extent in the two case studies *Uzalo* and *Isibaya*, while *Imbewu* portrays macho characteristics that are not necessarily villainous, but are perceived to be villainous by some of the female characters in the soap opera. This means that dominant representations of men in soap opera either are villainous or perceived to be villainous, because traditional feminine characteristics of soap opera do not necessarily adopt the idea of strong masculine traits. In addition, it is necessary to account for how South African history affects the development of plotlines in the South African soap opera.

Jacobs (2019) says black characters are currently represented in middle-class circumstances. Most of the black characters in the three case studies under discussion are portrayed as middle-class and/or working class. The South African soap opera has shifted away from conforming to the global soap opera formula. Jacobs suggests that South African soap operas, in particular, "stood out for their attempts to, unlike their American counterparts, engage directly with the country's political economy in their plotlines, whether incorporating routine post-Apartheid lives into storylines or engaging in complex ways with the country's political, social and economic transformation" (Jacobs 2019:64).

Malinga and Ratele's (2016:105) study calls for an alternative approach in the portrayal of black men. Instead of being depicted as mostly violent, they call for men to be presented in different and more positive accounts of manhood, where they demonstrate love and happiness, because these constructions shape the way that black men in real life will think and interpret

their own emotional gendered identities. Bearing this in mind, this study included interview questions, posed to the three soap opera producers, on their motivation for particular depictions.

Men who have attributes of traditional masculinity such as assertiveness are associated with villainy. Fiske (1995:345) argues that "the 'macho' characteristics … that identify the hero in masculine television tend here to be characteristics of the villain. It is not surprising that, in women's culture, feminised men should be seen positively while masculine men are more associated with villainy, but the reversal is not a simple one. The villains are typically good-looking and are often featured in the press as desirable 'hunks'; they are loved and hated, admired and despised".

This shows the complexity of gender portrayals in soap opera. No one is perfectly good or bad in soap opera. Although the discussion above demonstrates the way in which some soap operas construct representations that are stereotypical, some South African soap operas alternatively challenge and question the construction of gender norms. In this way, soap opera in South Africa has the potential to play a contributory function in the construction of these gender identities. This study aims to identify if and how this is the case in three contemporary Zulu soap operas.

Generic codes and conventions

"Genres are socially organised sets of relations between texts that function to enable certain relations between texts and viewers" (Berry-Flint 2004:41). Thus, genre theory underpins the way in which texts may be classified, coded, categorised and grouped within a class of works that are similar (Feur 1992:104; Berry-Flint 2004:27; Mittell 2001:3). Mittell (2001:6) and Berry-Flint (2004:27) argue that genre can only be fully experienced intertextually, between several texts, which would result in a common category. Soap opera has generic codes and conventions that differ from other serial dramas on television. These codes and conventions show that the soap opera is unique in its narrative structure, formation of characters, plots and characterisation (Brown 1994:48). Some of these conventions are applicable to this study, since its focus is on three South African soap operas.

Berry-Flint (2004) focuses her study on films specifically and the genre within which films can be located, but her definition of the film genre adds significant value to the understanding of the soap opera genre and its generic codes. She says "the variety of contexts and uses for

generic labels is important because it indicates the provisional nature of such categories" (Berry-Flint 2004: 27). The study of genre is necessary to assist with codifying intertextual fields and, in the process of doing so, new meanings emerge. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, an interview conducted by Onuh (2017) with one of the producers of *Uzalo* established that *Uzalo* can be defined as neither a telenovela, nor a soap opera. This is because genres evolve into their own meanings and "genres can manifest unconscious dynamics" that may "contradict the ideological values implied by their narratives" (Berry-Flint 2004:37). "Genre is thus about social as well as textual rules. Genres indicate what kind of communication will be facilitated in specific social formations" (Berry-Flint 2004:41). This study focuses on the soap opera genre, which has specific settings and conventions. These can be found in the representation of characters, the plot, the settings, the parasocial relationships and narrative devices.

Characters

Brown (1994:48) argues that the soap opera has the "centrality of female characters". This usually entails the female characters being portrayed as powerful outside the home in places of business. The "characterisation of female characters as [being] powerful, often in the world outside the home", and "the portrayal of many of the male characters as sensitive men" support the point. Brown's analysis of soap opera characters makes an adequate argument about soap opera. However, soap opera has adapted since the early 1990s and now caters for both men and women.

The three soap operas selected for this study show a centrality of male characters. This shows that soap opera has adapted over the years to have become inclusive of male viewers as well. In light of this, some of the arguments made by Brown (1994) are still relevant today, for example in the way female characters are portrayed as being powerful. In all three soap operas, the male characters are dominant, yet equally strong female characters are also portrayed (Focus Group 1). In *Uzalo,* MaNgcobo is shown as a strong female character who is able to fend for herself in business and relationships. In *Imbewu,* MaNdlovu is the leader of her family and is able to solve family problems that the men fail to resolve. In *Isibaya,* Mkhabayi is likewise a strong leader in her family, who also leads men and gives them guidance. All these female characters are as strong as the dominant male characters in their respective soap operas.

Brown's (1994) argument about the soap opera's portrayal of sensitive men still holds today. In the selected three soap operas, the men may be portrayed as strong and dominant, yet they may be shown as weak and sensitive in other storylines. In yet other situations, they may be shown as being caring and good listeners. Even though this is in line with the "cultural characteristics of the social construction of women" (Brown 1994:54), it still appeals to male viewers as they continue to watch soap operas.

Structure and narrative devices

The soap opera has been described as a story that depicts intimate conversations among people, some of which raise issues that viewers are reluctant to speak about in reality. It also emphasises problem-solving situations, which usually resist narrative closure and contains many characters and multiple storylines (Harrington 2016:110; Brown 1994; Hobson 1982). These are usually set in real time (audiences see that it is day or night, for example) so that the viewer is able to engage with the characters and believe that the action is continuing whether they are watching or not. Soap opera has a convention of intertwining storylines; a beginning is never shown on screen and there is no end in sight (Gledhill 2003: 352).

A soap opera usually consists of 30-minute time slots (Gledhill 2003: 352). It is dominated by female characters who are matriarchs and male characters who are sensitive, along with a few core families and many narratives (Brown 1994:48). The soap opera presents stories of "romances, families and attendant rituals such as births, engagements, marriages, divorces and deaths" Brunsdon (1984:78). It also depicts personal stories about families, romantic relationships and secrecy (Gledhill 2003:352; Hobson 1982:33).

The observations of Gledhill (2003), Brown (1994), Hobson (1982) and Brunsdon (1984) on the storyline of the soap opera are accurate for the global as well as the local format of the soap opera. Their observations are featured in the three case studies under discussion.

Setting and plot

Soap operas are "set in central environments where ordinary people (across the world) spend a significant amount of time in their lives" (King'ara 2013:92). These settings are environments such as the workplace, hospitals, the home, and any public and social space including restaurants and bars (King'ara 2013:92; Brown 1994:48; Hobson 1982:33). These places allow social interaction between the soap opera characters. Interactions are usually centred around

stories of family, relationships, love and business (King'ara 2013:92; Brown 1994). The soap opera has plots "that hinge on relationships between people, particularly family and romantic relationships". In its representation of several interactions and storylines, there are also several plots that show multiple views to entice the viewer (Brown 1994:48).

In an attempt to ensure storylines remain current and interesting, producers "frequently introduce plotlines dealing with controversial or social moral issues. The narrative structure of open serials enables these plotlines and implicit values they carry to be tried out and allows their fates to be influenced (if not determined) by viewer response" (Allen 1995:19-20). During an interview with *Uzalo* executive producer Thibedi (interview, 8 April 2019), she mentioned that *Uzalo* viewers are quick to complain about the plot and how things pan out. This is in line with Allen's argument about plotlines being directed at social and moral issues. Here, viewers were unhappy about MaNzuza's being married to two men (moral issue). In an interview with one of the writers of *Isibaya,* Ntshangase (interview, 13 March 2019) shared a similar experience. Members of the KwaZulu-Natal royal house wrote in to express their unhappiness with menstruating young women being shown to enter the Zulu kraal (*Isibaya*), since this is morally and socially unacceptable in Zulu culture. Likewise, on a daily basis, *Imbewu* viewers openly share their opinions on what they find socially and morally acceptable or unacceptable on the *Imbewu* Facebook page. But it is uncertain whether such feedback influences the way producers continue to develop storylines.

Still on the subject of social and moral correctness, Mumford (1995:164) argues that "every single daytime soap opera – as well as each primetime serial – deals with the issue of paternity on a regular basis". Mumford (1995:164) suggests that the paternity plotline in the soap opera enables viewers to anticipate who the father is and gives them the opportunity to fantasise. In *Uzalo,* paternity is seen in the mix-up of the two boys in hospital. In *Isibaya,* the queen was uncertain at first who her father was. In *Imbewu,* Ngcolosi raises his brother's children for more than 20 years without realising they are not his.

Soap operas can be seen as "agents of culture" that may be used to assess life. They may even be seen as an educational tool (King'ara 2013:92; Cardey, Garforth, Govender, Dyll-Myklebust 2013:288; Tufte 2004:412). Soap opera forms a part of entertainment education (EE) because they educate as well as entertain viewers. Entertainment education enables viewers to "learn not just from the information or narrative content of mass media, but through the portrayal of

role models" (Cardey, Garforth, Govender, Dyll-Myklebust 2013:289). In the three soap operas in this study, each of the representatives from the production cast felt that their soap opera provided entertainment education. Their testimonials will be further analysed in Chapter Five.

Soap opera stories have not changed substantially over the years. They are still based on families, the dramas that take place within families and romantic intrigue (King'ara 2013:92; Brown 1994). Soap opera in South Africa has extended its sphere of influence to become a means of communicating social issues (Cardey, Garforth, Govender, Dyll-Myklebust 2013:289; Tufte 2004:412) such as gender-based violence, gender inequality, voting rights and what it means to vote, among others. Social issues may affect viewers directly or indirectly. Historically, the term 'soap opera' was used scornfully to imply an over-dramatic, under-rehearsed presentation of trivial dramas blown out of proportion (Geraghty, 1991:1). Historical prejudice notwithstanding, and even though the soap opera may still today be looked down upon, millions of South African viewers avidly watch soap operas daily and millions follow *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya* (Broadcast Research Council of South Africa, 2020). This pedagogic information sharing is central to what this study seeks to assess.

Functions and influence: Parasocial and pedagogic

Soap opera is often considered a source of pleasure for its viewers in that it enables them to form friendships with the characters portrayed on the soap opera – audiences share in the characters' joys and hardships (Livingstone 1988:87). "Soap operas appeal powerfully to their viewers through the viewers' involvement with characters and narratives, identification with characters and situations featured in the narrative, and through the parasocial relationships viewers seek to have with performers" on soap opera (King'ara 2013:89). Hence, one can argue that similarities between the conventional soap opera and EE drama calls for research into the potential influence of soap opera relationships. Furthermore, these relationships spill over into the social interaction of the viewers, because they share them with family members and colleagues (Pitout 1998:65, Livingstone 1988:83, 87). Also, some "viewers will conduct imaginary conversations with soap opera characters at times when they need comfort or advice" (Tager 2010:114). However, viewers are able to distance themselves from the characters, because of their awareness of the fact that soap opera is a production and not real (Ang 2007:4).

Hermeneutics theory argues that while viewers are able to create parasocial relationships with characters, they are able to actively distance themselves simultaneously while watching (Pitout

1998:66; Ang 2007:4). This, in essence, makes the audience an active participant and not passive in what they view.

Ang (2007:4 – 5) argues that the notion of the active and passive audience has become banal. Instead, we should be investigating what viewers derive from watching soap operas. Ang (2007) identifies two methods of enjoying soap opera.

The first is through *melodramatic imagination*, where viewers are emotionally invested in watching. Viewers enjoy being swept away by the emotions that soap opera brings through laughter, crying and desire (Ang 2007:5). This correlates a finding in my master's study (Nzimande 2015) that looked at the presentation of masculinity in *Muvhango*. Some *Muvhango* viewers became very emotional when one of the female characters was abused by a male character. Some went as far as saying that if they saw the male character in reality, they would act violently towards him. This illustrates the intense melodramatic imagination soap opera triggers for some viewers.

The second form of enjoyment is that of *ironic pleasure*. This is when viewers watch a soap opera, but intellectually distance themselves while at the same time deriving pleasure from it because of its flaws and lack of quality. This is powerful because it neutralises the melodramatic imagination. It also shows how skilled audiences have become in reading television texts and how sceptical they may be of the messages portrayed (Ang 2007:5). It illustrates that viewers are now capable of mocking soap operas in which they have "perceived artificiality and disingenuousness" (Ang 2007:5).

Types of soap opera

Liebes and Livingstone have identified three distinguishing types of the soap opera genre. These are the community soap, the dynastic soap and the dyadic soap. Each of the subtypes has a classification of issues of class, gender and narrative (Liebes and Livingstone 1998:147).

Community soap

The community soap is associated with public service broadcasting, which is closely linked with the problematisation of gender in an effort to portray messages to its viewers (Liebes and Livingstone 1998:154). The community soap consists of "a number of equal, separate, middle- and working-class, multigenerational families (including single-parent families) and single

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characters, mostly not romantically connected, all living within one geographical neighbourhood and belonging to one community" (Liebes and Livingstone 1998:154). The community soap is associated with the British soap opera because of how they portray the working class in productions such as *Brookside* and *Coronation Street*. *Uzalo* and *Isibaya* both fit into the community soap, because the storylines are based within one community. However, they differ from the generic idea of what Liebes and Livingstone (1998:63) call a "harmonious, all-embracing neighbourhood". The neighbourhoods represented in *Uzalo* and *Isibaya* are not at all harmonious, both rife with firearms, crime and conflict, along with people's struggles to survive.

In community soaps, characters experience domestic and work problems, and they work within the community. These characteristics are identifiable in *Isibaya* and *Uzalo*. Liebes and Livingstone (1998:63) mention the example of people gathering in communal places such as the filling station and local pubs in *Coronation Street*. This is also the case in *Uzalo*. Characters in the community come together in homes, at the car wash, at the club and in the streets.

Dyadic soap
The dyadic soap "redefines family and community and brings about the destruction of each as a stable environment and framework for the story" (Liebes, Livingstone 1998:64). In other words, this type of soap opera places less emphasis on family and community. There is no real sense of belonging for the characters. As a result, relationships that exist in this type of soap are often in conflict and violent. The characters constantly seek happiness, but are forever mistrustful and uncertain of the future (Liebes, Livingstone 1998:64). While the soap opera *Uzalo*, associates mostly to the Community Model, it also has some characteristics of a Dyadic soap, this is because there are some characters who have no belonging, no family and they are constantly trying to find happiness through crime. The dyadic soap opera is not discussed much in this study as none of the three case studies fit into this specific type of soap.

Dynastic soap
Imbewu is an example of a dynastic soap opera. This soap opera models a powerful family. Other characters are intertwined with the main family, either through marriage or romance, and even in rivalry (Liebes, Livingstone 1998:4). Dynastic soaps are closely aligned with programming such as   *The Godfather* (An American Film) and *Die Schwarzwaldklinik,* (A

German drama series) each of which represents a diversity of gender and patriarchy – *The Godfather,* corruption is celebrated, while in *Die Schwarzwaldklinik,* the patriarch is upright (Liebes, Livingstone 1998:10). In a patriarchal or dynastic soap, the male characters move between the realms of work and home life, enjoying gain in both. This is evident in how the main characters in *Imbewu* are represented. The character Ngcolosi is the head of his home and is seen to be leading his family at home. He is also the head of his business and is shown interchangeably mostly in these contexts.

In summary, the three soap operas selected for this study fit into the *community* and *dynastic* models. In some instances, they challenge some of the generic norms for these models, which has been highlighted in this section. This suggests that the South African soap opera is not the same as British and American soaps, because it conforms to the local landscape. But the genre subtypes described by Liebes and Livingstone (1998) provide a fundamental way of understanding the South African soap opera and how various soaps may challenge and conform to the generic codes and conventions of the global soap opera.

South African television and soap opera: A history of a country
South Africa is a culturally diverse society. However, Apartheid "constructed South African national identity in ways that imposed and made into policies hierarchies of difference which marginalised and disadvantaged the majority of citizens" (Milton, Wasserman, Garman 2013:408). All forms of television broadcast before 1993 were confined to English and Afrikaans (Teer-Tomaselli 2005:559). "There was no television programming for African languages" (Teer-Tomaselli 2015:10) and it was only after a language policy was approved in 1979 that African languages could be aired on television (Teer-Tomaselli 2015:10). From 1994, The South African Broadcasting Corporation produced three main channels SABC1, SABC2 and SABC3, all three of which still exist today and cater for different demographics (Teer-Tomaselli 2005; Teer-Tomaselli 2011).

Periods of political and social transformation in South Africa have created a renewed public appetite for soap opera, setting the stage for fresh stories to be created and told (Marx 2016:80; Teer-Tomaselli 2005). Because of the political, economic and cultural shifts of South Africa, new identities have been created and many have been renegotiated (Marx 2016:80; Milton, Wasseman, Garman 2013:405; Teer-Tomaselli 2011:415), while yet others are "faced with

renegotiating their place" (Marx Knoetze 2016:28). Motsaathebe (2009:431) says:

> South Africa's transformation agenda after 1994 meant that the broadcasting industry, which had been instrumental in perpetuating all kinds of stereotypes including racial and gender stereotypes, had to be transformed to cater for all sections of the population. As a result, a regulatory board, the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), was set up to oversee the restructuring and transformation of the broadcasting industry.

These new identities play a significant role in the development of the South African soap opera. As a result of South Africa's transformation, Mfundi Mfundla, a television producer, was approached to create the South African soap opera, *Generations* (Motsaathebe 2009:431). When he was interviewed in 2005 about the mandate of *Generations* and what he had hoped to portray on the soap opera, he said:

> Generations made its debut on public broadcaster SABC after Apartheid ended in 1994, aiming to show blacks in a positive light after years of television drama cast Africans as unsophisticated, superstitious idiots who visited witch doctors to solve problems (Esipiu 2005).

Generations achieved Vundla's mandate and in 2009 became the most watched soap opera and most watched television programme in South Africa (Motsaathebe 2009: 430). Some of the *Generations* themes identified by Motsaathebe (2009:432) included "feminine values, abortion, homosexuality, rape, prostitution, child abuse, family violence, women in politics and business, illegal smuggling and workplace demographics". Many of these issues are also evident in the storylines of *Isibaya, Imbewu* and *Uzalo*. These storylines are dynamic and constantly evolving, seeing many new issues and characters' stories being introduced.

When *Generations* was first flighted on television, it was very similar to the American soap opera, but over time, storylines gradually became localised. *Generations* also shifted from being a dynastic soap opera form with the focus on one or two powerful families to following the prescripts of a dyadic model focusing on a number of interconnected couples and a continued procession of friendships (Tager 2010:109).

Current programming regulations have shaped the soap operas in this study into their current formats. This is depicted in the imaging of a post-Apartheid national identity and culture. Locally produced soap operas in the 1990s such as *Generations* and *7de Laan* focus on representing a multicultural South Africa (Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019:142). Current

South African soaps reflect nation-building strategies aimed at encouraging cultural diversity (Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019; Barnard 2006:42).

While soap opera presents a somewhat idealised world and communities that may not exist in society, these myths do have a foundation in reality. After the end of the Apartheid regime, the African National Congress (ANC) government strategised to counteract the long held status quo that that upheld the marginalisation of black persons and women of all colours. These changes have been entwined with "economic, political, legislative and cultural changes" (Ratele 2016:5). The initial strategy had been to present South Africa as the so-called Rainbow Nation with the view to promoting a culture of multiracialism. These ideals were taken up in the soap opera, *Generations*, which from 1993 to 2003 promoted unity between and within all cultures and all races.

Current South African soap opera landscape
"Initially there was no television programming in any African languages" (Teer-Tomaselli 2015:10). Currently on soap opera in South Africa, we are witnessing an entirely different approach – one that endorses black empowerment and black entertainment (Tager 2010:112, Teer-Tomaselli 2015). All three soap operas selected for this study endorse black empowerment and black entertainment because they are specifically monolingual (Zulu) and represent Zulu culture and Zulu identity. This creates a "huge new space for entertainment production in South African languages" (Teer-Tomaselli 2015:14). It is also crucial to note that these soap operas portray specific community locations in South Africa, an indication of just how localised they are. This study interrogates how local communities (specifically men) are able to analyse the constructs of Zulu masculinity. There are studies that focus on local television programmes that use local audiences to achieve similar objectives as this study. Tufte (2000) in his book, *Living with the Rubbish Queen,* conducted a range of 'telenovela interviews' with low-income urban women in Latin America. The telenovelas that his participants watched portrayed "dominant ideological discourses" that influence the everyday lives of people like them (Tufte 2000:4). Likewise, this study analyses representations of Zulu masculinity, using Zulu participants in Zulu soap operas. This has enabled the participants to understand the discourses that form part of their everyday lives. The representations they see on television are not very different to what they experience in day-to-day life.

Broadcasters appear to increasingly recognise the power of the soap opera influence on audiences. This indicates that the SABC "deploys soap operas and sitcoms to promote an agenda of social cohesion and newly-shared values in post-Apartheid South African society" (Tager 2010:112). This is an area of research that is gaining considerable scholarly attention. Soap operas in the current South Africa represent "multiracialism, multiculturalism and multilingualism" (Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019:142). This is a depiction of a post-Apartheid South Africa that aims to enhance local identities. In contrast to multiculturalism, other soap operas take on ethno-specific directions, further probing the concept of cultural proximity, which incentivises "local content in terms of language, dress, humour, ethnic appearance, style, historical references and social issues" (Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019:142 – 143).

Since soap opera presents a mixture of fantasy and an idealised world, Apartheid and post-Apartheid trauma and pain cannot be portrayed using this platform. Instead, these historic stories can be rewritten and flattened only to soften the reality that prevailed in South Africa (Anderson 2004:10). Concurring with Anderson's argument, some of Tager's (2010: 117) participants said soap opera in South Africa was idealised and fantasised and some even felt that *Generations'* move to have only black characters was another form of segregation, one only too similar to what had existed during Apartheid. Tager's subjects expressed a preference for *Isidingo* because of the many different cultures and races presented on the soap (Tager 2010:117). A few authors within the ethnographic field share a similar lens to the objectives this study aims to achieve. In her study, Milton (2008) focused on local soap opera and local viewers' understanding of three Afrikaans soap operas. Similarly, Van der Merwe's (2011) thesis focuses on the local soap opera, *7de Laan,* and how local viewers of different language and race groups interpret an Afrikaans text. In her first work in 1997, Tager conducted her research on how Zulu students perceived the American soap opera, *The Bold and the Beautiful,* and the South African soap opera, *Generations*. In later work in 2010, she further examined how young black adults perceived the South African soap opera, *Generations*, within a contemporary, post-Apartheid South Africa.

These authors have produced work similar to mine, in that their studies are based on local soap operas as case studies, with local audiences as interpreters of the text. However, what is different about this study is the focus on monolingual case studies, and specifically zooming in

further to interrogate male perspectives in South Africa. This is a unique contribution to the current local audience and local studies field.

In their study, Malinga and Ratele (2016) found that black males are frequently portrayed as being criminals and violent, which relates to a hegemonic construct of masculinity. The participants in this study were greatly influenced by the constructs of their own identities. Conversely, the more that black men on television are articulated as non-violent, the more this promotes change in black men (Malinga and Ratele 2016:102). In essence, the media plays a powerful role in the way men construct their lives.

Men in South African television are expected to be independent, lacking in emotion and driven by sex. Hegemonic forms of masculinity support such representations. In more recent times, representations of masculinity have embraced elements of the new man. The notions associated with this type of man are men who are emotionally expressive and open to being gentle and caring. Ideals of the new man oppose ideals of hegemonic masculinity and show masculinity in a positive light (Malinga and Ratele 2016:103). Positive roles and positive emotions by men play a fundamental role in determining how they act towards people. This would seem to indicate that South African television needs to take an active role in ensuring that the content produced does not hinder such positive roles in any way.

Multiculturalism to Indigenisation
While the mandate for many of South African soap operas such as *Generations, Isidingo* and *7de Laan* is to portray a multiracial cast, *Imbewu, Uzalo* and *Isibaya* employ an exclusively black cast. It is not uncommon for producers to conform to certain mandates in response to the broadcasters' requirements (Tager 2010:104; Thibedi, interview, 8 April 2019), especially since it is generally accepted that the mandate of the soap opera is to satisfy the requirements of the broadcaster and the audience (Tager 2010:104). During an interview conducted with one of the producers of *Uzalo*, I learned that SABC as a broadcaster has the right to make suggestions about storylines. Equally, viewers have the right to complain about any representations broadcast on the SABC that they are unhappy with (Thibedi, interview, 8 April 2019). Other requirements as per Tager's (2010:108) argument are notions of race and multiracialism. She believes that such expressions are "deployed on soap opera as a means to redress the damage and the injustices inflicted by Apartheid and its legacies", suggesting new ways of being in a post-Apartheid South Africa (Tager 2010:108). Tager's observations are

accurate reflected in South African soap operas such as *7de Laan* and *Isidingo,* which depict a fusion of different races and cultures.

While the multiculturalist direction of soap opera depicted in Tager's (1997; 2010) and Milton's (2008) work is important, this study's focus is on soap operas that appear to be framed within an ethno-specific perspective, as opposed to multiculturalism. The soap operas for this study were selected specifically to reflect one single culture, namely the Zulu culture. All three case studies are also monolingual, which attests to the ethno-specific direction of these local soap operas. The local appeal of this studies appeal relates to the "indigenization" the global genre of soap opera (Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019:142). Indigenization in the context of this study "refers to the way in which global expressions are adapted in accordance with local cultures" (Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019:142).

This may "problematise the previous message of a happy multiculturalism", but it is crucial to note that "today single language productions" are "encouraged by the 2016 Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA)" as the norm (Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019:142). This is the core of cultural proximity, where specific programmes are aired on television because they bring local content to viewers through incentivising issues of "languages, dress, humour, ethnic appearance, style, historical references and social issues" (Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019:143).

While *Isibaya, Imbewu and Uzalo* has an entirely black cast (Zulu and Indian), the manner in which this cast is portrayed is a means of offering a redress from Apartheid times. The black people in *Uzalo, Isibaya and Imbewu* are shown to be successful, educated and coming from positions of power, qualities that were far from evident under Apartheid. This study aims to investigate if and how the selected case studies may appeal to appeal to black, educated persons and those aspiring to achieve that status. "Within a race, too, there is not one single form of masculinity. Among blacks, then, different masculinities with equal social values exist" (Ratele 2016:48). This is seen in the soap operas *Imbewu, Isibaya and Uzalo,* where within one specific race of black men, different structures and manifestations of patriarchy exist.

In the early 2000s, the soap opera *Generations* changed its cast to consist of entirely black actors. This was something Tager's (2010:108 – 109) viewers appeared to welcome. They believed that the South African soap opera was finally depicting a lifelike portrayal of the

nature of society in South Africa, since most people in the country are black. Some of her research participants enjoyed seeing black characters climbing the corporate ladder and making it to the top. For them, this was something to aspire to. Some of her participants also found it frustrating that they themselves had not become members of the corporate world. Here, her viewers were able to discriminate between fantasy and reality. I was also able to verify this in my master's study (Nzimande 2015), with participants believing that some of the storylines they viewed were pure fantasy, matters that would never be realised in the real world.

Conclusion

This chapter summarises some of the history of South African television, and how Apartheid has affected general South African viewing (Milton 2008; Teer-Tomaselli 2005; Tager 1997; Milton, Wasserman, Garman 2013). The South African soap opera has been affected by societal changes the country has experienced (Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019; King'ara 2013; Milton 2008; Teer-Tomaselli 2005; Tager 2010).

The chapter also points out that soap opera is a genre that was initially created for female viewers (Geraghty 2005; Brundson 1995; Gledhill 2003; Ang 2007). However, evidence exists that, more recently, soap opera accommodates male viewers as well (Tager 2010, 1997; Gauntlett and Hill 1999). The soap opera functions as a phenomenon whereby many viewers engage with the characters through parasocial relationships and through sharing their hardships and bringing them into their lives (Pitout 1998; Livingstone 1988; Tager 1997). This increases the entertainment value of the viewing experience. Viewers are able to have the controlling power in their relationships with television characters on the understanding that they are able to remove themselves from the situation at any point.

The chapter also presents the three categories of soap opera as defined by Liebes and Livingstone's 1988 study. Since Liebes and Livingstone's study is based on the European soap opera, some of their categories do not neatly accommodate the South African context of the selected three case studies. This can be attributed to African dynamics of localness and the adaptation of the soap opera genre in South Africa.

It further shows how masculinity and gender have been included in South African media (Buiten and Naidoo 2013:197). Since 1994, South African media conveys a specific message

of a post-Apartheid community that highlights issues of multiculturalism and multiracialism (Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019; Teer-Tomaselli 2005). However, there is a more recent move to ethno-specific or indigenised television programming, into which the three case studies are arguably situated. The study highlights the importance of the genre theory in terms of categorising and coding soap opera (Berry-Flint 2004; Mittell 2001; Feur 1992). Some of the generic codes and conventions of soap opera are highlighted as a way of positioning the three case studies under discussion, and how South African soap opera both maintain and subvert certain conventions that may, in turn, represent a challenge or acceptance of popular and dominant discourses of South African Zulu men.

Chapter Three
Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This study is guided by two theories, namely masculinity theory and active audience theory. These theories were chosen because they align with the study in terms of understanding Zulu masculinities within audience studies. There are multiple ways within which masculinities can be explored, but this study explores masculinities from an anthropological, sociological, and particularly, social constructionist position. This is mainly because social constructionism draws from several developments such as "social interactionism, deviance …, social history, women's history and Marxist theory; and representational anthropology, multicultural work on sexuality, and gender studies" (Cilliers 2014:64), which are crucial streams to fully articulate how gender is constructed and deconstructed. This study takes the perspective that masculinities are fluid. It asserts that gender is not fixed, but is reproduced socially and culturally, and is therefore constantly renegotiated (Demetriou 2001, Connell 1995, 2005, Butler 1999, 1990, Cilliers 2014).

Gender and masculinities will be explored within the culturalist active audience theory (Morley 1992, Livingstone 2000, Fiske 1989) and its concomitant models such as encoding and decoding (Hall 1997, 1995) and principles such as cultural proximity (Castello 2010, Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019) to understand how audiences actively interpret gender and masculinity. Using this approach, the study will provide a platform for the data analysis section, which analyses how Zulu male focus group participants interpreted the representations of masculinity on local soap operas.

