

**An investigation into how Zimbabwe's Bulawayo viewers
negotiate the gay storyline in *Generations***

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Master of Arts Degree
In Journalism and Media Studies.

Rhodes University

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Dedication

*In loving memory of my daughter Ziyanda Salome Ndlovu
whose short life left an indelible mark in our lives.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Larry Strelitz for his guidance, counsel and patience through this arduous journey. I appreciate your continued support and insistence that I will get there even when I felt like giving in. I have definitely gained invaluable insight into this field through your guidance and I will forever appreciate this.

Thank you to my family: my husband Vulindlela for your unwavering support, believing in me, for your understanding through all the travelling and absence from home to pursue my studies. You are priceless! To my daughter Vuyelwa, for understanding when mom was too busy to watch all your favourite cartoons with you. I love you so very much.

To my mum I am always humbled by your trust and belief that I can do better and that I can achieve whatever I aspire to do. It keeps me motivated and I am grateful to have such a wonderful cheerleader in my life. To my sister Sylvia, brothers Sidalubuhle and Israel, my sisters- in-law Kwanele, Hlengiwe and Nomsa thank you for keeping me motivated and focused.

My deepest thanks to fellow student and friend Carlyne Lunga who did her best to help whenever I came knocking. To the Breakfast Club you ladies are my rock and special thanks to my respondents who gave of their time, thoughts and helped to make this research possible.

May Jehovah bless you all!

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to evaluate how aspects of religion, culture, political context, education and class, amongst others, impact on the manner with which Zimbabwe's Bulawayo residents make sense of media messages which explore issues of homosexuality, as encountered in the soap opera *Generations*.

This is against the backdrop of Zimbabwean legislation, such as the Sexual Deviancy Act, which criminalises homosexuality and the state victimisation of gays and lesbians in this country. The inclusion of homosexual liberties was rejected by all political parties and both public and private media in the recent drafting of a new rule of law. The legislation, including gay rights exclusion in the new constitution, and state action has perpetuated an impression that Zimbabwe is a deeply homophobic society.

As a starting point the study examines the claims of the media imperialism thesis which supposes an all-consuming power of western media and next examines Straubhaar's thesis of 'cultural proximity' which argues that there is often a preference for regional media, which is proximate to viewers' local culture, language and identity. The study explores the prominence of South Africa as a regional media player and that proximate identities with some cultures in that country have played a role in drawing some Bulawayo viewers to South African television, as they feel slighted by Zimbabwean media.

Utilising qualitative research methods, the study explores whether or not the representation of gay images on this South African soap opera provides viewers with opportunities for 'symbolic distancing'. The concept highlights that when people have insight into lifestyles that are different from their own, they use that as a resource to critically analyse their own lives and cultural understandings. The study evaluates if Bulawayo viewers' sentiments towards homosexuality has been challenged and changed through their interface with the soap opera, *Generations*.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| CONTENT | PAGE |
|------------------------|------|
| Dedication..... | i |
| Acknowledgements..... | ii |
| Abstract..... | iii |
| Table of Contents..... | iv |

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1. Background of the study..... | 1 |
| 1.1.1 General Background..... | 1 |
| 1.1.2 A personal note..... | 3 |
| 1.2 Objectives of the study..... | 4 |
| 1.3 Significance of the study..... | 5 |
| 1.4 Thesis outline..... | 5-6 |

CHAPTER TWO: THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Introduction..... | 7 |
| 2.1 Zimbabwe..... | 7 |
| 2.1.1 Brief Country profile..... | 7 |
| 2.1.2 Politics and Governance..... | 7 |
| 2.2 Broadcasting in Zimbabwe..... | 9 |
| 2.2.1 Broadcasting and the law..... | 9 |
| 2.2.2 Situation Currently Prevailing in Zimbabwe..... | 13 |
| 2.2.3 Bulawayo and the Ndebele ethnic group..... | 15 |
| Conclusion..... | 17-18 |

CHAPTER THREE: SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH: HOMOSEXUALITY AND SOAP OPERAS

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction..... | 19 |
| 3.1 LGBTIQ..... | 19 |
| 3.1.1 Discourse of sexuality..... | 19 |
| 3.1.2 Gay representation in the media..... | 20 |
| 3.1.3 Gay identity in Africa, Zimbabwe and portrayal in the media..... | 22 |
| 3.2 Soap Opera..... | 25 |
| 3.2.1 Brief background..... | 25 |
| Conclusion..... | 28 |

CHAPTER FOUR: THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction..... | 29 |
| 4.1 Globalisation..... | 29 |
| 4.2 Media Imperialism Thesis..... | 30 |
| 4.2.1 Ethnographic critique of the media imperialism thesis..... | 31 |
| 4.2.2 Passive-Active Audience..... | 35 |
| 4.2.3 Symbolic Distancing..... | 36 |
| 4.3 Regional Media..... | 38 |
| 4.3.1 Glocalisation..... | 40 |
| 4.3.2 Regional Media in Africa..... | 41 |
| Conclusion..... | 43 |

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction..... | 44 |
| 5.1 Research Procedure..... | 44 |
| 5.1.1 Qualitative Research and Audience Studies..... | 44 |
| 5.1.2 Reception Analysis..... | 46 |
| 5.2 Sampling and Research procedure..... | 47 |
| 5.2.1 Qualitative Content/Thematic Analysis..... | 49 |
| 5.2.2 Observation..... | 50 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| 5.2.3 Focus group Discussion..... | 51 |
| 5.3 Data Analysis procedure..... | 54 |
| 5.4 Limitations of the study..... | 55 |
| Conclusion..... | 55 |

CHAPTER SIX: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction..... | 56 |
| 6.1 Popularity of South African television..... | 56 |
| 6.1.1 Cultural proximity and attraction to South African television..... | 59 |
| 6.2 Popularity of Generations..... | 62 |
| 6.2.1 Cultural proximity as attraction to Generations..... | 62 |
| 6.2.2 Viewing of Generations as a social process..... | 64 |
| 6.2.3 Routine watching of Generations..... | 65 |
| 6.3 The gay representation in Generations..... | 67 |
| 6.3.1 Constructions of masculinity..... | 67 |
| 6.3.2 Camera use and intimacy..... | 70 |
| 6.3.3 Gay couple's social positioning and community..... | 71 |
| 6.4 Bulawayo viewers' reading and perceptions of the gay story-line..... | 72 |
| 6.4.1 Social structures and meaning making..... | 73 |
| 6.4.2 Views on different masculinities in Generations..... | 76 |
| 6.4.3 Perceptions on social positioning and community..... | 79 |
| 6.4.4. Audience views on gays and intimacy..... | 81 |
| Conclusion..... | 83 |

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction..... | 84 |
| 7.1 Summary..... | 84 |
| 7.2 Scope for further research..... | 86 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------|
| BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES..... | 87-101 |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------|

APPENDICES

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Annexure A: Thematic questions..... | 103 |
| Annexure B: Episode Visual and verbal breakdown..... | 104-115 |

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This study investigates meanings that Bulawayo viewers make when they interface the gay story-line in South African soap opera, *Generations*. This critical reception research evaluates emancipatory opportunity that may be provided for Zimbabweans through watching media from another country. It also unravels motivations that influence preference for South African over Zimbabwean television.

The media imperialism thesis, particularly its ethnographic critique forms the basis for this study. The media imperialism thesis highlights the all-consuming power that media from the centre exerts over countries in the periphery (Boyd-Barrett 1977, Tunstall 1977, Thompson 1995, and Schiller 1969). However the ethnographic critique of this thesis brings out the need to focus on particularities of meanings that people make at the point of reception, not generalised for all countries in the periphery (Ang 1991, Seiter 2004).

Highlighting the media imperialism thesis and its ethnographic critique helps frame the aspect of regional media in the African context. I bring out how South Africa has emerged as a prominent player in the region and the cultural proximity theory aids in understanding the popularity of this country's media for Bulawayo viewers (Straubhaar 2000). Thompson's (1995) symbolic distancing concept helps understand how watching South African media, showing a gay liberal environment, may have provided emancipatory opportunities for Zimbabweans living in a homophobic society.

In this chapter I will highlight the general background to the study as well as the objectives and significance of this research. Finally I will highlight the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Background of the study

1.1.1 General background

Zimbabweans are believed to be homophobic, an assertion supported by passing of the Sexual Deviancy Act of 2006 that criminalises sexual relations between people of the same sex. The country drafted and passed a new constitution in 2013. During the consultative process, the inclusion of gay and lesbian rights in the new rule of law triggered extensive debate (Makombe 2010). There was a concerted negative reporting by government and private media against the inclusion of gay rights in the constitution. For example between

February 2010, when the constitution consultation process began, to February 2012 around twenty-four news articles appeared both online and hard copy newspapers, all condemning the inclusion of gays and lesbian rights in the constitution (Mabvurira et al 2012).

The principals of the Government of National Unity (GNU), President Mugabe and Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, resisted the initiative citing strong views against gay and lesbian rights by the public (*Mail and Guardian* 26/03/10). The country's consultative body on the constitution, Copac, conceded they would not be consulting on the subject. As a result the new constitution does not make any provision for gay and lesbian rights.

Debates about gays and protection of their rights in Zimbabwe are usually enmeshed with political discourse, often for political gain (ilga.com 2012; iglhrc 2003). President Mugabe has openly condemned gays and lesbians in the media, saying that 'they do not have any rights' and are worse than pigs and dogs (iglhrc.org; Bulawayo 24.com 2012). Keith Goddard, the late founding member of Gays and Lesbian Association of Zimbabwe (GALZ) noted that homophobia has increased in the country; a situation that he said was perpetuated by President Mugabe's stance against the group (BBC news 1998). Epprecht (1998) notes that homophobia (and violence against gays) displayed by politicians is often perpetuated by that group. Ordinary Zimbabweans' reactions to homosexuality, he expands, are "rarely as violent or pervasive as it is in many western countries" (1998: 633).

These developments come at a time when many urban Zimbabweans have resorted to watching South African television rather than local Zimbabwe Broadcasting Television (ZTV). A Zimbabwe All Media Products and Services (ZAMPS) survey shows that over 50 percent of the country's population watch SABC broadcasting using free-to-air services (zarf2013). This indicates that there is a sizable number of Zimbabwe's urban population that has access to South African television. This move to SABC is due to poor programming and continued politicisation of local media content by Zanu (PF), which controls the country's broadcasting sector (Moyo 2004, Masuku 2009).

The South African constitution provides for gay and lesbians rights, although in reality the group is still stigmatised and are often victims of hate crimes (Mazibuko 1998, Polders et al 2006). Nevertheless homosexual representations are evident in that country's media, including the soap opera *Generations* on SABC 1 which features a gay married couple in the narrative line.

Generations is popular amongst urban Zimbabweans (Masuku 2009). This study intends to understand how viewers make sense of their interaction with the gay couple in the soap opera, given the perceived homophobic context of its reception. In particular it endeavours to explore if such textual encounters have played a role in either reinforcing or challenging assumed homophobic beliefs.

1.1.2 *A personal note*

I was drawn to the study through personal experience and events that unfolded in Zimbabwe's social and political environment. I grew up in a fairly sheltered environment and my first encounter with the reality of 'otherness' in sexuality was only after completing high school.

I signed up to a voluntary organisation providing life skills, guidance and counselling to Matabeleland South rural high schools. At the organisation's training retreat I met a friend, a fellow volunteer, who later confided in me that he is gay. After about a month we were despatched to different communities, mostly around Gwanda district.

A few months after our placements, my friend's sexuality was discovered amid allegations of inappropriate relations with students. He was subsequently dismissed without further investigation into the allegations. This situation forced me to reflect on what informs assumptions about homosexuality and treatment of gays (and lesbians) in Zimbabwean society. This question was cemented by media reports of popular personalities such as Frank Malaba (a soap opera star) and Kevin Ncube (Radio DJ) who left the country and came out of the closet in South Africa and the U.K respectively. Like my friend, who left the country soon after this incident, these men found solace in liberal communities they moved to.

On the other hand, the Zimbabwe media landscape, particularly in broadcasting, has not experienced significant changes since independence. Television and radio content is highly politicised and South African television seems to be gaining popularity. Services offering South African television such as DSTV are in high demand. I recall the 2012 festive season in Harare at the Multichoice offices when they ran out of decoders due to high demand. Customers were told to keep checking as they were not sure when they would get new stock.

One man in the queue approached the sales clerk and asked "Why did you guys fail to stock enough for the festive season? I am sure you are aware how people hate ZTV but do you know how painful it is to watch that channel? Please get your act together and bring more

decoders”. The desperation mixed with pleading in that man’s voice was an indication of the displeasure that people had in the national broadcaster.

Discussions on South African programmes such as *Generations* were common and at work it was a daily ritual for people to discuss the previous night’s episode during tea break. Descriptions of characters’ costumes and hairstyles were common and often used as a point of reference. It was quite natural for one to call their hairdresser and say “Make sure you watch *Generations* tonight because I need you to plait the same hairstyle that so and so has”.

This attraction to South African television is also deeply rooted in the socio-cultural and ethnic dynamics in Bulawayo. As a Ndebele speaker I am aware of language similarities between my mother tongue and South African Nguni languages: Zulu and Xhosa in particular. I could easily understand that country’s programmes, especially in the stated two languages. On the other hand, as Zimbabwe was experiencing economic challenges, quite a number of friends and relatives (like my sister) relocated to South Africa to seek greener pastures. Watching the soap opera was not only to turn away from a politicised media, it helped find common ground on issues that my sister and I could talk about.

At Rhodes University I was introduced to debates and criticisms of the media imperialism thesis. Straubhaar’s exploration of the Latin American experience and the cultural proximity thesis brought to mind the popularity of South African television to Zimbabweans. I wondered if it was possible for that country’s media to be the continent’s regional media ‘imperialist’. Therefore I sought to find out what really motivates and informs Bulawayo viewers’ attraction to that country’s media? What meanings do they make from the depiction of gays in *Generations* and if they are enlightened about homosexuality?