Four major models are generally accepted as being valuable in carrying out research on men and masculinity (Cilliers 2014, Fouten 2006, Van der Watt 2007). These are biological models, anthropological models, psychological models and sociological models. This study subscribes to aspects of the sociological model and, to a lesser degree, to the anthropological model. However, this chapter briefly includes the other models to show reasoning for the relevance of the sociological model and anthropological model in framing the research.

Models of masculinity

The biological models and frameworks attribute male and female behaviours to the biological differences that exist between men and women (Cilliers 2014, Fouten 2006, Connell 1995). The belief prevails that men are prone to aggression and violence because of higher testosterone levels, while women are gentle and emotional because of higher oestrogen levels (Van der Watt 2007). The key principles of this model have been disputed by key theorists of masculinity (Demetriou 2001, Connell 1995, Butler 1988 and 1999, Kimmel and Messner 2004), because gender is not fixed. It is, instead, a process that is constantly changing, reproduced and renegotiated.

Similarly, biological models emanate from the sex role theory that significantly reduces gender to sex differences, which sociologists Connell (1995, 2005,1987), Butler (1988, 1999), Demetriou (2001), Connell and Messertschmidt (2005), Kimmel and Messner (2004) vehemently dispute, arguing that gender is much more complicated and has several factors such as sociological and cultural relationships that affect it. The argument of the biological model is that the biology of a person influences brain activity, which in turn affects a person's behaviour (Van der Watt 2007, Cilliers 2014). The inference is that the male brain is controlled mostly by the left hemisphere, which is responsible for rationality and control. Conversely, the female brain is controlled by the right hemisphere, which is responsible for emotion (Van der Watt 2007:50).

Biological factors share sentiments similar to the essentialist point of view. Essentialist views of gender argue that all human behaviours and expressions are attributed to biological factors. In other words, how a person lives is rooted in the biological factors of being a man or a woman, and their thoughts stem from biological factors such as gender and race. The belief is that humans are "born with inherent tendencies" (Elliot 2003: 4). However, gender is not fixed only to the biological element. Many other elements related to gender, and therefore masculinities, are at play (Butler 1988, 1999, Demetriou 2001, Connell and Messertschmidt 2005, Connell 1995, 1987, 2005, Kimmel and Messner 2004). This is not to say that biology does not play a role in masculinities. Rather, the argument here is that social and cultural factors also have a substantial effect (Beynon 2002:2, Van der Watt 2007:49, Cilliers 2014, Butler 1988, Connell 1995, Demetrio 2001, Connell and Messertschmidt 2005).

Kimmel and Messner (2004: xii) further challenge the biological model by stating that "we may be born as males or females, but we become men and women in a cultural context". Similarly, one can argue that "masculinity reflects more social and cultural expectations of male behaviour (rather) than biology" (Van der Watt 2007:50). Similarly, Cilliers (2014) asserts that one of the most crucial issues that exist in sex and gender is social constructionism versus biology. He argues that if we state that gender is grounded only in biology, then we have to believe that the biology of men and women is a predetermined inevitability. In this argument, biology is predetermined by chromosomes, genes and hormones with little or no change possible. However, if we argue that gender is a social and cultural construct, then we have to believe that characteristics and appearances of gender within the roles can change and are open to negotiation (Cilliers 2014:63). Thus power relations, in the social constructionist approach, form an intricate part of the construction of gender. "Power relations and distinguishing between the two genders are constantly negotiated and renegotiated" (Cilliers 2014:64).

However, it has been determined that social experiences also incite differences between male and female behaviours, and that the influence of culture on individuals should not be underestimated (Cilliers 2014, Fouten 2006, Demetrio 2001, Connell and Messertschmidt 2005). Constitutional rights support a more tolerant society that should enable people to live beyond the confines of biology, both socially and sexually. From a sociological perspective, one may be born male but can become a woman (Van der Watt 2007:49, Connell 1995, Kimmel and Messner 2004). "Men are not born with masculinity as a part of their genetic make-up, rather it is something into which they are acculturated and which is composed of social codes of behaviour which they learn to reproduce in culturally appropriate ways" (Beynon 2002:2).

Other models argue that the behaviour of men goes beyond the physical attributes of biology. These are anthropological models. Anthropological models propose that male behaviour is associated with cultural differences (Butler 1999, Demetrio 2001, Beynon 2002:2, Fouten 2006), which suggests that the differences in gender are rooted in specific cultural adaptations to one's environment (Fouten 2006, Beynon 2002, Van der Watt 2007). Key authors like Butler (1990) argue that the biological construct of sex is culturally constructed as gender and that the primary influence of being male or female is a cultural construction. Others put forward ideas similar to those of Butler (1990), asserting that "cultural variations of gender roles ... seek[ing] to demonstrate the fluidity of gender and the primacy of cultural organisation" (Van der Watt

2007:51). Key authors such as Demetrio (2001) and Connell (1995) argue along similar lines, the specific focus being on masculinity. They suggest that hegemonic masculinities are culturally ideal for some communities. Non-hegemonic men are marginalised culturally and politically in terms of social status (Demetrio 2001).

Thinking beyond anthropological models include arguments that explore the thought processes of individuals. These are psychological models. Connell and Messertschmidt's (2005) psychological models have dominated the interpretation of gender and masculinities. These models focus on the psychological differences between men and women, and whether men think the same as or differently to women. The proposition here is that both men and women encounter situations in which they think and act in a masculine way and others in which they think and act in a feminine manner (Connell 1995). "Within this model men and women have inherent characteristic traits that fundamentally remain intact over the span of history and throughout different cultural borders" (Van der Watt 2007:52). For example, psychological models have contributed to the dialogue of gender roles. Authors such as Langa and Kiguwa (2013), Xaba (2001) and Bantjes, Kagee and Meissner (2016) apply the psychological model in their work and give detailed accounts of the psychological effects of men that have encountered colonisation and Apartheid. Chapter One of this study gives a comprehensive account of this argument.

Beyond psychological models, are models that account for the social factors that affect individuals, as already briefly explained above. Sociological models stress that "the accommodation to a sex role specific to one's biological sex is due to socialisation" (Fouten 2006:1) and depends on what each individual is exposed to, which leads to the idea of social constructionism that guides this study.

Social constructionism

Social constructionism is rooted in the belief that masculinities are shaped dynamically, "using the means and approaches in a given social situation" (Cilliers, 2014: 65). The term social constructionism derives from several influences and cannot be traced to a single source (Burr 1995). While some scholars trace it back to German philosophers who started deliberating on sociology in the 1920s, Berger and Luckman (1966) argue that three developments in the 19th Century contributed to the sociology of knowledge. These are "German thought – the *Marxian*, the *Nietzschean*, and the *historicist*" (Berger and Luckman 1966:17). They assert that it is out

of Marxist thought that sociology or social constructionism came to be. Under the *Marxian* thought, social constructionism was influenced by ideology and false consciousness, as well as the twin concepts of substructure and superstructure (Berger and Luckman 1966:18). These two concepts are based on the understanding of human activity, which is the foundation of the argument that human behaviour and activity are the outcomes of human thought (Berger and Luckman 1966). *Nietzche's* concept of social constructionism was based on anti-idealism, which added different dimensions to Marx's concept. Nietzche showed human thought to be not only relative to understanding human activity, but also in the context of "struggle for survival and power" (Berger and Luckman 1966:19). Thus, he developed his own theory and analysis of false consciousness with a specific focus on deception and self-deception (Berger and Luckman 1966). *Historicism* focused on how historical events and historical situations could be understood and processed on "the social situation of thought" (Berger and Luckman 1966:19). "The dominant theme here was an overwhelming sense of the relativity of all perspectives on human events, that is, of the inevitable historicity of human thought" (Berger and Luckman 1966:19).

Masculinities within a social constructionist framework propose that identity is "developed through a complex process of interaction with culture in which men learn the gender scripts of their culture. Within social and historical context, men are actively in the process of making themselves" (Cilliers 2014:65). Social constructionists such as Judith Butler (1999), Raewyn Connell (1995), Lynne Segal (2007), Michael Kimmel and Michael Messner (1992) believe that many factors shape a person's behaviour, such as the environment in which one grows up and lives. In other words, social constructionists believe that society has a sustainable influence on male behaviour (Elliot 2003:4). Ratele (2010), a social constructionist, confirms this by stating that "in highly unequal societies, where avenues for individual and social human development opportunities are unevenly distributed and where large numbers of young black males are unemployed and without good prospects, violence becomes a critical mechanism in some mens' strivings to be regarded as successfully masculine" (Ratele 2010:22). It is therefore inaccurate to state that only biological factors make a man what he is and how he behaves.

Butler (1990:6), a prolific social constructionist gender theorist, argues that gender is socially and culturally constructed and is therefore dynamic. Thus "man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine as a male body as easily as a female one" (Butler 1990:6). The cultural construction of gender is closely linked to social

determinism. In other words, one may be born biologically female, but becoming a woman (behaving in a certain way, dressing in a certain way) is a cultural compulsion or is influenced by social factors. The female in this instance interprets cultural meanings of what it is to be female and a woman (Butler 1990:8). Thus meanings of what it is to be a man or a woman are not bound to biology, but rather to how one interprets cultural meanings of what it means for themselves as individuals to be male or female (Butler 1990).

This indicates that gender is not limited to biology. Instead, it has become a social and cultural construct (Kimmel and Messner 2004). This makes gender "a stylised repetition of acts" (Butler 1990:140). As with dramas on television and soap operas, Butler (1990) argues, gender requires a repetition of performances that are already socially established for them to become legitimate. Social constructionists considered gender, masculinity and femininity to be fluid, and not fixed but rather constructed within a social and cultural context (Butler 1990, 1999, Connell 2005, Kimmel and Messner 2004).

Leading sociologist Raewyn Connell's (1985, 1987, 1995, 2002, 2005) theories about masculinities are applicable to this study, because they are based on social constructionism. In her book, Gender and Power, Connell (1987) asserts that the idea of gender is plagued by assumptions that biology/sex, or the natural form of the body, is more real than what is social. She argues that it is therefore crucial for the study of gender to take place so that individuals may fully understand gender as a product not confined to biology only, but rather as a product or tool to be used to understand life, politics and society as a whole. Social analysis of gender is crucial to fully comprehend one's personal life and society.

Nevertheless, her argument is that gender is still socially constructed, and to understand both the scientific and the social accounts, one must understand that gender is not fixed. Thus, "the guiding metaphors of scientific research, the impersonality of its discourse, the structures of power and communication in science, the reproduction of its internal culture, all stem from the social position of dominant men in a gendered world. The dominance of science in discussions of masculinity thus reflects the position of masculinity (or specific masculinities) in the social relations of gender" (Connell 1995:6). This indicates that both biological sciences and social sciences work hand-in-hand to understand gender as a product that is socially constructed. For example, the understanding of masculinities as a social science was initially centred on the male sex role, and the idea of the male sex role emanated from the scientific doctrine of

understanding sex differences (Connell 1995:21). In her book *Gender* (2002), she details accounts of gender patterns within society. She highlights the multidimensional element of gender and how it is linked to historical processes, which include marginalised masculinities, along with subordinate and complicit masculinities. This makes the concept of the social theory of gender complex and not easily defined (Connell 1985). She argues that "the social theory of gender is not a tightly-knit logical system" (Connell 1985:261). Connell (2005) elaborates that three important aspects are associated with male behaviour:

     i) physical attributes to masculinity that presume machismo,

     ii) the fact that masculinity is not fixed and is constructed within a social context, and

     iii) that men use violence to reinforce their dominance (Connell 2005a: 63, 65, and 83).

Connell's (2005) theories, like Butler's, frame this study in terms of understanding masculinity as a social construct and these will therefore be applied to interpret the data.

Therefore, genders are shaped dynamically - "differences between women and men are socially constructed and thus subject to change" (Van der Watt 2007:53). Despite masculinities being socially constructed, the ways in which they are performed/enacted (Butler 1990, 1999) often appears natural and irreversible. Some aspects of masculinity are constructed and learned, *appearing* to be natural through the workings of hegemony, power, ideology and myth. Gender appears natural because its actions are repeated, re-enacted and re-experienced, creating and affirming social legitimation (Butler 1990:140).

Three of the research objectives of this study seek to understand, firstly, Butler's (1990) argument of the repetition of actions in performances and how these are legitimised, or seen as true and natural by audiences. The second objective is to identify and analyse the ways in which the preferred messages on Zulu masculinities are decoded by different male audience groups. The third objective is to explore the ways in which new representations affirm, subvert or challenge popular and dominant current discourses on Zulu men in South Africa. This will be analysed in Chapter Six.

This study further demonstrates that these social constructions require a conceptualisation of power to give them meaning. The next section provides a discussion on hegemony, cultural hegemony, hegemonic masculinity and the interplay of media and audience studies. Gramsci (1957), Connell (2005) and Fiske (1987) are noteworthy theorists in various fields of hegemony

– Gramsci for his work on ideological hegemony, Connell for being a proponent of hegemonic masculinities, and Fiske for his work on popular culture in relation to gender. All three of these theorists are discussed in the next section. This is crucial to the study, since it aims to explore the ways in which Zulu masculinities are learned and thus socially and culturally constructed, and furthermore, how these constructions are read by a sample of soap opera viewers. Another crucial element of the study is that the participants were drawn from varying age groups, marital statuses and levels of education, which will account for different analyses of masculinities across factors of time, education and social exposure. Varying demographics will all be raised in Chapter Five.

Aspects of hegemony and demographics have significant links with the audience theory section, which is detailed later in this chapter. It concerns the way in which individuals experience and influences their own deconstruction of certain masculinities represented in the soap operas. In addition, social constructionists acknowledge a system that explains what sex roles are appropriate for males and females. For example, Beynon (2002:3) explains that in many cultures, masculinity has been viewed as competitive and aggressive (Beynon 2002:3), while femininity has been associated with passivity.

The descriptions of each model show that "masculinities extend beyond the biological differences between men and women and therefore they need to be explored relationally from different perspectives, including from a psychoanalytic, sociological and ethnographic vantage point" (Thole-Muir 2014:25). This study asserts that masculinity can be understood through the lens of representations that resonate with audiences who are situated within the cultural proximity of the language system being portrayed. However, as active audience theory implies, this does not mean that audiences engage with a text in the way producers have intended for them to do.

Social constructionism argues that several approaches can be taken to attach meaning to the world. These include critical realism, language, social practices, philosophical influences, sociological influences, and a discursive approach. This study is primarily influenced by the discursive approach, since it is interested in "how people use language in their everyday interactions, their 'discourse' with each other" (Burr 1995:19), as well as how they are able to derive meaning from the texts they interact with on television using language. In his book, *Television Culture* (1987), John Fiske argues that characters are discursive manifestations of

social discourses and not just psychological beings. Audiences are no longer passively subjected to dominant ideology. They are, instead, in control of both their viewing process and their viewing needs, by identifying and construing their own meanings based on what they view (Fiske 1987).

Fiske (1987) elaborates, saying that the viewer holds the power to be able to embody similar social values as the characters they view, while the characters on television simultaneously hold the same social values as their audiences. Many participants of this study felt this way about specific characters and scenes they could relate to, as will be expounded in Chapter Six. In this respect, Fiske (1987) argues that social values are constantly negotiated in relation to individuals' social positions (Fiske 1987), making masculinity a social construct by virtue of social positioning. Fiske (1987) asserts that it is important to understand representations of characters on television and how these invite audiences to identify with them as characters. It is also important to be mindful that audiences are drawn to characters with whom they identify. Furthermore, audiences use several means to attach themselves to characters, including experience, cultural background and the discursive practices to which they are exposed. This process of identification is believed to be evidence that television representations are not always deconstructed in the way intended, since the audience actively participates in creating meaning.

Fiske (1987) argues that this enables audiences to have an experience of living in similar time scales as the characters on television, since characters have past, present and future lives, as depicted on television. In other words, characters are depicted in time lines that add more value for audiences, since they are able to relate to them more meaningfully. Instead of only one element of a character being depicted, several aspects are shown that make them appealing, enabling audiences to participate in growing to understand the character. Such participation automatically invites audiences to relate to characters in terms of familiar experiences and identifications. It is further linked to cultural proximity, because the broadcaster is able to identify audiences' social needs and show characters in living patterns similar to those of the viewers. Cultural proximity will be discussed later on in this chapter.

This study perceives masculinity from a sociological and, in particular, social constructionist perspective. By extension, it is framed within the understanding that soap opera characters are discursive manifestations of social discourses, which should be explored via the concepts of ideology hegemony, power, and myth.

Ideological hegemony

Hegemony is an intricate part of this study, because it depicts culturally diverse societies vulnerable to being dominated by any one of its social classes. Such domination may be perceived to be 'normal' through the state apparatus, rendering Antonio Gramsci's work a focal point of this section. He uses hegemony to explain the power one dominant group can have in persuading subordinate groups to accept its political, moral and cultural views – in other words, the dominant ideology. However, hegemony is constantly re negotiated, which makes it fragile because it needs to reaffirm itself constantly to remain in the position of power. The reason for this is that some groups oppose the dominant ideology. In the South African context, several anti-Apartheid groups rose up against the regime. The way this relates to how masculinities are encoded and decoded in *Isibaya, Imbewu* and *Uzalo* will be discussed below

Gramsci contributed greatly to Marxist theory. He valued the fact that politics could be transformative and raised issues of political methods and strategy. Gramsci's work is crucial to this study, especially his concept of ideological hegemony. Hegemony is understood to be the domination of one over another, but Gramsci included an ideological element or rule to this. His ideological hegemony here is referred to "as the control of dominant ideas as well as control of the means of production" (Slattery 2003:121). With reference to this study, the production houses of the selected soap operas have the power to create and portray dominant ideas about masculinity in general and Zulu men in particular. Some of the dominant ideas about Zulu masculinities were identified by participants in this study. These will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Gramsci's work reflects the views that "class domination is exercised as much through popular 'consensus' achieved in civil society as through physical coercion (or threat of it) by the state apparatus, especially in advanced capitalist societies where education, the media, law, mass culture, etc. take on a new role" (Boggs 1976:16). In this way, those in power rule by 'consent'.

Gramsci (1957) associates the issue of consent to a *psychological* state that involves a form of acceptance, which may not necessarily be explicit in "the sociopolitical order of certain vital aspects of that order" (Lukes 2005:8). In other words, consent according to Gramsci, was voluntary, and in its voluntary state it could vary in intensity (Gramsci 1957:78). In South Africa, several regimes have affected the socio political order. For example, once the National

Party was in power, it engineered consensus through the control of all cultural forms. Regulatory control in society is an important socio political mechanism to establish hegemony. In South Africa during the Apartheid era, the state and civil society very effectively controlled all cultural forms, thereby establishing a system of informal and formal separateness. From 1948, the National Party dominated all sources of power that would allow the regime to exert its racial policies on the broader society. This enabled them to dominate and subordinate the racial majority in the country (Pillay 2017). Gramsci (1971) is of the opinion that when a ruling party is unable to retrieve widespread hegemony, it begins to create ruling measures to remain powerful. In South Africa, the National Party created rules, regulations and legislation that favoured the white people and marginalised non-whites (Pillay 2017).

Gramsci (1957) identified two types of political control; these were associated with the roles of *domination* and those of *hegemony*. Domination is associated with direct physical coercion and hegemony is associated with consent and ideological control (Boggs 1976:38). Gramsci's understanding and theory of hegemony was defined as a way of an 'organising principle', in essence organising views of the world. Different structures exist throughout civil society. For example, structures and activities exist within education, religion, and families. These structures and activities hold specific beliefs, discourses and values, and they are able to bring order to these structures. Hegemony, for Gramsci (1957, 1971), is the ability to organise such structures and views.

Gramsci (1971:259) argues consent to be a structure that is organised, one that is not generic but rather *educates* those who are governed. In other words, the ruling power receives consent from those who are governed. In this instance, the ruling power enjoys the power to rule as well as the dominion it has received. Gramsci (1971) further argues that for a state to have power for a prolonged period of time, it had to have hegemony and not rely only on coercion. In this way, a state may have minimal hegemony (Gramsci (1971). This argument comes into play, Gramsci (1971) and Femia (1981) say, when the ruling party marginalises the masses by not giving them the power to make decisions, while including or incorporating leaders who agree with its views, thereby increasing the size of the ruling party. Gramsci's (1971) minimal hegemony is relevant to the study of South Africa during the Apartheid regime, because the ruling National Party restricted decision-making to the white population, specifically Afrikaans-speaking, white individuals (Pillay 2017). Non-whites in this regard were strictly marginalised. For example, during Apartheid, non-whites were forced to carry a passbook,

known as the *dompas,* at all times, so that the police could identify them. Carrying the dompas confined non-whites within the Apartheid system.

Similarly, in a less politicised or racial example, an aspect of Zulu masculinities represented within *Uzalo*, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya*, is the inclusion of storylines on the topic of polygamy. Although the wife characters might contest the addition of another wife, they still choose to stay in the marriage despite being unhappy. This illustrates how consent is given through choices made within existing structures. As a man changes and modifies himself "to the same extent … he modifies the whole complex of relationships of which he is the nexus" (Gramsci 1957:77). This means that a man who has such influence also has the power to change the views of the relationships he is in. And if he has the power to do this, it means the whole mass of the relationships he is in can adopt similar thinking (Gramsci 1957:78). Although this idea seems clear-cut and simple, relationships are not simple. Some relationships "are involuntary and some voluntary" (Gramsci 1957:78). This study will consider this, since one of the key research questions is to understand what forms of Zulu masculinity are represented in the selected case studies. This will warrant an understanding of which relationships are voluntary and which are not. Some of the questions about polygamy posed to the focus group challenged the very idea of whether polygamous marriages within the case studies are voluntary or involuntary. These are discussed in detail in Chapter Six, where the data is analysed.

Hegemonic masculinity
In gender studies, the term hegemonic masculinity is a significant part of Raewyn Connell's gender order theory. Her theory recognises several masculinities across the spectrums of time, culture, social and individual existence (Messertschmidt 2000, Demetriou 2001, Hadebe 2010, Connell 1985, 1987, 1995, 2002, 2005). The variance of time is important to this study because participants of varying ages attended the focus groups. They also came from different social backgrounds and had different individual needs and feelings. While the participants were all isiZulu-speaking, they were able to share different thoughts on topics because of the variances in age. This is elaborated upon in Chapter Six. This aspect has significant links with audience theory, because participants' experiences affected their deconstructions of certain masculinities represented in the three soap operas.

The sociological approach to masculinity is concretised through hegemony, power and ideology. Raewyn Connell is an Australian sociologist who is considered the most influential

in the study of men and masculinity (Messertschmidt 2000, Demetriou 2001, Hadebe 2010). Hegemonic masculinities form part of her study on gender theory. She defined hegemonic masculinities as "…the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women and other men who are considered to be weak" (Connell, 1995:77). In other words, hegemonic masculinities can be understood as a practice that enables the male's dominant position in society, justifying the subordination of women, as well as other men. Hegemonic masculinities come into being because it is constantly enforced to ensure its continuation and domination over groups of people. This makes it fragile, because it continuously needs to reinforce itself to remain dominant. Within the social constructionist approach, hegemonic masculinities cannot be analysed without the assistance of psychological and sociological models, because so many factors contribute to being a man (Connell 2005, Van der Watt 2007, Xaba 2001), including social and psychological issues.

Acosta-Alzuru's (2003) study asserts that discourses on gender in Venezuela are rooted in socioeconomic, institutional, political and religious discourses. This is very similar to South African discourses of gender. The rapid changes that South Africans experienced politically as well as economically affected gender discourses in the realms of religion, politics, history and society (Ratele 2014:118). The current gender climate in South Africa shows evidence of hegemonic masculinities with an intensification in gender-based violence. Instances of men killing women and children continue to rise drastically (Ellis, 2020). President Cyril Ramaphosa addressed South Africa on 17 June 2020 and stressed the seriousness of gender-based violence and how it should be considered a second pandemic to affect the country, after COVID-19 (Ellis, 2020). In her study, Acosta-Alzuru discusses two critical dominant ideologies of machismo and marianismo. "Machismo is the belief that men are superior to women, have more rights and belong to the public sphere … marianismo holds that women are morally superior … the combination of these two ideologies places women in the private sphere of the household and assigns them to the brunt of parental responsibility" (Acosta-Alzuru 2003:275). Acosta-Alzuru's study shows similarities in the way men and women are positioned culturally in the Venezuelan and South African cultures. In Venezuela, men are perceived to be the head of the home, but in reality, the homes are female-headed (Acosta-Alzuru 2003:275). In South Africa, a similar ideology prevails as a result of the reign of hegemonic masculinities. However, during the Apartheid era, the migrant miner labour system (described in Chapter Two) resulted in most men being absent from home for long periods, leaving women to head

their families. Women have been seen to bear parental responsibility in South Africa for a long time. However, recent legislation has given women the same rights as men, along with the right to join the workforce (Hadebe 2010, Hunter 2005, MWCPD, 2013).

Venezuela, too, has seen an increase in women being part of the workforce. The difference in Venezuela is that this was "not the product of an ideological change in the social formation; it is merely the outcome of financial need" (Acosta-Alzuru 2003:276). Other sociocultural areas in which Venezula and South Africa have similar tendencies are domestic violence and homophobia. Acosta- Alzuru (2003:276) talks about the problem of domestic violence in Venezuela and how this transcends class. She describes how gay men and women are ridiculed. Similarly, Ratele (2014) discusses the violence in South Africa, pointing out that gay men and women experience ridicule and suffer violence. This shows that a culture exists in more than one country that endorses the subordination of women and men as well as many other forms of non-dominant masculinities. This is the very essence of hegemony. The next section continues with the topic of hegemony within the context of authority as well as how Apartheid may have shifted the social construction of masculinities.

Struggle and post-struggle masculinity

During colonialism and Apartheid in South Africa, hegemony played a role in race politics, because black masculinity had been subjected and subordinated to white masculinity, rendering black masculinities fragile (Hadebe 2010). Hegemonic masculinities in the South African context are "a socially constructed, collective gender identity" (Xaba 2001:108). Thus, the consequences of Apartheid gave rise to two types of masculinities that are socially constructed, namely struggle masculinity and post-struggle masculinity (Xaba 2001:108).

Struggle masculinity is closely linked to hegemonic masculinities because of its counter-hegemonic state as earlier attributed to Gramsci. This is because struggle masculinity attempted to confront the Apartheid system. Struggle masculinity was anti-authority. Over time it came to be viewed as negative by the government and some social groups because of its negative attitudes towards women and Apartheid laws. "Struggle masculinity considered women to be fair game" (Xaba 2001:116), meaning that men could rape and kill women in whatever fashion they deemed fit. Several accounts of rape and murder emerged during this time (Xaba 2001). Hegemonic masculinities in this form of brutality and gender-based violence

against women are still a reality today (Stats SA, 2018). This highlights how hegemonic masculinities still promote the subordination of women and other masculinities.

Since masculinities are socially constructed, with careful consideration given to how African men live currently, "social mobility will develop oppositional forms of masculinity" (Xaba 2001:120). This accounts for the fluidity of masculinity as well as the fragile state of hegemonic masculinity. One of this study's interests is to explore if an how this fluidity may be presented and interpreted in contemporary South African soap opera.

Post-struggle masculinity is associated with respect for law and order in society. It is characterised by paying for services and respecting and cooperating with state entities and the police (Xaba 2001:109). The participants in this study identified with post- struggle masculinity, since they were directly and indirectly affected by the apartheid regime, but currently uphold the law and abide by the country's rules and regulations. Xaba (2001) describes the transition as an environment where men may learn to rely on one another for support, while finding affirmation and confirmation from other men instead of defining their identity in terms of liberation movements.

Struggle masculinity	Post-struggle masculinity
Anti-authority, confronting laws and systems	Pro-authority, respecting law and order
Negative behaviour towards women	Positive behaviour towards women
Breaking the law	Abiding by laws
Hegemonic masculinities	Non- hegemonic masculinities
Subordinating women and other masculinities	Supporting women's upliftment and legislature to empower women

Table 3.1 Summary of struggle and post -struggle masculinities adapted from *Xaba (2001) and Hadebe (2010).*

Contemporary masculinities

South Africa has faced many adjustments and challenges with several transformations throughout colonialism and Apartheid, where the system segregated people and caused masculinity to compete for power (Connell and Messertschmidt 2005:835). Hadebe (2010) asserts that although the contemporary Zulu man is confronted by pre- and post-colonialist and Apartheid versions of masculinity, he is committed to "the democratisation of gender relations" (Habebe 2010:37). The contemporary Zulu man is marked by his social and economic standing as well as how well he stood up for his family and its members (Xaba 2001, Hadebe 2010).

Hegemonic masculinities are distinguished from other masculinities, especially masculinities that are subordinate to it. Hegemony is not necessarily associated with violence, but "men who received the benefits of patriarchy without enacting a strong version of masculine dominance could be regarded as showing a complicit masculinity. It was in relation to this group and to compliance among heterosexual women, that the concept of hegemony was most powerful" (Connell and Messertschmidt 2005:832). This emerged in the mid-1980s, when hegemonic masculinity was abstract instead of descriptive, which meant that it followed the logic of a patriarchal gender system. Thus, hegemonic masculinities emanated from specific circumstances and were argued to be open to historical changes. In other words, hegemonic masculinity could struggle to keep the upper hand, while newer forms could replace older forms of masculinity (Connell and Messertschmidt 2005). This will be explored further in Chapter five and Chapter Six.

Female empowerment and its impact on contemporary masculinities

Like all forms of identity, masculinities are continuously changing and evolving. Today, Zulu masculinities have no choice but to recognise femininities because of the legislation supporting women and their rights that prevail in South Africa (Hadebe 2010, Hunter 2005). Globally, much legislation has been passed to support women. In South Africa specifically, the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill was introduced in November 2013 with the aim of empowering women (MWCPD 2013). Legislation that endorses the empowerment of women, along with certain representations of men in the media, have pushed masculinity to explore new defining concepts (Viljoen 2008, Bantjes, Kagee and Meissner 2016, Buiten and Naidoo 2013). This postmodern movement in South Africa – where thought processes have changed, globalisation has affected legislation, women have been increasingly empowered, and new

cultural representations of men have emerged – forms a great part of how men see themselves and other men. Furthermore, how black men *choose* to live in a post-Apartheid culture provides new freedoms that they had not previously been allowed to enjoy (Xaba 2001). These include the freedom to vote, the freedom to choose where to live, and the freedom to be educated in schools of their choice. Under Apartheid, the black man had been severely restricted.