1.2 Objectives of the study

This study is primarily aimed at understanding how viewers in Bulawayo decode media messages which explore issues of homosexuality, as encountered in *Generations*. As the process of reception may have a bearing on the meanings people make and the acceptance/rejection of homosexuality, I also explored if the soap opera provided an opportunity for these viewers to transcend the dominant homophobic ideology that possibly exists in the country. Using focus group interviews, I also explored the attraction to South African television and motivations for this attraction as informed by the cultural proximity theory.

1.3 Significance of the study

Representation of gays in western media has gained increased prominence. Between the early 1970s and late 1980s there was a concerted symbolic annihilation of gays and lesbians by the media (Gross 1984). When represented, particularly in the late 1980s, it was in a negative light, for example to highlight HIV/AIDS issues. In this context gays and lesbians were often represented as the main source of the pandemic (Gross 1984, Geraghty 1995).

There is a dearth of literature on gays' representation in the media and their general existence in Zimbabwe. The reason is that "scholars in Zimbabwe have been seriously affected by myths and taboos around the subject" (Mabvurira et al 2012:219). This study attempts to add an African (Zimbabwean) perspective on gay representation in the media. It seeks to understand how people respond to these presentations, the meanings they make from these texts and how they relate it to their own lived experience.

Much research has been done on Zimbabwean broadcasting, particularly its polarisation and lack of alternative voices (Malleus 2012, Raftopoulos 2009, Mano 2009, Moyo 2012). This study will add to these scholars knowledge pool and give a voice to Zimbabweans themselves on what motivates their 'flight' to foreign media and how they make sense of these messages as they interpret them at a different point from their conception. My intension is to "provide a holistic understanding of research participants' views and actions in the context of their lives overall" (Snape and Spencer 2003:7). As with any other qualitative research, findings obtained in this research sample are not representative of the whole of Bulawayo. Rather I attempt to provide an "intrinsic case study" whereby "no attempt is made to generalise beyond the single case" under review (Silverman 2001: 249).

1.4 Thesis Outline

This research has a total of seven chapters; the first chapter provides an introduction to the study, the objective of the research, its significance and the outline of the thesis. Chapter Two provides the context of this research. It highlights the media, socio-economic and political state of Zimbabwe's recent past and the situation prevailing. It also highlights ethnic contestations that have a bearing on preference for South African television over ZTV. The third chapter further provides a background to the study, focusing on homosexuality, their representations in western media and Zimbabwe and highlights current conditions for the

group. The chapter also highlights the soap opera genre and evaluates strategies used in their production.

Chapter Four explores the theoretical and conceptual foundations that inform the study, the springboard being the ethnographic critique of the imperialism thesis, interrogation of cultural proximity theory, the concept of symbolic distancing and the passive-active audience debate. The fifth chapter highlights data gathering procedures detailing reasons for adoption of qualitative inquiry and the use of qualitative content/thematic analysis, observation and focus groups as the three step design of this research.

In the sixth chapter I present and analyse research findings, highlighting the popularity of South African media through the lens of cultural proximity theory. I also discuss factors that attract Bulawayo audiences to *Generations*. The gay representation in the soap opera is explored, highlighting salient themes which show their framing and the dominant reading of this portrayal. Lastly I evaluate structural features that impact on audience readings and then explore their preferred readings. Chapter Seven presents the research summary and outlines opportunities for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

The social context of the study

Introduction

In attempting to understand the meanings that Bulawayo viewers make when watching the gay couple in *Generations*, it is essential to evaluate the context that frames the issue under review. In this chapter I explore the social, political, historical and economic factors which lend understanding to the situation prevailing in Zimbabwe. Political factors that have an impact on the study will be evaluated and I will outline the history of the Ndebele ethnic group, tracing it to the situation obtaining about the group.

2.1 Zimbabwe

2.1.1 Brief Country Profile

Zimbabwe has a population of about 13 million people (zimstat 2012) and shares its borders with four countries: South Africa, Botswana, Zambia and Mozambique. Zimbabwe has eight provinces and the recently adopted constitution recognises 16 official languages. Shona and Ndebele are the major ethnic tribes. Harare is the capital city, located in Mashonaland region where mainly Shona language is spoken and Bulawayo, the second capital, is in Matabeleland and Ndebele language is widely spoken.

2.1.2 Politics and governance

This section will highlight the political and government conditions in Zimbabwe. This is imperative to help frame the political contestations in the country and understand events which led to drafting of the new constitution. It will also point to how the draft was largely a political settlement than a document meant to protect the rights and liberties of Zimbabweans (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012).

Zimbabwe attained its independence from Britain in 1980 and has since then been ruled by Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (Zanu PF) and its leader President Robert Mugabe. Since year 2000, the ruling party has faced a stiff challenge from the Movement for

Democratic Change (MDC) party, led by Morgan Tsvangirai. In 2008, Tsvangirai won the presidential election but failed to get '50 percent plus one' majority vote required for an outright win, leading to an election run-off (Mlambo and Raftopoulos 2009). Violence broke out before the run-off elections and it was largely attributed to the actions of Zanu PF militants against MDC supporters (Matyszak 2010). Tsvangirai withdrew from the election, citing an uneven playing field for credible elections to take place. Mugabe declared himself a winner after Tsvangirai's withdrawal (Moore and Raftopoulos 2012).

Election observers sent by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) declared that conditions prevailing in the country, leading to run-off elections, were violent and suppressive of the opposition. As a result the regional body's heads of state did not recognise Mugabe's win by default. Thabo Mbeki (South African president at the time) was tasked by SADC to mediate a power sharing deal between MDC (now made up of two formations led by Tsvangirai for MDC-T, and Welshman Ncube for MDC) and Zanu PF (Matyszak 2010).

The inclusive government was formed in January 2009 and "it left Mugabe very much in control of the security apparatus of the state, but also gave the MDC a share of political power" (Mlambo and Raftopoulos 2010:230). The new government, also referred to as the Government of National Unity (GNU), pledged to transition the country to a democratic republic by enacting progressive laws, implementing media reforms and overhauling police and judiciary system in order to create a level playing field for future elections.

The overhaul included the formulation and adoption of a new constitution (Copac 2009). The country's 1979 Constitution in use at that time, was a negotiated settlement between the colonial government and freedom fighters (Campbell 2003). Zanu PF had effectively used its dominance in parliament over the years to implement up to seventeen constitutional amendments on the Lancaster document, so that it was often referred to as a "Zanu PF constitution" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012).

In year 2000 an attempt was made by Zanu PF to redraw the constitution. The Constitution Commission was accused of failing to factor people's submissions in the draft document (Dorman 2003). As a result, 54 percent of the 1.3 million voters rejected the draft and this was attributed to the "broad coalition of interests" such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the MDC against the ruling party (Mlambo and Raftopoulos 2009: 210). The rejection was perceived not only as a denunciation of a faulty document, but a concerted rebuff of the ruling party (Campbell 2003).

In February 2010 renewed efforts were made by the GNU to draft a constitution, it was overwhelmingly supported through a March 2013 referendum. Gay rights inclusion in the constitution was mooted but not implemented (Mabvurira et. al. 2012). The constitution making process and its adoption has been criticised for being polarising and politically expedient (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012).

2.2 Broadcasting in Zimbabwe

2.2.1 Broadcasting history and the law

Zimbabwe inherited a legacy of an oppressive media frame from the Rhodesian government (Frederikse 1982). The Rhodesian Front ruling party used the media in its fight against Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) in the liberation war. Television operations were placed under the Ministry of Information and party sympathisers were appointed to positions of influence (Saunders 1999). The media were used to disseminate the dominant hegemonic ideals of the Rhodesian Front (Mano 2009).

At independence Zimbabwe inherited aging equipment from the Rhodesian government (Chiumbu et. al. 2009). A BBC team evaluated the country's broadcasting service, trained new staff members and made recommendations to the broadcaster: Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC). The BBC team, according to Moyo, stated that the partisan control of the broadcaster by the Rhodesian Front, had adversely affected its operations. They emphasised the need to liberalise airwaves and keep it insulated from government interference (Moyo 2009:14).

Print media was liberalised through having an independent board, the Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust (ZMMT) which was tasked to oversee its operations. However, this was not extended to broadcasting. Although most recommendations made by the BBC team were implemented, liberating the airwaves was over-looked (Moyo 2009). A colonial law called the Broadcasting Act of 1957 which provided for a government monopoly in broadcasting was retained (Chiumbu et al 2009). President Mugabe made it apparent that they would not liberalise airwaves stating that "you do not know what propaganda a non-state radio station might broadcast" (Maja-Pearce in Moyo 2009).

Muzondidya notes that from independence the ruling party has “marshalled state resources and institutions, such as the army, police, intelligence service, and public radio and television, to ensure its electoral hegemony” (2009:177). This hegemony was challenged by Capitol Radio in year 2000. The station challenged the constitutionality of the Broadcasting Act in the Supreme Court, arguing that it contravened Section 20 of the constitution which provided for freedom of expression. The Supreme Court ruled in favour of Capitol Radio and “FM100 started broadcasting in a secret location in Harare” (Moyo in Moyo 2012:486).

Government quickly announced the Presidential Powers (Temporary Measures) Act, which allowed it to introduce laws that are valid for up to six months to plug a legislative loophole. The ruling party, Moyo states, went on to quickly introduce the “Presidential Powers (Temporary) (Broadcasting) measures of 2000” (2009: 22). Police used the act’s provision to hunt down Capitol Radio from its location at the roof top of a Harare hotel and seized all its equipment, thus forcing it to shut down (Moyo 2010).

The Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) was drafted and enacted in 2001 and it is targeted at regulating the broadcasting sector. BSA stipulated that Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) board should be appointed and tasked with issuing operating licenses, regulating frequencies and to generally oversee the country’s broadcasting sector. BAZ’s autonomy was questionable, as the Ministry of Information after consulting with the President, had the mandate to appoint board members (Moyo 2009).

BSA provisions also discourage investment in broadcasting. Foreign ownership is prohibited and application fees for a licence are steep, recently pegged at USD\$50 000 for a ten year licence, a tough requirement to meet for a country that has just come out of an economic recession (Radiovop 2011). Opportunities for abuse of airtime by government are possible as the BSA provides for “one hour cumulatively per week of its broadcasting time available for the purpose of enabling the government of the day, at its request, to explain the policies of the nation” (Moyo 2009). This clause may be abused by the ruling party as they may let the time provided for them to accumulate, then claim it at election time and basically use one’s station to campaign during that election.

Pseudo-efforts for broadcasting liberalisation were made when ZBC leased a channel to Joy TV. This development had its loopholes as (i) ZBC charged the channel exorbitant fees so that it eventually owed the national broadcaster a lot of money (ii) Joy TV was available in Harare and its surrounding areas and (iii) it mainly offered entertainment hence ZBC

remained the main source of news (Moyo 2009). Misa Zimbabwe posits that although Joy TV's demise was based on a legislative blunder (it was illegal for ZBC to lease a channel to another station), ZBC had played a major role in ensuring that the station would not succeed in its endeavour to be an independent broadcaster (misazim.com).

The ruling party's abuse of the national broadcaster was most apparent when Zanu PF was faced with a tough contender in the political arena, the MDC. When the ruling party 'lost' the constitutional referendum in year 2000, it tightened its grip on the national broadcaster purging foreign media content which was blamed for people's rejection of the referendum. The ruling party justified this by stating that the media had been colonised therefore "Zimbabwe should never be a colony again" (Mano 2009:168).

Professor Jonathan Moyo, the Minister of Information and a ruling party member, used the media to launch "offensive and abusive" attacks on the MDC and any groups perceived to be aligned to the party (Mukundu and Ngwenya 2011:78). He implemented a BSA clause which stipulated that there should be at least 75 percent local content in broadcasting, later changed to 100 percent. This was manipulated so that in the run up to the 2002 presidential elections, preference was given to media content such as documentaries, music and music videos which praised Zanu PF. In 2003, it was estimated that the music jingle (made by Zanu PF) "*Rambai Makashinga*" (Keep on Persevering) was played approximately 288 times a day on radio and up to 72 times a day on Zimbabwean television" (Mano 2009:169). In this regard, the national broadcaster had basically been turned into a ruling party mouthpiece used to spread its hegemony.

In 2001 ZBC was commercialised to Zimbabwe Broadcasting Holdings (ZBH). Previously the broadcaster was made up of Zimbabwe Television and Radio stations One, Two, Three and Four. Its structures changed to "Strategic Business Units": Spot FM, Power FM, Sportnet, Radio Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe Television, Newsnet and Production services" (Mano 2009:169). It is imperative to note however that these changes did not have any significant impact on operations of these stations; they still were/are used by the ruling party to advance their ideals.

Economic challenges in the country also adversely affected state media. The meltdown began in the 1990's where successive droughts led to a decline in agricultural exports, the backbone of the country's economy. Government initiated the IMF/World Bank Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) among others, in a bid to revive the economy (Muzondidya 2009). The

programmes' effect was that thousands of people lost their jobs, "farmers' incomes were eroded, and the country had increasingly poor and insecure households" (Ranga 2001: 167). Strikes were prevalent and a general dissatisfaction with the government was pronounced.

In 1997 war veterans demonstrated against the government for six months. They believed Zimbabwe's leaders did not appreciate the contribution they made in the liberation war. They besieged court rooms and looted the ruling party's offices (Dorman 2003). To quell their displeasure, President Mugabe awarded "each of the estimated 50,000 ex-combatants a one-off gratuity of approximately US\$5,000 (Z\$50,000) payable by 31 December 1997, and a monthly pension of approximately US\$200(Z\$2,000) beginning January 1998." (Tarisayi 2012:14). Money for these payments was not available and government had to borrow heavily, leading to a sharp devaluation of the Zimbabwean dollar by about 71.5 percent against the US Dollar (Tarisayi 2012).

Cash payments to war veterans and Zimbabwe's involvement in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) war further contributed to the decline of the country's economy (Tarisayi 2012). Zanu PF's narrow victory in the June 2000 elections led to the party adopting populist decisions such as the Fast Tract Land Reform Programme. White farmers were displaced from their farms to make way for 'landless black people' without compensation. The Land Reform Programme essentially debased the country's agricultural sector, and the ruling elite benefitted most as they parcelled out the most productive tracts of land to each other, not to ordinary Zimbabweans (Campbell 2003, Raftopoulos 2009). Disruptions in commercial farming and the fact that most new farmers were largely undercapitalised led to underutilisation of fertile land and a decline in farm productivity, further harming the economy (Raftopoulos 2003).