New legislation that empower women in South Africa has disrupted the Zulu man's social and cultural positioning as being the sole provider in the home (Hunter 2005, Hadebe 2010). This accounts for the fluidity of masculinity and gender roles within the home, which further adds to the fragility of masculinity. Contemporary Zulu men may feel trapped between gender roles as a result of women increasingly enjoying equal opportunities, while a fragile economy further affects gender relations, both nationally and at home (Hadebe 2010). In the current post-colonial and post- Apartheid South Africa, "hegemonic masculinities have shown vulnerability to change which is often manifest in immature behavior, low self-esteem, uncertainty, and fear" (Hadebe 2010: ii). Hunter (2005) and Hadebe (2010) describe how Zulu men find themselves in situations they have never experienced before. They may find themselves sharing household chores, which in the past was unheard of. Morrell (2001:26-33) shares similar views to Hunter (2005) and Hadebe (2010), describing the current situation of South African men as being accommodating, reactive and progressive. Morrell (2001) says men have tried to regain their power by resisting change and continuing with hegemonic practices to subordinate women and other men. Hegemonic masculinities are rooted in historical and current discourses of the subordination of women (Morrell 2001, Hunter 2005, Hadebe 2010). However, since hegemony is constructed socially and is culturally fragile, it is constantly subject to change. In other words, the dominion of men over women may be challenged, and it requires a significant amount of energy and effort for men to maintain it (Connell and Messertschmidt 2005:844).

Hadebe's (2010) and Xaba's (2001) characteristics of the contemporary post-Apartheid black man are considered in this research. These characteristics are addressed in research question 1, which aims to understand the different types of masculinities as shown in *Uzalo*, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya*. The characteristics of the contemporary Zulu man, along with post-struggle and struggle masculinities are discussed in Chapter Six to further understand how audiences read the masculinities produced in the soap operas.

Internally and externally practised masculinities

The practice of hegemonic masculinity requires that men be monitored to ensure they adhere to its principles, along with the purposeful exclusion and subordination of women.

Hegemonic masculinity may be practised both internally and externally (Demetriou 2001, Connell and Messertschmidt 2005). External masculinities refer to the institutionalisation of the dominion of men over women, while internal masculinities refer to the dominion of men over other men (Demetriou 2001, Connell and Messertschmidt 2005. The former is depicted in the soap operas *Uzalo*, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya,* This is explained in greater detail in Chapter Five and six, through the analysis of the decoders and encoders perspective.

Hegemonic masculinities are influenced by the psychological and sociological factors and discourses to which a man is exposed, but these masculine tendencies are strategically modified by men depending on the situation. In other words, men can adopt hegemonic masculinities whenever they like, but they can as easily distance themselves strategically from hegemonic masculinities at other times. In this way, hegemonic masculinities do not describe a type of man, but rather a way that men choose to position themselves at certain times through discursive practices (Connell and Messertschmidt 2005:835). This behaviour is significant in this research, since the participants were able to specify moments when male soap characters were able to strategically modify their relationship to hegemonic masculinity, and how they as members of the soap opera audience read this process.

Hegemonic masculinity is propagated and subverted through the media. The next section will elaborate further on how masculinity and hegemony work together in popular culture.

Hegemony in popular culture

The soap operas *Uzalo*, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya* form part of popular culture in South African television. They show different types of power relations, such as the dominion of men and the subordination of women, but they equally show women resisting the patriarchy and rising against it, which supports Fiske's (1989) argument of how popular culture contradicts itself.

Fiske (1989) asserts that the contradiction within popular culture has two characteristics. The first entails the domination and subordination of power and resistance. This may resonate with Gramsci's argument that hegemony needs consent as well as coercion. The second entails polysemy and semiotic richness. These contradictions enable the receivers and readers of a text to participate in both the contradictions while simultaneously devolving " to them the power to situate themselves within this play of forces at a point that meets their particular cultural interests" (Fiske 1989:5). In this sense, the viewers of *Imbewu*, *Uzalo* and *Isibaya* are diverse and their understanding of masculinity may range. This means that they will be able to understand the communal and individual meanings of dominant femininity and masculinity, depending on their proximity to these dominant ideologies.

Fiske (1989) argues that meanings are intertextual and that no individual text can produce the fullness of all meanings or representations. The producers of texts do research to understand and identify social differences to be in a position of constructing equivalent differences in their products (Fiske 1989:6). This will be displayed so intricately that active audiences will be able to recognise that they are being targeted and how they are being targeted. Audiences are able to position themselves within the text according to their own identity as well as the discourses they are exposed to (Hall 1993, 1997). Fiske (1989) also argues that when zooming in on class differences, one also has to consider gender differences, because gender is linked to social and cultural differences. He makes an example about how advertisements for designer jeans are targeted at women and, he says, within a patriarchal society, women (more than men) have been groomed to invest in their sexual appearance, their bodies and social identity. Fiske (1989) says clothing is used as means to convey social meanings. This is evident in the selected case studies where, for example, powerful male characters wear suits to convey power and wealth. Focus group participants were asked how they viewed successful Zulu men in the selected case studies. Clothing, business status and levels of education were identified as some of the physical manifestations of masculinity. This will be discussed further in Chapter Five and Chapter Six.

Social meanings in popular culture

Within the selected case studies, social meanings are related through cultural discourses around Zuluness that include patriarchy and hegemony (Ntsangase 2019, Thibedi, interview, 8 April 2019, Ndlovu, interview 12 June 2019). Representations of gender differences are "sites of struggle for control over meanings of masculinity and femininity" in contemporary Zulu society (Fiske 1989:3). This is because soap opera as a form of

popular culture is the culture of the subordinated and disempowered and thus always bears within it signs of power relations, traces of the forces of domination and subordinating that are central to our social system and therefore our social experience. Equally, it shows signs of resisting or evades these forces: popular culture contradicts itself (Fiske 1989:3).

Similarly, *Uzalo*, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya* are able to fuse Western or modern values (such as capitalism) alongside traditional Zulu values. Fiske also asserts that there are critical moments when subordinate groups create their own culture using the resources and commodities that are provided by the dominant system. He calls this process *excorporation* (Fiske 1989:15). Fiske says subordinate groups are able to create subcultures provided by the very system that oppresses or subordinates them. Making culture to be a collective effort rather than individualised (Hofstede 2011). This then means that when analysing popular culture, one needs to study not only cultural commodities but also ways in which people are able to make use of them (Butler 1999, Hofstede). This is significantly consistent with the social construct of masculinities, because dominated groups are able to create their own mechanism so survive their subordination (Connell 1995, Van de Watt 2007). This informs one of this study's objectives, which is to explore the ways in which new representations affirm, subvert or challenge dominant current discourses of Zulu men in South Africa.

Fiske (1989) suggests that popular culture takes three main directions. The first is the consensual model, which is perceived to be less productive because it celebrates popular culture without associating it or grouping it within the structures of power. This model also views popular culture as a way of managing social differences in an attempt to produce harmony, and it can therefore be classified as democratic.

The second model is the power model. The power model reinforces domination to such an extent that it appears impossible for real popular culture to exist.

This study is closely aligned to Fiske's (1989) third model, which is in an emerging state. Hall (2018) argues similar ideas to Fiske's (1989) third model. Which perceives popular culture as a struggle, because it endorses the forces of dominance or dominion by focusing on popular tactics "by which these forces are coped with, are evaded or resisted. Instead of tracing exclusively the process of incorporation, it investigates rather the popular vitality and creativity that makes incorporation such a constant necessity" (Fiske 1989:20). Hall (2018: 932) argues

The field of cultural relations is articulated by exactly that struggle, by the struggle as to what falls into which pole. That is what the cultural business is about. It's always a field which has dominant and

subordinate elements in it and, although it's not as easy as one imagines to identify what constitutes dominance in the cultural field and what constitutes the subordinate elements.

Hall (2018) argues the same ideas on popular culture he argues that cultural relations is never a field of equal relations there is always a group that did dominated and those that are subordinate and that there will always exist a *structured dominance*. Therefore, instead of focusing on the sinister and ubiquitous elements of dominant ideology, it focuses on understanding the daily resistance and evasions that enable an ideology to work. Popular culture is perceived as progressive and a means to providing the possibility of driving social change (Fiske 1989, Butler 1999, Hall 2018).

The interplay between the soap opera and hegemony

Since the 1930s, soap opera has been described as a feminine narrative (Brown 1994, Fiske 1995). The main reasons for this include its contribution to the feminine aesthetic with its multiple plots, its showcasing of the sensitive man, and its portrayal of women in powerful, non-domestic roles. Indeed, all these contributed to the soap opera's feminine characteristics. "The dominant ideology is inscribed in the status quo, and the soap operas offer their subordinated women viewers the pleasure of seeing this status quo in a constant state of disruption" (Fiske 1995:342).

Masculine discourses arguably propel skewed gender beliefs (Fiske 1995). However, soap opera is arguably different because supposedly no dominant discourse is present in soap opera, because every character is equally important and no perspective is valued more than any other (Fiske 1995, Brown 1994). By not foregrounding male dominance and including powerful female characters, soap opera subverts discourses of hegemonic masculinities. Fiske (1995) and Brown (1994) argue that soap opera does this by challenging normative gender constructs because it is premised on the idea that there is no dominant value espoused in texts.

Soap opera constructs a feminine discourse and promotes women's culture through gossip, dialogue and domestic issues (Brown 1994, Fiske 1995). Furthermore, it challenges hegemonic masculinities because male characters possess feminine qualities (Fiske 1995, Brown 1994). Where masculine characteristics or hegemonic characteristics are portrayed, they are associated with villainy (Fiske 1995:345). Fiske (1995) says this representation of male characters as villains is not surprising, because in women's culture men that embody feminine characteristics are perceived in a positive light, while the men that show dominant masculine characteristics are associated with villainy.

In marital relationships in soap opera, "patriarchy grants women a position of some power" (Fiske 1995:342), meaning women are given a portion of control. This can be seen in soap opera when women are given control over their home and children by the men in their lives. Men are portrayed in situations of masculine lack which is a position that is rejected by patriarchy (Fiske 1995).

In the past and still today, soap opera displays traditional feminine appeals and fantasies of women in powerful positions of authority and decision-making (Harrington 2016:110). However, while soap opera showcases traditional feminine appeals and fantasies, Geraghty (1991:167) argues that "the emphasis has significantly altered".

On contemporary South African television, soap operas portray images of a contemporary dominant discourse (Jacobs 2019), while also portraying elements of women in powerful positions. Jacob (2019) terms this black economic empowerment[6], since black characters are shown in contemporary positions of empowerment and transformation. It would appear that South African soap operas interplay with discourses around hegemonic ideas of masculinity, while femininity differs from what has been described above in relation to many international soap operas. This is because South African soap opera promotes dominant discourses and it also reinforces female agency.

Specifically, within the chosen case studies, a dual representation of the soap opera genre exists. The first is the traditional representation of soap opera, where women are represented in powerful positions and are able to use their sexuality and body against patriarchy (Fiske 1995:344). Soap opera also shows women in positions of power and not objectified as sexual beings only, showing their intelligence and business acumen instead (Harrigton 2016, Geraghty 1991). The second is that soap opera propels dominant discourses. This is evident in how each of the storylines in *Uzalo*, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya* are male centred. *Uzalo* centres on a battle of men in the church and men in the gangster world, *Imbewu* centres on two brothers who keep several secrets from each other, and *Isibaya* centres on two taxi rivals and their families. Many of the male characters are dominant and many female characters are subordinate, but this dominance is presented as 'fragile', since female agency is often portrayed in storylines as being an equal or even stronger match.

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[6] Black economic empowerment (BEE) is a programme that was launched by the South African government in order to redress the inequalities caused by Apartheid.

The "common understanding of discourse as used in media studies and similar types of academic research is that language and texts (broadly defined) are infused with power, are produced by a small number of powerful actors, constitute subjects and meaning, result in particular knowledge and promote certain ways of behaving" (Hough 2015:18). How the interplay between soap opera and hegemony was previously studied needs to be examined, but it has not focused on decoding contemporary Zulu masculinities, which is what this study provides.

In contemporary South Africa, dominant discourses have shifted as the country journeyed through societal changes and transformation beyond Apartheid. *Uzalo*, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya* are all set in post-Apartheid contexts. They showcase storylines that illustrate a slight shift in dominant discourse, along with societal and cultural changes that endorse female agency, while at the same time maintaining some traditional dominant discourses. In this way, these soap operas offer a sophisticated edge, depicting both the traditional and the subversive. This is because "[t]elevision's techniques for gendering its audience have grown more sophisticated and nowhere more so than in its development of gender-specific narrative forms" (Fiske 1995:340).

The uniqueness of this study lies in its approach to using the soap opera genre as a tool to explore social constructs of Zulu masculinities. These case studies are fruitful sites for analysis. The plotlines of the soap operas have been among the most watched shows on local television, providing models for changing racial attitudes and, among black South Africans in particular, for cultivating "aspirational politics" Jacobs (2016:63). This includes representations of black middle-class people, which as a class, did not exist during Apartheid.

The next section presents an important theory on how to understand active audiences and how they create meanings from texts. The previous section deals with the social and cultural meanings of soap opera, while the next aims to explore how audiences are able to interpret and understand these meanings through cultural proximity, audience studies and Stuart Hall's (1993) model of encoding and decoding.

Culturalist audience studies

The concept of the active audience is embedded in culturalist audience studies. Culturalist audience studies theorises that audiences are "active producers of meaning from within their own cultural context" (Barker 2013:339). In other words, audiences are not perceived as passive. Instead, they are active in their consumption of (media) texts. The official

institutionalisation of this type of cultural study originated in the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham University (Hall 1997, Fiske 1997, Morley 1998). Culturalist audience studies takes into consideration the audience's quality of life, along with their attitudes and discourse against the background of mass communication and globalisation (Storey 1997:52). The way meanings are constructed and interpreted differ from one individual to the next, with multiple differing factors such as gender, class and cultural community at play (Barker 2013:340). Cultural studies depict a rapidly changing and shifting ground of knowledge and debate about society and the culture within. This field seeks "new questions, new models, and new ways of study, testing the fine lines between intellectual rigor and social relevance" (Hall 1997:337). The study of the interpretation of masculinities represented in *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya* will follow a similar line of investigation.

Structuralism has been a fundamental influence in cultural studies because the study of culture involves meaning making and, notably, language (Barker 2010). A significant body of work from scholars at the Birmingham CCCS was influenced by Marxist thinking, which is premised on structuralist thought. Structuralism has been tremendously influential within cultural studies, because it focuses on the meaning-making process and its importance to the function of culture. The theoretical approach of structuralism identifies patterns in social arrangements such as language. Structuralism also extends an important theoretical lens to the field, because it has enabled its exploration. Some of the challenges faced by Western Marxism were attempts to theorise culture in this manner. Structuralism enabled neo-Marxist-oriented cultural studies to "move away from a reductionist theory of culture" (Barker 2010:1).

CCCS marked the beginning of cultural studies under the directorship of Stuart Hall. Some of the structuralists who influenced CCCS is Ferdinand de Saussure, who founded linguistic structuralism. Roland Barthes further "extended structuralist principals to cultural signs" (Barker 2010:2). Cultural studies, developed at CCCS and supported by Marxist traditions, reflect the ideas of ethnography and structuralism. The viewpoint was that culture was closely linked to social structure and history. Thus, the ethnographic influence on CCCS was reflected in sociological practices and relations.

In other words, for a person to experience any set of social relations, they would need to create meanings and frameworks to which they can relate (Fiske 1997:115). This places the emphasis of cultural studies on the circulation of meanings and understanding in societies (Fiske 1997:115). Cultural studies therefore depict a rapidly shifting ground of knowledge and debate

about society and the culture that exists within. This study adheres to the Hall (1997:337) framework because of the demographic diversity of the people interviewed. While each of the focus group participants were black Zulu men, the sample represents groups of men that exist within different cultural practices, discourses and frameworks, and age. These factors all shape the way they think and behave (Hall, 1995).

Since the study explores representations and interpretations, both the senders and the receivers of the text have been interviewed to determine whether or not the message received was true to its preferred meaning, and the reasons for this. This has been done because audiences respond "actively and even argumentatively to the messages of the media. Because we all view media messages through the discourses and sets of representations which affect our lives, these messages do not confront us in isolation" (Morley 1992:70). Instead, these messages are constantly negotiated and contested, intersecting with the many other messages we receive.

Active audience theory

This section discusses how the broader cultural studies approach is a valuable perspective for both data collection and analysis, with particular reference to the active audience theory (Hall 1995; Morley 1992, 1980; Livingstone 2000, 2008, 2013; Fiske 1987) and cultural proximity (Castello 2010), as they foreground the role of cultural context and lived experience in audience interpretation.

The study subscribes to the concept of the active audience on the assumption that audiences are not passive, but actively negotiate meaning from texts. And they do not always share the producer's intended message as encoded into the text, nor do they share the same interpretations within a particular cultural, racial or age group. Hall's (1993) encoding/decoding model of communication becomes important in understanding the active audience theory for the purposes of this study.

Encoding and decoding

The encoding/decoding communication model (Hall 1993) is particularly useful to this study, since it frames the way in which the researcher can explore the relationship between what senders – the producers, creators and writers – encode into texts, and the ways in which receivers – the audiences – interpret or decode the messages. Senders encode messages in line with their views and ideological standpoint, and audiences decode these messages in line with their own understanding (Hall 1993:91).

Hall identifies three positions that account for the ways in which audiences decode messages. The first is the dominant hegemonic position. This is when the viewer fully accepts the dominant point of view and articulates the message as intended (Hall 1993:101). Here, there is virtually no or very little difference in understanding between the sender and the viewer.

The second is the negotiated position, where the receiver broadly accepts the preferred messages from the sender. The messages are understood but modified to fit their own understanding, viewpoints, cultural context and discourses (Hall 1993:102).

The last position is the oppositional view, where the audience member rejects the message intended by the sender. Their personal experience, cultural beliefs, and discourses place them in opposition to the message (Hall 1993:103).

Hall's model is a useful aid in understanding how hegemony intertwines with dominant ideology in the form of media messages, and how the insights of audiences, or lack thereof, influence their receptiveness to messaging.

However, the model that Hall (1993) presents can be critiqued as depicting simplistic views of understanding audience categorisation. Morley (1992, 1980), Fiske (1987) and Livingstone (2000, 2008, 2013) have refined Hall's (1993) model further. These authors have been able to provide "more literary approaches over the encoding/decoding model". This has provided "closer specification of the relation between texts and readers, which details the nature of the codes and the nature of textual and extratextual resources presumed by texts and available to audiences" (Livingstone 2000:177-178). Livingstone (2000) further extends Hall's (1993) encoding and decoding model. Chapter Five and Chapter Six elaborates on Hall's (1993) and Livingstone's (2000) concepts of understanding audiences through texts. These principles have been used in practice to understand participants' engagements with the three soap operas. This is a crucial aspect of the study, which seeks to understand the relationship between representations and interpretations of Zulu masculinities in contemporary South Africa, and the role of local soap opera – as exemplified in *Uzalo*, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya* – in facilitating this.

Hall's work provides ample background for Morley's *Nationwide* study on audience research. Morley's work offers a proactive analysis of the viewing contexts of audiences. He focuses on two modes of analysis, namely semiotics and sociology. Within these modes, he argues that two distinctions of constraint exist within the process of producing meaning. The first lies within internal structures of a text or reading, drawing on certain readings and excluding others. The selection of the case studies in this study were deliberate. The isiZulu soap operas draw on

specific Zulu identities and discourses that may draw Zulu viewers, to the exclusion of others, because of their internal structures. The second is the viewer's cultural background. This, Morley (1992) argues, has to be analysed sociologically. Morley's 1992 study is crucial to this study, because a sociological approach has been applied, implying that this study specifically analyses how the viewer's cultural background will determine "individual interpretations of the programmes in question" (Morley 1992:71). Since audiences are active in their interpretation of texts, their understanding and interpretation of masculinities may also be diverse and range according to the discourses and resources at their disposable. South African masculinities have been constructed through colonialism, Apartheid and post-Apartheid. This may inform the ways in which masculinities have been embodied, and thus how Zulu masculinities, in particular, have been constructed.

King'ara (2013:106) argues that, within an African context, "symbolic spaces for social-cultural interactions between producers and audiences" exist. These enable audiences in their active interpretative state to reflect socially and evaluate who they are because of the sociocultural programmes they view. Following this line of thinking and because of their local productions and storylines, this study assumes that *Imbewu*, *Uzalo* and *Isibaya* provide a means through which audiences are able to reflect on their lives and society. King'ara (2013: 106) elaborates:

> Conventional soap operas have the potential to reflect on and question in some degree their own cultural practices. Furthermore, when audience members and producers of conventional soap operas are preoccupied with a search for moral lessons in the realism depicted in these types of entertainment programmes, a social responsible television production-viewing culture emerges.

Another important factor is that members of one cultural context who share similar discourses and cultural orientation may decode messages in a similar way. This is because certain messages are read and interpreted from cultural practices that are embedded in each individual social structure (Morley 1992:81). This is explored in the study because all the participants share some elements of cultural practice, since they are all Zulu men living in Pietermaritzburg and Durban. While similar readings and decoding of the texts took place within the homogenous group of participants, differences are also likely to be found. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Morley (1992), Livingstone (2000) and Fiske (1987) researched how audiences understood and interpreted the messages they received during their viewing processes and how they actively internalised these against the backdrop of mass media. By doing this, we reject the notion that a media message will automatically have an influence or impact on its audience (Morley 1992:70). This is the principle at the heart of this study – its point of departure is that watching the selected soap operas is "an active process of decoding or interpretation, not simply a passive process of 'reception' or consumption of messages" (Morley 1992:70).

Fiske (1989) asserts that active audiences create fan bases and communities for channelling information and interpreting information. This places audiences in positions where they engage actively through the viewing process as well as with one another. This enables them to question not only the superficial meaning of the texts and media, but to engage deeply with the content.

In this study, participants were placed in focus groups that gave them the opportunity to engage with one another. Discussions emerging from the focus group dialogue were noted down and these are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

Morley (1992:70) further asserts:

> we all bring to our viewing those other discourses and sets of representations which are in contact in other areas of our lives, the messages that we receive from the media do not confront us in isolation. They intersect with other messages that we have received – explicit and implicit messages, from other institutions, people we know, or sources of information we trust.

Livingstone (2000:177) argues that "audiences must interpret what they see even to construct the message as meaningful and orderly, however routine this interpretation may be. Second, audiences diverge in their interpretations, generating different understandings from the same text. Third, the experience of viewing stands at the interface between media (and their interpretations) and the rest of their viewers' lives, with all the concerns, experiences and knowledge which this involves".

Morley (1992), Hall (1993) and Livingstone (2000) argue along similar lines when it comes to interpretation. Their studies on interpretation are based on three approaches. The first is that a single event is in a position of being encoded and interpreted in more than one way. In other words, the way Zulu men are represented in the soap operas *Uzalo*, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya* can be interpreted in more than one way. The second is that the messages are polysemic, meaning they have more than one interpretation, reading or meaning. This is not to say that messages cannot promote certain readings against others, but messages will not produce only one reading. The

participants in this study were able to have more than one interpretation of the media presented to them, which supports Morley's argument. These are discussed in detail in Chapter Five and Chapter Six. Thirdly, Morley (1992:79) suggests that it is crucial to understand that attempting to understand a message can be "a problematic practice, however transparent and 'natural' it may seem. Messages encoded one way can always be read in a different way". Morley's argument here corresponds with Hall's (1993) oppositional view, which argues that an encoder creates the message, but the decoder may not always be in a position to read it exactly as it was intended.

This study is influenced by a sociological approach because although all the participants are Zulu men, the sample was diverse in terms of age, location, marital status, social positioning, level of education, working status, and upbringing. This allowed the collection of data that demonstrates how Zulu male audiences from different sociocultural backgrounds interpret Zulu cultural frameworks as these are represented in popular culture. While each of the participants are Zulu, they all exist within different cultural practices and discourses, and individual experiences, which shape the way they think and perform. Hall (1995:278) best summarises this:

> Cultural studies has multiple discourses; it has a number of different histories. It is a whole set of formations; it has its own different conjunctures and moments in the past. It included many different kinds of work. I want to insist on that! It always was a set of unstable formation. It was 'centred' only in quotations marks … it had many trajectories; many people had and have different theoretical positions, all of them in contention. Theoretical work at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural studies was more appropriately called theoretical noise. It was accompanied by a great deal of bad feeling, argument, unstable anxieties, and angry silences.

The three soap operas' divergent display of Zulu masculinities makes a case for the extent to which portrayal can subvert, challenge and/or accept dominant discourses of South African Zulu men. In terms of the Hall's assertion above, this study is interested in the moment or moments of the 'crisis of masculinity' (Van der Watt 2007:19). Postmodernist culture has left men uncertain of how to behave and what they can expect from themselves. Globalisation as a culture in itself has pushed masculinities to explore new concepts that it can use. In South Africa, this culture forms a great part of how men see themselves and other men. It also shapes how men will learn to live in the post-Apartheid culture, which provides the democracy and freedom they were not previously allowed to enjoy. The next section will focus on cultural proximity and how this is an important aspect for both the broadcaster and the target audience.

<u>Cultural proximity</u>

In terms of television, the concept of cultural proximity means "the broadcaster and the target community both share a set of cultural referents and values" (Castello 2010:207-208). This means that the popularity of soap operas can be associated with their cultural proximity as well as the viewer's ability to identify with the characters (Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019, Fiske 1989, Teer-Tomaselli 2005, Pitout 1996). In other words, audiences tend to gravitate towards certain media products because of their culture (Ksiazek and Webster 2008). However, it is not only culture that draws viewers to a media product; language and the geographic location also play a role (Ksiazek and Webster 2008). This concept influenced the questions asked of the focus group participants in that it posed exploratory lines of inquiry as to the *possible* influence of language and geographical location on their viewing, as well as their explanations of masculinity. These are detailed in Chapter Six.

The television industry understands the importance of cultural proximity and ensures the incentivising of "local content in terms of language, dress, humour, ethnic appearance, style, historical references and social issues (Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019). This study therefore identifies the critical elements that were actively included in the soap operas that resonate with viewers in the areas of surroundings, their emotions as well as their experiences by way of cultural proximity (Castello 2010).

The soap operas selected for this study are culturally and linguistically specific (Zulu), meaning that they are likely to appeal to a niche audience. When audiences engage with television programmes, they "actively seek cultural proximity in their cultural consumption" (Castello 2010:208) This affects viewing habits. If viewers are not able to relate to a programme in some way, they will not be in a position to consume it culturally. In other words, cultural proximity examines not only the language elements of a media text, but also its religion, culture, audio-visual production, and humour (Castello 2010:207-208). This study examines how audiences interpret representations of masculinity, which may be linked to their environment, culture, language and religion.

Conclusion

Masculinity is a concept that has enabled the theorisation of a specific topic in gender relations. This chapter discusses masculine hegemony as having power over women and subordinate masculinities (Demetriou 2001:341). It has shown that masculinities are fluid – even in its hegemonic stages it can allow for diversity. The study of masculinity pays very close attention to issues of gender and power, while acting in alignment with discursive practices, both culturally and socially. It also draws attention to the understanding that it cannot exist without an association with women and feminine studies. In essence, masculinity draws on constructs that stand in relation to female identities. Masculinity can be explained through many models, thus attesting to its dynamic 'character' as these models include biological, sociological, anthropological and psychological factors.

This chapter also explored existing theories on masculinities, while showing that the conceptualisation of masculinities is historically and socially constructed. This allows for masculinities to be fluid and to be continuously restructured and reconstructed. These changes in masculinity are often resisted by some, accepted by others, and tolerated by yet others. This is what makes masculinities interesting. Instead of having one fixed definition, the definition for masculinities is constantly evolving.

In South Africa, masculinities have been affected by both traditional and contemporary influences. Traditional influences are factors such as hegemony adopted during the eras of Apartheid and colonialism. Contemporary influences include legislations (for example new laws that promote female agency and work), television (men can learn from characters on television and develop parasocial relationships), new social constructs (masculinities are fluid and thus changing all the time), social and cultural situations (where sometimes the men are not breadwinners and the roles in the home need to be renegotiated).

The chapter also takes into account cultural studies with the specific focus on the active audience. This study assumes that the participants of this study are active and not passive audiences and are able to interpret masculine representations based on their cultural/contextual background and individual experience (Hall 1993). The next chapter will focus on the research methods applied to this study.

Introduction

This chapter outlines the study's methodological approach, which was operationalised in order to understand the constructs of Zulu masculinities within the context of the South African soap opera. The study is concerned with understanding how Zulu men are depicted by the producers and creators of *Uzalo*, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya*. It also seeks to understand how the Zulu audiences (in focus groups) are able to interpret these meanings within the specific context of KwaZulu-Natal-based soap operas in particular. It therefore employs an interpretive approach (Snape and Spencer 2003; Merriam 2002). Purposive sampling was adopted for both the expert interviews and focus groups, as it deliberately selected research participants because of special qualities that the participants possessed (Dragan and Isaic-Maniu 2013). Relational analysis was used as a way of creating a relationship between information retrieved from the encoders and decoders. Relational analysis is a useful add on technique, which is designed to work with other qualitative methods in a study (Robinson 2011).

The study was conducted in townships and rural areas across KwaZulu-Natal, since these are areas where the selected soap operas are set. A substantial number of male focus group participants who come from different social classes (middle class, lower glass), backgrounds (different social surroundings, upbringing) and levels of education (matriculated, higher education, no education, primary education, secondary education) were engaged in order to understand their interpretation of the represented masculinities in *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya*. The variety of the sample is guided by the concept of the active audience. Although all the men in the study are Zulu, this study explores whether and how they interpret meanings according to their class and cultural community, as well as individual experience (Barker 2013:340). Thus, the study adopts a reception analysis research design. This is "well suited to detailed interpretive analysis … as well as to provide insight into the interactive dynamics of small groups" (Deacon 1999:57).

While I refer to myself in the third person elsewhere in this thesis, in this chapter I refer to myself in first person. The reason for this is that this chapter includes my personal experiences

of the fieldwork, and these are best described in the first person. Using '*I*' has a critical meaning and credibility, which establishes the commitment of the writer of a text (Hyland 2017) as "effective argument involves making language choices, including those related to the use of I, based on assessments about our readers and our text" (Hyland 2017: 192).

Research paradigm, position and reasoning

This study is situated within the interpretive paradigm that can be understood as a researcher's way of understanding the nature of human experience (Thanh and Thanh 2015:24). This forms part of the perception of the truth or reality through noting the participants' views as well as their experiences. In this research, for example, how the viewers of *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya* construct, understand and interpret masculinities will be analysed according to their sociocultural experience. Using the information provided by the participants, I construct meaning and understanding from the gathered data in terms of the selected theories. The interpretive paradigm recognises that certain ideologies influence the way in which meaning is made. This paradigm is also rooted in beliefs that are socially constructed (Thanh and Thanh 2015:25; Willis 2007:583).

As mentioned earlier in the introduction chapter this research aligns with the wider decolonial approach. Postcolony plays a part of this study since black men in the South African context were affected by both colonisation and apartheid which "is characterised by a distinctive style of political improvisation, by a tendency to excess and a lack of proportion as well as by distinctive ways in which identities are multiplied, transformed and put into circulation" (Mbembe 1992:3). It is also made up of a series of corporate institutions and a political machinery (Mbembe 1992:3). Decolonisation through indigenisation allows research to have indigenous voices that were previously not able to speak (Dyll 2020). Decoloniality is not only political but it also forms a way of thinking, knowing and doing for individuals (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015). Thus, this study is developed from a group of individuals who have been directly and indirectly affected politically by apartheid and colonisation. This study gives the participants an opportunity to voice their concerns about power, representations, and hegemony, apartheid and Zulu masculinities. This through indigenisation allows the participants to "free themselves" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015:493) from coloniality and speak freely about the domains of power, knowledge and being. This also shifts "economic power from the West" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015:493) as participants are actively speaking about *their*

masculinities, representations, testimonies, and democratising experiences instead of the global world commenting on *their* masculinities which may not be entirely accurate.

This study subscribes to the subjective epistemological position, and particularly that of social constructionism, since its focus is on how a set of participants construct meaning on a specific topic. It is furthermore based on the understanding that viewers are able to construct meaning based on social and cultural factors and influences (Butler 1999). This is because "knowledge is socially distributed and the mechanism of this distribution can be made the subject matter of a sociological discipline" (Berger and Luckmann 1966:28). Masculinities, within a social constructionist framework, employ the idea that the male identity is constructed and developed through cultural and sociological experiences (Butler 1990; Connell 1995). Therefore, masculinities are in the process of continuously changing (Cilliers 2014)[7].

It follows, therefore, that this study subscribes to the humanist ontological view as the male participants' values, experiences and interpretations predominate (as opposed to a deterministic ontology that gives greater power to institutions, and assigns less power to the role of people).

Deduction, induction and abduction are forms of logical thinking used in all research. They are "not concepts, nor are they methods or tools of data analysis, but means of connecting and generating ideas" (Reichertz 2014:123). This study adopts inductive reasoning for three reasons. The first is that the inductive approach uses a series of empirical cases to identify a pattern. Secondly, it is based on gathering categories using data. Thirdly, it uses data to reveal new understandings (Kennedy and Thornberg 2018; Braun and Clarke 2006). This research uses focus groups, expert interviews, observation, note taking, and transcriptions to identify patterns. These patterns will be used to create themes to reveal new understandings and new knowledge.

Research approach: Qualitative research methodology

As this study is informed by the interpretive paradigm, it adopts a qualitative approach to attain and analyse the perceptions of specific individuals instead of relying on statistics (Thanh and Thanh 2015:25; Cypress 2017). This includes conversations, recordings, observation and

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[7] Social constructionism is elaborated in detail in Chapter Three.

interpretation (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). The qualitative approach also includes multiple interpretive activities, with no single methodological practice (Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Cypress 2017; Mays and Pope 1995). The qualitative approach is also associated with multiple theoretical paradigms such as cultural studies (Denzin and Lincoln 2005).

The study also employs an *iterative* approach, which is an interplay between data analysis and data collection (Kennedy and Thornberg 2018). In other words, data, the concepts that are used, and the evidence that is received from the data are all connected to one another (Aspers and Corte 2019; Becker 2017). The *iterative* approach involves data analysis as an ongoing process.

When analysing data in relation to theory it is important to explain how each study may properly acquaint data. Three identified ways exist in which data analysis and theory may be understood. These are induction, deduction and abduction (Kennedy and Thornberg 2018).

This study associates most closely to *induction*, because this mode enables a creative process of examining data while simultaneously allowing room for new knowledge- and meaning-making that go beyond pre-existing theoretical knowledge (Kennedy and Thornberg 2018). Some of the findings of this study, which will be elaborated in Chapter Five, do not fit perfectly into existing theories and literature, thus the induction mode allows for new interpretations and identifications to be explored.

Deduction, in the context of this study, is rigid because it is associated with a specific theory and rule and thus the analysis of data is examined according to that rule (Kennedy and Thornberg 2018). While some of the participants of this study are able to suggest meanings that link to some theory, some of their responses provide new knowledge that could add to the current existing knowledge, which is why the deduction mode is not suited to this study.

The *abduction* mode is also not entirely suitable for this study, since its conclusions, according to Kennedy and Thornberg (2018), stem from inventing a hypothesis and then pursuing the hypothesis.

Thus, induction is the best mode adopted for this study because it leads to new knowledge.

Research design: Reception analysis

The study adopts a reception analysis as its research design. Reception studies refer to "the way in which people make sense of their lives and the events, actors, processes and texts that they encounter" (Livingstone and Das 2015:1). Audience reception studies focus on the

interpretation of various texts by the viewers in an ethnographic context (Livingstone 1988:2). As such, reception studies contextualise the role of active audiences as meaning makers (Pitout 1998:65).

Tager and Van der Merwe (2018) argue that the analysis of audiences within reception studies is focused on two main genres. The first is news and current affairs, clustered under informational and current news, which aim to educate the public. The second is soap opera, which includes elements of drama and romance, and is referred to as popular culture. The case studies for this study fall within this latter genre.

Reception studies allow for the analysis of the complexity of signifying the "process of the negotiation between texts (e.g. television programmes) and readers (e.g. viewers) situation within specific socio-cultural contexts" (Pitout 1998:65). Reception theory and the active audience theory play a tremendous role in understanding the text in both the context of the readers and the author, especially "the ability of readers to interpret a text in terms of their specific circumstances" (Pitout 1998:65). In this study, for example, both the author (encoder) and the reader (decoder) of the text have been considered when establishing any relationships of data and interpretation between the two. The study thus conducts a relational analysis.

In reception studies, there is either a resistance to or a reception of media texts by the audiences. In other words, some audiences may accept the text and its dominant reading, while others may be resistant. This depends on the different power struggles in society as well as the disparities among the different groups of people in terms of their demographics and social settings (Livingstone and Das 2015:14). These readings will be identified and analysed in Chapter Five.

Pitout (1998:66) argues that studying interpretation should always be understood within people's historical traditions, because this will play a tremendous role in how people read messages conveyed by texts.

Since reception studies employ focus groups and in-depth interviews to investigate the negotiation of meaning, they may be associated with the inductive mode of research, since new knowledge is created and discussed in these settings. This study follows suit, as it uses both in-depth interviews and focus groups to understand how Zulu men who come from different social settings (rural and urban environments, age groups, education) are able to negotiate and make meaning from the soap operas they view.

Reception studies also aim to investigate how audiences read texts within culture (Tager and Van der Merwe 2018; Livingstone and Das 2013) and historical traditions (Pitout 1998: 66). Within the scope of research in the soap opera genre, authors such as Viola Milton (2008) and Tager (1997) have made substantial contributions to South African reception studies. Milton's (2008) focus was on locally produced Afrikaans programmes on SABC 2. Tager's (1997) study was based on understanding the dynamics of a local soap versus an international soap. My study is similar to Milton's (2008) in the sense that we both focus on a single cultural group as viewers. She focused on an Afrikaans audience, and how the transformation structure of the SABC may lead to a multi-structured audience in terms of race, class and gender as well as how this can contribute towards new discourses. While my study focuses on Zulu males and their interpretations of contemporary representations if Zulu masculinities as presented in popular culture, particularly soap opera. My study is also similar to Tager's (1997) in the sense that she engaged with isiZulu-speaking students (men and women). The same cultural group is therefore the focus, however, I concentrate on Zulu men.

One of the most critical arguments made by Tager and Van der Merwe (2018:223) is that "we all interpret texts differently based on who we are, our level of education, our cultural and religious background, our gender and our age". This argument was profoundly confirmed in this study – the fact that all the men were Zulu (same language), black, and grew up in KwaZulu-Natal did not mean that they interpreted the case studies in the same way. They were able to interpret the texts differently according to the factors that Tager and Van der Merwe (2018) argue. This is explored in detail in Chapter Five.

The concept of interpretation is used to understand and comprehend the perception of something. Therefore, interpretation is examined through reception studies (Livingstone and Das 2013). Livingstone and Das (2013) argue that the level of meanings retrieved from the active role of readers of a text and audiences may be viewed within a wider circuit of culture. They argue that there are three approaches of meaning – the micro level, which is the political economy, the meso level, which constitutes groups and communities, and the macro level, which is everyday life and the world. This study employs the meso and the micro levels because it seeks to understand groups' and communities' understanding of masculinities along with how they are able to perceive the world and everyday life.

The population and recruitment strategy

The population for this study are isiZulu-speaking males who view the soap operas *Uzalo*, *Imbewu*, and *Isibaya*. The reason for this is that SABC and Broadcasting Research Council of South Africa (BRC) statistics show that Nguni-speakers constitute the largest viewership of several local soap operas (Uys, 2018, BRC 2019, Pooe 2020).

Table 4.1 demonstrates that while there is a high percentage of female viewers of soap opera, there is also an increasing number *of* male viewers (Uys 2018; Pooe, 2020). The table shows consolidated information retrieved from the SABC as well as the BRC.

Soap Opera	Year	Percentage of male viewers	Percentage of female viewers
Uzalo	2018	43%	57 %
Imbewu	2020	42,8 %	57,2 %
Isibaya	2020	43,1 %	56,9 %

Table 4.1 Viewership percentages

The sample for the study was drawn from Pietermaritzburg and Durban in the KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa, because these areas are convenient for the researcher in terms of location. The locations are also home to a broad enough sample of Zulu-speaking men to study, and KwaZulu-Natal is where the Zulu Kingdom originated in the 19th century (Houston and Mbele 2011:43-45). The members were aged between 18 and 35 years, because SABC and BRC statistics show that this is the largest age group that engages with soap opera (Uys, 2018 Pooe 2020).

Recruitment process

A contact person for each township and rural area was used in a facilitatory manner to recruit the men and establish venues that were suitable to each of them. The contact person was either a traditional leader, pastor, social worker, or a person of influence in that specific community. This enabled a point of contact and trust for participants.

The recruitment process utilised emails, letters, phone calls, and face-to-face interactions with Zulu men to request their participation in the research. Only positive responses from participants that met my criteria were considered. Selected participants hailed from various locations, representing a range of sociocultural and economic backgrounds.

I consistently recruited more than six people per focus group, in case there were cancellations, no shows or late comers. This strategy benefitted the study as some participants would arrive three hours late and would not be permitted into the group because of the additional recruitment. Focus groups were formed according to the availability of the potential participants. In other words, in instances where only one or two participants were available, the focus group had to be postponed until all the participants were available to honour the inclusion criteria of the study. The challenge of participants cancelling at the last minute was solved by over-recruiting and not relying only on the availability of a specific number of participants. If one or two participants cancelled, additional participants recruited to address this situation could step in.

It took approximately three full weeks to arrange a single focus group session. Several logistical factors had to be aligned to ensure that the group interviews would take place. The first step was approaching a community leader; this was done through various channels. Frequently a meeting with a leader was necessary to explain exactly what was required for the research – for example, the age groups and which soap operas were under discussion. A meeting with participants then followed to explain to them how they fitted into the research and to create a space in which they could be open to discuss matters with a female researcher who was a stranger to them. Finding a suitable venue within each specified area was another hurdle.

Sampling and data collection

The research consists of two sets of data collection, namely expert interviews and focus groups.

Expert interviews

Expert interviews were conducted with the production staff of *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya*. Gatekeeper permission was secured prior to interviews from Stained Glass Productions for interviews with *Uzalo* staff (see Appendix A), Word of Mouth Pictures for *Imbewu* staff (see Appendix B) and The Bomb Shelter for *Isibaya* staff (see Appendix C). For the purposes of this study, one production staff member was interviewed per soap opera, rendering three expert interviews. All participants were provided with an informed consent form (see Appendix D for the English letter and Appendix E for the isiZulu letter).

Purposeful sampling is suitable for this data set, because its logic "lies in selecting information-rich cases … from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (Patton 1990:169). The people filling the above-mentioned roles are expert participants, and the value of their insights lie in their experience with the *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya* productions. Expert interviews with a representative of the production staff were selected as a data collection method, because encoder perspectives of masculine constructs will contribute to this study's identification of the preferred messages of masculinity in each soap opera. This helps address the first research question, since it seeks to understand the encoded messages and the ways in which they are created.

Recruitment took place via emails and approaching participants telephonically to set up interviews. Interviews were conducted at the convenience of the production staff and at venues suitable to them. The *Uzalo* and *Imbewu* interviews were conducted in one of their sets/studios in Durban. The set for *Isibaya* is based in Johannesburg. Therefore, I met the writer at a hotel coffee shop in Durban to conduct the interview, while he was in the city on other business. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. The interviews did not exceed 90 minutes (see interview schedule attached as Appendix F).

The first interview was with the *Isibaya* representative. It took place on 13 March 2019. I met with Jacob Ntshangase, a writer for the production. The interview was a face-to-face

engagement. This interview encountered an initial obstacle, as I found out on the day of the interview that Ntshangase was available to meet with me. His availability in Durban was communicated at short notice, and I am based in Pietermaritzburg, nearly an hour away. I knew that I had to grab the opportunity because he is based in Johannesburg. The interview took place at a coffee shop in the hotel where Ntshangase stayed.

The second interview took place on 8 April 2019. I interviewed the *Uzalo* executive producer, Mmamitse Thibedi, at the Stained Glass Production studio. This was more relaxed as it was planned well ahead of time. Both Ntshangase and Thibedi provided exciting and up-to-the-minute information on the two soaps.

The third interview with Dr Duma Ndlovu, one of the creators and producers of *Imbewu,* took place on 12 June 2019 at the Grapevine production studio. The encounter was very insightful and educational, and afterwards Dr Ndlovu introduced me to the rest of his executive team. Everybody was excited about the research.

The interviews were driven by an interview guide, which was drafted with the view to understanding the encoded representations and storylines, and with the objectives and key questions of this study in mind (this is attached as Appendix F). A deeper analysis of how each of the key questions and objectives is addressed in the interviews forms part of Chapter Five.

The interviews were semi-structured. This made them more flexible, in that they employed a blend of questions, including open-ended and closed questions (Adams 2015). The value of using semi-structured interviews is that they allow room for probing on specific topics, using *why* and *how* follow-up questions. Semi-structured interviews are relaxed and highly engaging (Adams 2015), which is why they lasted more than 30 minutes. Semi-structured interviews are time-consuming and require the interviewer to be knowledgeable about the subject matter so that they can probe the right questions (Adams 2015).

Focus groups

Focus groups are important because they deliver multiple reactions and information from a wide range of individuals in a short space of time (Morgan 1996). They use interactive group discussions as a source of data collection, acknowledging the researcher as the facilitator of the discussion for the data collection to take place (Morgan 1996).

The value of this method for the study is that focus group settings can "stress the audience's potential to respond actively and even argumentatively to the messages of the media … because we all bring to our viewing those other discourses and sets of representations with which we are in contact in other areas of our lives" (Morley 1992:70). Since a researcher can retrieve a good amount of data in the space of 90 minutes (Morgan 1996), this study's group sessions were no longer than 90 minutes each.

Most projects have four to six focus groups as an acceptable standard (Morgan 1996). Altogether 30 people across five focus groups participated in this study. This is the acceptable sample size for ethnography and ethno-science research (Bernard 2000:178, Morse 1994:225). Each focus groups had six to seven male members. Each group consisted of men between the ages of 18 and 35, some of whom were employed and others not, some educated and others not, some married and others unmarried. More intricate information pertaining to the demographics, and marital and educational status of participants is discussed in Chapter Five.

Focus Group One took place in the Imbali area (a township) on 27 July 2019. A local church allowed us to use their venue and equipment to watch selected episodes. The group had seven participants. Focus Group Two had six participants and took place on 24 August 2019 in the Impendle area (rural). This focus group took place in a community hall, where we had to purchase prepaid electricity to have power to make tea and coffee, and to watch soap opera episodes. Focus Group Three had six participants and was held in a church building in the Mpophomeni area (semi-township/rural). The focus group took place on 7 October 2019. Focus Group Four had five participants and took place in the Mkhambathini area (rural) on 19 October 2019. The focus group took place in one of the residents' houses in the area. I rewarded the residents by providing a cooked meal and dessert as a way of thanking her for opening her home to the focus group. Focus Group Five had six participants and took place in the France area (township) on 11 November 2019. The focus group gathered in a community hall.

On the days of the focus group sessions, I woke up as early as three in the morning to prepare a fresh breakfast – bacon, eggs, toast, baked beans, banana bread, scones, and tea – for the participants, some of whom were unemployed, to make sure they were well fed for the day. I would also leave very early since most of the venues were far from where I lived and to ensure that the venue for the day was fit to conduct the sessions in and to pick up keys. I meticulously managed my time and communication to make sure the groups ran smoothly.

The units of analysis in the focus groups were selected episodes of *Uzalo*, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya* available on YouTube and VUI. During the focus group engagements the episodes were screened on a laptop, or projector of large screen, this was dependent on what was available in each venue. The selection of these specific years was to provide the most recent episodes for analysis (at the time of data collection), as well as to reflect the increase in viewers over the years. The chosen episodes were subjected to a preliminary content analysis prior to the sessions with focus groups to guide the construction of the research questions. The content analysis provided themes through coding, the results of which were used to form the basis of the questions to be discussed in the focus groups (Hashemnezhad 2015:59). Once the participants were together in each focus group, they viewed the episodes of *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya*. This data collection method addresses research questions two and three and their sub-questions.

The *Uzalo*, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya* episodes screened at the start of the focus groups were purposefully sampled, as the inclusion criteria were directly influenced by the research questions. The first criterion centres on location and language, in that the soap operas had to be South African produced, set in KZN and that isiZulu be the main spoken language. This is because the participants in this study are Zulu men based in KwaZulu-Natal and the study aims to explore their interpretations of Zulu masculinity as presented in the above-mentioned soap operas.

The second criterion is the representation of male action in both urban and rural settings. The reason for this is that the male focus group participants reside in both rural and urban settings and the study aims to understand their perceptions of masculinities to which (it is hypothesised) they may relate, based on the idea of cultural proximity (Castello 2010, Ksiazek and Webster 2008).

The third criterion is the time frame. Only the most recent episodes (relative to the time of the focus groups) were chosen to keep the study current and up to date with the most recent male representations. The inclusion criteria for selecting the episodes were that they were the most recent episodes airing on television to keep the study up to date and relevant. Episodes from July 2019 were selected for *Imbewu* and *Isibaya* because the first set of focus group interviews took place in that same month. Altogether nine episodes were viewed by these audiences – the equivalent of three episodes per soap opera. They were:

Imbewu: episodes from 12 to 14 July 2019

Isibaya: episodes from 15 to 16, and 18 July 2019

Uzalo: episodes from 13 to 15 August 2018

The selection of episodes from 2018 instead of 2019 episodes for *Uzalo* is because the researcher observed that the most recent episodes (at the time of conducting focus groups) omitted sexual diversity, while the 2018 episodes showed more of this. Since the study focuses on understanding the constructs of Zulu masculinities, exploring all elements of masculinities that are depicted in these soap operas is critical, even if it takes exploring earlier (2018) episodes of *Uzalo* instead those in 2019. It is important to ensure that all types of masculinities are investigated.

The participants were not bound to specifically refer to only the selected episodes since they are regular viewers of these soap operas in any case. The focus group questions were not specific to the episodes but were general across all aired episodes. All the episodes were viewed in one sitting, which consisted of a three-hour viewing period.

The fourth criterion is the representation of male characters in episodes that show the widest range of different male characters and dynamics.

The fifth criterion relates to the themes that were included in the episodes chosen – they needed to be deductively aligned with the study's research questions, literature and theory, while still leaving room for new inductive emerging themes to be identified in the data. The reason for the inclusion of both deductive and inductive themes is to ensure important themes identified by the male viewers of this study are not left out (Schreirer 2014). The episodes were selected through the use of a basic quantitative content analysis process. In its simplest form, content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). In this study, content analysis has been used to determine the presence and representations of masculinities in the soap operas *Uzalo*, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya*. There are three approaches that may be used to derive meaning from data through content analysis, these are conventional, directed or summative:

> In conventional content analysis, coding categories are derived directly from the text data. With a directed approach, analysis starts with a theory or relevant research findings as guidance for initial codes. A summative content analysis involves counting and comparisons, usually of

keywords or content, followed by the interpretation of the underlying context (Hsieh and Shannon 2005:1277).

This study uses a directed approach to content analysis which uses relevant theory and research findings as an initial guidance to draw codes (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). Thus, the inclusion criteria of each of the episodes is delineated with the purpose to answer specific research questions.

The focus groups were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim. An assistant, Phindile Gordon, was assigned the task of acting as scribe during the focus group sessions. All the participants were informed of the nature of the study and their role in it (the focus group discussion guide is attached as Appendix G). Confidentiality and their anonymity were guaranteed, and each was given a pseudonym in the transcriptions. They were also provided with an informed consent letter in isiZulu as they are first-language isiZulu speakers (see attached Appendix E). The consent letter contains the person's name, location, and level of education. I conducted the focus group interviews in both English and isiZulu, depending on the nature of each group. Secondary data consisting of information collected from previously published scholarly works on soap opera, audience reception studies, and masculinity studies. This has been integrated with the findings of the primary data.

Semi-structured focus group discussion guides (Appendix G) were used with the focus groups to prompt participants to speak about *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya*. For the purposes of this study, the male characters in each of the chosen episodes are used as a unit of analysis. A summary description of each male character is given in Chapter Six.

I am able to communicate moderately well in isiZulu, but also made use of a translator. Freedom Nzimande, was able to communicate fluently in the isiZulu language during interviews in rural settings to ensure that the questions were articulated clearly so that the participants could understand them. Three episodes per soap opera were selected for viewing by the participants, to further prompt responses and to address specific questions.

While the participants had generally watched all three selected soaps, they tended to favour one or two. One of the reasons for this could be that time slots for *Isibaya* and *Uzalo* clash – both air daily at 20:30. Both also flight their omnibus on Sunday afternoons. *Imbewu,* on the other hand*,* airs at 21:00 with an omnibus on Saturday afternoons.

From personal experience with the focus group interviewing process, I felt the interviews conducted in the township areas were more relaxed, because dress codes for urban women are generally less restrictive, so long as they wear any relatively decent clothing such as trousers or jeans. The township groups could converse in English and Zulu during the interviews.

The rural area focus groups were different in the sense that I had to dress more conservatively to show respect for Zulu customs. In most rural Zulu settings, a woman is required to *hlonipha*[8] (Rudwick and Shange 2009). In many Zulu settings this includes maintaining a certain dress code and posture around men. For example, covering the head, not wearing trousers, showing linguistic and social submissiveness, as well as avoiding eye contact with men is considered respectful (Rudwick and Shange 2009:70). These are all customary practices I had to observe for the rural interviews. I wore a headscarf and long skirt throughout and acted submissive towards the men. Not making eye contact during interviews was very difficult, but I tried my best not to maintain too much eye contact as a means of respect. In areas where predominantly traditional forms of masculinity prevailed. There were also moments when participants would argue among one another and I would need to scrape together the courage to bring the group back into the line.

Table 4.1 shows that the case studies under review are particularly popular in KwaZulu-Natal within the age groups of 15 to 24, and 25 to 34 (Uys 2018, Pooe 2020). This asserts the relevance of the study, conducting research within KwaZulu-Natal and interviewing within the age groups that watch the soap opera. The men who participated in the study are all between the ages of 18 and 35, which is one of the inclusion criteria's for the participants and falls within the highest percentage of viewers.

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[8] *Hlonipha*, is a Zulu word that means to be respectful.

Uzalo	Male audience percentages		Language		Age	
	Western Cape	7%	Nguni	57%	15–24	17%
	Northern Cape	1%	Sotho	39%	25–34	21%
	Free State	6%	Afrikaans	3%	35–49	21%
	Eastern Cape	13%	English	1%		
	KwaZulu-Natal	23%				
	Mpumalanga	8%				
	Limpopo	12%				
	Gauteng	24%				
	North West	6%				
Imbewu	Western Cape	13,4 %	Nguni	63,7%	15–24	27,2%
	Northern Cape	1,3%	Sotho	7,1 %	25–34	28, 3%
	Free state	3,7 %	Tswana	8,3%	35–49	26%
	Eastern Cape	11,7%				
	KwaZulu-Natal	25,8				
	Mpumalanga	6,7 %				
	Limpopo	4, 5 %				
	Gauteng	27,1 %				
	North West	5,7 %				
Isibaya	Western Cape	7,2%	Nguni	62,9%	15–24	25, 7%
	Northern Cape	0%	Sotho	8,9%	25–34	29, 6 %
	Free state	5%	Tswana	10,6%	35–49	26,4 %
	Eastern Cape	1,1%				
	Kwazulu-Natal	25%				
	Mpumalanga	6,5%				
	Limpopo	3,9%				
	Gauteng	47,2 %				
	North west	4,1 %				

Table 4.2 Percentages, language and age groups (adapted from Uys 2018, Pooe 2020).

Data Analysis

The data analysis of this study is discussed in chapters five and six. Chapter Five is focused on encoding masculinities while Chapter Six is focused on decoding masculinities. The encoding and decoding are separated because they each have dissimilar themes as well consistent themes which are identified using a relational analysis. Chapter Six includes information on the episodes that have been selected through using a content analysis as these episodes were the foundation for discussion in the focus groups.

Both Chapters five and six use a combination of a theoretical thematic analysis and an inductive approach to identify and analyse patterns and themes (Braun and Clarke 2006:79; Barbour

2014). Here, themes are interpreted according to the research questions using the theoretical frameworks of masculinity theory and cultural studies active audience theory. Data is therefore organised thematically to identify the repeated themes in what the experts identify as the *encoded* Zulu masculinities as well as how audiences *decode* Zulu masculinities. A theoretical thematic analysis is applied as themes are identified according to the study's theoretical or analytic interest in masculinity – in this manner it is more explicitly analyst driven. "This form of thematic analysis tends to provide less a rich description of the data overall, and a more detailed analysis of some aspects of the data" (Braun 2006:87). The inductive approach further enhances this study as it allows new themes to emerge that go beyond theoretical knowledge (Kennedy and Thornberg 2018) and is directly related to the male participants' experiences.

Using quotations from the study participants enriches the data presentation by including the participant's views as expressed by them (Barbour 2014). It is important to have details such as biography, lifestyle, and age of participants (Barbour 2014) to understand how and why they analyse data in a certain way. Thus, the comparison of data between groups adds value to the overall enrichment of the analysis (Barbour 2014) in as far as it speaks to principles of the active audience.

Identifying key patterns is critical for analysis, as it aims to understand what a participant said and in what context (Barbour 2014). The identified themes are critically discussed in terms of how a sociocultural context may affect masculinities, the presentation thereof, and the ways in which the audiences read these masculinities, as guided by the encoding/decoding model (Hall 1993:101). As such, the study explains the reason why audiences may hold either: a) dominant and/or b) negotiated and/or oppositional readings (Hall 1993:102) of the Zulu masculinities under review. It also offers a critical discussion on the ways in which popular or dominant discourses of South African Zulu masculinities may be affirmed or subverted in the study. The study's literature, along with theoretical concepts of active audience (Barker 2013, Pitout 1998) and cultural proximity (Hall 1997, Fiske 1997, Morley 1998) are mobilised to academically explain some of these reasons.

Ethical considerations

Prior to data collection, I received ethical approval from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC). The ethical approval number for the research is HSS/1585/018D. The sections above have detailed the use of informed consent forms and gatekeeper permission letters in this study. It has also worked towards ensuring validity, reliability and rigour.

Validity and reliability

"Validity is broadly defined as the state of being well grounded or justifiable, relevant, meaningful, logical, conforming to accepted principles or the quality of being sound, just and well founded" (Cypress 2017:256). Several debates exist on the validity of non-scientific studies, because validity is concerned with accuracy in scientific findings (Cypress 2017). While other studies that attain such validity cannot be found in non-scientific studies, others argue that validity may be used in both qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Cypress 2017). "To validate means to investigate, to question, to theorise, which are all activities to ensure rigour in a qualitative inquiry" (Cypress 2017:257).

Since most naturalistic studies are critiqued for their validity, they have to put measures, procedures and techniques in place to ensure validity, such as a sound research design (Cypress 2017). Most qualitative research raw data come in the form of recordings and transcripts of conversations (Mays and Pope 1995). This study employed the same methodology, namely recording the expert interviews and focus groups, which were later transcribed verbatim.

Reliability in this regard is safeguarded through maintaining records of the interviews and meticulously saving all notes and observations for each interview, in essence documenting every single process of the analysis, where possible (Mays and Pope 1995). I hired a translator and a scribe/observer to maintain reliability and validity of the research. Another factor that adds value is ensuring that an independent person assesses the transcripts (Mays and Pope 1995). To this end, I hired a transcriber so that the process was handled reliably. To ensure the recordings and transcriptions were safeguarded, I saved all recordings and transcriptions on my personal laptop, backed up on the cloud in Google Drive, as well as on an external drive. This is to ensure that the information is kept safely where it cannot be accessed or destroyed easily, while protecting the identities of the participants.

It is important for researchers to show the validity of their findings (Mays and Pope 1995, Cypress 2017). This study used triangulation to ensure validity. Triangulation is an approach to collect data using different sources (Mays and Pope 1995). This study used oral testimony, taped recordings, transcriptions, observation, and note taking to ensure validity. Some of the findings are linked to existing theory and literature, which may account for their reliability and validity (Mays and Pope 1995).

Rigour

Qualitative research methods have been criticised for using experimental and unscientific methods and approaches to obtain data (Mays and Pope 1995, Cypress 2017). The main criticism is that the data is based on personal impressions and may contain researcher bias. Secondly, it is argued that the research may lack the ability to be reproduced since it is personal to the researcher, making it difficult for another researcher using the same tools to reach the same conclusion. Lastly, qualitative research is criticised for being able to generate large amounts of detailed information, thus lacking generalisability (Mays and pope 1995). Therefore, for a study to ensure rigour in qualitative research, it needs systematic "research design, data collection, interpretation and communication" (Mays and Pope 1995:110). This study has ensured that its research design and data collection methods are clear, so that should another researcher use the same methodology and data collection protocols, they may come to similar conclusions (Mays and Pope 1995), thus producing "a plausible and coherent explanation of the phenomenon under scrutiny" (Mays and Pope 1995:110).