This deterioration of the country's economy through the ruling party's poor decisions heightened negative feelings against them (Campbell 2003 and Raftopoulos 2009). The state media, largely dependent on government funding and viewers' licence fees, could not provide quality programming as the country's economic decline negatively impacted the broadcaster. ZBH could not purchase latest broadcasting equipment or programmes and still relied on dated equipment inherited from the Rhodesian era (Waldahl 2004, Moyo 2009). The national broadcaster produced poor quality programming and beamed dated films and music which "adopted the rhetoric of heroes (for those sympathetic to Zanu PF) and 'sell-outs' (for anyone expressing dissenting voices)" (Ranger 2005: 12, Raftopoulos 2009).

The power sharing deal between Zanu PF and MDC in 2009 brought some changes in the broadcasting sector. The Global Political Agreement (GPA) document, signed by the parties' highlighted the need to free the airwaves. Tough legislation in broadcasting and a lack of political will in liberalising the sector has created a fertile ground for the emergence of pirate radio stations beaming into Zimbabwe. These are "SW Radio Africa (London), Voice of the People (Johannesburg), and Voice of America (Washington DC) and most of these stations are run by journalists exiled from the country" (Moyo 2012: 487). Radio Dialogue is another Bulawayo based pirate station founded in 2001 and has been denied a licence many times. The station uses CD's and its website to disseminate broadcasts in and around the city (Moyo 2012).

BAZ called for applications for two commercial radio stations and subsequently Star FM and Zi FM were awarded licenses in 2011. Chances of the two stations being critical of the government are highly unlikely; Star FM is owned by Zimpapers, a company where government has a majority share and Zi FM is owned by Supa Mandiwanzira, a "staunch Zanu PF man" who is the country's deputy Minister of Information, appointed by President Mugabe (Chuma 2013:38). In this regard, Chuma states, "Zanu PF managed to force through a radio licencing scam presented as a legitimate liberalisation of the airwaves" (2013: 38).

This section highlighted measures that Zimbabwe's ruling party has gone through to retain a legacy of oppression in the broadcasting sector. Radio remains the most powerful and effective tool in reaching out to both urban and rural areas in most African countries, including Zimbabwe (Moyo 2010). Developments during the GNU gave an illusion of change in the broadcasting sector. In reality, the fact that over three decades after independence a community broadcaster does not exist, reflects a genuine lack of will to change the status quo of the broadcasting sector. This is more so in television where ZTV still remains the sole television channel (Misa 2012).

2.2.2 Situation currently prevailing in Zimbabwe

Many Zimbabweans have turned to alternate means for news and entertainment and shunned the country's broadcaster. A Zimbabwe All Media Products Survey (ZAMPS) for 2013 shows that over 50 percent of the country's urban population watch satellite television, beaming broadcasts from Botswana and South Africa (zarf 2013). This 'flight' to satellite television is attributed mainly to Zimbabwean's growing dissatisfaction with local television and embracing opportunities presented by new technology (Malleus 2012). Poor

programming, dated equipment (subsequently poor picture and sound quality) and propaganda by the ruling party are some reasons Zimbabweans give for choosing alternative television (Waldahl 2004, Thompson 2013). Zanu PF's control of the country's sole television station has also impacted on narratives projected in the channel. Gatsheni-Ndlovu (2009) highlights that Shona language and culture dominates the station and there is little to no attention paid to other ethnic groups.

Satellite television viewing by Zimbabweans is a rather intricate phenomenon. Border towns such as Beitbridge, Plumtree, Victoria Falls and Mutare have always faced problems in accessing the country's television and radio signals. Dated signal carrier equipment has been blamed for this anomaly, a situation obtaining to this day (Misazim 2012). The towns' citizens rely on the neighbouring countries' media for information. For example Beitbridge residents easily access South African television through the analogue system. Wiztech decoder's emergence in the country (a Chinese manufactured receiving device) enabled more Zimbabweans to watch neighbouring country's television stations; the only investment needed was to buy the device. The decoders gave access to Botswana television (BTV), SABC 1, 2 and 3 and E TV as well as a myriad of gospel channels.

Wiztech decoders spread fast and this was indicated by "satellite dishes hanging on rooftops of mansions, middle class houses, blocks of flats and one room homes" (Malleus 2012:129). DSTV, a pay-per-view service offered by Multichoice South Africa was the service of choice for those who could afford it, as it is rather pricey for average Zimbabweans. The company's Zimbabwe public relations office acknowledges a constant rise in its subscriber base (Malleus 2012).

DSTV viewing in Zimbabwe is also a dynamic exercise. From personal experience, some viewers have DSTV subscription accounts in Zimbabwe and are able to access DSTV meant for 'the rest of Africa'. Others are helped by either friends or relatives resident in South Africa to open an account in that country. This gives them access to DSTV channels meant for South Africa, in Zimbabwe. The added benefit is that South African public broadcasting channels, SABC 1 to 3 and ETV are available together with the bouquet one would have chosen, a situation that is not possible if one has an account from another African country.

Having a South African based DSTV account has proven to be an advantage for some Zimbabweans. Since July 2013, access to South African local channels was suspended due to the encryption of SABC's signal by Sentech. ETV Botswana took the signal carrier to court

for its failure to encrypt SABC channel signals, and as a result they were losing revenue from advertisers due to pirate viewing of SABC in that country. The court ruled in ETV's favour and Sentech was compelled to encrypt SABC's channel signals (Newsday July 2013). Wiztech owners were left without access to SABC, however some have since resorted to DSTV as 'agents' around the country have mushroomed, offering people access to DSTV South Africa at rates of about US\$10 per month (Southern eye 2013).

Poor programming and equipment together with propaganda in the country's national broadcaster has pushed viewers to watch neighbouring country's television at their own expense. Another reason for this flight to foreign television is due to Ndebele and Shona ethnic politics. The following section will provide an evaluation of this aspect;

2.2.3 Bulawayo and the Ndebele ethnic group

Bulawayo is home to about a million people. Ndebele is widely spoken but the city is also home to the Kalanga, Tonga, Venda, Sotho, and Xhosa tribes (Msindo 2007). To better understand the similarities of Ndebeles to Nguni culture and identity it is essential to provide a brief historical background.

Ndebele history can be traced back to the 19th century *mfecane* war. Accounts on what exactly led to the war differ, the first narrative, deemed euro-centric, focuses on the internal fights by the Zulu nation over resources such as land and water due to their rapid expansion (Wright 1995). On the other hand Cobbing (1988) argues that although Zulu King Shaka's violent wars contributed to the social upheaval at the time, it was not the sole reason for events that led to the *mfecane* war. He states that the colony's commercial activities, such as slave trade, and expansion of its frontiers contributed to social conflict that eventually led to the war. As a result migrations took place "that saw some Nguni and Sotho communities burst asunder and fragmenting into fleeing groups such as the Ndebele under King Mzilikazi Khumalo....who arrived in the Zimbabwean plateau between 1839-1840 " (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009).

On their way to Zimbabwe, Ndebele warriors pillaged and captured some nations along the way such as the Sotho, Kalanga, Tswana, Venda, Tonga and Rozvi. These groups were then assimilated into the Ndebele nation, adopting their language and culture (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009). The impact of assimilating these nations is that there is only a slight difference in the Ndebele language and culture from their organic Zulu identity. Rycroft notes:

Modern Ndebele and modern Zulu are in many respects so similar that it is plausible (though probably somewhat simplistic) to postulate that they both derive from a single 'proto-Zulu' parent language spoken in Zululand before 1822. (1980: 109)

Sibanda also contends that “Ndebele is a mutually intelligible dialect of Zulu but considered a separate language” (2012: 35). These scholars essentially underline the relative similarities between Zimbabwean Ndebele and South African Zulu language.

The Ndebele modern history narrative is marred by the Gukurahundi war that occurred between 1982 and 1986. It took place in Matabeleland North, South and Midlands’ provinces. Zipra led by Joshua Nkomo’s Zimbabwe African People’s Union (Zapu) party fought alongside Zanla led by Robert Mugabe’s Zanu PF during the liberation war. After independence, President Mugabe won resoundingly in the country’s first elections, as a result his Zanu PF party obtained the most influential and lucrative positions in the country’s leadership structures (Campbell 2003, Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009).

Former Zipra forces expressed their displeasure that Zanu PF was downplaying their role in historical narrative of the liberation struggle and privileging their own (Muzondidya 2009). This, coupled with the perceived “preferential treatment given to Zanla in the Zimbabwean National Army” and the ‘discovery’ of arms in properties owned by Zapu, led to the arrest and detention of the party’s leadership, including its president Joshua Nkomo. Other Zipra fighters armed themselves and fled into the bush (Muzondidya 2009: 178).

President Mugabe then deployed a North Korean trained army called the Fifth Brigade Unit, under the guise of restraining ‘dissidents’ who were armed (Meredith 2002, Muzondidya 2009). In reality, some scholars and historians contend the President used this disturbance to annihilate Zapu supporters and Ndebele people. He stated that “Zapu is connected with dissidents and Zapu is supported by the Ndebele, therefore Ndebeles are dissidents” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009: 12 and 13). Campbell expands:

The fight against dissidents was a ruse by Mugabe army to squash support for Zapu by “executing thousands of innocent civilians” in Midlands and Matabeleland provinces, an estimated 20 000 people (2003:272).

To end the victimisation of the Ndebele, Joshua Nkomo signed a unity accord with Zanu PF, as a result his party was subsumed into Zanu PF in 1987 (Muzondidya 2009, Campbell 2003). The Gukurahundi war in Matabeleland and Midlands resulted in a “weakened sense of

affiliation” by the Ndebele and a general sense of being side-lined in the country’s history narrative (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012:108). This is aptly captured by Thompson:

Most news stories on television cover events in Harare, the country’s capital, which is Mashonaland, and therefore Ndebele speakers and other ethno-linguistic minorities, are unlikely to appear. In contrast to actors and politicians of Shona background, Ndebele people-let alone people of smaller ethnic groups-are seldom found in film or television, and their languages are rarely used. (2013: 18)

Ndlovu contends that Shona dominance has been privileged by the political dispensation in the country:

While Zimbabwe’s documented language policy gives the impression that English, Shona and Ndebele are the recognised languages of widest communication, hidden policies in the form of political discourses prescribe only two languages, English and Shona, with Ndebele being accorded a ceremonial national language status for veiled political purposes of tribal balancing. (in Ndlovu 2008: 310)

The result has been an exodus of Ndebele’s from Zimbabwe. Ndlovu explains:

The weakened sense of affiliation felt by the Ndebele has seen a steady stream of members of this ethnic group cross the South African border since the 1980s, peaking after 2000. (2012: 110)

Zimbabwe’s economic challenges also led to an increase of migration, and it is estimated that over 3 million Zimbabwean migrants live in South Africa. Strong “cultural and linguistic ties” that Ndebeles share with the Nguni give them an advantage when trying to assimilate to South African society (Raftopoulos 2009:223).

This historical narrative of the Ndebele and construction of their identity is paramount for this thesis. It will help evaluate if language and cultural proximity to South Africa’s Nguni identities and subsequently their media, have a bearing on Bulawayo viewers’ preference for South African media. It will also help uncover if Ndebeles’ weakened sense of affiliation to the dominant Zimbabwean (Shona) narrative and culture has influenced their choice to interface with foreign media than of their own.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have highlighted the socio-political environment in Zimbabwe that is essential for this research. I uncovered that Zanu PF has been at the helm of Zimbabwe’s leadership since independence, save for a five year GNU between the party and two

formations of the MDC. I emphasised how the ruling party has essentially used the media as its mouthpiece and how this has impacted on the quality and content of productions in the national broadcaster. I also brought out how the BSA has effectively been used to entrench the ruling party's dominance over the broadcasting sector, save for pseudo-efforts made during the unity government. Ndebeles' ancient and modern history was highlighted, emphasis being on their similarities with South African Nguni identity as well as their marginalisation in Zimbabwe. In the next chapter I will highlight factors pertaining to homosexuality, its existence in Africa (Zimbabwe and South Africa) and their coverage in the media. I will also highlight the soap opera genre.

CHAPTER THREE

Social context of the research: Homosexuality and Soap Operas

Introduction

In attempting to understand meanings made by Bulawayo viewers when interfacing the gay storyline in *Generations*, in this section I provide a background to homosexuality and soap operas. The chapter explores homosexual representation in the media, first in the western media and then in Africa, giving particular attention to Zimbabwe. I also highlight the treatment of the group in Zimbabwe and how they have been victimised by the current political dispensation. The section briefly touches on gays in South Africa and how they are treated in that country. I then evaluate and describe the soap opera genre.

3.1 Lesbian Gay Bisexuals and Transgender Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ)

3.1.1 *Discourse of sexuality*

Foucault's essay on *The History of Sexuality* (Foucault 1980 (Hurley English translation)) gives an extensive theorisation on sexuality. He notes that although sex was openly discussed before, by the 17th century the power bloc then created "regimes of truth" (Rahman and Jackson 2010) on how matters of sex were to be discussed. He calls this the "repressive hypothesis" (1980:15). The repressive hypothesis delineated that sex was confined to the institution of marriage, between husband and wife, and it was a private and practical affair while sex for pleasure was frowned upon. By making this determination, the power bloc maintained an ideological hold over discourse on sexuality.

Foucault expands that by the 18th century, this repressive hypothesis had a reverse effect on the masses. The secrecy on the subject of sexuality instead made it more intriguing,

Our sexuality, unlike that of others, is subjected to a regime of repression so intense as to present a constant danger; not only is sex a formidable secret, as the directors of conscience, moralists, pedagogues, and doctors always said to former generations, not

only must we search it out for the truth it conceals, but if it carries with it so many dangers, this is because-whether out of scrupulousness, an overtly acute sense of sin, or hypocrisy, no matter-we have too long reduced it to silence (1980:128).

Foucault here highlights the need to uncover the truth and unmask the secrecy that had concealed the subject of sexuality. This renewed will to subvert the dominant discourse resulted in sex becoming an object of debate and research in other areas beyond marriage, such as medicine, psychiatry and the criminal justice system. By the 19th century, the discourse of sex and sexuality had changed. He highlights:

We, on the other hand, are in a society of “sex”, or rather a society “with a sexuality”: the mechanisms of power are addressed to the body, to life, to what causes it to proliferate.... (1980:147).

This awareness of sexuality through social research and conversing on the subject has given us knowledge. Knowledge in turn gives us power over the subject and that leads on to an ideological determination on the discourse of sexuality.

This study seeks to provide an added insight into the discourse of sexuality. It seeks to understand Bulawayo viewers’ perception of homosexuality projected in *Generations* given that they receive it a homophobic environment. Focus will be on male to male sexual relationship commonly referred to as ‘gay’ and this term, together with homosexuality, will be generally used in this thesis to refer to sexual difference. Gay relationship alluded to is between two consenting adults engaging in a sexual relationship and does not include “pederasty and paedophilia” (Galz 2008:2).

3.1.2 *Gay representation in the media*

As the focus of this thesis is on understanding how Bulawayo viewers understand the gay story-line that they view in a homophobic environment, it is imperative to trace the general representation of gays in the media. In this section I will highlight how gays are represented in the media drawing examples from western media. Western media in this instance refers to United States as the most information and resources of that experience are readily available and well documented. I will then highlight gay media representations in Africa, emphasis being on Zimbabwe and marginally on South Africa.

Until the 1950’s to 1960’s ‘alternate’ sexual identities were not common, if at all in American media. Gross states that sexual minorities’ symbolic annihilation was due to the perception that they were a threat to the “natural order of things”. This view was perpetuated by the

cultural elite, who were often “white, middle class, middle aged males and heterosexual” and also framed their portrayal in the media (1989:130, 131). Early homosexual representations portrayed gayness as an affliction that one needed to be cured of. They were commonly peripheral characters, present in the narrative for a short time before being killed off. Gay representation in news was mostly to cover their emancipation campaign and efforts were made, by news reporters and media companies, not to accord the group the status of a civil rights movement (Fejes and Petrich 1993).

Discourses on HIV/AIDS in the 1980s brought a shift in representations of gays. Gross (1989) notes that media images of gay men often inferred that they were the source of the pandemic. This period also forced news media companies to increasingly ‘acknowledge’ the existence of gays in society; although it was in the narrative of the pandemic being a ‘gay disease’ and they were perceived as ‘guilty’ sufferers (Fejes and Petrich 1993: 401).

Due to this skewed representation, gay rights liberation movements made an effort to portray *their* needs and concerns in *their* own media such as books, magazines and producing videos educating each other on preventing the virus. This brought a change in mainstream media as journalists and producers had a first-hand, realistic account on what it meant to be gay, instead of relying on assumptions (Fejes and Petrich 1993). This development, coupled with the rise in gay and lesbian rights liberation movements led to a paradigm shift which was reflected in media content. By mid-1990’s homosexual relationships were extensively explored in the media (Mediaed 2006; Saavedra 2009).

Changes in the portrayal of gays in the media did not necessarily translate to a complete and fair projection of homosexuality. The narrative on a gay story line tended to project the contentious issue of “coming out” and after that is achieved it did not leave much for a character to expand and they would usually be killed off in the narrative (Sender 2006). This further emphasised the bias of heterosexual perceptions on gayness.

The level of explicitness in projecting affection between gay couples is another area where heteronormative bias exists. Saavedra states that although *Will and Grace* was the longest running serial with a gay protagonist (from 1998 to 2006), Will was never shown go to bed with another man (Saavedra 2008). Fejes points out that gay presentations are also fraught with stereotypes where they are predominantly “young, white, Caucasian, preferably with a well-muscled, smooth body, handsome face, good education, professional job, and a high income” (in Saavedra 2008: 8). Fuqua also notes that although strides have been made to

provide a true reflection of same sex relations, the show of outright emotion such as a gay kiss is “sanitised for the viewer’s protection” (1995:202). Therefore media homosexual representations often “emphasise the interpersonal issues of homosexuality and avoid the political ones” such as portrayals of gay characters that are not fraught with stereotypical connotations (Dow in Saavedra 2008: 6).

The presence of gays in television has been attributed to a number of factors;

- Purely commercial reasons: America’s three big networks (ABC, CBS and NBC) had experienced a drastic drop in audience ratings “from 73.9 to 50.5 percent from 1984 to 1996” and were doing all they could to entice young liberal thinkers to their channels (Becker 2004:391). On the other hand, television networks were increasingly aware of gays’ spending power and projecting their identities on television was mainly to rope in that market and deliver it to its advertisers (Fejes and Petrich 1993).
- Reality television (a genre quickly gaining popularity) endeavoured to showcase real life stories; therefore showing gays in the media was simply reflecting the reality that gays exist (Gross 2006).
- Acknowledging the central role played by gay activists who would confront media executives on demeaning and stereotypical projections of the group (Fejes and Petrich 1993).

These are some of the major reasons cited for the emergence of gay representations in the media. Focus is on the international media (mainly American) but the following section will interrogate alternate sexualities in the African context primarily in Zimbabwe and explore their coverage in the media.

3.1.3 Gay identity in Africa, Zimbabwe and portrayal in the media

Most African leaders are vocal in their condemnation of homosexuality. They often state that gays are ‘unAfrican’ and a foreign concept introduced by colonialists to a ‘pure’ African society (Palmbert in Kennedy 2006). This has led to a general lack of interest in talking about or advocating for gay rights for fear that one may be labelled a closet gay (Mabvurira et. al. 2012).

Homosexuality is deemed to have existed in African societies before the arrival of white settlers. Galz notes that the first documented case of sodomy brought into a European court of law was in 1890, the first year that Europeans arrived in Zimbabwe. This, Galz expands, is

proof that male-on-male sexual relations existed before Europeans arrived in Zimbabwe. Subsequent cases reported were between black men (sexual encounters), thereby discounting Europeans' corrupting influence as society was deeply fragmented at that time (Galz 2008). Epprecht states that rock paintings found in Zimbabwe depicting male -on -male sexual act, dated to an era before white settlers arrived, is evidence that colonisers did not introduce homosexuality in the country (1998).

Passing of oral traditions on sexual matters was one of the areas where homosexuality was known to exist in pre-colonial Africa, and accepted as necessary. The Basotho, Galz states, were such an example as herd boys would spend weeks isolated in the bush. Older boys or men would give practical advice on sexual matters to younger men, preparing them for married life. They contend that homosexual practise was accepted as it was training, preparing younger men for a future heterosexual relationship (Galz 2008).

Economic changes from 1920s to 1930s heralded a change in black society. Subsistence farming together with the hunter-gatherer way of life could not sustain families. Men had to look for alternate ways to support their families and some set off for South Africa to work in gold mines (Galz 2008). Life in hostels was characterised by males living in close proximity for extended periods of time. Labourers came from far off countries such as Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia), Zambia (Northern Rhodesia), Malawi, Botswana among others and could not travel often to see their families. Older men resorted to taking younger men as wives and cohabiting in mine hostels (Galz 2008).

Zimbabwe and South Africa's history on homosexuality is slightly shared. Zimbabwean men were also exposed or involved in homosexual relations at South African gold mines. Sex education through practical education by older men to the young also existed in that society. Apartheid South Africa was intolerant of homosexuality. It was perceived as a threat to Afrikaner values and impacted negatively on procreation, essential for expanding the white race (Galz 2008; Kennedy 2006). During the 1950s and 1960s, the apartheid government made a concerted effort to thwart homosexuality through raids on gatherings such as parties where homosexual activity was suspected to be taking place.

The fight against homophobia by gay rights groups became enmeshed with civil rights movement against racial discrimination. This development is often credited for the eventual inclusion and protection of rights on the grounds of sexual orientation in South Africa's constitution (Altman 2005). However Gontek (2009) highlights that although the South

African constitution protects gay rights, the situation on the ground is still arduous for the group. Lesbians are often victims of corrective rape and legislation changes to align laws to the progressive constitution have only been through legal cases than the instigation of the government. Nevertheless South African media gives adequate coverage of gay issues and it is this presence of a gay couple in the soap opera *Generations*, which is the object of my study.

In Zimbabwe most ethnic groups have a deep rooted culture of discretion and the ‘don’t ask-don’t tell’ syndrome stems from the traditional belief that sexual matters are private and should not be openly discussed. In some traditional societies, married couples are not supposed to talk about or even look at each other’s’ sexual organs - further emphasising how reserved Zimbabweans are (Epprecht 2006:636). It was known but not acknowledged that homosexuality existed in the country and as long as it happened behind closed doors it was tolerable (Galz 2008). Gays and Lesbians Association of Zimbabwe (Galz) was formed in 1990 but mainly comprised of ‘white-middle aged members’ (2008:194).

In 1995, while exhibiting at the country’s Book Fair in Harare, President Mugabe visited the fair and saw a Galz exhibition. He condemned the group calling them “worse than pigs and dogs” (Campbell 2003:156). President Mugabe has also used gay accusations as a tool to intimidate opponents, political and otherwise. The following is an example of his vitriolic sentiments targeted at the private media:

They are filthy tabloids clearly of the gutter type, and are edited and run through fronts of young Africans they have employed as puppet editors and reporters. In some cases these are also their homosexual partners-and that is true. (Saunders 1999: 35)

Since the book fair incident President Mugabe has consistently condemned homosexuality and his Zanu PF party was instrumental in passing the Sexual Deviancy Act in 2006, a law that criminalises gay relationships in Zimbabwe.

During the GNU constitution making process Mr Tsvangirai, at a BBC Newsnight interview with Gain Esler, initially voiced his support for the inclusion of gay rights in the new constitution. President Mugabe on the other hand stated that gay rights inclusion were not up for discussion (Zim-eye 24/10/11). Media reports from both government and private media consistently denounced the inclusion of gay rights in the constitution (Mabvurira et. al. 2012). When the second constitutional draft “called for no discrimination based on “circumstances

of birth,” Zanu PF members and supporters blamed Tsvangirai and his party representatives in Copac, for sneaking in gay rights using this provision (Epprecht 2012:3). In a bid to curry favour with his Christian supporters and having failed to get support from high ranking MDC-T members, Tsvangirai later recanted his support for gay rights (Epprecht 2012).

Police constantly raid offices of Galz, without search warrants, and the organisation’s members and staffers are often violently arrested on “spurious charges” (Crisis Coalition in Zimbabwe 2012:1). At a stakeholders briefing on the Draft constitution in August 2012, police invaded the function, targeting Galz members. Subsequently 44 people were arrested and detained (Crisis Coalition in Zimbabwe 2012). Such systematic persecution by state, and implicitly by society through the media, has presented a portrait of ingrained homophobia and heterosexism by Zimbabweans.

President Mugabe’s sentiments on the group have been largely attributed for their symbolic annihilation in the country’s media (Goddard 1998). Academic literature on homosexuality is quite limited, possible reasons being that “scholars in Zimbabwe have been seriously affected by myths and taboos around the subject” (Mabvurira et al 2012:219).

Most Zimbabweans have shunned local media and are confronted with homosexuality in South African media, something they would not see in local media. My interest is to uncover if such encounters have presented emancipatory opportunities or have further reinforced the ideological perception of homophobia that exists in the country.

3.2 Soap Opera

3.2.1 Brief background

Soap operas emerged in the 1930’s in America as serialised radio dramas sponsored by manufacturers of home detergents such as Proctor and Gamble (Hobson 1982). Their emergence was an attempt by media companies to merge interests of advertisers to the market/audience. Soap opera productions were spearheaded by advertising agencies but owned by corporations who sponsored them. The serial has now evolved to include two main formats. The first is a continuous serial running over decades that are common with western soap operas. The second format is the Telenovelas (popular in South America) whose story

line may take months but eventually comes to an end (Ang 1985; Geraghty 1991; Seiter 1989 and Lopez 1995).

Most soap operas are primarily set in the home. The genre's formula was aptly explained by a writer in a 1935 magazine titled *Broadcast*, referring to a soap opera called *Today's Children*:

.....it differs from many women's programmes in that each broadcast is a chapter or an episode in the life of an ordinary American family, their friends and the sweethearts of the younger members of the family...it is drama, homey drama of the type that appeals to 'just folks', the mothers, the homemakers, the *flour users* of America. (Allen 1985: 11)

Traditionally soap operas are focused on all things familiar to its target audience of women, and facets of their lives. Themes that prevail in the soap are about family: challenges they face and threats they confront and overcome. The attraction to the genre is the constant rupture and later fixing of the equilibrium on one theme after another (Modleski 1982)

Closely linked to this aspect is that the protagonist or other strong characters would be women "of different ages, class, and personal type". As women are the target audience the assumption is that they would identify with a female protagonist. Men are not excluded but their inclusion serves to provide romantic themes, comic relief and villains (Hobson 1982:33).

Immediately outside the home environment, soap operas also focus on social issues. This strategy is used to frame the family's daily life so that they do not seem to live in a vacuum, and it also helps address social issues (Spence 2005; Hobson 1982). These social commentaries include gay characters, and soap operas are credited as one of the first genres to include gay story lines (Geraghty 1995).

Hobson posits that soap operas often provide a platform for emancipatory ideas which would have failed to get a platform in other areas:

Soap operas, along with situation comedies, are seen either by their creators or their viewers as a vehicle for progressive or revolutionary ideas, but they do present a liberal view of the consensus. (1985:35)

She goes on to highlight that the soap opera genre succeeds in showing some 'unusual' issues compared to other genres as audiences tend to identify more with the characters that they interface often: in the case of long running serials, for decades. Therefore when confronted with contentious issues the audience is rather up close and personal with it and in a sense they are forced to face it.

The close contact that audience has with characters in the soap opera also highlights the strength the genre has in withstanding ‘unconventional’ storylines. As soap operas depict various characters that audiences can relate to, this also provides a coping mechanism for the viewer if they do not agree or relate to a theme under review. The viewer would simply focus on another narrative they can identify with and may not stop watching the soap opera completely (Geraghty 1991).