Reflexive journaling and observation also assisted with rigour. After each focus group engagement, I immediately reflected to capture crucial elements to the study. All notes for observation were also used in the process of reflexive journaling to ensure that data was collated rigorously.

Dissemination of research findings

Making public a person's personal information is to violate that person's privacy (Ruane 2005). Therefore, it is important as a researcher to honour the confidentiality of participants (Ruane 2005). This study takes the dissemination of research findings seriously, but will not expose any of the focus group participants in any way. The only participants in this study whose identities are known are the representatives from the production houses, whose consent we

obtained to do so. In Chapter Six, the analysis chapter, participants are referred to as being part of Focus Group One, Focus Group Two, and so on. Ruane (2005) argues that researchers sometimes give participants case numbers to protect their identities. In disseminating these research findings, I also will email each participant an electronic copy of the final thesis.

Conclusion

This chapter delineates the methodology this study employed, along with the reasoning for the chosen methods and why they best accommodate the subject matter. It also explains how and why each of the expert interviews and focus groups were conducted, as well as any challenges and victories experienced. It further details the sampling and recruitment processes.

The chapter sets the study's social constructionist paradigm, qualitative approach, and reception analysis design. The chapter introduces the inductive and iterative approach as methods of analysis that will be used on Chapter Five and Six as these are approaches are better suited as means of creating meanings in the data collection process. The next chapter analyses the data retrieved from the in-depth expert interviews in order to establish the reasoning and significance of the encoded masculinities on the soap operas.

Chapter Five

Findings and Analysis: Encoding masculinities

Introduction

The findings and analysis of this study have been separated into two chapters. This chapter identifies themes that emerge as construed by encoded Zulu masculinities as a result of the description of characters from media sources and information from the expert interviews with the soap opera producers. Chapter Six focuses on the themes from the focus group interviews as the decoders (Hall 1997) provide the relational analysis between the preferred encoded messages and decoded interpretations thereof signalling whether and how their interpretations are dominant, negotiated, and/or oppositional readings (Hall 1997, Livingstone 2000, Morley 1992, 1998). The benefit of this is that a relational analysis "can be used to help explore the full spectrum of possible relationships between analytical themes within qualitative data" (Robinson 2011: 197).

Chapter Five and Chapter Six are linked and follow each other systematically. The two chapters identify all the themes that have emerged in relation to relevant theory and literature. To fully explore these constructions and meanings, this chapter uses direct quotations from the expert interviews. Data will, therefore, be organised thematically to identify similar and differentiated themes in both what the experts identify as the *encoded* Zulu masculinities and then what the audiences *decode* in terms of Zulu masculinities.

This study applies a combination of both deductive and inductive coding. Both Chapters Five and Six employ this combined approach as a means of analysing the data retrieved from participants. The reason for this is that the deductive approach is aligned to the theory, research questions and literature, which enables the study to focus on the study objectives (Schreirer 2014). The reason for the selection of inductive coding is threefold. The first is that inductive coding condenses raw textual data into a summary format. Secondly, it creates links between the research questions and objectives derived from the raw data. Lastly, it develops a framework from the experiences and processes that are evident in the raw data (Thomas 2006). This is because "inductive coding allows for assigning any number of codes to a piece of text" (Schreirer 2014:173).

Explanation of themes and analytical process

This study uses a combination of a theoretical thematic analysis (see Braun and Clarke 2006) as the first step, and an inductive approach thereafter. The reason for this is that, through the theoretical thematic analysis, the research questions can be directly addressed as the process is explicitly analyst-driven (influenced by the literature and theory). The inclusion of an inductive thematic analysis enables the study to identify emerging themes and categories directly from the primary data (Chong and Yeo, 2015).

As a reminder, the research questions are:

1. What forms of Zulu masculinities are represented on the soap operas *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya?*
2. How are the representations of Zulu masculinities on *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya* interpreted by black male audiences from different sociocultural backgrounds?
3. In what way do these representations subvert, challenge or accept popular and dominant discourses of South African Zulu men?

The analytical steps were derived from Braun and Clarke's (2006:16 – 23) six-phase guide to thematic analysis. This study applies five of the six phases explored by Braun and Clarke (2006), instead of all the six, because the phase of searching for themes that is included by Braun and Clarke (2006) is done simultaneously throughout the phases of this research and does not need a phase on its own.

Phase one is familiarising yourself with the data, which includes reading all the transcripts and analysing every one of them thoroughly. The second phase is the generation of initial codes and themes and grouping these into meaningful groups in relation to the phenomenon. In this phase, the interpretative analysis of data occurs in relation to masculinity because this is the phenomenon being analysed. For example, issues of fatherhood and patriarchy are clustered together. Any themes that are divergent will also be discussed within the analysis. The third phase is reviewing the themes and how they relate to the literature and theories, as well as how they relate to the participants. The fourth is reviewing the themes and how they relate to the study. Fifth and last is making meanings from all the themes and categories to address the objectives of the study.

A relational analysis is instrumental in addressing these objectives to identify the similar themes across both encoders and decoders, and in terms of comparing past representations to those presented in the three soap operas to ascertain if and how these current representations subvert and /or challenge dominant discourses of Zulu men. This will directly address research question three. Relational analysis in thematic analysis is used to engage the process of relating data themes together (Robinson 2011). In the case of this study, encoder themes are related to decoder themes. Within a qualitative analysis, relational analysis "seeks to bring themes, codes or categories together into [a] coherent combination" (Robinson 2001:200).

This study also takes into consideration that themes will emerge from the data that are similar and others that are not similar among the encoders and the decoders. The study will offer commentary on what new insights inductively emerge from the encoders and decoders. The table below lists the themes that are relational between the encoder and the decoder, as well as new themes that have emerged from both the encoder and the decoder that are different.

Encoders themes (relational to decoder themes)	New themes that emerged from encoders (not related to decoder themes)
Encoding *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya*	Intermediaries
Good Zulu man vs Bad Zulu man	Stereotypes
Struggle masculinity vs post-struggle masculinity	
Entertainment – Education	
Cultural proximity	

Table 5.1 Encoder list of themes

Data presentation of emerging ideas: Encoded Zulu masculinities

Encoding Uzalo, Imbewu and Isibaya: Relational themes

Hall's (1993) encoding framework is useful to this chapter, since it frames the way in which the researcher can explore the relationship between what senders – the producers, creators and writers – encode into texts, and the ways in which receivers – the audiences – interpret or decode the messages. Senders encode messages in line with their views and ideological

standpoint, and audiences decode these messages in line with their own cultural and sociological understanding (Hall 1993:91, Morley 1992). The first research question of this study asks, "what forms of Zulu masculinities are represented on the soap operas *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya?*" In this study, the encoders all felt as though the decoders of the text would be able to understand the meanings directly communicated with them. They believed that the decoders took on what Hall (1993) argues to be the dominant position. This is when the viewer fully accepts the dominant point of view and articulates the message as intended (Hall 1993:101). Here, there is virtually no, or very little, difference in understanding between the sender and the viewer. When the encoders were asked about whether viewers were able to articulate the messages sent to them, the distinct answer was "yes" (Ntshangase interview, 13 March 2019; Ndlovu interview, 12 June 2019; Thibedi interview, 8 April 2019).

However, after deeper conversations with the soap opera producers, it became more apparent that they believed the audience did not always hold a dominant reading to their preferred message. This is shown in how some of the viewers actively complained to the encoders about some of the storylines depicted. This is indicative of oppositional positions where the audience member rejects the message intended by the sender (Hall 1993). Their personal experience, cultural beliefs, and discourses place them in opposition to the message (Hall 1993:103). *Uzalo* viewers have actively complained to the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA). "We find sometimes that people get agitated, people get agitated by religious views and they get agitated by political views" (Thibedi interview, 8 April 2019). *Isibaya* writer Jacob Ntshangase (interview, 13 March 2019) reveals the role of culture in a viewer's reading of certain storylines. He explains:

> Some members of the Royal Family were complaining about certain things. They [asked] why did you guys [production] let young girls who were menstruating and all those kind of things to go to *esibayeni* (kraal), because it was supposed [certain individuals who are permitted to enter the kraal] to be *makoti* (the bride) and the older generation."

In the same interview, Ntshangase also indicated that as encoders they were "impressed" by being contacted by members of the royal family and that they as encoders "apologised" for the incorrect representations of Zulu culture and that, as encoders, they "welcome suggestions". This implies that audiences hold power in the negotiation of representation and meaning.

Imbewu has not yet had any direct complaints. The assumption here is that one reason may be because it was very new (at the time of data collection) compared with the two other soap

operas. The next section focuses on what representations the encoders construct as potentially good Zulu men and bad Zulu men.

Good Zulu man vs Bad Zulu man

Mmamitse Thibedi explains that they often use male characters as opposed to female characters to develop complex characters that include a villain.

> We understand that, there's very little contemporary masculinity, most of it is rooted in old, in old traditions and where we've tried to translate masculinity in a contemporary sense, we realized that audiences like by, their base understanding of relationships between men and women are from patriarchal point of view. We tried to have female leads in season two, where the show was being carried by two females. But audiences were still looking for a masculine villain. For example *icharecter yaSbu* and Fikile (with Sbu and Fikile's characters). I think they have a slightly more contemporary relationship, in that she's, they feel like equals, sometimes she feels like she is stronger than, but it's just her personality, but *yena* (her) in relation to other men in the world she is conformed or guided by the fact that she's a woman. Sometimes you have to play into people's beliefs and then question them once they believe you understand what they stand for (Thibedi, interview, 8 April 2019).

When speaking to the encoders, they felt that their message was clear and simple to decode. The findings from the decoders display how messages are personalised according to experience and cultural context, which have been described by several authors (Hall 1993, 1997, Barker 2013, Fiske 1997, Morley 1992, 1998, Livingstone 2000). The producers of the selected case studies believe that television in South Africa today portrays several dynamics of masculinities, which is inclusive of traditional masculinities, non-traditional masculinities, hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities.

Duma Ndlovu (interview, 12 June 2019) of *Imbewu* understood that culturally traditional ideas of men exist, but he endorsed the non-culturally traditional view as an example of what a good representation of a Zulu man looked like. He stated:

> So, my understanding of Zulu masculinity is in a positive light, of *ubaba* (a father/man) who wants to be *ubaba wekhaya lakhe* (man of the house), who wants to be a positive male role model within the family home, and I think you'll see that translating even *kwiMbewu* (on *Imbewu*) … So, when there is a father role, we don't confuse that, where it even becomes abusive when it gets seen as masculinity.

Ndlovu also affirmed the fact that "black men have been emasculated over the years … Now they need to be helped to regain their positive male masculinity that re-establishes them as African male leaders of their family" (interview, 12 June 2019). He argued that soap opera needs to show men in a positive light, as beings who look after their families, and beings that are not abusive to women, but rather nurture and look after women.

Ndlovu's (interview, 12 June 2019) argument is in line with Fiske (1995) and Brown (1994), who speak of soap opera as a female genre. They argue that soap opera plays into the female genre because of how men are shown to be sensitive and women are shown in positions of strength.

Ndlovu (interview, 12 June 2019) describes the masculinities in soap opera in a similar way to the scholars. However, in *Imbewu,* while the man is portrayed as soft and sensitive, there are also depictions of violence, and of villainous and murderous men. Nevertheless, Ndlovu (interview, 12 June 2019) argues that the soap opera intends to display the new man, who shows how men can be good and kind. His argument speaks directly to the intentions of current representations of Zulu men. This is very different to past representations, which showed men to be violent (Luyt 2012). These new representations displaying men as being kind subvert past representations of men being violent, which addresses research question three.

Isibaya writer Jacob Ntshangase (interview, 13 March 2019) spoke about how the male characters portrayed in *Isibaya* are relevant to its viewers. He defined a good Zulu man as being embedded in the representation of the character Mpiyakhe. He said: "Most of the time, I think the way we portray men on *Isibaya*, people are able to relate to. For instance … I can even safely say the way Mpiyakhe treats his children, is how I treat my children" [with kindness and affection].

The idea of showcasing relevant storylines is closely linked to cultural proximity. Producers of television use wardrobe, style, history and culture as a way of relating to viewers (Gibson, Dyll, Teer-Tomaselli 2019). The larger significance of this argument in how messages can be relayed and interpreted/decoded is discussed in Chapter Six.

However, *Uzalo's* executive producer, Mmamitse Thibedi, points out the sustained dominant role of patriarchy in contemporary Zulu masculinity:

> There's very little contemporary masculinity. Most of it is rooted in old traditions and where
> we've tried to translate masculinity in a contemporary sense, we realised that audiences [are

likely to] base understanding of relationships between men and women from a patriarchal point of view.

She also argued that "audiences were still looking for a masculine villain" (interview, 8 April 2019) within storylines as a sustained dominant patriarchal role. This is similar to Fiske's (1995) argument asserting that where masculine or macho traits of men are shown, they are only in positions of villainy.

The arguments from the different producers and writers of the case studies address research question one in understanding what forms of Zulu masculinities are represented on the soap operas *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya.* Their statements assert that soap opera depicts sensitive men as well as strong and powerful men (implying that soap opera shows a diversity of male characters), but audiences are still in search for a villain in the good and in the bad. The three arguments from the producers and writers of the soap operas show that there are great complexities within the encoding of Zulu masculinities. Patriarchy within the traditional encoding of the soap operas exists in how the producers describe Zulu masculinities using terms such as the man being the head of the home. Thibedi (interview, 8 April 2019) asserts that because stories are encoded from a patriarchal point of view, they are also decoded from a patriarchal point of view. The relevance for this is that if encoders are able to understand how audiences decode messages, they will be able to relay messages that audiences are able to understand and relate to.

Male violence

Male violence is an extension of a bad Zulu man. Connell (2005) asserts that men use violence to reinforce their dominance. The soap operas producers felt very deeply about issues of violence and they do not necessarily want to support it on television. Ndlovu explains that, "I made it clear right from the beginning that my characters are not criminals, my characters are not given to senseless violence" (Ndlovu, interview, 12 June 2019). The producers do not want to show violence on their soap operas unless it is a way to educate viewers about it.

While the encoders personally felt strongly about representing Zulu male characters in violence narratives and scenes they still showed these stories as each of the soap operas that have been selected for this study do show some storylines with violence. This also indicates that the producers do showcase the dominant discourses of Zulu men. Where black men are represented as violent (Luyt 2012).

Struggle and post-struggle masculinity

This section directly addresses question three in understanding masculinities and how they may subvert, challenge or accept popular and dominant discourses of South African Zulu men. Apartheid has influenced masculinity radically in South Africa (Ratele 2012, 2016, Morrel 2001, Xaba 2001). This influence is also reflected in the South African television industry in how television programming has evolved over the years during Apartheid and after Apartheid, as explained in Chapter Two, while Chapter Three shows the relationship between Apartheid and masculinity.

The current case studies show a paradigm shift in production as far as representations of masculinity go. Representations, says Hall (2013), are the production of meanings and concepts through language. Hall (2013) argues that the link between concepts and language may refer to the real word or people or events and even to imaginary or fictional object and events. The case studies show a diversity of representations, some that subvert/challenge and affirm dominant discourses of South African Zulu men. The struggle masculinity of men in representations where they are shown as violent (Xaba 2001, Luyt 2012) is being subverted and men are shown to be kinder and more family orientated (Ndlovu interview, 12 June 2019, Ntshangase interview, 13 March 2019).). The context varies from theme to theme generated by this study in how soap opera is focusing on different incentives, mandates and representations such as a post-Apartheid South Africa. (Gibson, *et al* 2019; Teer-Tomaselli 2005).

For example, the current case studies depict some of the effects of Apartheid, which show how representations of men may accept popular dominant discourses of South African Zulu men. "*Uzalo* shows men who are a result of Apartheid" (Thibedi interview, 8 April 2019), such as men who are traditional[9] (in other words, hegemonic) and men who lack progression. The traditional man in this instance accepts the popular and dominant discourse of South African Zulu men, since this is a pattern of practice that men choose to employ. She maintains that *Uzalo* has not yet displayed a man who is progressive aside from a short period, when a man who was an advocate came into MaNzuza's life and he offered her the chance to live the life

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[9] Traditional or hegemonic forms of masculinity can be defined as "a pattern of practice" (Connell and Messertschmidt 2005:832), which not only entrenches male dominion over women, but also subjects subordinate masculinities to oppression (Connell and Messertschmidt 2005:832; Ratele 2014:118; Morrell and Lindegger 2012:11).

of her dreams. However, at the end, MaNzuza chose to go back to her traditional, patriarchal man. This is a key argument to the third research question of this study, which aims to understand the ways in which the representations on television subvert, challenge or accept popular and dominant discourses of South African Zulu men. Here, the encoding process accepts and affirms the popular dominant discourse of patriarchal society. This confirms Thole-Muir's (2014) argument that while there are non-traditional and modern forms of masculinity, society may have the urge to reinforce the traditional. This is seen in the character of MaNzuza, a powerful and popular female character (Onuh 2017). Yet she still chooses a partner that affirms the rule of patriarchy.

Imbewu and *Uzalo* show the possibilities of unity that now exist among different races in democratic South Africa. Ndlovu (interview, 12 June 2019) states:

> [We] are showing people who've risen above their adversity, people who have been able to see life in spite of the background that they've come from. *Imbewu* starts in the 90s with three people who start a company, Ngcolosi, Pranav and Zain. And at the beginning, they are starting as a democratic free-minded people that want to start a company together, hence it's an Indian, a Coloured and African guy, [irrespective of what] they have gone through, they've risen above their adversity ...

Isibaya also conveys a shift of the mindset from the Apartheid era. "In terms of the memory that were playing, that in the past the source of conflict between him and the Zungus had to do with the political activities of their past as young boys. So, there is that element of transition that we have taken from the Apartheid days to where they are right now" (Ntshangase interview, 13 March 2019). He argues that *Isibaya* depicts characters that have transitioned from the Apartheid era and this is portrayed in the element of showing old memories of older characters and showing how some of their quarrels began during the Apartheid era.

As previously mentioned in Chapter Two, television is currently endorsing black empowerment and growth for black individuals (Teer-Tomaselli 2015, Tager 2010). The encoders of these soap operas are addressing the empowerment of black individuals in how they encode their messages. All three case studies show a significant move away from the dominant representations of masculinity that characterised the Apartheid era. In so doing, the soap operas arguably intend to promote new ideas that endorse a post-Apartheid South Africa (Tager 2010, Anderson 2004). This is encoded or achieved through reaching their audiences culturally by appealing to them through "language, dress, humour, ethnic appearance, style,

historical references and social issues" (Gibson, *et al* 2019:142 – 143). Authors such as Morley (1992) and Livingstone (2000) provide a detailed account to Hall's (1993) framework. They argue that every single event is in a position of being encoded and interpreted in more than one way. In this study, the encoders have chosen to position the storylines in the post-Apartheid era showing male characters in a way that is representative of current South African lives and lifestyles. Morley (1992) also argues that the messages are polysemic, meaning they have more than one interpretation, reading or meaning. This means that while encoders develop messages, readers may assign them more than one meaning when reading. While this section aims to understand, why and how the encoder develops their messages in the context of Apartheid and its effects on masculinity, the next section addresses the role of entertainment-education that may influence the *motive for why* messages are encoded in a certain way [my emphasis].

Entertainment Education

Entertainment education (EE) is "the strategic and theoretically informed process of developing educational messages using a range of media platforms to facilitate a desired behavioural or social change" (Govender 2013:1). The soap opera producers believe that there is an (inadvertent) element of EE in their soap operas. In the interview with *Uzalo's* executive producer, Mmamitse Thibedi, it was evident that while the first goal of the soap opera is entertainment, it is also believed that there are lessons that viewers can learn. For example, *Uzalo* incorporates critical issues that relate to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) community. The South African community is generally thought of as intolerant with regards to LGBT (Ratele 2014). "Issues of lesbian, gay and "othered" sexualities are vital for a fuller understanding of the production of hegemonic forms of gender and masculinity in Africa" (Ratele, 2014: 115). It is therefore important for characters like GC to be displayed on television. While it may or may not be intentional EE, the inclusion of GC has inadvertently promoted tolerance for the depiction of different masculinities. The popularity of the character of GC within the storyline of *Uzalo* goes hand-in-hand with the public's adoration for him as Khaya Dladla, an openly homosexual man.

> "GC as a character was already accepted by the populace, regardless of his sexual orientation … [as a production] we started exploring his story and speaking about his sexual orientation. People were relating to him as a person as opposed to a gay person … We have to set up the world normally and then question the abnormalities in the world." (Thibedi, interview, 8 April 2019.

While the educational element of *Uzalo* is encrypted within issues of LGBT (Thibedi, interview, 8 April 2020), for *Isibaya* the EE is encrypted within how culture is presented into the storylines. Ntshangase (interview, 13 March 2019) mentioned that they thrive on perfecting their research, which teaches their viewers about aspects of Zulu culture that are not widely known. He stated that:

> People always say 'wow I didn't know'. There's one thing that we did, I think it was in season two, which is something that people had forgotten about … *Ukubonga Indaba* (a traditional ceremony) … we got very good positive response from people, saying 'Wow!'. The recent traditional wedding of Mpiyakhe for instance, people were saying 'Wow! We were not aware that in traditional wedding in isiZulu there is *Poyisa lomthetho* (officer of the law) who plays the role of *umfundisi* (pastor) in binding together.

This shows that Zulu audiences have responded to storylines in a way that demonstrates that they do not regard the soap opera as entertaining only but also as educational.

Similarly, *Imbewu* also uses its narrative to teach people about culture. Ndlovu (interview, 12 June 2019) stated:

> Over the years, we've learnt to couch educational didactic messages with entertainment. It is a skill that you have to develop as a television producer. We basically teach people about culture … We teach people about the morality. I mean we are not preaching to them and hitting them over the head but we are couching our messages within an entertainment value.

Ndlovu's explanation reiterates the presence of "grey zone" Entertainment Education (Govender, 2013) as he explains that *Imbewu* can be educational because the show initiates conversations with people about cultural and moral issues. While some storylines have the ability to educate and entertain simultaneously (King'ara 2013), some storylines are not necessarily intentionally educational in a didactic way but can arguably be interpreted as functioning in the grey zone of EE (Govender 2013). The grey zone of EE can be understood as an area where a storyline non-purposefully produces an educational element that may be perceived as EE.

"These often undocumented and grey zone experiences challenge our understanding of EE as a purposive or strategic communication process when non-purposive and non-strategic development of interventions reflect EE principles and EE outcomes" (Govender, 2013:5). In this way, the soap operas appear to implicitly encode EE elements into the storylines,

particularly in the areas of contemporary ills and as custodians of culture (King'ara 2013). This addresses parts of research question one in the understanding the reasons for the inclusion of certain Zulu masculinities in the selected case studies.

Cultural proximity

Representations share an important relationship with cultural proximity because they enable us to better understand the world through language and concepts (Hall 2013, Livingstone 2000, Morley 1992, Castello 2010). Cultural proximity is an important part of television viewing, because audiences tend to gravitate towards programming that is relevant to them culturally as well as through language and geographical location (Ksiazek and Webster 2008, Castello 2010). For cultural proximity to work, the encoder and the decoder need to share the same cultural values and understanding (Castello 2010).

Ntshangase (interview, 13 March 2019) felt that *Isibaya* contributes to his own personal being as a man. He stated: "Most of the time, I think the way we portray men on *Isibaya*, people are able to relate to, for instance, the way I can even safely say the way Mpiyakhe treats his children is how I treat my children". Likewise, Ndlovu (interview, 12 June 2019) also asserted that like Ngcolosi [male character] sits down to have breakfast with his children, he asked his children to sit down for a meal with him.

The encoders also shared similar sentiments about ensuring cultural proximity in the way that they encoded their message.

> Zulu culture is very important to, for us to portray we are in KZN. The expectation from our audiences is that, we must acknowledge the base that we are in. So if we didn't do that, we wouldn't be able to reach people (Thibedi, interview, 8 April 2019).

This indicates Castello's (2010) argument in that the encoder and the decoder need to share cultural values. The comments from the decoders indicate that they themselves are active participants in not only the encoding process but also the decoding process because they mimic the very same behaviour that the characters on their soap operas act, because often they share similar cultural attributes to the characters that they encode. The cultural proximity element, as defined by the producers of *Isibaya* and *Imbewu,* shared similar sentiments.

The *Uzalo* producer's perspective on cultural proximity appears to differ from that of the two other producers. Thibedi's focus is mainly on how society has been affected culturally by the

rise of women and female independence, which has affected the male behavioural patterns. She says the contribution that *Uzalo* makes to understanding masculinities is different to that of the two other soap operas. She maintains that female characters can also drive the understanding of cultural proximity. She talks about how the role of MaNgcobo has questioned the role of masculinity and the dynamics between the masculine and the feminine in Zulu society (Thibedi, interview, 8 April 2019). This is because MaNgcobo played the gangster's wife, but she is also as an independent woman. To affirm his masculinity and his power over her, Nkunzi marries another woman, because "he felt like he was losing control over MaNgcobo" (Thibedi interview, 8 April 2019). This was because MaNgcobo did not conform to traditional patriarchy. This storyline represents South African patriarchal standards as hegemonic masculinity in that his "failing to control her [equates to] failing to love her" (Thibedi, interview 8 April 2019). Earlier in the chapter it is stated that MaNgcobo chooses to stay with her husband and thus encourages patriarchy, but in this storyline she appears to challenge patriarchy through her strength and independence. This indicates how each storyline can subvert or accept dominant discourses of Zulu masculinity, depending on the needs of the narrative, and can be interpreted differently. It also shows some of the dynamics Zulu men face today with independent women in their lives and how to place themselves in that space. Nkunzi's behaviour towards his wife is in line with Luyt's (2012) argument that masculinity in South Africa embodies the importance of control. This demonstrates that popular media texts, like soap opera, play an important role in displaying a cultural process that maintains hegemony for audiences (Luyt 2012).

Cultural proximity is a powerful tool in creating representations that appeal to specific audiences (Castello 2010). The next section focuses on how aspects of intermediaries affect the ways in which encoders may create their messages. Intermediaries can be a key component to the representations that are displayed on television, since they can influence cultural representations, storylines and characters.

Themes specific to the encoding process

This section discusses themes that emerged from the interviews with the producers.

Intermediaries

Each of the production houses spoke about the role of intermediaries[10] (if any) in the decision on how to represent Zulu men. Ntshangase (interview, 13 March 2019), who represented *Isibaya,* said that DSTV does not impose storylines on them and that as the producers of the soap opera they drive the story. They are in constant communication with DSTV and they are always in a position to listen to any thoughts and suggestions. As a production house, they conduct their own research and create the storylines themselves. This aligns with Hall's (1993), Morley's (1992, 1998) and Livingstone's (2000) arguments that the encoder can develop and drive a message into whichever direction – likewise, viewers may read it in several different ways. For *Imbewu,* Ndlovu (interview, 12 June 2019) spoke about the fact that it is a collaboration of ideas, because *Imbewu* has more than one producer and the group of producers collaborate with eTV. While collaboration with eTV takes place, he indicated that eTV does not dictate to the producers of *Imbewu* as to what they must produce. Instead, they work together to encode messages. *Uzalo* was the only case study that differed in this respect, mainly because it is produced by a public broadcaster [The SABC], and [The SABC] has "a social messaging mandate as a public broadcaster" (Thibedi interview, 8 April 2019).

Uzalo producers pitch ideas to the SABC for each season for the channel. The SABC gives direction on topics that have not been explored at all, or not explored amply enough. The SABC gives detailed information about how some of the storylines in *Uzalo* should pan out, along with what they're satisfied and dissatisfied with (Thibedi interview, 8 April 2019). Overall, from the expert interviews, it is clear that intermediaries do not have any power to encode messages, nor take a position in encoding or driving messages on behalf of *Imbewu* and *Isibaya* but are permitted to make comments or suggestions.

However, with regard to *Uzalo*, intermediaries hold a significant amount of power that has the potential to alter storylines. This indicates that there are complexities in the encoding process

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[10] A person who acts as a link between people to try and bring about an agreement (Oxford Dictionary 2020). Intermediaries in the context of this study are agencies/stations that work with the soap operas selected in the study.

as *Uzalo,* broadcast on a public service broadcaster (PSB), appears to include several more encoders. PSB programming often needs to fulfill a specific mandate that goes hand in hand with influencing public opinion (Teer-Tomaselli 2005: 560). Since 1994 the ideological rationale of the SABC, as the PSB, has been to be more accommodating of other languages and culture, thus being more equitable (Teer-Tomaselli 2005).

The next section focuses on the stereotypical element of soap opera and how encoders may or may not deliberately create stereotypical representations of Zulu men. A significant link exists between ideology and stereotypes. Mainly because representations are created to produce meanings that appeal to viewers culturally (Castello 2010), ideology through stereotypes attempts to create meanings that appeal to the viewers, which *may* deconstruct the work of the representation by trying to fix or adjust meanings. Hall (1997) describes stereotypes as encompassing various forms of symbolic power. Hegemony and power in this regard involve ruling by consent (Boggs 1976, Gramsci 1957).

Stereotypes

Stereotypes exist in South African soap operas (Motsaathebe 2009). Hall (1997) argues that not all stereotypes are negative and that one could maintain a positive representation in place of a stereotypical representation that existed before. This argument is similar to one of the producer's argument. In describing *Imbewu,* Ndlovu (interview, 12 June 2019) argues that the soap opera does not necessarily conform to the generic stereotypes of hegemony and patriarchy. Rather, he argues, the soap opera creates nuanced contemporary stereotypes to which audiences aspire:

> We think that we are making a contribution in changing the perception of how the male is perceived. We believe that by young people watching *Imbewu* [there] will be a stereotype, a new stereotype that will be planted in their heads, of this particular man, male figure so we are creating role models that are not necessarily a common factor in South African television. But the funny thing or the exciting thing for me is that we've also set trends where other television producers are now following us … the image of a father who owns a company, a black father, is not a common image. And yet, we know it is empowering to a child … you might not take notice of it because it doesn't happen in black families, they insist on having dinner together as a family (Ndlovu interview, 12 June 2019).

Ndlovu's (interview, 12 June 2019) argument is closely linked to Hall's (2013) concept of representation as embedded in the mind through mental thoughts that consist of a cluster of

several thoughts, objects that we see, systems and concepts. Through representations, encoders are able to create new messages or representations in the minds of the readers through storylines, plots, and narratives. Here, Ndlovu reveals that a significant motive in the encoding process was to subvert negative stereotypes of the past by presenting positive role models in the Zulu male characters.

Ntshangase (interview, 13 March 2019) felt that if *Isibaya* is perpetuating stereotypes, this is not done intentionally. The soap opera seeks mainly to entertain and inadvertently educate its viewers (Govender 2013). This can also speak to how intentional ideological messages are decoded versus how representations are decoded, with certain hegemonic structures in place to guide both the encoders and the decoders. Hall (1997), Livingstone (2000) and Morley (1992) argue that audiences read messages actively, with sociological and cultural experiences guiding their viewing experience. Sometimes audiences may be able to understand the intentional ideological messages communicated by the encoder and at other times they may completely disagree with them (Morley 1992, Hall 1997). This once again reinforces the notion of the grey zone within EE in how storylines may indirectly become an educational tool (Govender 2013). This becomes especially relevant in the representation of stereotypes. As a production member of *Isibaya*, Ntshangase (interview, 13 March 2019) argued that the producers actively try not to display stereotypes, yet that it may be possible for viewers to perceive their messages as stereotypical, even though it is not their intention to encode stereotypical messages.

Thibedi (interview, 8 April 2019) was frank in the assertion that *Uzalo* does show representations of men in a stereotypical manner, describing the character of Nkunzi as "stereotypically a Zulu man". The producers encode his character to be what they believe represents a traditional Zulu man.

> Nkunzi's attitude towards women and marriage is stereotypical … And his attitude is his understanding of the role of a man and the role of a woman … I think it is stereotypically Zulu as well to a certain extent. Walking into the show, he already had another wife … So, polygamy is normal in Zulu culture, that's something that needs to be dissected or looked on the with scrutiny it's just part, and it's either you subscribe or you don't. He is stereotypically a Zulu man in our understanding of a traditional Zulu man (Thibedi interview, 8 April 2019).

The characteristics that make Nkunzi a stereotypical representation of a Zulu man is the treatment of woman, especially in terms of polygamy and Zulu culture. The motive for *Uzalo* displaying the character in this way is not very clear and seems to be driven mainly by the

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storyline, because Thibedi commented that "we don't deal with polygamy like that. It's just this is the situation and how does it, how does it play out." (Thibedi interview, 8 April 2019).

This perception is influenced by the way the character was encoded. This is related to Hall's (1993), Morley's (1992, 1998) and Livingstone's (2000) arguments that the encoder has the power to create messages and that these messages may be read in different ways, which may be dominant, either negotiated or oppositional. Similarly, King'ara (2013:106) argues that there are "symbolic spaces for social-cultural interactions between producers and audiences".

Within the South African context of soap opera, and within the context of my study, the indigenisation of culture, language and setting are symbolic spaces for social-cultural interactions of the soap opera genre. Culture plays a significant role in encoding and decoding, because members of one cultural context who share similar discourses and cultural orientation may decode messages in a similar way (Morley 1992). However, while the producers pointed out some of the negative stereotypes of the soap operas, there are also some positive stereotypes that were described by the viewers and argued by Hall (1997). These are addressed in the next chapter. The idea of understanding stereotypes is important to this study, since it addresses research question one and research question three. These two research questions aim to understand the forms of masculinities that are represented on the selected case studies as well as whether these representations subvert, challenge, or accept popular and dominant discourses of South African Zulu men.

Conclusion

This chapter thematically presents the data retrieved from the three experts from the production houses of the case studies. The themes are presented in relation to literature and theory. The chapter's finding and analysis are rooted mainly in Hall's (1993) notion of the encoder and decoder, but also other authors (Livingstone 2000, Morley 1992) as a means of understanding how the encoder creates messages. Hall's (1996, 1997) view of the encoding process can be described as mental frameworks, concepts, thoughts and categories, which create systems of representations that audiences can decode and assign meaning to. The chapter demonstrated that this message creation involves an intricate interplay between ideology and hegemony, the semi-intentional objective to educate while entertaining, cultural proximity, and the indigenisation of culture, language and setting in South African soap opera and the objective to tell compelling stories. The following chapter addresses how the decoder understands the

encoded message – in this instance, the representation of Zulu masculinities in the soap operas *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya*.

Chapter 6

Findings and analysis: Decoding masculinities

Introduction

This chapter focuses directly on the decoding and interpretation of findings and themes from the focus group interviews with the soap opera audiences of *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya*. It also analyses what this may reveal about contemporary South African male audiences' readings of representations of themselves as Zulu men decoding representations of Zulu men. It investigates whether these representations affirm or challenge their own sense of identity, and what the implications may be in the broader sense of the politics of representing Zulu men on television.

This study takes a culturalist approach to audience studies as a way of understanding viewers' discourse against mass beliefs (Storey 1997). This chapter also cross-references the data to show commonalities and discords between the encoder and decoder to address the key research questions. It assumes that, from a social constructionist perspective, masculinities are socially and culturally constructed (Butler 1999, Connell 1995, Segal 2007). The relational analysis between discussions of the common themes between the encoder and decoder will be threaded throughout the common themes.

It needs to be stated here that the identities of the viewers have been protected and that none of their names will be revealed in this research. They will be identified by pseudonyms.

The chapter directly addresses research question two and three, which are:

- How are the representations of Zulu masculinities on *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya* interpreted by black male audiences from different sociocultural backgrounds?

- In what way do these representations subvert, challenge or accept popular and dominant discourses of South African Zulu men?

The chapter integrates the key scholarship presented in earlier chapters into the analysis of the themes that have emerged (Hall 1997; Fiske 1987; Morley 1992, 1980; Livingstone 2000, 2008, 2013). Stuart Hall's (1993, 1997) encoding / decoding model is particularly crucial to this chapter, the focus being on the decoder and how they are able to interpret and articulate

meanings from media texts. The critical contribution this study makes to the literature is to provide insight into the ways in which popular or dominant discourses of Zulu South African masculinities are affirmed or subverted in the selected soap operas.

The study's literature and theoretical concepts of the active audience (Barker 2013, Pitout 1998), masculinity theory (Connell 2005, Butler 1990) and cultural proximity (Castello 2010, Gibson *et al* 2019) is mobilised to explain some of these insights.

Inclusion criteria for episodes

The texts in this study are selected soap opera episodes and the words or concepts that refer to the presence of male characters and other criteria for inclusion, as explained above and illustrated below. The benefit of this approach to selecting relevant episodes is that, as a technique, it has the ability to systematically determine the existence and frequency of the concepts in a text (Downe-Wamboldt 1992). This, in turn, provides an information-rich resource on which to base the focus-group discussions.

The study does not analyse the discursive importance attributed to particular thematic clusters within each of the episodes. The focus-group data interpreted through the theoretical framework addresses the themes' discursive importance in relation to masculinity (as represented in table 6.1 showing the inclusion criteria for the selected episodes).

The table is a breakdown of the inclusion criteria for each of the episodes. The first criterion for choosing the three case studies was that each of the soap operas had to be local and based within the KwaZulu-Natal province. The participants of this study are all local to the province. The second criterion was that the storylines and narratives had to be set within rural as well as urban settings. This also applies to the participants, since they are based in both rural and urban settings. The third criterion was that the time period for all the episodes had to be the most recent in relation to when the data was collected. The fourth criterion was that the male characters represented in each of the episodes had to be diverse. This links to the participants in terms of cultural proximity. The fifth and final criterion centred around the themes that emerged from each of the episodes.

Criteria 1: Local soap opera	Criteria 2: Setting – rural urban	Criteria 3: Time frame	Criteria 4: Characters represented	Criteria 5: Themes from the storyline
Uzalo	Urban	13 August 2018	Nkunzi	Hegemonic masculinity, patriarchal, lack of sensitivity, lack of showing affection and love
	Urban		GC	Non-hegemonic masculinity, sensitivity, post struggle masculinity, stereotypical representations of homosexual representation
	Urban		Mxolisi	Non-hegemonic masculinity, post struggle masculinity, male sensitivity, supportive men
	Urban		Mondli	Non-hegemonic masculinity, stereotypical representation of police force, male sensitivity
	Urban		Sbu	Non-hegemonic masculinity, Sensitivity, subordinate masculinity
	Urban	14 August 2018	GC	Non-hegemonic masculinity, stereotypical representations of homosexual men
	Urban		Pastor Melusi	Non-hegemonic masculinity, stereotypical representation of religion, beliefs

	Urban		Qabanga	Hegemonic masculinity, stereotypical representation of church leadership
	Urban	15 August 2018	Sbu	Non-hegemonic masculinity, male sensitivity, post-struggle masculinity
	Urban		GC	Non-hegemonic masculinity, sensitivity, post-struggle masculinity
	Urban		Mondli	Non-hegemonic masculinity, stereotypical representation of police force, lack of proper investigation, male sensitivity, subordinate masculinity
	Urban		Qabanga	Hegemonic masculinity, stereotypical representation of religion/church leadership
Imbewu	Urban	15 July 2019	Nkululeko	Absent fathers, fatherhood, power dynamics
	Rural		Phakade	Religion vs culture, leadership dynamics, non-hegemonic masculinity
	Urban		Pranav	Non-hegemonic masculinity, male sensitivity, family man, male affection and care, male love
	Rural		Macingwane	Hegemonic masculinity, stereotypical representation of a traditional healer, speaks

				in riddles, religion vs beliefs
	Urban		Navin	Hegemonic masculinity, abusive, male violence
	Urban		Thu	Non-hegemonic masculinities, the rise of subordinated masculinities
	Urban		Mthunzi	Hegemonic masculinity, abusive, male violence
	Urban		Phunyuka	Hegemonic masculinity, protector, male affection, male sensitivity
	Urban		Ngcolosi	Hegemonic masculinity, Patriarchy, stereotypical representations of men being stubborn
	Urban	16 July 2019	Zithulele	The new man, progressive man, protective man, male affection and sensitivity.
	Urban		Phunyuka	Hegemonic masculinity, the new man, shows sensitivity, protective
	Urban		Mthunzi	Hegemonic masculinity, male violence, male abuse
	Urban		Thu	The rise of insubordinate masculinities, show of strength, male protection, male sensitivity
	Urban		Nkululeko	Fatherhood, absent fathers, effects of absent fathers
	Urban		Ngcolosi	Hegemonic masculinity, stubbornness, male leadership

	Urban		Lindo	Non-hegemonic masculinities, non-stereotypical representation of homosexual men, professional men
	Urban	18 July 2019	Phunyuka	Hegemonic masculinity, the new man, protective masculinity, sensitivity
	Urban		Zithulele	The new man, progressive masculinity, protective masculinity
	Urban		Mthunzi	Hegemonic masculinity, male violence, male abuse
	Urban		Navin	Hegemonic masculinity, patriarchy, male violence and abuse
	Urban		Thu	Non hegemonic masculinity The rise of subordinated masculinities
	Rural and urban		Phakade	Patriarchy, non-hegemonic masculinity, culture vs beliefs, religion dynamics
	Rural		Magcingwane	Hegemonic masculinity, stereotypical representations of traditional healers
	Urban		Pranav	Non-hegemonic masculinity, progressive masculinity, supportive father, present father, family man,
	Urban		Ngcolosi	Patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity, stereotypical representation of male

				relationships with their families
Isibaya	Urban	12 July 2019	Mpiyakhe	Patriarchy, polygamy
	Urban		Qaphela	Non-hegemonic, male sensitivity, male subordination
	Urban/rural		Fezile	Hegemonic masculinity, impatient, non-progressive
	Rural		Mandla	Non-hegemonic masculinity, supportive, sensitive, present father, fatherhood dynamics
	Urban		Judas	Hegemonic masculinity, business orientated, patriarchal, marriage dynamics
	Urban		Dam-Dam	Hegemony vs sensitivity, present husband, male sensitivity
	Rural		Ngwebedla	Patriarchy, non-progressive
	Urban	13 July 2019	Qaphela	Non-hegemonic masculinity, subordinate masculinity, sensitive masculinity
	Urban/Rural		Fezile	Hegemonic masculinity, male impatience and stubbornness
	Urban		Dam-Dam	Hegemony vs sensitivity, present husband, male sensitivity
	Urban		Jabu	The new man, progressive, business orientated

	Urban		Judas	Hegemonic masculinity, patriarchal, lack of sensitivity, lack of support for wife
	Rural		Ngwebedla	Patriarchy, non-progressive
	Urban	14 July 2019	Qaphela	Non-hegemonic masculinity, identity issues
	Urban		Dam-Dam	Non-hegemonic masculinity, hegemony vs sensitivity, present husband, male sensitivity
	Rural		Mandla	Non-hegemonic masculinity, present father, progressive, supportive of family
	Rural		Fezile	Hegemonic masculinity, lack of patience, male loyalty to employer
	Urban		Judas	Hegemonic masculinity, inability to show love and affection to wife, patriarchal
	Rural		Duma	The new man, progressive, shows support to female empowerment (the queen)
	Rural		Ngwebandla	Patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity, dishonesty

Table 6.1 Episode selection inclusion criteria

Description of male characters in the case studies

Table 6.2 below presents the male characters that are part of the storylines in the selected episodes. There are several more male characters that form part of the soap opera narratives. However, table 6.2 details the characters who are pertinent to what the interviewees and focus

group participants referred to in the data collection. This table, therefore, serves as an informational resource for the presentation of findings and their analysis.

As described in Chapter Five, characters represent themes that possibly signify certain perspectives and beliefs held by the producers. It is believed (based on previous scholarship) that because certain characters are relatable, these themes and perspectives may resonate with certain audience members. Pitout (1998:70) argues that since "viewers come into contact with soap opera characters everyday, they become like friends". Viewers are also able to "recognize aspects of a character that [are] similar to an important person (significant other) in their lives" (Pitout 1998:70). The table below describes each of the male characters that appear in the selected episodes. The information provided in table 6.2 has been retrieved from *Independent Online* (IOL, 2020) and *Briefly* (2020), respectively. They are both news and information websites based in South Africa. Other sites used to retrieve information about the male descriptions were TVSA (2020), a resource that displays international and local databases of South African actors and shows, as well as IMBD (2020), a site that streams local and international shows.

Soap opera	Character
Isibaya	Character name: Mpiyakhe Zungu Actor name: Siyabonga Twala Occupation or pastime: Business owner Sexual orientation: Heterosexual Relationship status: Married Character/personality: Hegemonic, leader, dictator, patriarchal Age: 51 (IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020, *Briefly* 2020)

	Character name: Mandla Ndlovu
	Actor name: Bongani Gumede
	Occupation or pastime: Involved in family business
	Sexual Orientation: Heterosexual
	Relationship status: Single
	Character/personality: Low self-esteem, caring, non-hegemonic, loving and sensitive
	Age: not specified
	(IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020, *Briefly* 2020)
	Character name: Jabu Zungu
	Actor name: Pallance Dladla
	Occupation or pastime: Business owner
	Sexual orientation: Heterosexual
	Relationship status: Dating
	Character/personality: Confident, outgoing.
	Age: 28
	(IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020, *Briefly* 2020)
	Character name: Chief Dabula
	Actor name: Chris Radebe
	Occupation or pastime: Heir to the throne
	Sexual orientation: Heterosexual
	Relationship status: Single
	Character/personality: Violent, dangerous and looks for trouble
	Age: 37
	(IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020, *Briefly* 2020)
	Character name: Judas Ngwenya
	Actor name: Menzi Ngubani

	Occupation or pastime: Business owner
	Sexual orientation: Heterosexual
	Relationship status: Married
	Character/personality: Abusive physically and emotionally, violent, materialistic
	Age: 56
	(IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020, *Briefly* 2020)
	Character name: Duma Ngema
	Actor name: Muzi Mthabela
	Occupation or pastime: Council member, (also at some stage was the acting Chief)
	Sexual orientation: Heterosexual
	Relationship status: Dating
	Age: 43
	(IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020, *Briefly* 2020)
	Character name: Saddam (Dam-Dam)
	Actor name: Sayitsheni Simon Mdakhi
	Occupation or pastime: Business owner
	Relationship status: Married
	Sexual orientation: Heterosexual
	Age: 38
	(IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020, *Briefly* 2020)
	Character name: Fezile (surname not specified)
	Actor name: Andile Mxakaza
	Occupation or pastime: *Inkabi* [11](a hitman)
	Sexual orientation: Heterosexual
	Relationship status: Single
	Character/personality: Quiet, short-tempered, loyal

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[11] *Inkabi* is a Zulu word for a hitman. (Cambridge dictionary, 2020)

	Age: 42
	(IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020, *Briefly* 2020)
	Character name: Ngwebedla (Surname not specified)
	Actor name: Ernest Ndlovu
	Occupation or pastime: Counsel member
	Sexual orientation: Heterosexual
	Relationship status: Single
	Character/personality: Opinionated, patriarchal, scheming, disloyal, patriarchal
	Age: Not specified
	(IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020, *Briefly* 2020)
	Character name: Sibusiso Ndlovu
	Actor name: Sdumo Mtshali
	Occupation or pastime: Business owner
	Sexual orientation: Heterosexual
	Relationship status: Married
	Character/personality: Playful, outgoing, happy
	Age:37
	(IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020, *Briefly* 2020)
	Character name: Qaphela Ngwenya
	Actor name: Abdul Khoza
	Occupation or pastime: Business owner
	Sexual orientation: Heterosexual
	Relationship status: Single
	Character/personality: Sensitive, meek, subordinate
	Age: 32
	(IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020, *Briefly* 2020)

Imbewu	Character name: Ngcolosi Bhengu
	Actor name: Tony Kgoroge
	Occupation or pastime: Business owner
	Sexual orientation: Heterosexual
	Relationship status: Married
	Character/personality: Leader, hegemonic, strong, stubborn
	Age:46
	(IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020, *Briefly* 2020)
	Character name: Phakade Bhengu
	Actor name: Sandile Dlamini
	Occupation or pastime: Pastor
	Sexual orientation: Heterosexual
	Relationship status: Married
	Character/personality: Secretive, disloyal, dishonest
	Age: 54
	(IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020, *Briefly* 2020)
	Character name: Nkululekho Bhengu
	Actor name: Nkanyiso Mchunu
	Occupation or pastime: CEO of Maluju
	Sexual orientation: Heterosexual
	Relationship status: Dating
	Character/personality: Implosive, irrational, emotional, sensitive, hegemonic
	Age: 31
	(IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020, *Briefly* 2020)
	Character name: Zithulele
	Actor name: Raphael Griffiths
	Occupation or pastime: Business owner

	Sexual orientation: Heterosexual Relationship status: Dating off and on Character/personality: Sensitive, emotional, impulsive Age:28 (IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020, *Briefly* 2020)
	Character name: Thu Sheleni Actor name: Kaylin Soobramanian Occupation or pastime: Waitron Sexual orientation: Heterosexual Relationship status: Dating Character/personality: Sensitive, timid, submissive, supportive Age:17 (IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020, *Briefly* 2020)
	Character name: Navin Patel Actor name: Jethro McNamee Occupation or pastime: Business contractor Sexual orientation: Heterosexual Relationship status: Dating Character/personality: Abusive, dangerous, manipulative Age: Not specified (TV Plus 2020)
	Character name: Pranav Rampersad Actor name: Koobeshen Naidoo Occupation or pastime: Business owner Sexual orientation: Heterosexual Relationship status: Married Character/personality: Sensitive, supportive, hardworking

	Age: 55 (*Briefly* 2020, IOL 2020, TVSA 2020)
	Character name: Mthunzi (surname not specified) Actor name: Wanda Zuma Occupation or pastime: unemployed (sells drugs for money) Sexual orientation: Heterosexual Relationship status: Single Character/personality: Violent, abusive, aggressive, manipulative Age: not specified (TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020)
	Character name: Lindo (surname not specified) Actor name: Anathi Gabeni Sexual orientation: Homosexual Relationship status: Single Character/personality: Bubbly, hardworking, supportive, focused Age: Not specified (IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020)
Uzalo	Character name: Sbu Makhathini Actor name: Simphiwe Majozi Occupation or pastime: Stealing cars Sexual orientation: Heterosexual Relationship status: Dating Character/personality: Funny, outgoing, submissive Age: 35 (IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020, *Briefly* 2020)
	Character name: Nkunzi Mhlongo Actor name: Masoja Msiza

	Occupation or pastime: Business owner
	Sexual orientation: Heterosexual
	Relationship status: Married
	Character/personality: Hegemonic, violent, dictator, patriarchal
	Age: 56
	(IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020, *Briefly* 2020)
	Character name: GC
	Actor name: Khanya Dladla
	Occupation or pastime: Salon hair mistress
	Sexual orientation: Homosexual
	Relationship status: Single
	Character/personality: Outgoing, bubbly and funny
	Age: 30 years old
	(IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020, *Briefly* 2020)
	Character name: Pastor (Melusi) Mdletshe
	Actor name: Glen Gabela
	Occupation or pastime: Pastor
	Sexual orientation: Heterosexual
	Relationship status: Married
	Character/personality: Timid, meek, introvert
	Age: Not specified
	(IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020, *Briefly* 2020)
	Character name: Qhabanga Khumalo
	Actor name: Siyabonga Shibe
	Occupation or pastime: Pastor/gangster
	Sexual orientation: Heterosexual
	Relationship status: Married

	Character/personality: Confident, outgoing, strong leader
	Age: 42
	(IOL 2020, TVSA 2020, IMBD 2020, *Briefly* 2020)

Table 6.2. Summary of male characters in the case studies

Storylines of the selected episodes

The previous chapter demonstrated that the creation of a compelling storyline was one key motive for the way in which certain masculinities were encoded. This chapter provides some detail on some of the storylines in which the male characters are central.

Isibaya

The three chosen episodes were aired from 13 to 15 July 2019, the month during which the first focus group took place. The storylines consisted of several dynamics, mainly portraying issues of patriarchy. Ntwenhle Ndlovu is made queen, since there was no heir to take the king's throne. While many characters accept her position, most of the characters feel she is too young. She is constantly undermined in her position as queen but strives to rise above the patriarchal system.

Other storylines show Mpiyakhe Zungu in prison for murder and how his wives battle each other for strategies to get him out of prison. Other elements of the narrative show how Beauty Ngwenya (Judas' wife) makes him choose between her and his right-hand man, because his right-hand man tried to murder her. She involves the police get him sent to prison. Another storyline portrays how Lillian easily manipulates and is physically and verbally abusive to the men in her life.

Imbewu

The three *Imbewu* episodes were selected from 15, 16 and 18 July 2019, since focus group interviews were conducted in that month. The episodes show the dynamics between certain masculinities. Some are subordinate to others when it comes to financial status, workplace position or cultural power. The main storyline involves the character Mthunzi. Mthunzi uses girlfriend Andiswa's drug addiction as a way to lure Zithulele into a business deal. This results in Mthunzi badly beating Zithulele and planting drugs in Zithulele's club so that he is arrested for drugs. Mthunzi also beats up Andiswa, which may account for the preponderance of hegemonic masculinities in South Africa and the gender-based violence it engenders. Other storylines reveal how Zakhiti is always angry with his father because the latter does not let him have his way with the company. Zakhithi always sees his father as the villain and the enemy because of the power that he possesses as a patriarch. Other episodes also show Nkuleko and how he is emotionally scarred because of the absence of a father in his life, along with the power of forgiveness.

Uzalo

Unlike *Imbewu* and *Isibaya*, the three *Uzalo* episodes were specifically chosen from a month later and a year earlier, namely 12 to 14 August 2018. The episodes showed the dynamics of different types of male representation. There were violent men who endorsed patriarchal ideals described as hegemonic masculinities (Connell 1995). There were also representations of sensitive men who are described as non-hegemonic masculinities (Connell 1995). The soap opera represented stereotypes of both, along with the interplay of hegemonic masculinities. They showed how weaker masculinities could be overpowered by stronger masculinities.

The narratives showed hegemonic patriarchy in most modern-day Zulu marriages and how women are still thought of as subordinate. The episodes further presented a division between the female characters and how this directly and indirectly affected the male characters. The narratives show how the gangster, Nkunzi, is unable to rescue his daughter, Zithulele, from drug addiction, and how Nkunzi forces his wife MaNgcobo to accept another wife in their home without her permission or agreement. Other narratives show the character GC and his dishonesty about where he lives to befriend the rich. Other narratives show the dynamics of the church and how pastor Melusi tries very hard to fight for his church, but the congregants are easily swayed by money and resources.

Data presentation of emerging themes

Participants in the study are assumed active audiences who are able to create meanings through their own cultural context (Barker 2013; Hall 1995; Morley 1992, 1980; Livingstone 2000, 2008, 2013; Fiske 1987). The active audience is associated with culturalist audience studies, since cultural factors come into play when viewers interpret messages from the encoder (Barker 2013). As mentioned previously, viewers are able to interpret meaning in many ways (Hall 1993). Hall's (1993) encoder and decoder framework provides a basis for different ways in which viewers may interpret the messages that are encoded. Morley (1992) and Livingstone (2000) elevate Hall's (1993) framework by arguing that viewers take into account culture, sociology, and experiences when decoding data. The themes that have emerged from the decoders show the arguments of Morley (1992), Hall (1993, 1997) and Livingstone (2000). As previously mentioned, both Chapters Five and Six apply a combination of both deductive and inductive coding. Instead of collating the data by focus group, data is discussed according to themes. This chapter creates themes along the five-phase guide to thematic analysis highlighted in the previous chapter, with a focus on phase two, which groups similar themes together. While some themes here are similar to those of the encoders in the previous chapter (in order to conduct a relational analysis), other themes emerged from the data that share new ideas and these are also discussed in detail. Table 6.3 below provides a list of the themes that have emerged.

Common decoder and encoder themes	New themes that emerged from encoders	New themes that emerged from decoders
Good Zulu man vs Bad Zulu man	Intermediaries	Homophobia
Struggle masculinity vs post-struggle masculinity	Stereotypes	Man as head of home
Entertainment-Education	Encoding *Uzalo*, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya*	Hegemony vs 'the sensitive man'
Cultural proximity		Decoding *Uzalo*, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya*

Table 6.3 Decoder List of Themes

Decoding *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya: Relational Themes*

Decoders draw on cultural and sociological factors when reading messages. This is evident in the focus group participant's comments that are interpreted throughout the themes that follow.

Cultural proximity

Audiences have the power to find pleasure and displeasure in television programmes (Fiske 1989). Ang (2007) argues that audiences can enjoy a soap opera through *melodramatic imagination*, where viewers are emotionally swept away by what they watch through desire, laughter or even tears, as well as through *ironic pleasure*, where they are able to intellectually distance themselves while enjoying the soap opera. Viewers are also able to develop parasocial relationships to the characters that they view on television (Pitout 1996), this is typically because they identify with a specific character and / or the programme culturally proximate (Castello 2010, Feasy 2008). Castello (2010) explains that for cultural proximity to work, both the encoder and decoder need to have similar cultural constructs. In this study, both the encoder and the decoder have similar cultural constructs, as mentioned in Chapter Five.

Some of the participants in this study share parasocial relationships with the soap opera characters as their repeated exposure to the soap opera persona has caused the male participant to develop illusions of intimacy, friendship, and identification (Chung and Cho, 2017).

This was evident from how some of participants set a date to start watching all of the soap operas from 6pm. In focus group one held in Imbali (27 July 2019), one of the participants felt that the character of Nkululeko showed a picture of his own story in trying to find his father. In Imphophomeni (7 October 2019), one of the participants Sam saw himself in the character of Duma. *"Unezimo ezithi ukufana nezami* (He has faced situations that are similar to mine)" (Sam, focus group 3, 7 October 2019). He did not wish to expand on this, but he mentioned that everything about the character was a replica of himself.

In Impendle (24 August 2019), one of the participants mentioned that he did not want to go into his personal details, but the male characters in the soap operas represented a significant part of his life that he did not want to divulge. In the Mkhambathini group (19 October 2019), Njabulo said he liked one of the male characters who lost his child in *Imbewu. Njengo Ngcolosi walahlekelwa ingane, nami ngadlula kukhona nje, ngingasho kanjalo* (When Ngcolosi lost a

child, I have also been through that) He, too, had lost a baby through trauma similar to that of the character. In the France group (11 November 2019), one participant's brother was in prison because of criminal activities, so he could identify with the characters in *Uzalo*. This participant also felt abandoned by his father, who told him when he was in Grade 9 that he must now fight and fend for himself.

The consensus within each of the focus groups was that television displays realistic and unrealistic stories. Thus, as per Ang's (2007) argument, participants were able to enjoy soap opera using both *melodramatic imagination* and *ironic pleasure*. To a great extent, each of the groups felt that they had had impactful encounters with the soap operas and could identify with a situation that a character faced, or knew of a person who experienced similar encounters, or found some truth embedded within the storylines. Absent fathers is a dominant discourse in the South African context (Ratele 2012, Fazel 2017, Rabe 2006:21). "South Africa experiences a challenge of absent fathers and fatherlessness" (Fazel 2017: 89). Thus television is able to be relatable to audiences since it reflects the very same dominant discourse of South African Zulu men, namely those of absent fathers. This all speaks to the ways in which television programming can be both a means for escape, as well as for reflection and identification on real issues.

Communal experiences

In South African soap opera is mostly watched communally, with friends, colleagues, community members and or family (Tager 1997). In my Masters' study, all the informants watched soap opera in groups with their families and friends (Nzimande, 2005). Similarly, with this study, many of the informants spoke about how they watch with their families in the evenings and how watching soap opera is a family engagement enjoyed by all participants. Those that watched individually in the groups were few, and it was those who were renting away from home for work and those that were very busy that would catch up on the soap opera using the Video Interface Unit (VIU) application programmer, that is provided for online catching up on soap opera.

Communal experiences relates to cultural proximity and is important in terms of how participants are able to read the masculinities presented to them.

The decoders shared a dominant position because they shared very similar ideas as the encoders on the topic of cultural proximity (Hall 1997). Elements that affected how the focus group informants read the masculinities were issues of language and setting. They argued that *Isibaya* presented a deep Zulu spoken language. Ntando from Imbali (27 July 2019) argued "*IsiZulu seSibaya siqinile* (the isiZulu in *Isibaya* is hard)". Mfene supported this comment and added that "*Siqilile, esogogo ndoda* (It's hard, it's for grannies' man)". While Ntando and Mfene thought that *Isibaya* Zulu was difficult and was for the older generation other participants in the other focus groups appreciated it. John from the Impendle group (24 August 2019) argues that the harder Zulu language is something that teaches them the language "As we were watching *Isibaya*, *Isibaya* teaches us about our culture as Zulu's, the way they speak their isiZulu, there is a different element to how they speak, and they use it quite often".

The groups also spoke about setting and expressed that *Isibaya* is set on the rural areas and how life is conducted there while *Uzalo* and *Imbewu* is set on the townships which is perceived to be more modern:

> *Isibaya* is based on the olden times, the way they do things is olden/vintage, you see olden men, how to carry yourself in the rural area, in the rural areas, a man does not like gay men. *Isibaya* is already, it is based on the past, even how they speak, but on *Uzalo* you see, *Uzalo* and *Imbewu* you can see that this is modern. (Ndu, focus group 1, 27 July 2019).