Geraghty highlights that soap operas often provide an easier route for introducing topics that family members may sometimes find difficult to interrogate out of the blue:

There is some evidence that families use soaps as a way of raising awkward issues and easing discussion of them. Such a process can only be seen in conversations at work where soaps provide a common basis for conversation for those who share an intimacy based on the proximity rather than choice. (1991:123).

Therefore soap operas not only provide a forum to talk about issues that were previously side-lined, but in this case it also becomes an ice-breaker. This may also be made easier by the intimate setup that people tend to watch soap operas, often at home.

My intension is to find out if soap opera strategies that enable producers to effectively introduce controversial topics to the genre have enabled Bulawayo viewers to interface with the gay story-line in the soap opera. Has the soap opera succeeded in bringing homosexuality to the fore? I would also like to uncover if viewers who are uncomfortable with the gay narrative have continued engaging with the soap opera and how they have maintained this engagement to the programme.

Although initially symbolically annihilated, early representations of gays in soap operas showcased gay characters in a contentious manner. Not only were gay men represented by a few couples compared to a myriad of heterosexual relationships in the soap, they also were fringe characters in a temporary theme than as part of the main narrative (Geraghty 1995). Fuqua (1995) highlights that the placing of gay characters on the fringes helped to implicitly reinforce that it was not part of the main story but a passing theme which was not as important as the focal theme.

Furthermore most gay characters tended to have an unhappy ending in the soap opera:

As Vito Russo noted recently, “it is not insignificant that out of 32 films with major homosexual characters from 1961 through 1976, 13 feature gays who commit suicide and 18 have the homosexual murdered by another character. (Gross 1989:136)

Therefore despite having gay representations in soap opera, their demise was a subtle way of showing disapproval of their sexual orientation.

The soap opera genre in Africa has largely been used for social awareness. Barnard (2006) notes that soon after South Africa's democratisation, soap operas projected the country's transition to a multicultural society. In India soap operas have also been lauded as a successful medium in effectively reducing social ills such as child marriage and advocacy for educating the girl child (Khattri 2007).

The South African soap opera; *Generations* has also been used to project social issues, including that of homosexuality through presenting the relationship of a gay couple – Senzo (played by Thami Mqolo) and Jason (Zolisa Xaluva). The couple's presence in the soap opera will be the object of my study, in particular how Bulawayo viewers make sense of such an encounter in a homophobic environment.

Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the representations of homosexuality in western media. Although the group was initially symbolically annihilated, their representations later were fraught with stereotypes and there is little or no interest in highlighting intimacy between gays. I brought out that gays' current prevalent representations were largely brought upon by economic interests of media companies. The history of gays in the Zimbabwean and South African context was highlighted together with how they have been victims of abuse in both societies. I evaluated the soap opera genre and highlighted how its formula has morphed to two main categories, a long running serial and the telenovela. I also brought out how women are usually the main viewers of soap opera and themes presented are those around this target audience. In the next chapter I will highlight the conceptual and theoretical framework of the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

Theoretical and Conceptual framework

Introduction

The chapter will explore theoretical and conceptual aspects that inform the research on how Bulawayo viewers interpret the gay story line in *Generations*. I will highlight theories of globalisation, the media imperialism thesis and its ethnographic critique. The passive-active audience analysis will be illuminated using previous researches. Cultural proximity theory will be examined together with how cultural capital influences audiences' media choice. Regional media's form and structure will also be reviewed, with emphasis being on factors that have contributed to its prominence and its impact on programme formats.

4.1 Globalisation

Globalisation denotes the most rapid changes in society with respect to bringing far away societies and communities closer through the use of technology (Appandurai 2006). Social changes/advances are not new, but the rapid manner of these changes in recent decades has led to a new understanding to globalisation. Arnett defines globalisation as an increased "intensity of connections among different cultures and different world regions". Rapid transformations in telecommunications have resulted in an interdependence of financial and economic institutions worldwide (Arnett 2002:774).

Globalisation denotes the creation of interconnected and interdependent communities. It is about bridging geographical and physical gaps through technology. This has created "the availability of global and local products on the marketplace, providing simultaneous spaces for the expression of individual identities" (Bauman in McMillin 2007:10). Giddens emphasises the collision of local and the global, he states that globalisation is the "intersection of presence and absence, the interlacing of social events and social relationships 'at distance' with local contextualises" (Giddens in Tomlinson 1997:117).

Globalisation has facilitated ease of interactions and exchange between global and local spaces. Silverstone notes that with globalisation "transgressing boundaries", it has brought about "transcending identities, fracturing communities and universalising images" (1999:106). Transnational Corporations (TNCs) are a characteristic of globalisation and the emergence of such companies have revolutionised media operations around the globe.

The TNCs' structure and operations are well articulated by Thompson (1995). Media conglomerates, he notes, are privately owned and have invested heavily in producing and disseminating media goods for profit. Access to these markets is enabled by satellite and cable services. Media products circulate in local (where produced) and international markets, but this has led to a disparity in production and dissemination of media forms. Western countries (mainly the United States) dominate media production and exports while countries at the periphery depend on these products (Thompson 1995). The uneven exchange of media goods is the basis for the media imperialism thesis.

4.2 Media imperialism thesis

Globalisation has enabled TNC's to extend their reach to previously inaccessible territories. Consumption of TNC's media products is manifest in different ways to societies they beam to. The media imperialism thesis, a concept credited to Herbert Schiller, highlights the different ways that people appropriate global messages and brings out the perceived impact that they are believed to have on consumers (Schiller 1969, 1976 and 1998).

Schiller states that global media impose the commercial model of broadcasting on poorer countries. Multinational corporations from developed countries (particularly from the west) dominate developing countries who are

...attracted, pressured, forced and sometimes bribed into shaping its social institutions to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominating centre of the system. (Schiller in White 2000:1)

These countries (such as the United States) use institutions like the media to champion their economic interests. Western media's influence is also hegemonic as its dominant perceptions are widely disseminated and often accepted as truth (Straubhaar 2007).

On the other hand Nye (2004) contends that developed nations exert soft power on developing ones through the media. Soft power, he explains, "rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others.....it is the ability to attract and attraction often leads to acquiescence" (Nye 2004: 5, 6). Therefore as western countries' media is advanced and widespread, they have the upper hand in shaping preferences of consumers or audiences in their locality and the periphery. This gives them an advantage so that their ideas are widely disseminated, and as Nye contends, this often leads to their adoption.

Developing countries lack necessary skills and funding to adequately produce and cater to their audiences' needs. Historical factors such as colonial influence, poverty and lack of investments in the media have negatively impacted on developing countries' ability to produce their own media products. They resort to importing media programmes from other countries, which is a much cheaper option (Thompson 1995).

Watching foreign media, according to the media imperialism thesis, leads to top-down absorption of another country's culture, consumerism and way of life by countries at the periphery. Local cultures are culturally battered by the domination of large media corporations and products from the west (Tunstall in Tomlinson 1991). Development of local culture and values are stunted as prominence is given to popular foreign formats at the expense of promoting local cultures (Boyd-Barrett 1977). The result is that "media globalisation results in global cultural homogenisation" (Strelitz 2005:35, Tomlinson 1999, Thompson 1995)

Media imperialism is defined as

A process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution, or content of the media in any country are singly or together subject to substantial external pressures from the media interests of any other country or countries, without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected. (Boyd-Barrett 1977:117)

Boyd Barrett then lists countries such as the US (dominating), Britain, France, West Germany and Russia as the purveyors of this disproportionate influence (Strelitz 2005). These countries, in the centre, then use their financial muscle to extensively produce and disseminate their media products which then dominate and influence people and media forms at the periphery.

The media imperialism thesis' assumed cultural homogeneity is challenged by critiques of this thesis. It is argued that local values, language and cultural values are brought to bear when audiences interact with media texts and may challenge or reject dominant discourses brought by foreign media (Featherstone 1990). The following section will discuss the ethnographic critique of the media imperialism thesis and evaluate if previous understandings of the thesis are still applicable and relevant.

4.2.1 Ethnographic critique of Media imperialism thesis

Criticism of the media imperialism thesis largely focuses on its ignorance of factors brought to bear when people interface and appropriate media texts. The thesis's emphasis is on the

perceived metamorphosis of periphery audiences to westernised individuals. The ethnographic critiques calls to question the level with this acculturation to consumerist values happens (Thompson 1995).

Critiques of the media imperialism thesis have sought to uncover meanings that audiences make at the point of reception and this is explored through reception studies. Reception studies have evolved from their preoccupation with texts to focus on the range of meanings that people make when reading media texts. Dahlgren (1997) notes that it is due to the recognition that people have varied social and contextual abilities at the point of reception. These influence the meaning they make. Therefore text-based studies do not adequately uncover the complexities of the reception process. The shift has thus been from a textual focus to exploring human agency in audience studies (Morley 1992). This focus on audience meaning-making has been an influential strand within cultural studies where ethnographic audience studies not only acknowledge differences between people, but pays attention to “meanings and pleasures they find when watching television” (Fiske 1987:63).

Ethnographic audience research is concerned with people’s stories and subjectivities which they use to interpret the world around them (Silverman 2004, Moores 1993 and Ang 1996). Factors such as individual culture and language, rich local discourses, subjective and socially situated readings are brought to bear when making sense of media messages. The media imperialism thesis does not factor in these differences but focuses on “quantification through measurement” thus assuming audience change without adequately investigating how local values and culture influence decoding of media text (Moores 1993: 3).

Ang notes that there are “dynamic and variable formations of people whose cultural and psychological boundaries are essentially uncertain” (Ang 1991:40). Therefore it is not feasible to generalise interpretations from one group of people to another as people have different “cultural codes” they use to decode text (Hall 1997:4, Morley 1992, Straubhaar 2007, Thompson 1995, Featherstone 1990).

The media imperialism thesis highlights the deterministic role of media TNC’s. Their ideological messages, according to the thesis, have much influence and limit the range of discourses available (Garnham in Strelitz 2000). Fiske notes that production is located in two places, the financial and the cultural. Emphasis on financial aspects by the media imperialism thesis downplays the most important aspect, the cultural where “what is exchanged is not wealth but meanings, pleasures and social identities” (in Strelitz 2000:40). Meanings are

polysemic, according to Fiske; audiences interpret media text differently, unrestricted by dominant textual readings (Fiske in Strelitz 2000). Therefore the reductionist approach of the media imperialism thesis' focus on production (financial or textual) is faulty as it ignores the audience's ability to make polysemic readings.

The media imperialism thesis is largely based on an assumption of influence without interrogation of factors prevailing on the ground, it generalises cultural factors brought to bear when people interpret media text, privileging "economic power over symbolic power (Thompson 1995: 173). Fiske highlights that reading media text is an active process where meaning are "negotiated", therefore the text could either be adopted or rejected. It is not a given that audiences will adopt the dominant meaning imbued in media text. This negotiation is a discursive process and its articulation "happens as an individual progression of expression" (1987:263 and 1987:83).

Stuart Hall in his seminal essay titled Encoding/Decoding posits a preferred reading theory reflecting different ways that people can read media text. There is a dominant/preferred reading which is a hegemonic meaning often proffered by the institutions and media producers. The negotiated meaning is a combination of privileging the hegemonic meaning yet it has a negotiated slant in the message's appropriation/inflection by the reader. The oppositional reading is divergent from the dominant ideological meaning (Hall 1980). Hall's thesis highlights that contrary to the media imperialism thesis' emphasis on the un-interrogated consumption and adoption of western values, audiences make varied readings of media texts and their meanings should not be assumed

Class positioning and privileges accorded by one's economic conditions also influence their choice of media. Bourdieu (1986) is credited for coining the term 'cultural capital', referring to how class positioning influences the type of media that people prefer. People who have acquired a privileged cultural capital through wealth and subsequently education and travel to foreign countries, are likely to watch imported media. Those with less cultural capital, such as the working class, prefer media products that are proximate to their lives such as national or regional media (Straubhaar 2007). The media imperialism thesis does not interrogate factors such as cultural capital which may influence audience preference for local or national over foreign media.

Straubhaar, through his cultural proximity theory, also highlights that factors such as culture, language, dress (among others) have a bearing on audiences' media preferences:

...countries and cultures would tend to prefer their own local or national productions first due to factors such as the appeal of local stars, the local knowledge required to understand much television humour, the appeal of local themes and issues, the appeal of similar looking ethnic faces, and the familiarity of local styles and locales. (Straubhaar 2007:91)

Therefore viewers in Europe will not have the same understanding of a programme as viewers in Africa because of different cultural codes they employ when appropriating text. Although the media imperialism thesis assumes an unbridled consumption of western media products; however the cultural proximity theory infers that people will likely watch media from their own countries or those culturally relative to their own. This theory will help understand if proximity to South African culture, language (among other factors) influences preference for Bulawayo viewers' turn to that country's media. Furthermore it will help evaluate particular elements they find appealing in South African media so that they prefer it over ZTV.

Dynamic social and cultural structural factors such as the gendered viewing of television are some factors ignored by the media imperialism thesis. Studies carried out by Spence (2005) and Hobson (1982) show that day-time soap operas are watched by women and they often watch these serials while doing household chores such as cooking, ironing, cleaning and taking care of children. For a man the home is as a place for relaxation, while a woman is forever at work, as a home is her place of work and 'relaxing'. Ethnographic research uncovers this dynamic of viewing and how these complexities of reception bear on the meanings that gendered audiences make (Thompson 1995, Moores 1993).

The ethnographic critique rejects the positioning of people as textual subjects who are powerless, rather they are emphasised to be active constructors of meaning. Diversity of people is acknowledged through their viewing patterns and meaning construction through their social experiences (Fiske 1987).

Ethnographic work, in the sense of drawing on what we can perceive and experience in everyday settings, acquires its critical edge when it functions as a reminder that reality is always more complicated and diversified than our theories can represent, and that there is no such thing as 'audience' whose characteristics can be set once and for all." (Ang 1996:52).