The participants were able to also recognise some characters that resembled community members within the characters that they watched on television. Toto from Mkhambathini (19 October 2019) argued that within the "community and surrounding areas" they are there [individuals who resemble the characters on television]. In each and every focus group there were individuals who were able to recognize characters that relate to some of what they watch on television. This signifies the soap operas ability to culturally infuse some of the realties' of the participants. Since the representations of the male character, the language and the setting was relatable, the participants found the storylines to be believable and authentic. Because of cultural proximity, the narratives did not challenge the participant's perceptions who held a dominant reading of what they encountered in the text, concerning the setting.

Struggle masculinity vs post-struggle masculinity

The decoders shared a dominant reading position on the topic of struggle masculinity but held a negotiated position on post-struggle masculinity. The dominant reading entails the audience reading the text in the way that the encoder intended them to. The negotiated reading is when the decoder believes the code and accepts some of its message but modifies it in a way that displays their own sociological, physiological and cultural experiences and interests. This argument reinforces the notion that representations of Zulu men on television reflect popular and dominant discourses of South African Zulu men. Struggle masculinity is anti-authority, shows negative behaviour to women, and supports hegemonic masculinities. While post-struggle masculinity is proauthority, has positive behaviour towards women and supports non-hegemonic masculinities (Xaba 2001).

The topic of absentee fathers was discussed above. Other reasons that contributed to the absence of black fathers from the home were Apartheid laws that forced black men to work on the mines (Rabe 2006). Two participants, in the Imbali and Mpendle focus groups claimed that the mines and Johannesburg took their father away from them for work. They said their fathers ended up not returning home from the mines. This underscores how the mining industry and the migrant labour system forced black men to leave their children and wives to work on the mines (Rabe 2006:14). Ntando, in the Mbali group, and Nkululeko, in the Mpendle group, reflect that their fathers left them to work in the mines in Johannesburg. Which signifies that the storyline of the absent father reflects Rabe's (2006) argument for them, but for other participants in the France group their fathers did not leave to work in the mines, they left for their own personal reasons. Still these different groups of men are affected by the storyline of the absent father for different reasons. The way that the storylines show this display of Zulu men accept this behavior as a dominant Zulu masculinity discourse and as something that Zulu men struggle with even after Apartheid.

Ntando (focus group 1, 27 July 2019) said, "My father abandoned my brother and I." Nkululeko in Impendle (24 August 2019) said, "My father left us and never came back." Giroud in France (19 October 2019) spoke along similar lines, saying "He [my father] quickly told me, maybe I was in grade nine or grade ten, he said, "You are a man now, you need to fend for yourself." This confirms Ratele's (2010) argument that in unequal societies, avenues for black men are unevenly distributed, where a significant number of black men find

themselves without good prospects and the cycle continues over and over. For these participants there was recognition in the storyline and this made the stories to be relatable. The participants did not speak about how the storyline made them feel in terms of absentee fathers, but it did make them feel as if they were not alone in the situation as the storyline was relatable. The storyline of the absent fathers reveals dominant discourse of Zulu men in terms of past and current representations in terms Zulu masculinities.

The focus group participants held a negotiated reading of the encoder's preferred messages around post-struggle masculinity, where there was agreement in terms of the representation of some male characters as financially and emotionally unstable. Thibedi (interview, 8 April 2019) argued that *Uzalo* shows men, who are a result of Apartheid, men who are not progressive and unstable. At the same time, audiences can relate to this because these situations depict experiences familiar to the decoder.

Zulu men were among other groups of African men affected by the Apartheid regime in South Africa (Xaba 2001, Hadebe 2010). The far-reaching effects of Apartheid have left many men without confidence about how to coexist with other men, women and children (Ratele 2010). In the Chapter Five, one of the arguments made by the producers is that *Uzalo* shows the effects of Apartheid on Zulu men, which aligns with how the decoders of the text understood it. This also adds significance to issues surrounding fatherhood as they apply to Zulu men, since some have absent fathers in their lives.

South African television reveals how many black men fail to coexist with others and deal with situations (Luyt 2012). "[I]n *Uzalo*, Nkunzi, that time when Zekhethelo was hooked on drugs, he just shouted at her, he never sat her down, he never sat her down as a father" (Lindo, focus group 1, 27 July 2019). This shows the absence of an active father who avoid engaging in tough emotional situations. Other participants in the Imbali, Mpendle and France focus groups shared personal stories of how the selected soap operas show the absence of fathers, calling these a realistic representation of their own personal experiences as well as those of many other men.

On the other hand, the soap operas present male characters who, as part of a post-struggle identity, take responsibility for their actions, are sensitive and care for their families. They are men who have learnt from the Apartheid era and can now adjust into a contemporary space (Ntshangase, interview 13 March 2019, Ndlovu, interview, 12 June 2019). The groups enjoyed the post-struggle man that soap opera portrays. Ntando (focus group 1, 24 August 2019) mentioned, "Phunyuka is able to show his [say sorry and apologise] manhood. When he is in

the wrong, he is able to have the guts to go up to the family and explain what happened." At the same time, they expressed the desire to see characters who are more contemporary. "Njeza [male character] for me needs to show [growth, accountability, progression] that a young man [Zulu boy] can still open himself up to possibilities [education and make an honest living that does not involve crime and theft] even if he grew up poor" (Nhaka, Focus group 1, 24 August 2019). The group held the character of Njeza accountable for his actions.

They also expressed a desire for television programmes that show masculinities that are more contemporary and fewer villainous masculinities. Participants in groups 1 (24 August 2019), 3 (7 October 2019) and 5 (11 November 2019) spoke about how they enjoyed the three soap operas showing Zulu men in the aftermath of Apartheid holding positions that they were unable to hold in the past. This supports Buthelezi's (2008) argument that the media stream messages that promote a post-Apartheid era specifically for the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Black representation has shifted to show black individuals in a positive light in alignment with multiculturalism and transformation in contemporary South Africa (Tager 2010, Teer-Tomaselli 2015, Gibson *et al*. 2018). The next section explores how the focus group participants read the representations of a good Zulu man and a bad Zulu man is.

Good Zulu man vs bad Zulu man

Van der Watt (2007) and Clatterbaugh (1990) argue that the gender idea is by definition what a society believes men should be and that societal and cultural thoughts will differ in term of their general thoughts of what men should be like. Although this section is presented as binary oppositions, the discussion will also include the challenges to such a distinct division.

The focus group participants held a negotiated reading. The encoder and decoder shared similar ideas to a good Zulu man as one who was able to provide, look after his family, and lead his household. Education was also important to them – one of the groups liked to watch the character of Sibonelo, who was a Zulu man who had become a doctor. That amazed them, since they felt this was "rare and [did] not happen often for a Zulu man living in the townships to be a [medical] doctor" (Nzuzo, focus group 5, 11 November 2019). This may indicate an aspirational element in their decoding. There is a connection between aspiration and hegemonic masculinity (Howson 2008, 2014). The concept of aspiration is important in understanding contemporary hegemonic masculinity. Howson (2014:27) asserts that:

Aspiration represents the expression of the difference between what men can achieve and what men should achieve. More importantly, within a cultural situation, aspiration operates as a process (constituted by consciousness and practice) that enables the alignment of men's practices and identities to a goal that exposes achievement as always already heterogeneous.

The character of Sbonelo "was a gangster and a doctor" (Ndu, focus group 1, 27 July 2019) simultaneously which can account for the hegemony in aspiration. The participants were not pleased that the character ended up leaving his work as a doctor to pursue stealing cars and the gangster life. Their disappointment at this choice illustrates the audience's desire to see men in respectful professional jobs, which once again affirms that the participants held a negotiated reading to the text as they were disappointed by Sbonelo's behaviour to move from being a doctor to a gangster. This connects to Ndlovu (interview, 12 June 2019) and Ntshangase's (interview, 13 March 2019) explanations on the use of role modelling. However, the encoder's decision for Sbonelo to pursue a criminal life instead of a professional life and good financial status appears to contradict the use of role models.

The encoders and decoders agree that the constitution of a good man entails protection and responsibility. Nzuzo in France (11 November 2019) said good Zulu men were those who "are constantly trying to cover their families from embarrassment. [They] protect them from going hungry". Toto in Mkhambathini (19 October 2019) said good Zulu men were "able to prevent certain situations from happening, or even if they happen, he is able to solve them in the end, for them to go as planned."

The encoder and decoder agreed that a good Zulu man could protect his family from danger, carry the financial load for his family, provide leadership in difficult situations and be a loving man. This resonated with all the views expressed about being an actively present father. What the decoders describe as a good Zulu is progressive/ *war of position* because it produces aspirational hegemony. This is because it "engages people in a moral and intellectual way rather than forces people to comply (Howson 2008). Good men as a concept are considered men who are present and can provide and protect. Since absent fathers is a dominant discourse in South Africa (Ratele 2012, Fazel 2017 and Rabe 2006), this notion challenges how dominant Zulu masculinities operate in KwaZulu-Natal.

While representation of good Zulu men was read from a dominant position, readings of bad Zulu men were negotiated, which according to Hall (1997) is where the decoder acknowledges the message but does not completely accept it and reads it according to their own cultural

context and experience. A bad Zulu man was seen as one who lacked humility, who could not provide for his family, a father who abandoned his children, a man who abused women and one who failed to learn from his mistakes. These attributes subscribe to the hegemonic discourse of what a man should be, because hegemonic masculinity may be practiced internally and externally (Demetriou 2001, Connell and Messertschmidt 2005). External masculinities refer to the institutionalisation of the dominion of men over women, while internal masculinities refer to the dominion of men over other men (Demetriou 2001, Connell and Messertschmidt 2005).

Zuluness was described by participants as the inability to say, "I love you", but being able to provide protection. This links to the war of position discourse these thoughts about Zulu men are progressive and because "offers a new way to think about the nature of hegemony" Howson (2008:141). The groups described a Zulu man as one who is stubborn (Ndu, focus group 1, 27 July 2019, and Phili, focus group 5, 11 November 2019) and unable to articulate his affections, yet able to bring stability to the family. The attributes they described reinforce the hegemonic discourse of what a man should be (Connell 19995, Xaba 2001, Hadebe 2010), which is "the legitimacy of patriarchy, …the dominant position of men, the subordination of women and other men who are considered to be weak" (Connell, 1995:77). They were able to enjoy some good moments with the villain, while despise others. This concurs with Morell's (2001) argument that no single type of man exists, but rather different types of men that coexist. For example, the character of Ngcolosi in focus group one is described only doing "what's best for him mostly" and," it's more on him [self centred] and the empire that he is building" (Nhlaka, focus group 1, 27 July 2019). Later, in the same focus group, Mfene argues different thoughts on the same character. "Ngcolosi is a good man because he takes care of his family… everything that he does, he has his family in mind" (Mfene, focus group 1, 27 July 2019). This once again asserts Morell's (2001) argument in how fluid masculinity is and how it can change at any given moment. Some men may display or aspire to certain hegemonic traits but subvert others, this relates to binary oppositions and how each of the binaries may blur into each other. This will be explained in the section below on binary oppositions.

Male violence

The participants of this study hold an oppositional reading to the representation of male violence in the case studies. They did not agree with the depiction of Zulu men being displayed as violent and felt that men should not carry themselves violently. Mlindo's comment, in the

Imbali focus group, (27 July 2019) shows some of the sentiments that were shared in the various groups:

> *USibusiso lapha kwiSibaya kade ekhuluma noNkosikazi wakhe ethi unkosikazi wakhe "Ngishaye, ngishaye, ngishaye"* (Sibusiso there on *Isibaya*, they were talking… him and his wife, his wife was saying, "Beat me, beat me, beat me"). *Indlela yokuxazulula indaba, ayixazululwa hlampe ngokushaya ukuze umuntu abone ukuthi uright noma uwrong* (The way of solving issues, you do not solve issues by hitting someone or being violence towards other indivduals.) (Mlindo, focus group 1, 27 July 2019).

This study is similar to Mpanza's (2018) Masters study that conducted a reception analysis on audience interpretations of violence as represented on *Uzalo*. While his participants found that *Uzalo* showed realistic and unrealistic representations, in general they were unhappy about the representation of violence because they felt that it was overly sensational and exaggerated (Mpanza 2018). Similarly, the vast majority of the focus groups participants in this study were not happy about the representations of violence that are portrayed.

Siyabazi, from the France focus group (11 November 2019), argued that representations of violent Zulu men make them question their own manhood and whether they would act violently in certain situations:

> There is a message that [the producers] are portraying like, *i*-women abuse *yabo, bobuka umuntu wesilisa kuTV e-abusa umuntu wesifazane,* there's that thing kuwena ukuthi 'Would I do this?' kwi-situation enje 'How would I tackle it differently?' They're making us ask questions of who we are (There is a message that they are portraying like women abuse for instance, if you are watching a man on television abusing a woman, there's that thing in you that says 'Would I do this?' in a situation like that 'How would I tackle it differently?' They're making us ask questions of who we are.

The consensus amongst the participants was that they were against gender-based violence towards women and children. The did not deny that men, and specifically Zulu men, can be guilty of domestic violence, but as a group they asserted that violence in not acceptable in general. While the producers of the study do not necessarily want to show narratives that include violence, as explained in Chapter Five, they felt it necessary to include them as entertainment which is their "primary goal" (Thibedi, interview, 8 April 2019). Thibedi (interview, 8 April 2019) also affirmed that showing consequences of violence such as prison is a way that they educate viewers. This affirms two critical thoughts; the first is that storylines

may include implicit EE lessons. The second is in line with Mpanza's (2018) argument that stories with violent narratives that include gangster life draw large audiences. The next section focuses on how soap opera can be both educational and entertaining.

Entertainment Education

Although only an implicit preferred reading, it appears that the focus group participants believed the soap operas to be educational. Resoundingly, all the focus groups were adamant that they did not watch soap opera for entertainment purposes only, but that they also learned a great deal from the situations depicted on the soaps. While the producers did not deliberately produce educational content, their interviews revealed that they did believe some storylines could provide important pro-social lessons. Generally, the focus group participants held a dominant reading of these cultural and lifestyle 'lessons'.

John, from Impendle (24 August 2019), said, "As we were watching *Isibaya … Isibaya* teaches us about our culture as Zulus." Again, this is in line with cultural proximity in how viewers watch programming they can relate to. This is also in line with what the producers of *Isibaya* stated earlier about how *Isibaya* presents its storylines along cultural lines. Lindelani (focus group 3) said that "soap operas teach us about gender-based violence and social issues." Lindelani's (focus group 3, 7 October 2019) argument is in line with the producers' comments in Chapter Five about how part of their mandate being to educate the public on social issues, especially *Uzalo*, since it is aired by the public broadcaster. Smehle in the Mkhambathini group (19 October 2019) said soap opera showed him how families should act in situations. "It also teaches fathers to listen to their children," he said. Participants learned a great deal from the storylines presented to them.

EE shows Zulu men in a light that challenges dominant discourses of South African Zulu men, because it teaches audiences to think differently about certain topics, while enhancing current knowledge and understanding. Among the issues dealt with are drug and substance abuse, the abuse of women, how to lead their families, and how to deal with certain situations. Participants also felt that some of the characters showed them what they must not be, giving viewers a glimpse into the lives of others, and how they can act in adverse situations. This corresponds with what the producers of the soap operas mentioned, namely that their stories had an

educational element that viewers could understand. What emanated from the comments with the producers is that EE was not always intended but rather implicit or unintentional, which is described by Govender (2013) as a grey zone.

Themes specific to the decoding process

The next section incorporates new themes that are generated from the focus group discussions that are not discussed in Chapter Five. The new themes are not related to themes that emerged from the encoders, but inductively demonstrate important aspects of the interpretations of the masculinities produced on the three popular soap operas.

Homophobia

The majority of the study participants held an oppositional reading of the open representation of Zulu men, as they believe it incorrectly teaches young Zulu men that the behaviour is 'normal'. Homophobia is a serious issue in Africa (Ratele 2014). Men who are homosexual have been marginalised for many years, especially so in the African context (Ratele 2014). Representations of homosexual men on South African television challenge the dominant discourses of Zulu men in South Africa. This is because it's long been defined as unnatural or un-African to be homosexual (Ratele 2014). The focus group interviews showed homophobia towards non-heterosexual characters, which reflects the hegemonic masculinities in South Africa currently, as represented by the selected group of men. What the groups all had in common was the issue of homosexual Zulu men. They felt that homosexual men had "no identity" or suffered a "loss of identity" (focus group 1), and that homosexual Zulu men made them feel "angry", "annoyed", "bad", and "uncomfortable" (focus group 1, 27 July 2019; focus group 2, 24 August 2019; focus group 3, 7 October 2020; focus group 4, 19 October 2019 and focus group 5, 11 November 2019). Furthermore, the male participants compared homosexual men to mad people. One of the participants said, "Just as much as you want to know what is happening in the mind of a mad man, you want to know what is happening in the mind of the gay man" (Buthelezi, focus group 3, 7 October 2019). Phili in the France focus group (11 November 2019 argued:

> You never get used to it [representations of homosexual men on television] and it makes, what
> Nzuzo was saying, them being shown on television, that on its own, in my heart, in the depths

of my heart, I do not agree with it, I do not agree with it because our children will grow up knowing this and see it as right, that will in turn make me end up resenting my child because I know that it is wrong, as a parent I am unable to continue to watch my child do something wrong.

In spite of the fact that most men had openly stated that they watch soap opera (a known female genre), some of the men were marginalised for showing traits that are perceived to be feminine. In the Impendle focus group (24 August 2019), one of the respondents was teased, the assumption being that he was homosexual because he associated with women – even growing up, he played with girls, which was why he was marginalised. The men agreed that homosexual men made them feel extremely uncomfortable and that they did not know how to behave around then. All these accounts show that degrees of homophobia exist among Zulu men and the Zulu discourse. It also implies that "the 'homosexual' then, is what a real African man is not" (Ratele 2014:118).

Within the whole group of 30 men, only 3 men were not necessarily against homosexuality. However, they still felt that they did not want representations of it to be aired on television. Giroud's (focus group 5, 11 Nov 2019) explanation sums up this complicated perspective argued:

> No for me, I would like to be honest, my views are, most of the time they are different from society. I usually disagree with a lot of things, you will find that society accepts them, but I personally do not have a problem with a gay person, I even have friends that are gay but, the idea of being gay, no I do not like it, I do not like watching it on television. I do not like that, my younger siblings will watch that on television, I also know that it is wrong, you see that? God is against it but I accept gay people. I show them love. I also show them that I do not have a problem with them but I feel like I am being a hypocrite because of that, because I know that what they stand for I do not like it or I do not pass it. But they are also human (Giroud, Focus group 5, 11 November 2019).

This perspective is further complicated by the character of GC, played by the homosexual actor Khaya Dladla (discussed above). Dladla is popular in the South African entertainment industry and is prominent on social media platforms, with followers who are both heterosexual and homosexual men. This signifies that the representations of homosexual men in popular soap operas challenges the dominant discourses of Zulu masculinities.

Participants explained what they considered to be normal and abnormal forms of masculinity. They said it was 'natural' and 'normal' for Zulu men to look after their families, to discipline their children and to protect their wives. However, it was not natural for Zulu men to be gay, since this went beyond the scope of what was perceived to be normal and acceptable. This confirms that masculinity is a social construct that each and every community creates for themselves. Connell (2005) explains that since masculinity is a social construct, communities decide on what they agree with and disagree with. For example, the participants in this study spoke about how some men in their communities would frown upon the idea that men can be domestic and perform domestic duties such as washing dishes, duties traditionally associated with women. Demetriou (2001) and Connell and Messertschmidt (2005) argue this process as internally practicing masculinity.

Hegemony vs 'the sensitive man'

Fiske says hegemony does not exist in soap opera unless a villain is present (Fiske 1995). This is because soap opera challenges hegemonic masculinities since male characters in soap opera usually possess feminine qualities (Fiske 1995, Brown 1994). The contribution this study makes is that it shows that hegemony does exist in soap opera and in characters that are not necessarily pure villains.

The study argues two notions. The first is that there are representations of men in the selected soap operas that perpetuate and promote the feminine discourse, which is at the very heart of soap opera (Fiske 1995, Brown 1994). The second is that this study contradicts Fiske (1995) and Brown (1994) by claiming that the hegemonic man does exist in soap opera. For example, the leading male characters are hegemonic while simultaneously displaying their sensitive side. The case for the hegemonic man and how he is represented in these soap operas emerges from some of the responses of the participants that show soap opera in South Africa as also depicting the hegemonic man. This is shown in the *Uzalo* character of Nkunzi, when he disregards the feelings of MaNgcobo (his wife), when deciding to take another wife (focus group 1, 27 July 2019 and focus group 5, 11 November 2019). It is also shown in the *Imbewu* character, Zimele, when he makes decisions about his business, and again as well as in the *Isibaya* character, Zungu, when dealing with his businesses (focus group 1, 27 July 2019, focus group 3, 7 October 2019, and focus group 5, 11 November 2019). The hegemonic man is identified by the focus

groups as one who is able to lead his family, and one who possesses power. In *Uzalo,* the character of Nkunzi was seen as hegemonic, as was Zungu in *Isibaya,* and Zimele in *Imbewu.* The portrayal of men in *Uzalo, Imbewu and Isibaya* shows a clear dominance in male characters over female characters. This is an indication of just how deep hegemony runs to obtain and maintain dominion over women and other subordinate groups (Messertschmidt 2000; Demetriou 2001; Hadebe 2010; Connell 1985, 1987). Almost all the men in the respective soap operas are either in positions of power or are entrepreneurs who are doing well. Frequent disputes and issues of power unfold among the male characters and it is the most powerful men who win. This illustrates hegemony and how it wants to rule over other masculinities (Connell 1995). The participants of this study held oppositional positions towards the representation of hegemony but dominant positions towards the sensitive man.

Beyond being hegemonic, participants also revealed sensitivity to each of the male characters who loved their families. This demonstrates Connell's (2005) arguments that masculinity is not fixed and is constructed within a social context in the same way men use violence to reinforce their dominance, elevating male physical attributes and machismo (Connell 2005). This understanding helps frame the study in terms of understanding masculinity as a social construct and how this has been applied to interpret the data.

As discussed extensively in Chapters One and Two soap opera was originally created for the female viewer, because it plays on elements of gossip, never-ending storylines, and "sensitive men" men (Brown 1994: 48, Fiske 1995). But over time soap opera has extended its reach to cater for male viewers as well (Gauntlett and Hill 1999, Frisby 2002). All of the focus groups participants summed it up by stating that, historically, women would watch soap opera because of its association to romance, gossip and love. They also felt that women were more likely to be domesticated and could be expected to stay at home and watch television, while men would be outside playing soccer or doing other outdoor activities. However, over the years, soap opera has become diverse, catering also for men and their viewing preferences. One of the participants went as far as to say "we [men] do not even call them soaps, we call them drama" (Phili, focus group 5, 11 November 2019). In other words, soap opera feels like a drama to fulfilling a specific viewing need. The reason why audiences watch drama is for emotional arousal (Dunbar, Teasdale, Thompson, Budelmann, Duncan, van Emde Boas, Maguire, 2016; Armstrong, Tanaka, Reoch, Bronstein, Honce and Rozenberg 2015). Dunbar *et al.* (2016:10) and Armstrong's *et al.* (2015) explanation on emotional arousal as a motive to watch drama is

interesting for this study as it suggests a subversion of the stereotypical, as well as previously researched notion, that men tend towards genres such as the action film and series for various reasons. "Public opinion takes for granted that men strive to prove their manhood through compensatory consumption, using whatever symbolic props are available" (Holt and Thompson 2004:425). Men watch action due to the idealised model of manhood (Holt and Thompson 2004). Holt and Thompson's (2004) study is based in America. The finding that South African men participating in this study appear to prefer emotional arousal appears to contradicts what Holt and Thompson (2004) refer to as the ideology of heroic masculinity.

It is a significant finding that the one reason for watching *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya* is to satisfy the focus group participants' need for emotional arousal. However, as one of the inclusion criteria for focus group participation was that the men be frequent viewers of the soap operas, the finding cannot be generalised to all Zulu men. Most focus group participants explained that other men they knew believed it to be a woman's past time. Lindelani (focus group 3, 7 October 2019) told the story of playing soccer with his male friends and then telling them he was leaving to watch a soap opera. His friends were shocked and asked him stern questions about why he would be leaving a manly activity to engage in "something for women". Phili, (focus group 5, 11 November 2019), said that although he watches soap opera, he does not openly acknowledge the fact and looks down on men who leave a soccer game to watch soap opera. Some of the conversations around soap opera spilled over into other conversations that challenge Zulu masculinity. Kwanele in the Mkhabathini focus group (19 October 2019), was challenged by other men in his community for washing the dishes and sweeping the floor. He was asked why he engaged in "things that women do". In some of these communities, soap opera is seen as a strictly feminine genre designed for women, as are domesticated duties such as cleaning and cooking. This reveals that even in contemporary South Africa many still conform to divided hegemonic roles and behaviour for men and for women. Although hegemonic division of gender roles still exists, the need for emotional arousal may signify the move towards the sensitive man.

Polygamy

The study participants accept the idea of polygamous marriage but held oppositional positions on how it is represented on the soap operas. This may be because polygamy is closely linked to hegemony and the partisans had previously held oppositional positions towards certain hegemonic portrayals. Polygamy is a common practice in African culture (Baloyi 2013), and

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in the context of this study, within the Zulu culture. It has also found its way into all three of the case studies selected and participants had much to say about it. The character of Nkunzi in *Uzalo* has several wives, the character of Zungu in *Isibaya* has several wives and the character of Ngcolosi in *Imbewu* considered taking a second wife even without the consent of his brother and wife. The notion of polygamy in the case studies may be understood as what Connell and Messertschmidt (2005) and Demetriou (2001) argue as internally and externally practiced masculinities. External masculinities refer to the institutionalisation of the dominion of men over women, and internal masculinities refer to the dominion of men over men. The former is depicted in the soap operas *Uzalo*, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya,* when the male characters rule over female characters when they force their wives into polygamous marriages. In this way, the male characters externally institutionalise their dominion over their female counterparts. This shows the lengths to which hegemony may go to obtain dominion over women. The reason for this is because masculinity is a social construct and communities tend to adapt to social and cultural constructs.

To illustrate an example of internally practised hegemonic masculinity, the participants in this study were mostly homophobic, freely admitting to not being comfortable around homosexual men. But when around homosexual men on public forums, they behave normally because they understand that homosexuality is a socially accepted type of masculinity. Thus, the analyses of Demetriou (2001), and Connell and Messertschmidt (2005) that hegemonic masculinity can be practised externally as well as internally is an accurate analysis of Zulu masculinities for the purposes of this study. The general consensus among the groups was that polygamy is a common Zulu practice. One of the men in the France focus group (11 November 2019) mentioned that his father had more than one wife, so it was normal to him. Others indicated that they understood the practice but did not necessarily agree with it. In the Imbali focus group (27 July 2019), the men did not like how the character of Nkunzi introduced other women into his wife's life. In the Mkhabathini focus group (19 October 2019) a participant negatively described the character of Nkunzi as "having too much love" for women, which he found unacceptable. In general, the groups understood polygamy as being a generic Zulu practice at present, but they did not necessarily agree with some of the practices associated with it.

Some participants challenged the representations of polygamy as a common practice. This argument again links to Hall's (1993) encoder and decoder framework in that viewers may decode messages in several different ways (Livingstone 2000, Morley 1992). Hall (2013) also

argues that viewers read representations within language, cultural and social contexts. This is where cultural proximity becomes relevant to the study – while polygamy is a cultural practice, viewers shared different cultural values on the issue of polygamy. Several factors are embedded in their environment, age, religion and experiences, and shape their views (Castello 2010), along with sociological and cultural experiences (Hall 2013, Morley 1992, Livingstone 2000). The theoretical framework presented Fiske's (1989) concept of excorporation, which is closely linked to polygamy. An example of this is how in *Isibaya* and *Uzalo*, the wives of the leading characters are able to find a way to work with each other and tolerate each other in a polygamous marriage. It is also seen in *Imbewu*, when the leading male character brings a potential wife who is pregnant with his baby into his home, and how his wife and girlfriend had to find a way to coexist in the dominated system that Fiske terms excorporation. Thus, the dominant group are the male characters and the subordinate groups find ways to live in the subordination by creating subcultures (Fiske 1989). Tables 6.1 and 6.2 provide a breakdown of masculinities that are dominant (hegemonic) and masculinities that are subordinate.

It also needs to be noted that while the character of Nkunzi is depicted as violent and aggressive, some scenes show him as being gentle, sensitive and kind, an indication that his character is fluid and changes from one situation to another. This points to the fact that hegemony in itself is a social construct that is affected by many factors and can take different shapes depending on circumstances (Connell 2005, Butler 1999). The male participants in the study picked up on that and enjoyed viewing men who could be complex and have more than one dimension. They indicated that this was an accurate depiction of men in the real world.

Man as head of the home

Resounding approval came from all the focus groups for how specific characters such as Zimele, Phunyuka and Zungu in the soap operas were able to protect and look after their families and lead their homes. The participants held a dominant position on the representations of men being head of their homes and leaders of their families. One of the participants said, "From my thinking and from watching, in the time that I watch, they do show us that a man always has to remain the head of the household" (Thobelani, focus group 5, 11 November 2019). All the groups seemed to know an example of a good man who displayed hegemonic patriarchal tendencies. The groups associated the family man and head of the home with hegemonic traits such as the power that comes with owning businesses, the power to have more

than one wife, and the power to control the finances in a relationship. This diverges from Fiske's (1995) arguments. Fiske (1995) asserts that, in soap opera, women are granted a position of power and men are shown in situations of masculine lack. In these selected soap operas, men are not in positions of lack but rather in positions of power. Moreover, they are usually deviated by other men and are able to rise up from adversity. This attests to the fact that soap opera today from an international perspective has designated greater "prominence to men, adolescents and children" (Geraghty 1991:168). While Geraghty's (1991) argument is specific to international soap operas, it is significant to this study. As South African, soap opera also show prominence to male characters but the differences that emerge from her argument is that this study is focused on the cultural and local context of patriarchy, hegemony, polygamy and issues that pertain to masculinity on local soap opera. As well as how certain aspects of the representations of masculinity are either accepted, challenged or opposed by Zulu male audiences. It furthermore shows how the representation of men in South African soap opera is different from the global arena of soap opera. This speaks to the fluidity of the genre to suit the South African audience.