My aim was to find out Bulawayo viewers' subjective interpretations of the gay characters in *Generations*, by using an ethnographic approach to this reception study for two of the four interview groups I conducted. I intended to evaluate if they understood the gay story line in a

dominant, negotiated or an oppositional way to the one offered by *Generations* soap opera. I sought to understand what role structural features such as society (implicitly upbringing), education, politics and cultural factors have on their readings of the gay text.

4.2.2 *Passive -Active Audience*

Research in audience studies initially focused on the masses' responses to media propaganda (Kitzinger 2004). These were influenced by Neo-Marxist perspectives such as Althusser's cultural hegemony concept which projected the all assuming power of the media (Boyd-Barrett 1995). Later researchers moved to highlight human agency in interpreting and using media texts, marking the move from passive to active audience, in the uses and gratifications approach.

This approach sought to uncover audiences' appropriation of media and to uncover what messages people used or rejected. However this was also limited as "it ultimately explained differential responses to the media in terms of individual differences of personality or psychology" (Curran 1995: 506). Audience studies scholars changed their focus on realising that aspects such as social and cultural context would not be adequately explained by simple categorisations (Curran 1995).

Janice Radway's (1983) *Reading the Romance* research emphasised the active audience concept. Her research was based on women's reading of mass produced romance novels. When women were reading the romance novels, Radway notes, it was as if they were participating in their own exclusive community of women. Reading for them was not necessarily about the text itself, but a way for the women to "declare their independence", from their role of taking care of others and to focus on themselves. It was also a sign that the rest of the family members should not disturb her, at the same time the novel provided an escape from the women's ordinary lives (1983: 60).

To the Smithton women (on whom the research was based) reading romance novels "create (d) a feeling of hope, provided emotional sustenance and produced a fully visceral sense of well-being". Radway's research brought out how the women were an active audience because they expressed not only how they read the novels (text) but also how they interpreted it in their lives. Reading romance novels was appropriated differently, such as giving the women a sense of belonging to a female community and as a subtle code for the rest of the family to give the woman her space and time away from daily routines. They were actively using the

text not in its basic form as a romance novel, but how it added value to their lives (Radway in Curran 1995: 512-517).

Ang's (1985) research titled *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the melodramatic* further highlights how viewers are active participants when consuming media text. Her research goal was to investigate viewer's perceptions and comments about *Dallas* soap opera. Ang advertised in a newspaper, asking respondents to write a letter in response to a set of questions, stating their reasons for watching *Dallas*. She notes that some viewers perceived the characters as 'life-like' and they would relate to him/her as if the character actually existed in reality.

Ang brings out that while some viewers could relate to the soap opera, others tended to subvert the text and its meaning. They would watch the soap opera but practise what she calls "ironic reading". The ironic readers turned the soap opera into an object of mockery, and they would watch it just to laugh at characters (Ang 1985: 109). These ironic readers are not passive viewers who agree with whatever is reflected by the soap opera's producers, but are active and have an oppositional reading to the ideological constructions and portrayal of characters in the programme.

Ang and Radway's researches show that text based research fails to uncover different social, cultural and individual patterns which may influence reception. Audience studies' focus should not merely be on exploring effects and uses, but as viewers are active, it should uncover socially-produced interpretations of reading communities.

4.2.3 *Symbolic Distancing*

Thompson posits that people watch global media in various settings. His symbolic distancing concept highlights that "the appropriation of symbolic materials enables individuals to take some distance from the conditions of their day to day lives literally but symbolically, imaginatively, vicariously" (1995:175). Global media give an insight into lives and life conditions which are different from that of viewers' at a point of reception. Their appropriation of these messages solely depends on local practices and conditions which shape their understanding (Thompson 1995).

The media imperialism thesis emphasises a pessimistic view of how audiences appropriate media messages. In the context of this study, the assumption would be that global media disseminates images of gay and lesbian relationships in television that may then be copied or

adopted by countries in the periphery. The thesis ignores the central role played by foreign media in providing insight on life conditions that are liberated and may provide emancipatory opportunities which may help challenge regressive views or habits.

The notion of symbolic distancing highlights that the reception of media messages takes place at a different point from their conception. It is only at the point of reception that a message may be read according to one's life realities. The message is a resource for one to critically analyse one's life. Svenkerud and Singhal (1994) highlight an example of a 1969 soap opera called *Simplente Maria* broadcast in Latin American countries. The soap opera was about Maria who managed to better her life through sheer determination and use of sewing skills. A sharp rise of registration in literacy and sewing classes by young women in Mexico, Venezuela and Columbia was attributed to the impact of the soap opera; these young girls sought to improve their lives as they had seen Maria do in the soap opera (1994).

Kim (in Goodall 2012) highlights how western media has had a positive influence on the lifestyles and attitudes of Asian women. Viewing western media has presented an alternative culture and lifestyle for them, she expands; and as a result there is a "knowledge diaspora". This diaspora which keeps expanding signifies an increase in western media consumption by Asian women, who are positively influenced by the portrayal of women in various social roles. They are presented with a myriad of possibilities giving them a concept of positions they could aspire to inhabit, roles they have not seen being inhabited by women in their Asian society.

Western programmes provide a "resource for the learning of self, culture and society in Asia" for the women (Kim in Goodall 2012:160). They are symbolically distanced from their own culture by the portrayal of women in active roles, and they read these reflections as motivation for something they should aspire for. It presents opportunities for them, possibly to expand their horizon and apply positive changes to their own lives, such as occupying active roles in Asian society.

The examples show that audiences do not view foreign media and simply adopt the country's culture and way of life. Local needs in various social and cultural backgrounds influence the readings and appropriation of media messages. Consumption of foreign media and its effects cannot be assumed; people interface with media texts in a symbolically distanced environment from its production. They may gain positive insight to their lives which might

be saddled with hegemonic ideological views such as the homophobic perceptions of homosexuality in Zimbabwe.

It is this possibility that my study sought to interrogate: do Bulawayo viewers perceive the reflection of a gay relationship as a channel for them to better understand identities (relationships) different from their own? Have they gained a conception of what being gay means and the 'alternate' sexual identities that exist? Has the soap opera played a role in challenging pre-existing stereotypes about gays? Such questions will help uncover if *Generations* has either challenged or reinforced the assumed homophobic attitude of Zimbabwean society.

4.3 Regional media

Regional media is not a 'new' phenomenon. Focus on debates about media imperialism and the all-consuming power ascribed to it, has led to a preoccupation with global (western) media by media scholars (Allen and Hill 2004). Regional media has improved extensively so that it plays a central role in challenging western media's dominance in producing and exporting media forms. Regional media is described as "regional industries normally (that) have a more distinct audience group defined by language, ethnicity or religion, e.g. The Islamic world or Greater China" (Wang, Ku and Liu 2000:53).

The 'rise' of regional media is due to a number of factors. Wang, Ku and Liu highlight that the penetration of western media has always been over estimated. They expand that media companies' importing foreign programmes did not translate to audiences actually consuming/watching the programmes. For example "...Australia, percentage of total supply 54.2: percentage of total consumption 37.0. Sweden, percentage of total supply 75.0, percentage of total consumption 28.0." (2000: 58). These figures show that despite the large amount of imported foreign programming by these countries, the actual consumption (definite viewing) of these programmes by their audiences is relatively low.

The disparity between programmes imported and those actually viewed by the audience brings out how generalisations of effect by simply looking at a country's importation of media forms, fail to uncover the actual appropriation of media texts by audiences in the periphery. The assumption of extensive consumption of foreign media was arrived at after content analysis research of programming schedules (Straubhaar 2007). Therefore the media researchers paid little attention not only to "the patterns of uptake but also the uses of

globalised symbolic materials-that is, what recipients do with them, how they understand them, how they incorporate them into the routines and practices of their everyday lives” (Thompson1995:164).

Prevalence and domination of western media products, according to Allen and Hill (2004), was characteristic of the 1960’s to 1970’s. Television had just emerged and periphery countries relied mainly on the US for most of their programming as their own television (production) was not developed. During this period debates on media imperialism thesis emerged, emphasising the all-inclusive power that foreign media had on audiences in the periphery. In time, television in less developed countries progressed and audiences began to appreciate content that reflected their language and culture (Allen and Hill 2004).

Reliance on western media meant that local interests, culture and language were symbolically annihilated from their (television) media. The need to cater to specialised interests and produce culturally proximate programmes also contributed to the increasingly central role occupied by regional media. Migrants were interested in media products from home to “resist acculturation” and satellite technology made this possible. It provided a market for productions beyond a country’s border and contributed to the rise of regional media (Straubhaar 2007:104).

Improvement in media investment, rise in national production of programming, regulatory reforms and technological advancements are other factors that positively affected the growth of regional media. This has impacted on the importation of western media in some countries. Straubhaar notes that even English speaking countries such as Canada have reduced their imports of US media and turned to other regional media such as China and Latin America. Poor countries like Mozambique now look to Brazil for prime time shows instead of the Unites States (Straubhaar 2000).

Egypt, India, Brazil and Mexico are some countries that have taken advantage of the geo-linguistic market; its nature is explained thus:

In Asia, for example segmentation of audiences has resulted in four cultural markets: the Chinese, Hindu, Islamic and English. Other such markets include the Spanish-speaking population which reaches beyond Latin America into Europe; the Arab world, Europe and diasporic or ethnic communities scattered in various corners of the world (Wang, Ku and Liu 2000: 67).

Shared cultural identities and language promote regional media and the geo-linguistic market in particular. Language that is spoken in a wider geographic area gives an economic advantage for regional media as it has a wider market for its products. This has marked a shift in the west's domination so that they only retain influence in big budget (and highly technical) genres that are expensive for regional media players to produce; such as action and animated films (Wildman and Siwek in Straubhaar 2000, Straubhaar 2007). The next section will explore media formats that regional media have employed to differentiate themselves and create media products that are culturally proximate to their audiences.

4.3.1 *Glocalisation*

A format is succinctly defined by McCabe as “a concept, programme idea and it may contain narrative elements; scripts and character dialogue, and perhaps includes suggestions for staging (camera angles, musical arrangements)” (2013:12). Formats that have been successful elsewhere will more likely be bought for adaptation by a regional media house. Copying of global media formats and adaptation to local needs by using local characters, language and projecting local values is called glocalisation (Iwabuchi 2002, Straubhaar 2007). McCabe (2013) notes that TNC's usually give first preference to their own production subsidiaries to glocalise formats before they pass it on to another company.

Although European and African countries still import a number of their programmes from the west, Straubhaar (2007) notes that Latin American and Middle Eastern countries will more likely import programme ideas and genres. The advantage of shared and widely spoken language gives regional media players in Latin America and the Middle East an economic advantage and wider market for programmes showcasing their organic identities.

Brazil was one of the first major players in buying media format ideas from the US from as early as the 1940's. Mexico and Cuba were known as the “adaptation centres” for programmes later sold in Latin America (Rivero in Hilmes 2013:28). Companies like Colgate-Palmolive introduced the soap opera serial in radio productions during that time, for the Latin American audience, to market their products as they had successfully done in the US.

Formats ideas sometimes grew from their original template, were used as inspiration for new formats and at times they evolved to a totally different one from the original. One example is the transition of the soap opera to telenovelas genre. The telenovela has emerged with its own

peculiarity so that sometimes producers in America borrow format ideas from it (Straubhaar 2007). Lopez states that in 1970's telenovelas proved to be popular with locals in Latin America so that such productions began to actively compete with American soap operas like *Dallas*. The format gained popularity not only in the local market but in the South American as well, creating a large export market for the genre (Lopez 1995).

Growth of regional media and the rapid exchange of formats have led to an increased globalisation of media productions. The malleability of a format's characters and cultural similarities and adaptations are factors considered by regional media producers (McCabe 2013). One such format is the Latin American drama *Yo soy Betty la fea* adapted to the American adaptation *Ugly Betty* as well as many adaptations in Czech Republic, Russia, Germany, Finland, Israel and China (Akas and McCabe 2013). Format adaptations in game shows are also common and reality shows such as *Big Brother*, *Idols*, *The X factor* and *Who wants to be a millionaire?* have been adapted in a number of countries (Moran 2009).

4.3.2 Regional media in Africa

Debates on regional media have extensively explored the Latin American experience, probably because of the significant size of its geo-linguistic market. There is a dearth of academic literature providing a thorough comparative analysis of prominent African broadcast media players. Another reason for this may be the continent's diversity: that "many African countries consist of nations within nations, comprising different tribes, religious affiliations and other ethno-regional differences" (Yasha'u 2010:355). Yasha'u highlights that countries like Cameroon, Sudan, Ivory Coast and Nigeria are deeply divided so that there exist different histories and socio-political characteristics within one country.

These divisions of African society may be contributing to the lack of a clearly defined regional media. Language disparities are also a large contributor to this. English is the official language for most countries but the continent also has populous Lusophone and Francophone countries. This is further complicated by lack of investment in television and a myriad of indigenous ethnic and cultural groupings, for example Nigeria alone "has 250 cultural/ethnic groups and 500 indigenous languages" (Oyedele and Minor 2012:91). These social dynamics present challenges which may hinder the establishment of a truly regional media in Africa.

Despite these challenges, countries such as Nigeria and South Africa have emerged as prominent media players in the region. Nigeria's movie sector, also known as Nollywood is

touted as the third largest movie producer in the world, after America's Hollywood and Indian Bollywood (Hayes 2007). Nollywood movies are popular in Africa and possibly to attest to this popularity, the South African satellite service, Multichoice has two channels dedicated to primarily English language Nigerian films; Africa Magic One and Two (Adejunmobi 2011).

South Africa's media reach and extensive penetration of the African region is the basis used to define it as a dominating regional media producer. This is through the pay television satellite service offered by Multi Choice Africa in about 47 countries where English is the official language. So far no other country has been able to provide such extensive service in Africa hence accordingly it may be called Africa's regional media (Adejunmobi 2011).

Multichoice's programming previously predominantly consisted of foreign material and it was criticised for "peddling foreign programmes rather than promoting local productions" (Mano in Adejunmobi 2011:68). Recently, there have been significant strides made to produce and showcase programmes that are proximate to the African continent, evidenced by the introduction of Africa magic channels in 2003. By 2007 DSTV further entrenched its focus on African productions by launching Africa Magic Yoruba and Africa Magic Hausa in Nigeria. Yoruba and Hausa languages are spoken by about 68 percent of that country's population, reinforcing the point that widely spoken languages presents a big economic potential for regional media players (Oyedele and Minor 2012, Adejunmobi 2011).

The 'move' to focus on African programming is reinforced by the introduction of channels almost wholly showcasing South African productions. Mzansi Magic, Mzansi Wethu and Mzansi Bioskop's majority programs are made by South African cast and crew and tell local stories. Multichoice highlights that formats showcasing local stories like *Lokshin Bioscope* are very popular and they have about 150 productions that they will beam on newly established Mzansi Bioskop channel (a 24-hour movie channel) (Multichoice africa.com).

South African Mzansi channels have also adopted the Latin American telenovela format to produce local telenovelas such as *Zabalaza*, *Isibaya* and *Inkaba*. Mzansi Magic channel also showcases Brazilian telenovelas with English voice overs (Multichoice africa.com). Focus on local programming, stories and organic culture by Multichoice emphasises the aim of regional media; to produce programmes which are culturally proximate to local identities. One may argue that in focusing on mainly Nigeria and South Africa the company is not only

catering to a lucrative market (because of its size), but also tries to cater to the needs of audiences in the North and South of the continent albeit in an unsatisfactory way.

Conclusion

In this chapter I explored theoretical and conceptual issues which are pertinent to this study. Globalisation and the media imperialism thesis debates denote a culturally homogenous world. However the ethnographic critique of this thesis highlights shortcomings of the media imperialism thesis such as ignorance of gendered viewing of television, human agency at the point of reception and the polysemy of media texts among other factors. Thompson's symbolic distancing concept highlights that audiences may use media text to understand their life conditions and that of people in different communities. Global media may provide a resource for self-introspection when audiences compare their lives to those seen in other societies. Subsequently they may be emancipated from previously held regressive habits and ideas. Regional media's character was explored and the glocalisation or adaptation of media formats by these players, such as Multichoice, in order to provide culturally proximate media forms. The next chapter will extensively uncover research methodologies and data analysis strategy used in this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

Research Methodology and Data Analysis

Introduction

This chapter will explore the research methodology and data gathering procedures used in trying to understand how Bulawayo viewers make sense of the gay storyline in *Generations*. It explores ethnographic reception studies rooted in qualitative research and the underpinnings of this methodology

5.1 Research procedure

5.1.1 *Qualitative Research and Audience Studies*

In this research I explored audiences' subjective and personal interpretations of the gay story line in *Generations*. I conducted an ethnographic audience study, which is underpinned by qualitative methodology. To better understand reasons for this I will first evaluate the foundations and underpinnings of qualitative research then discuss ethnographic audience research.

Qualitative research is informed by the phenomenological or interpretive tradition of research (Babbie and Mouton 2001). The positivist tradition endeavours to explain human behaviour through "systematic personal observation" yet remaining objective by keeping a distance between the researcher and research subjects (Deacon et al 1999: 4). On the other hand the interpretive tradition underscores human agency and "constructivism...that social realities are continually constructed and reconstructed through routine social practises". This approach relies on people to explain these conceptions and understandings. The researcher, in the interpretive tradition, can immerse themselves in the social setting of their research subjects and get to know them intimately, observing how they live and probing their perception of the world (Deacon et al 1999: 7).

Human action/speech provides a wealth of data for researchers. In quantitative research the intention is to explain people's social conditions and formulate hypothesis based on data obtained. However for qualitative research the endeavour is to engage with the respondents in order to understand how they conceive the world, the meanings they make and the social, historical and cultural factors that influence meaning making (Snape and Spencer 2003).

Furthermore, the intention is to explore human action, conversations, culture, lifestyles and observe their interactions (among other methods of data gathering) to uncover organic patterns of behaviours and social structure (Deacon et al 1999). Babbie and Mouton point out that qualitative research involves “naturalistic inquiry” as it is best conducted in the natural setting in which it takes place, instead of an “unnatural” environment such as a laboratory (2001:270). Qualitative researchers are interested in obtaining data in a natural setting, as events unfold.

Qualitative research’s emphasis on human behaviour and interaction extends the possibility of fluidity and flexibility. The researcher does not have any preconceptions about what they will uncover; they are not constrained by a script but interest is in exploring unanticipated findings (Bryman 1984).

Qualitative researchers often inhabit an insider’s perspective to aid in data gathering. This can be applied in a bifurcated way. The first is that the researcher may share “similar cultural, linguistic, ethnic, national and religious heritage” with his/her research subjects (Ganga and Scott 2006:2). This is advantageous for the researcher as s/he may be aware of salient issues for further probing and it helps one to easily obtain respondents’ confidence especially for ‘reserved’ communities such as religious groups, sexual minorities, victims of abuse and immigrants. On the other hand the insider’s perspective denotes the researcher making “a deliberate attempt to put themselves in the shoes of the people they are observing and studying and try to understand their actions...” (2001:271). This helps understand behaviour and actions of research subjects as the researcher has insight into what these behaviours and actions mean to those conducting them (Bryman 1984, Ritchie and Lewis 2003).

My research sought to uncover meanings of the gay story line for Bulawayo viewers, particular attention being on their subjective interpretation. This was achieved through the use of research methods “which attempt to provide a holistic understanding of research participants’ view and actions in the context of their overall lives” (Ritchie and Lewis 2003:7 Morley 1992). To get viewers interpretations of the gay story-line I relied extensively on focus group discussions to draw out their understanding. This method helped to uncover their preferred readings and to highlight structural features which had a bearing on the meanings or interpretations they had.

On the other hand the ethnographic approach to reception helped uncover respondents’ interface with the programme. To obtain this data I used observation to view the respondents

as they were watching *Generations* in their ‘natural’ setting, in this case observing workers who watched the programme at a hair salon in Bulawayo’s CBD. I paid attention to the conversations and commentary that accompanied their viewing to understand motivations and foundations for interpretations they later expressed during focus group discussion. More on observation and focus groups to be discussed later in the chapter. In the next section I will bring out reception analysis and its pertinence to the study.

5.1.2 *Reception analysis*

Reception analysis is conceived out of two approaches to media studies research. The first is textual analysis as the basis and foundation of meanings and effects on audiences. Textual analysis often assumes an all assuming power media supposedly has on the audience and “implies[s] a view of media effects as acting directly and powerfully on audiences” (Jensen 1991: 136). Textual analysis’ shortcoming is that the researcher draws conclusions about the ideological nature of a text from textual features and does not take into account situated reading of this text by the audience (Jensen 1988:3).

The second approach that informs reception analysis is the interpretative tradition. This strand foregrounds the subjective analyses of texts by the viewers; that people are co-producers of meaning. Therefore in reception analysis the researcher uncovers foundations that inform production of media text and seeks to uncover the “frames of interpretation” that audiences use to make sense of the text (Jensen 1982:23). Jensen states that it basically is an “audience-cum-content analysis” approach (1988:3). He expands that before evaluating audience readings, “some analytical attention must be given to the several layers and interpretations of any given media product” (Jensen 1982: 25). This is due to an understanding that media products are also socially produced. Therefore reception analysis entails uncovering contexts of the media form’s production and the audience’s reception of the form (Jensen 1991).

To analyse the text before obtaining viewers perceptions, I conducted a qualitative content/thematic analysis on an episode of *Generations*. Qualitative content/thematic analysis involves thematically analysing media context to bring out “its underlying intentions or its presumable effects on the audience” (Kracauer 1953: 638). An extensive narrative detailing qualitative content/thematic analysis procedure will be evaluated later in the chapter.

Reception is a social process and there are varied codes and conventions that are used to make sense of the same media texts by different audiences. Reception analysis endeavours to explain the codes and conventions that audiences use to make meaning. People who share similar interpretive strategies are an interpretive community (Jensen 1988 and 1991). These interpretive communities, according to Jensen:

...rely on specific contextualized frames of cognitive and affective understanding, appear to crisscross, to a degree, standard socio-economic audience categories, hence mediating the further impact of media in ways that are only beginning to be explored by empirical research. (1991:138)

Reception analysis seeks to explore the various strategies and codes used by interpretive communities to make sense of media text. People or audiences inhabit different interpretive communities according to common factors or coding mechanisms they share. For reception analysis, the goal is to evaluate media text and the interpretation's that these communities construct out of it.

The next section will highlight the research procedure undertaken to obtain respondents and data gathering methods used.

5.2 Sampling and Research Procedure

The purpose of this study was to obtain Bulawayo audience responses to the gay representation in *Generations*. However as it is impossible to obtain views from the whole population, I relied on purposive and snowball sampling to obtain participants for this research.

Qualitative researchers sometimes use purposive sampling to “seek groups, settings, and individuals where and from whom the processes being studied are most likely to occur” (Denzin and Lincoln 2000:370). Unlike quantitative sampling where samples are chosen to statistically represent a section of the population and make generalisations to wider populations, qualitative research seeks to explore specificities of a chosen group and make sure that key elements of the research question are covered (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam 2003).

Snowball sampling involves identifying initial contacts that help the researcher link-up with other contacts who may participate in the research (Deacon et al 1999). This, Deacon explains, is used in places where “the social knowledge and personal recommendations of the initial contacts are invaluable in opening up and mapping tight social networks” (1999:53). I

used existing social networks I had to recruit respondents and they later recommended other people who were interested in participating in the focus group discussions.

One such network was at the hair salon where I normally get my hair done. There I obtained participants for two of the four focus group discussions that I conducted for the research. I noted the hairdressers' involvement with the soap opera on one visit to the salon. I asked my hairdresser to link me with her workmates whom I invited to participate in the study. Her recommendation, coupled with the fact that I am a familiar face at the salon, helped establish the familiarity needed to obtain respondents for the research. The respondents' familiarity with me also helped in exploring their views as they were comfortable expressing them to someone they know.

The purpose of obtaining salon respondents was to involve such variables as gender, as all participants (and predominantly all workers) are female. Another assumption I made was that I would obtain working class respondents with a low or basic education. This assumption was justified as my findings revealed that all but two hairdressers' (tertiary college education) level of education was up to secondary school. The respondents were also working class who lived in high-density areas and predominantly did not own the properties they lived in. Therefore they also provided insights into life conditions of people with a low cultural capital, a structural feature necessary to obtain findings on whether class has a determining role on individuals' media choices.

Three of the four focus groups I conducted had female respondents as they were easier to find and willing to participate. However in order to obtain possible alternative opinions and avenues to explore, I purposefully chose a sample with both female and male participants in the fourth group. The group had four males and one female, a deliberate effort to "include phenomena which may vary widely" from what I had already obtained (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam 2003:79). Gender was a particularly important variable to note. As soap operas are predominantly watched by women, my interest was to uncover readings made by this target audience. On the other hand I also sought views from male respondents, particularly since the gay characters featured are male and to uncover their sentiments about this homosexual projection of their gender. By and large this was aimed at uncovering various interpretations needed to answer the research question and differing opinions on the subject (Denzin and Lincoln 2000).

Purposive sampling is crucial for qualitative research; it enhances chances to obtain phenomena that can best answer the research question. Ritchie, Lewis and Elam (2003) highlight what they call a “symbolic representations” in a sample. These are chosen to “both ‘represent’ and ‘symbolise’ features of relevance to the investigation” (Lewis and Elam 2003:83). Factors like religion, political views, culture and education were included to uncover the impact they may have on viewers’ perceptions about homosexuality. To achieve this I deliberately chose respondents who had various ‘identities’: such as reporters, news editors, hairdressers, stay-at-home mothers, office administrator, students and a lawyer. These various representations gave me insight into how their careers/roles, class and socialisation impacted their interpretations of the gay representation in *Generations*.

I used a three-stage design to draw out needed data to answer the research question. These stages were:

- i) Qualitative Content analysis
- ii) Observation
- iii) Focus group discussions.

In the following sections I will explore these data gathering techniques in detail and show how they were implemented in this research.

5.2.1 *Qualitative Content/Thematic Analysis*

Content analysis is predominantly used in positivist tradition inquiry where quantification of certain variables, such as how many times a word or phrase appears, is used to draw inferences or determinations about the meaning and intentions of the text (Hansen et al 1998).

Kracauer notes that the quantification strategy used in content analysis tends to reduce complex phenomena to terms such as “favourable” and “very favourable” but fails to elicit salient features for this justification and explaining variables that may lie in between (1953:632). By doing so, he expands, one fails to bring out the main intentions of the text as well as the preferred readings that may be inscribed in it; what he simply calls the “direction of original communication” (1953:632).

However, qualitative content analysis determines the “meanings associated with the messages rather than the number of times message variables occur” (McDowell 2008: 219). It seeks to unveil aspects that are privileged and back grounded in a text and the inferences that one may

draw from this. For qualitative content/thematic analysis emphasis is on salient meanings through understanding particularities of a whole. It's a move away from picking at certain words or expression to prove a hypothesis, to understanding a holistic picture of what that text means.

I used purposive sampling to choose an episode of *Generations* that I thematically analysed and used as a probe for further discussion during focus group interviews. The gay relationship is presented by one couple and from the episodes I could obtain; I chose an episode that dealt with their relationship in detail.

I identified three prevalent themes of the gay representation in the soap opera and they are: constructions of masculinity, camera use and intimacy and the gay couple's social positioning and community. In my analysis of the episode under review, and the general representation of the couple in the programme, I paid attention to language use and the connotations that one may elicit from particular word choice. I also highlighted privileged discourses, framing of the gay couple together with the preferred reading of this framing.

One key to unveiling how audiences receive media text is through observing them as they consume these texts. I discuss this aspect of my research design in the next section.

5.2.3 Observation

Observation provides an opportunity for one to observe, record and analyse human behaviour as it takes place (Ritchie 2003). An authentic ethnographic approach entails participant observation where a researcher lives and interacts with a society or community they were researching (Lindlof 1995, Press and Livingstone 2001). Due to lack of time and resources I employed a holistic nature of ethnographic enquiry which involves describing cultural system, observing human interaction and uncovering personal beliefs and interpretations (Lindlof 1995:20).