Binary oppositions

Binary oppositions are often used to organise data into categories (Lévi-Strauss, 1978; Fiske 1990). "A binary opposition is a system of two related categories that, in its purest form, comprises the universe" (Fiske, 1990: 116). They are used as a structuring narrative device in television and film, but seldomly reflect reality as identity is fluid and individuals can be both good and bad. Hobson (2003:106) argues that "Good characters and bad characters seem to be a redundant concept in relation to [soap opera] genre. As in real life, people are more complex than merely being good or bad, hero or villain; they are not that simple." Similarly, in her study of the two *Uzalo* matriarchs, Onuh 2017 found that:

> The two matriarchs were constructed within the binary oppositions of crime-Christian values, tradition-modern, religion-secular and good-bad. However, their portrayal is more complicated than a straightforward binary model, showing the complexity of the characters in their roles as mothers, wives, business-woman/church leader and de-facto heads of their homes.

Although some of this study's themes have been presented as, binary oppositions (struggle vs post-struggle masculinity, good vs bad Zulu man, hegemony vs the sensitive man). It does subscribe to the notion that "opposites" are simply structuring devices and tools to facilitate the presentation of data and that in both the real world and in soap opera world, they can blur

in order to present complexity. For example, the blurring between good and bad is represented in the character of Sbonelo as he was both a doctor and a thief demonstrating that representation involves a continuous negotiation.

Conclusion

This chapter thematically arranged and analysed the data retrieved from the male focus groups participants. It applies Hall's (1997) encoding /decoding model, with particular focus on how the decoder understands and interprets meaning. The interpretations reveal that masculinity is constructed within a social context.

The chapter illustrates that there are several more similarities than differences in the ways participants discussed masculinities from within the contexts of their communities. The groups generally agreed on their views about homosexual men, issues of masculinity, polygamy, patriarchy and hegemony. There are moments when there was a distinction between how each of the groups responded according to their location (township and rural). This speaks to cultural proximity in how one community (townships) responds differently to another (rural area) in the contexts of the social and cultural discourses they are exposed to[12]. The chapter indicates that viewers were able to interpret data according to post-struggle masculinity as opposed to struggle masculinity. They showed care for the law and were against gender-based violence and vulgar language. The viewers are products of post-struggle masculinity, which is discussed in detail in Chapter Three. Viewers were also able to analyse masculinity across time, cultural, social and individual factors (Messertschmidt 2000, Demetriou 2001, Hadebe 2010, Connell 1985, 1987, 1995, 2002, 2005). In essence, no one type – nor two types – of masculinity exist. Instead, an array of masculinities appears on a continuum in the form of hierarchies in relation to dominant and hegemonic masculinities. These masculinities emanate from historical and cultural settings (Connell 2005a:37).

Chapter Seven is a conclusion, summarising each of the chapters and findings retrieved as they relate to the research questions and objectives set by the study.

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[12] It was not a study objective to explore these similarities and differences according to geographic location, rather the difference in locations was to ensure a wide sample. However, this comparison could be a possible topic for further research (see Chapter 7).

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of each chapter and synthesises the study's main findings in response to the key study objectives. It also presents some suggestions for further research.

The main purpose of the study was to understand the production and consumption of Zulu masculinities in the South African soap operas *Uzalo*, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya*. While investigating the production and consumption, the study aimed to explore the representations of Zulu masculinities, the reason for such representations, how the representations were interpreted by Zulu male audiences as well as how the representations challenge, subvert and accept popular dominant discourses of South African Zulu men. While also noting the complexities and ambiguities that exist in Zulu masculinities. This was achieved by collating information from the soap opera producers through in-depth interviews in relation to information from focus groups that included men from varying parts of the KwaZulu-Natal region.

Summary of the chapters in relation to the research questions and objectives

Chapter One provided a comprehensive guide and summary into the understanding of Zulu masculinities in the context of television and, specifically, soap opera. The chapter also provides the study's problem statement. There is a paucity of literature that refers specifically to South African masculinities, and in particular studies that focus on masculinity as depicted on South African television and soap opera as well as the changing context of South African Zulu masculinities. As an introductory chapter, it outlines what is examined in the other chapters, namely the literature review, theory, methodology and analysis. An introduction of the three case studies is discussed in detail to account for why each of the soap operas were chosen for the study. It is critical to understand South African masculinity on television to fully comprehend Zulu masculinities in soap opera. The chapter provides a preliminary summary of this, and the literature review chapter expands on this.

Chapter Two discusses relevant literature embedded within the topics of masculinity and gender, then focuses directly on Zulu masculinities that are affected by colonialism, Apartheid and democratic South African (Xaba 2001, Hadebe 2010, Morrell 2001). As this study is based on representations on television, masculinities on television form part of this chapter, along with how black men are represented on television (Luyt 2012, Milton 2008).

The study zooms in on monolingual soap opera texts based in the KwaZulu-Natal province. It also discusses how soap opera was previously perceived as a feminine genre, but has since evolved to accommodate male viewers. Both Chapters One and Two address previous concerns by juxtaposing literature about the exploration and representation of masculinities in South African soap opera, comparing similarities and differences in representing South African masculinities across television channels.

Chapter Three presented the theory that guided the data collection and that was mobilised in its interpretation. This included masculinity (Connell and Messertschmidt 2005, Ratele 2016) gender (Nixon 1997, Butler 1999), cultural proximity (Castello 2010, Feasey 2008) and the active audience, including Hall's (1993) encoding / decoding model. Additions to the model, as presented by Morley (1992, 1980), Fiske (1987) and Livingstone (2000, 2008, 2013).

Chapter Four provides a methodological approach for the study starting with an explanation of its suitability within the interpretive paradigm. The study was designed as a reception analysis that included qualitative data collection of interviews and focus groups. It chapter also included a delineation of the sample strategy and rationale.

Chapters Five and Six identify the ways in which preferred representations of Zulu masculinities are decoded by male audiences. This was achieved by using a relational analysis to link the common themes that are discussed across the both the encoder and the decoder groups, as well as the presentation of themes that inductively emerged and are specific to the decoder group. Chapter Five focused on the encoders and their reasons for representing make characters in particular ways. Chapter Six focused on the decoders and how different groups of Zulu male audiences interpreted them.

Relevance of findings

This study attempts to avoid creating a version of the black male because there is no one version of it. Rather specificities of what it means to be a Zulu man have been taken into account. This position is culturally, linguistically and socially important to create a particular view on Zulu manhood. Across the world, communal experiences are extremely important parts of the appreciation of soap operas. Though not unique to the African experience, it certainly characterises television viewing in Africa in general and South African in particular. Despite this common knowledge, however relatively few studies critically take this into account, and therefore this study adds to understanding the specificities of viewing within the African context and the importance of creatives to be aware of the ways in which these habits shape the meanings of the programmes they produce.

Zulu men as an active audience

The study demonstrates that within the active audience theory, several factors need to be taken into consideration when studying audiences. These include sociological and cultural factors – in essence cultural proximity and cultural studies. The participants of this study confirmed that they were active viewers of the texts, by drawing on their personal and cultural knowledge, as well as their local surroundings to read the male characters presented to them on the soap operas. This study therefore makes a unique contribution to soap opera scholarship, because its objective is to investigate how male viewers observe and understand the representations of South African men on soap opera by Zulu men.

Indigenisation of soap opera scholarship

Cultural proximity, identification and indigenisation of culture are important aspect in audience studies (Castello, 2010, Gibson, *et al.* 2019). This study contributes to the indigenisation of soap opera scholarship because it focuses on local Zulu soap operas set within KwaZulu-Natal, using participants who were born and bred in the province, and whose first language is isiZulu. In this manner, it builds on local studies with local audiences. It helps understand aspects of the cultural proximity of soap opera, how it is represented on television and how local viewers

perceive it. This adds to growing scholarship by Milton (2008), Tager (1997, 2010), Teer-Tomaseli (2005); however this study's unique contribution is that its focus is on Zulu masculinities. Another critical element is how this study is set from a postcolony/decolonised approach, which has enabled marginalised groups to have a voice (Dyll 2020) in areas of representation, power and masculinities. These voices have enabled this research to be transformative in undersanding how Zulu men construct their undersanding of Zulu masculinities at a local level.

Dual representation of the soap opera genre

One of the unique factors of this study is that it specifically focuses on men, a group that was traditionally perceived as not being a soap opera audience (Gauntlett and Hill 1999, Frisby 2002). Soap opera has over the years evolved and expanded its audiences, and now accommodates men (Feasy 2008, Tager 2010, Milton 2008).

Soap opera has been viewed as a feminine genre (Brown 1994, Fiske 1987). However, this study argues that while it has traditionally been a feminine genre, within the South African context, soap opera takes on several dramatic forms that also draw in a male viewership. This study asserts that nearly as many men as women are now avid viewers of soap opera (Uys, 2018, Pooe 2020). Even the participants of this study referred to it as drama rather than soap opera. This poses the question of whether soap opera still is an exclusively a feminine genre – in South Africa, at least. One of the findings of this study is that while soap opera challenges normative and hegemonic forms of masculinity (Fiske 1987), this study adds to the knowledge in this respect by asserting that the selected case studies showcase a dual representation of the genre, which is the traditional and the non-traditional representations of patriarchy. This study contradicts Fiske (1995) and Brown (1994) by claiming that the hegemonic man does exist in soap opera. This is elaborated on in detail in Chapter Three. This speaks significantly to research question three, which aims to understand popular and dominant discourses within the representations of Zulu men.

Emotional arousal

This study determined that the participants of this research perceived soap operas to be like dramas. This indicates that for the participants of this study soap opera could be seen in duality, the first in its initial form as soap opera and the second as more of a drama. It also determined

that the participants watched for emotional arousal, which Dunbar *et al* (2016), argues to be accurate representation of what viewers expect to derive from drama programmes.

Entertainment Education

Within the selected soap operas, the encoders deliberately incorporated elements of EE that was directed at educating viewers. However, inadvertently there were several narratives that were not intentionally educational but decoders still derived educational meanings, particularly on the areas of culture, gender-based violence, language and social issues. This is not in all contexts and instances but this value was observed from this study. This speaks to the grey zone of EE (Govender 2013). The producers of this study did not deliberately produce educational content, but many of the storylines provided pro-social lessons. These pro-social lessons held a dominant reading from the participants.

Parasocial relationships

Parasocial relationships are very common for audiences as this helps them to engage with programming in a very intimate way (Pitout 1996). In each of the focus group, discussions the participants shared of how they felt drawn to certain characters because they reminded them of themselves and certain instances that they have gone through in life. This accounts for how men are now as engaged as female viewers on the soap opera genre, and highlights another aspect of their active reading.

Zulu men as absent fathers

One of the dominant discourses surrounding men in South Africa is the absent father (Ratele 2012, Fazel 2017). Men are absent for various reasons such as work taking them away from their families (Rabe 2006) and some just leave for their children for personal reasons. The participants of this study were affected by representations of fatherhood because of how their fathers were absent in their lives. The participants held a dominant reading of the representations of absent fathers, because they agreed with the messages encoded by the producers for this specific topic, because many of them have experienced not having fathers or knew people who did not have fathers present in their lives.

Storylines set in patriarchal standards

The producers of the selected case studies showed that South African soap opera is set on patriarchal standards as hegemonic masculinity. These representations centre on male characters as powerful businessmen and as the heads of their homes. It also shows that the patriarchal dominance is further entrenched because although there may be strong, independent female characters, such as MaNgcobo, in certain storylines they still submit to patriarchal standards (Thibedi, interview, 8 April 2019). The presence of hegemonic masculinity is evident on South African soap opera. For example, in *Imbewu* it is shown in the character of Zimele and how he is a leader in his home and his business. It is also shown in the character of Zungu in *Isibaya* in how he leads his businesses and wives. Hegemony is also present in *Uzalo* with the character of Nkunzi in how he leads his wives and carries himself in his businesses. The men held a negotiated position to patriarchy, because they appreciated how a man could lead his home and business but did not agree with some representations of polygamy in how men would treat women badly, as well as the representations of men being violent against women.

Intermediaries

Intermediaries do not hold any power to drive messages or encode messages on behalf of *Imbewu* and *Isibaya*, but are able to make comments and suggestions. The only soap opera were intermediaries hold significant power is *Uzalo*. This is because it is cast on a public service broadcaster and they have to fulfil certain mandates that influence public opinion (Teer-Tomaselli 2005). The significance of this in terms of representing masculinities and ideology is that, the ideological rationale of the SABC, as the public service broadcaster, has been to be more accommodating of other languages and culture, thus being more equitable (Teer-Tomaselli 2005). This can account to how constructions of masculinities are created on television.

Representations of Zulu men on soap opera

The constructions of Zulu masculinities on South African soap opera are multidimensional, which can account for the social construction of masculinities in general. This is because a male character may be aggressive and show hegemony in other narratives, as well as show sensitivity and kindness in others. South African masculinities show men who are undergoing the process of struggle masculinity (no regard for the law, aggressive). As well as post-struggle masculinities (responsible, sensitive, caring for their families). This can account for how masculinities have adjusted into a contemporary space as representations of men who have been affected by the Apartheid era are now learning to adjust (Ntshangase, interview 13 March 2019, Ndlovu, interview, 12 June 2019).

Stereotypes

This study identified both positive and negative stereotypes of the presentations of men on soap opera. The producers of *Imbewu* and *Isibaya* try to show positive role models of Zulu men, as opposed to showing them in a negative light. Their storylines, plots and narratives specifically try to create new messages and representations that show Zulu men in a positive light such as men who look after their families, men who protect women, and men who are able to lead. These positive representations subvert the negative stereotypes of Zulu men as absent fathers, male violence, and an inability to be sensitive. The participants held a dominant position in the positive representations of Zulu men but held an oppositional position of the negative stereotypes of Zulu men. This can account for the diversity that exists in the constructions of masculinities on South African soap opera.

A stereotypical image of Zulu men is that of a warrior (Buthelezi, 2008). Shaka Zulu is referenced as a hero for fighting and conspiring to kill and killing people and because of this reputation, he is a Zulu warrior. A stereotypical image of a Zulu warrior is one that continues, "to serve the harsh sentence imposed by shaka" (Buthelezi, 2008:31). It was quite surprising that this representation was not discussed from both the expert interviews and the focus group participants.

<u>Male violence</u>

The participants of this study held an oppositional reading to the depiction of male violence on television. They did not deny that there are men in society who are violent. Despite this, their standpoint was that they preferred that they did not have to view representations of male violence. The producers of the case studies did not necessarily want to show representations of Zulu men in violent positions either. However, they did so as a way to educate audiences on the ills of gender based violence, which is a serious concern in South Africa (Ellis, 2020).

Suggestions for further research

The encoders in this study acknowledge that oppositional readings of their preferred messages on masculinities may come into play. A suggestion for further research could be to investigate the measures (if any) that the producers take to alter representations of masculinities to accommodate viewers' thoughts. This could be a significant aspect of a study on the contemporary television industry in South Africa, since it would imply that the audience holds power in the negotiation of representation and meaning.

Further research could compare audience responses of both male and female viewers to understand their interpretations of masculinities on South African soap opera. This study purposefully used male respondents as a way of understanding a single group's (Zulu men) ways of interpreting Zulu masculinities. This was done, firstly, to gain an enriched and direct perspective from Zulu men on Zulu representations, and secondly, because soap opera has been considered a feminine genre but now caters for men as well. If further studies incorporate both male and female perspectives, they may be able to interpret Zulu masculinities widely as a social construct built on both feminine and masculine discourse on cultural proximity, along with sociological and cultural factors.

It was not a study objective to explore these similarities and differences according to geographic location, rather the difference in locations was to ensure a wide sample. However, this comparison could be a possible topic for further research. Further research could identify contrasts between how Zulu men from townships and Zulu men from rural areas interpret masculinities. This is a notion that emerged from the data and could be further investigation.

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Appendix A: Gatekeeper letter from Stained Glass Productions

Stained Glass
productions

9 July 2018

Dear Melba Nzimande (209534743)

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at Stained Glass Tv on the soap opera *Uzalo*, towards your postgraduate studies (Doctorate Degree). Provided that Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note that the title of your project is: *"An interpretive study of the representations of black masculinity in the South African soap operas, Muvhango, Uzalo and Isidingo"*.

Permission has been granted to:
Student: Melba Belinda Melissa Nzimande
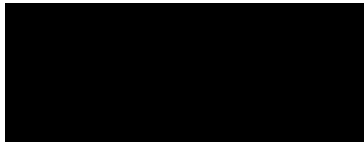Student Number: 209534743
Institution: University of KwaZulu-Natal (CCMS)

Student Supervisor:
Supervisor: Dr Lauren Dyll

Yours Sincerely

Mmamitse Thibedi

Directors:KobedIPokane | Gugulethu Zuma

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Appendix B: Gatekeeper letter from Word of Mouth Pictures

Word of Mouth Pictures (Pty) Limited

54 Auckland Avenue
Auckland Park,
Johannesburg
Gauteng
Tel 011 482 3000
Fax 011 482 3003
info@wompictures.co.za

21 August 2018

Centre for Communication, Media and Society (CCMS)
School of Applied Human Sciences
College of Humanities
Howard College Campus
University of KwaZulu Natal

Dear Melba Nzimande (209534743)

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at Word of Mouth Pictures on the soap opera *Imbewu: The Seed*, towards your postgraduate studies (Doctorate Degree). Provided that ethical clearance has been obtained. We note that the title of your project is: *"An interpretive study of the representations of isiZulu masculinity in the South African soap operas, Uzalo, imbewu and isibaya"*. As supervised by Dr Lauren Dyll at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

It is noted that you will be gathering data and constituting your sample by interviewing production (as and when they are available). We also note that focus groups will be conducted with *Imbewu: The Seed* audiences where episodes of *Imbewu: The seed* will be screened. This will be facilitated separately from production sites.

Data must be collected with due confidentiality, as stipulated in the Informed consent form to be provided to interviewees.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Duma Ndlovu

Word of Mouth Pictures (Pty) Ltd. Reg. No. 2009/xxxxxx/83
Managing Director D. Ndlovu

Appendix C: Gatekeeper Letter for The Bomb Shelter

b✳mb

The Bomb Shelter Film Company (Pty) Ltd
63 Main Street, Bordeaux
Randburg, Gauteng, South Africa,
PO Box 651452,
Benmore Gardens, 2010
T: 27 11 804 2552
F: 27 11 804 5115
E: jacobn@sizwemedia.co.za
Directors: Angus Gibson, Teboho Mahlatsi,
Desireé Markgraaff
Reg no. 2001/003062/07

6 August 2018
Centre for Communication, Media and Society (CCMS)
School of Applied Human Sciences
College of Humanities
Howard College Campus
University of KwaZulu-Natal

Dear Melba Nzimande (209534743)

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at The Bomb Shelter on the soap opera *Isibaya*, towards your postgraduate studies (Doctorate Degree). Provided that ethical clearance has been obtained. We note that the title of your project is: *"An interpretive study of the representations of IsiZulu masculinity in the South African soap operas, Uzalo, Imbewu and Isibaya"*. As supervised by Dr Lauren Dyll at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

It is noted that you will be gathering data and constituting your sample by interviewing production (as and when they are available). We also note that focus groups will be conducted with *Isibaya* audiences where episodes of *Isibaya* will be screened. This will be facilitated separately from production sites.

Data must be collected with due confidentiality, as stipulated in the informed consent form to be provided to interviewees.

Yours Sincerely

Mr Jacob Ntshangase
Mobile: 0835481196

Appendix D: Informed Consent Letter- English

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date: _____

Good day

My name is Melba Nzimande from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Durban. I am a PhD student at the School of Applied Human Sciences under the Centre for Communication, Media and Society (CCMS). For further confirmation on my credentials and this study my supervisor can be reached on the number 031 260 2298, email: dyll@ukzn.ac.za

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research in how black men are represented on soap opera in South Africa. The aim and purpose of this research is to investigate your thoughts on how men are represented on *Uzalo*, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya*. The study is expected to enrol 30 participants in KwaZulu-Natal. It will involve you watching various soap operas and being asked questions about them that will be recorded on a tape recorder and analyzing them for the research. This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee **(HSS/1585/018D)**

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at contact number, 081 5611 895 and email address: melba.gordon@ymail.com or the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES and SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Participation in this research is voluntary and you may withdraw participation at any point. In the event of refusal/withdrawal of participation you will not incur penalty or loss of treatment. Your confidentiality is guaranteed because you will be given a pseudonym on the

transcriptions. Your data will be kept save by the University of KwaZulu-Natal for 5 years, after that it will be destroyed.

CONSENT

I (_____) have been informed about the study entitled An interpretive study of the representations of South African IsiZulu masculinity in the soap operas, *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya* by Melba Nzimande

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study. I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to. I have been informed about any available compensation or medical treatment if injury occurs to me as a result of study-related procedures. If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at 081 56 11895 and email address: melba.gordon@ymail.com

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES and SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   **Date**

Appendix E- Consent letter IsiZulu

OKUKULEKELELA EKWAKHIWENI KWEFOMU LOKUVUMA

Umbhalo Wemininingwane Nokuvuma Ukubamba Iqhaza Ocwaningweni

Usuku:

Igama lami ngingu Melba Nzimande wase Nyuvesi yakwaZulu-Natali.

Uyamenywa ukuba ubambe iqhaza ocwaningweni olumayelana nemidlalo yamabonakude okubalwa kuyo Uzalo, Imbewu, Kanye neSibaya. Inhloso nempokophelo yalolu cwaningo ukuthi sizwe uvolwakho ngedlela obona ngaya okuthengiswayo ngabantu besilise kulemidlalo. Ucwaningo lulindeleke ukuthi luthinte isibalo sabantu abangam shumi amathatu nesithuba beqhamuke eKwaZulu-Natali.

Lolu cwaningo luhloliwe ngokwenqubonhle lwagunyazwa i-UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee **(HSS/1585/018D).** Uma kunezinkinga noma imibuzo/ukukhathazeka ungaxhumana nomcwaningi lapha Ku 081 561 1895, melba.gordon@ymail.com noma i- UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, kulemininingwane elandelayo:

EZOKUPHATHWA KWEZENQUBONHLE KWEZOCWANINGO EKOLISHI LEZESINTU ESIKOLENI SEZIFUNDO NGENHLALO YOMPHAKATHI

Ihhovisi LezoCwaningo, iKhempasi i-Westville

Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Ucingo: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

I-imeyili: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Imininingwane yakho yevikelekile. Yonke imibono yakho oyibekile, izogcinwa iNyuvesi iminyaka emihlanu, emva kwaloko izocishwa. Uyaqini

----

UKUVUMA

Mina _____ngazisiwe ngocwaningo labantu besilisa abatshengiswa emidlalweni kamabona kude. Lolu cwaningo luthina Uzalo, Imbewu neSibaya luka Melba Nzimande.

Ngiyakuqonda okuphokophelwe nokuyimigomo zalolu cwaningo. Nginikeziwe ithuba lokuphendula imibuzo mayelana nocwaningo futhi ngithole izimpendulo ezingigculisayo. Ngiyaqinisekisa ukuthi ukubamba kwami iqhaza kulolu cwaningo akuphoqelekile futhi ngingayeka noma yinini nokuthi lokho ngeke kube nomthelela kwengikuzuzayo engijwayele ukukuthola. Uma ngineminye imibuzo/ukukhathazeka noma kukhona engidinga kucaciswe mayelana nocwaningo ngiyakuqonda ukuthi ngingathintana nomcwaningi ku melba.gordon@ymail.com noma kulenombolo 081 561 1895.

Uma nginemibuzo noma ukukhathazeka ngamalungelo ami njengobambe iqhaza, noma ngikhathazekile nganoma yiluphi uhlangothi locwaningo noma abacwaningi ngingathintana nabe:

EZOKUPHATHWA KWEZENQUBONHLE KWEZOCWANINGO EKOLISHI LEZESINTU ESIKOLENI SEZIFUNDO NGENHLALO YOMPHAKATHI

Ihhovisi LezoCwaningo, iKhempasi i-Westville

Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Ucingo: 27 31 2604557 - iFeksi: 27 31 2604609

I-imeyili: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Ukuvuma okwengeziwe, lapho kudingeka khona

Ngiyavuma ukuthi kwenziwe lokhu:

Kuqoshwe ingxoxo yami/yeqembu   YEBO/CHA

_____   _____

Ukusayina kobambe iqhaza   **Usuku**

Appendix F- Expert interviews

The expert interviews questions addressed Research Question 1

Research question 1: What forms of IsiZulu masculinities are represented on the South African soap operas, *Uzalo, Imbewu and Isibaya*?

1. What do you (or the production/scriptwriters etc.) understand **contemporary** isiZulu masculinity to be or mean? How are these elements included in certain characters and why? (setting, status, wardrobe, discourses / script, role in the narrative)?
2. In what ways may it be important to show traditional Zulu culture as practiced today? Is this important in creating certain types of masculinities in *Uzalo/Imbewu/Isibaya*?
3. Does the production have freedom to create, write and present any time of male characters they wish, or does the SABC/eTV, DSTV make suggestions or request? Please explain.
4. Although characters are fictional, how do you think that your soap opera contributes to the way in which viewers understand IsiZulu masculinity in KwaZulu-Natal?
5. In what ways do you think that the construction of Zulu men in your soap opera is a representation of how Zulu men **actually** live in South Africa? Please explain.
6. What **intention** does the production have in presenting certain male characters? For example, is it purely to move the story line along, or is there any kind of pro-social intention, to impact positively on society? Please explain.
7. *Uzalo/Imbewu/Isibaya* provides entertainment for the South African viewer; do you think that there are educational elements that the show portrays? If so, what aspects about the **male characters** (and their interactions with other characters) are possibly educational?
8. How do you think that the Zulu male characters **presented** in *Uzalo/Imbewu/ Isibaya* are **different or similar** to a.) past presentations of Zulu masculinity? b.) other soap operas?
9. Do you think that your soap opera depicts some stereotypical views of Zulu men? Why/ why not?
10. Do you believe that your soap opera shows how men have adapted over the years through apartheid, if so how?
11. In what ways do you think that your soap opera may improve on the *overall image* of the representations of Zulu men (considering that in the past there have been some negative portrayals)? Or may there be characters that could present a problematic image? Please explain.
12. Do you think that the Zulu men that are shown in your soap opera a.) reinforce or b.) challenge the current behavior of how men behave in society?
13. Who is the **target audience** for Uzalo/Imbewu/ *Isibaya*?
14. Statistics show that black men watch your soap opera, why do you think that *some* men watch as much as women watch?
15. How are their (men) 'viewing needs' catered for in Uzalo/Imbewu/ *Isibaya?* In what ways may they be similar to or different from women?
16. Do you believe that viewers are able to understand the meanings intended for them? If yes, what makes you to believe that they receive the intended message? If no, why do you think that they do not receive the intended message?
17. There is literature that describes Zulu men as being able to share their emotions, as well as others that dispute the notion of emotional Zulu men. Do you think that your

soap opera shows men who are able to show their emotions or men that are not able to show their emotions? Why do you state this and which characters?

Appendix G- Focus group questions

Research Question 2: How are the representations of South African Zulu masculinity on *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya* interpreted by Zulu male audiences from different socio-cultural backgrounds?

1. How often do you watch the selected soap operas?
2. Which of the three soap operas is your favourite and why?
3. Why do you watch these soap operas, and keep watching?
4. Who do you watch soap opera with?
5. Compared to what you may have seen in how Zulu men have been represented on television in the past, how are those representations a. similar and b. different to the type of Zulu men you see on *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya.* Please give me an example.
6. What message or advice could you give the producers of the soap operas?
7. What are your general perceptions of the men in *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya*? Please explain.
8. What characters for you represent a good Zulu man and a bad Zulu man, give examples (Success, Aggression, Patriarchal, Emasculation, Insecurities, Humility, Gentleness). What evidence supports it (setting, status, wardrobe, discourses / script, role in the narrative)?
9. Why do you think that the men are represented in this way?
10. After watching *Uzalo, Imbewu and Isibaya,* what do you like about the men that you see in the soap opera and why?
11. What do you dislike about the men on *Uzalo, Imbewu* and *Isibaya*? What is your reason for this?
12. What do you think are the similarities between the men in Uzalo, *Imbewu* and *Isibaya*?
13. What do you think are the differences between the men in *Uzalo, Imbewu and Isibaya*?
14. Do you watch these soap operas for entertainment only? Or do they also teach you certain things? If so, a.) What is entertaining? b) What do you learn?
15. Do you think that soap opera reflects some of the men that you encounter in reality? Do you believe that soap opera reflect some of the realities of life for Zulu men today, how?
16. Do you think that Zulu men in KZN today have similar experiences to the men on these soap operas? How may these experiences be similar / different?
17. Can you identity yourself or situation with one of the men on these soap operas –if so, which character/s and please explain

Research question 3: In what ways do these representations subvert, challenge or accept, affirm popular and dominant discourses of South African Zulu men?

1. Do you believe that the way men shown on the selected soap opera behave like the general male men in society?
2. Do you believe that the way that black men shown on the selected soap operas should be the way that men behave? Please explain.
3. Do you think that the way that men are shown on the selected soap opera shows says anything about the changes (probes: colonization, apartheid, mining labor system, fatherhood) in South African society?
4. What do you think that the production managers of these soap operas wanted you to see and understand about Zulu men today when they produced their soap operas?

5. Do you agree with the messages that the producers of the soaps are sending you through your viewing?
6. Do you feel like the male characters on the selected soap operas impact on your life in any way? If so, could you please explain or give me an example.
7. Do you think that soap operas were designed specifically for women? Or does it also accommodate you as a man?
8. What are your thoughts of Zulu gay men on television?

Appendix H- Demographic Distribution of soap opera viewers from January-March 2018

DEMOGRAPIC DISTRIBUTION OF SOAP VIIEWERS : Ave Jan-Mar 2018

Base: All Individuals (4+)

	Channel	SABC 1
Profile Header		UZALO
Gender	Male	43%
	Female	57%
Age Groups	4-6	6%
	7-10	8%
	11-14	8%
	15-24	17%
	25-34	21%
	35-49	21%
	50-64	13%
	65+	6%
Ethnic Group	White	0%
	Coloured	3%
	Indian	1%
	Black	96%
LSM Group	LSM 1	0%
	LSM 2	0%
	LSM 3	1%
	LSM 4	8%
	LSM 5	24%
	LSM 6	40%
	LSM 7	17%

	LSM 8	6%
	LSM 9	3%
	LSM 10	1%
Watch via DStv	No	70%
	Yes	30%
Province	Western Cape	7%
	Northern Cape	1%
	Free State	6%
	Eastern Cape	13%
	KwaZulu Natal	23%
	Mpumalanga	8%
	Limpopo	12%
	Gauteng	24%
	North West	6%
Lang	Nguni	57%
	Sotho	39%
	Afr	3%
	Eng	1%