Insight into social interactions of viewing was provided through observing hairdressers and their assistants at a hair salon in Bulawayo's CBD. I am a client at the salon and the first time I noted the group's viewing and interaction was when I visited the salon at around 9 a.m. At this time a repeat episode of *Generations* is aired on SABC 1 and that particular episode contained the gay story line. It was uncommonly quiet from the usual noise of the salon and on enquiring I was told that at that time people are not particularly keen on idle chit-chat that may distract from watching the soap opera.

I then came on two further separate occasions on the pretence of dropping by to chat with my hairdresser in order to observe the workers as they watched and conversed about the soap opera. The reason for doing so was to make sure that the hairdressers were regular viewers of the soap opera. I also intended to uncover the viewing processes of the group, for instance how they interacted with the programme and if they negotiated readings they made about the soap opera together. I also sought to glean the comments they made about the soap opera, particularly about the gay couple. Being a “fly on the wall” enabled me to observe the hairdressers and to make note of their interaction and conversations, something I believe would have been hindered in if I had declared my research intentions in advance (Deacon et al 1999: 250).

During the week, the soap opera’s previous night’s episode is repeated at 9 a.m. on SABC 1 and later at 10.30 am on SABC 3. Although the workers tuned in to both screenings, the earlier time slot was most popular and practical as the salon would be quieter and relatively free of clients. The first two observations I carried out were for this earlier viewing session. After conducting the focus group I returned to observe respondents during the 10.30 broadcast and further evaluate assertions they made during focus group interview.

I took notes detailing data obtained during these observations sessions soon after leaving the salon. Note taking in the salon, while observing respondents, would have been conspicuous and possibly hindered naturalistic behaviour from respondents (Deacon et al 1999).

5.2.4 Focus Group Discussion

Focus groups involve bringing together a group or groups of people to discuss an issue in the presence of a moderator or an interviewee (Lunt and Livingstone 1996, Fontana and Frey 1994). Initially focus groups were largely used by market researchers to gather consumer attitude about certain products and services, and by political parties to uncover voter’s sentiments about policy issues (Fontana and Frey 1994).

The focus group interview method is imperative in gathering data for qualitative inquiry and reception analysis in particular. Deacon (et al) notes that as reception studies highlight the “social context of media consumption and the agency and discernment of audience members in the decoding process”, therefore focus groups discussions provide a crucial insight as they “provide rich qualitative material well suited to detailed interpretive analysis” (1999:55).

Focus group interviews' significance stems from the realisation that instead of using respondents to test pre-determined hypothesis, they are a primary resource providing rich data. Group discussions, according to Lunt and Livingstone (1996), provide a close simulation of everyday talk and meaning making, especially for preconceived groups who may watch television together and are comfortable with each other (Deacon et al 1999). All group interviews were predominantly conducted in Ndebele, the first language for most respondents which helped participants to comfortably and exhaustively express their views. Some respondents felt comfortable expressing themselves in English.

There was a degree of familiarity amongst the members of the focus groups that I constituted so that discussions flowed easily (Deacon et al 1999). I chose two groups from a hair salon (five members in the first group and eight in the second) comprising of hairdressers and their assistants as they work and watch *Generations* together. Another group (four members) was comprised of friends undertaking a weight-loss challenge, and the last group (five members) was made up of work mates at a local daily newspaper. Therefore in total there were four groups, three with female respondents and the fourth group had four males and one female. I was personally acquainted with one or two members of each group and they in turn introduced me to the rest of their 'group members', which helped me gain their trust.

As I have previously highlighted, I used purposive sampling to obtain interviewees. In particular I used heterogeneous purposive sampling to capture a wide range of identities/variables which would have been relevant for this study. In this instance newsroom participants are privy to socio-political aspects in the country which may have a bearing on their reading of homosexuality given that politicians of the day perpetuate homophobia. Weight loss group largely comprised of homemakers, some who are well educated, while hairdressers provided a sample of working class group with basic education.

Venue choice was made on the basis of convenience to the respondents and to ensure that respondents were comfortable (Finch and Lewis 2003). For the salon respondents I managed to conduct the focus group at the salon but early in the day before it got busy, which was around 7.30 am. The weight-loss club group discussion took place at a coffee shop near to their boot camp while the news workers' discussion was conducted in the company board room provided by the editor during the journalists' lunch break.

Before the interview commenced, I spent a few minutes outlining the purpose of the research and its subject matter. I explained the purpose of my research and sought respondents'

consent to use a recording device during the interview. This was done to address ethical concerns of informed consent, that participants need to be aware of what they are taking part in and “decide for themselves what is in their best interest and what risks they are prepared to take” (Ali and Kelly 2004:121). I also highlighted privacy concerns, in particular the use of respondents’ names in the thesis. All group participants were indifferent to having their names used and the use of a recording device during the interview. However for the sake of guarding respondents from unsolicited exposure, I chose to use pseudonyms in the thesis (Christians 2008).

Interaction of the group was essential in giving me a conception of how respondents would normally relate when watching the soap opera. Focus groups provided a “replication of the social setting in which people live”, or in this context an insight into conversations respondents made while viewing *Generations* (Burgess et al in Lunt and Livingstone 1996:86). To further elicit these interactions, after watching the episode of the soap opera, I posed pre-determined thematic questions to the groups (see Appendix A for interview guide). I came up with these questions with the help of my supervisor, Professor Strelitz, but was conscious of allowing flexibility so that group conversation would flow freely in case these exchanges provided an interesting avenue I could explore (Fontana and Frey 1994)

After posing a question participants would respond or discuss among themselves. At times some respondents would give examples and personal stories to clarify a point. Others would then concur or express their own interpretations. I found that familiarity or “synergy” (Finch and Lewis 2003:171) among group members was invaluable in this research as I felt that most respondents were able to freely express their sentiments on homosexuality, while participants with differing views from the consensus were also able to articulate their opinions.

As three of the total focus groups conducted were female respondents, the need to cater to this gendered group was paramount. Some members tended to dominate the discussion and as a moderator, I made a conscious effort to draw in quiet members by pointedly asking their own views and sentiments (Finch and Lewis 2003). On the other hand, some respondents would easily get carried away and bring in facets of the soap opera that were not relevant to the study. Women according to Yeandle, “are always encouraged to digress into details of their personal histories and to recount anecdotes of their working lives” as this may provide

valuable insights and possible new avenues to explore (Yeandle in Fontana and Frey 1994:370). I had to keep a firm hand to ensure that these digressions provided valuable data.

5.3 Data Analysis Procedure

I watched the episode of *Generations* chosen for the group discussion and thematically analysed it, paying attention to the programme's preferred reading (Hall 1980). When respondents were watching the episode at the beginning of the group interview, I observed their viewing process, paying attention to the comments and conversations taking place (Fontana and Frey 1994).

Hiemstra (1983) states that the advantage of focus group interviewing is that it "provide(s) the opportunity to observe informants conducting their own discursive tests, negotiating meaning, and confirming or disconfirming appropriate ways of speaking" (in Lunt and Livingstone 1996: 88). To effectively obtain data from this interview process I conducted the group interviews in Ndebele. I then translated and transcribed the findings to English, paying attention to salient meanings in respondents' conversations.

Data obtained from respondents presented a wealth of information that helped provide insight into their motivations and foundations for views expressed about the gay representation in *Generations*. This data, together with observations notes, was categorised according to theme topics predetermined when drafting interview questions. Therefore information chosen was essential to fulfilling the objective of the research (Ritchie Spencer and O'Connor 2003).

After thematically coding the responses and observation notes I analysed them, paying attention to "recurring themes and ideas" (Ritchie Spencer and O'Connor 2003: 221). Data uncovered during the interview process was also categorised and analysed. Mead (in Babbie and Mouton) emphasises the importance of uncovering social shaping of meaning as individuals "are born into an already formed society and thus s/he emerges from, and is defined in terms of an ongoing flux of social activity" (2001:31). Therefore I paid particular attention to respondents' culture, political background, religious and educational background that may influence their interpretations about homosexuality. Data obtained was presented in a narrative form and quotations were used to highlight and emphasise certain points.

5.4 Limitations of the study

As previously highlighted, there are a few academic research materials in Zimbabwe related to homosexuality, I felt having some insight into what other researchers may have done would have provided a worthwhile arc to my research. On the other hand the fact that homosexuality is criminalised in Zimbabwe and Gals members are victimised by the state, meant that I was treated with suspicion by the group. Although the group has an in-house library, I believe their victimisation by the state worked to my disadvantage as I failed to get their assistance and in particular to access their library which may have provided worthwhile insight into the research question.

Salon respondents were relatively difficult to manage. Some respondents kept moving away, for instance to attend to clients, and to chat to other workers who were not participating in the discussion. I noticed this disorder in the first group interview but in the second one I had to insist that only people who could commit to stay put during the whole interview process should take part.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the research design and data gathering techniques used to answer this research question. I chose purposive sampling to choose respondents for the research and to establish focus groups for the interview. Efforts were made to encompass different variables such as culture, religion, education and political background by purposively choosing heterogeneous samples representative of all variables. I highlighted the three-stage model of data gathering that is qualitative content/thematic analysis, observation and focus group discussions. The data analysing process as well as the limitations of the study were explored. In the following chapter will present data gathered.

CHAPTER SIX

Data Presentation and Analysis

Introduction

Viewing of regional media and the meanings made by Bulawayo viewers when watching television programmes containing homosexuality is the main focus of this research. This investigation was carried out by observing and interviewing viewers of the soap opera *Generations*. The research stems from the assumption that western media exerts its culture and value system on countries in the periphery. The ethnographic critique of media imperialism thesis highlights that regional media players are gaining prominence and stretching their influence over geo-linguistic markets they operate in. South Africa is an example of a regional media player in the African region and in this chapter I highlight factors that influence preference of this country's media by Zimbabweans.

I draw on the notion of symbolic distancing to understand how Bulawayo viewers make sense of the homosexual story line in *Generations* as they view it in Zimbabwe, a country whose government and laws reject homosexuality. A qualitative content/thematic analysis on an episode of the soap opera will help highlight main themes of the soap opera, particularly the gay couple's framing. I also provide a hegemonic reading of their representation. Hall's encoding/decoding model provides insight into readings and meanings viewers make.

This chapter has four main sections. In the first I highlight the popularity of South African television for Bulawayo viewers, emphasising ethnic politics that largely influence this preference. In the second I examine factors contributing to the attraction to *Generations*. The cultural proximity theory will help elicit reasons for this preference. The third section highlights central themes about the representation of the gay couple, while the fourth provides an evaluation of respondents' readings.

6.1 Popularity of South African Television

ZTV's viewership has been on the decline in Zimbabwe and statistics show this is most glaring in urban areas where over 50 percent of the population watch foreign satellite television (Zamps 2013). Bulawayo viewers' preference for South African television is largely determined by lack of a local alternative television channel from the national broadcaster. Reference to South African television in this research is to SABC 1 to 3 as most

respondents had access to these stations. Of all the respondents interviewed, only one admitted that she recently watched ZTV; to see the opening of parliament and burial of a national hero.

I observed that most interviewees were rather dismissive when I probed their preference for South African television. They seemed to have a “taken-for-granted” approach to it, that the reasons were common knowledge so why ask a “dumb” question. Their preference for South African television is that it has a better range of programmes, talented presenters and actors and the quality of production is exceptional when compared to ZTV.

Eve: It (South African television) has more programmes, especially children programmes like Takalani Sesame whereas here (ZTV) their children’s programmes are not as good, not like South African television.

Ben: We watch it merely because we do not have our own local option so that is why we view SABC.

Duduzani: Partly because there are no options in Zimbabwe. In South Africa most of their stuff shows they have a healthy budget so their productions, like picture quality, is exceptional. Their soccer coverage is very advanced. They strive to showcase their local football and even show foreign sport like the English Premier League on Supersport.

For Eve her attraction to South African television, as a mother, is the station’s ability to provide varied entertainment options for her children, something she finds lacking in Zimbabwean television. On the other hand Ben alludes to the lack of a ‘local’ option, inferring to lack of a channel that reflects the languages and culture of Matabeleland. This aspect will be exhaustively interrogated in the following sub-section. Duduzani also highlights the superiority of South African productions which he believes are a cut above the Zimbabwean ones. He perceives that they have better picture quality and more extensive sports coverage.

The attraction to South African television for some respondents is the extent of its proximity to their own lives, how ‘realistic’ they are.

Lazarus: South African programs are realistic because of the cultural and social similarities we share. They are set in familiar places like Johannesburg which also have features like townships which are similar to our own. For example, we see shebeens in their programs and we also have them in Bulawayo. South Africa also wields a lot of influence culturally as a number of Zimbabweans have either stayed or visited there.

Seeing familiar scenes being portrayed in South African television explains Lazarus' attraction to the country's media. Strelitz (2002) highlights that audiences are often attracted to programmes which seem 'realistic' to them, when "a literal resemblance is sought between the fictional world of the text and the 'real' world as experienced by the audience member" (Ang in Strelitz 2002:188). Portrayal of townships and shebeens in South African television, which also exist in Bulawayo, justifies the realistic aspect of that nation's television and its attraction for Lazarus.

Another contributing factor to the rejection of ZTV by Zimbabweans is its "un-interrogated war rhetoric and propaganda" and its insistence on promoting the ruling party's ideology (Malleus 2012: 134). This shortcoming is expressed by one respondent, who states:

Noma: I think we get more critical news about our very own country from South African television than ZTV.

For Noma the neighbouring country's news service provides an analytical coverage of Zimbabwean affairs, something she finds lacking in the national broadcaster. As Malleus notes, for many Zimbabweans, ZTV has simply "crossed the line" thus people prefer news or views from other countries than those expressed on local television (2012: 134).

Although some Ndebele respondents explained their attraction to South African television through ethnic contestations (to be explored later in the chapter), Shona speaking interviewees highlighted aspects such as ZTV's poor quality programmes and Zanu PF narrative privileging of the party's role in the country's liberation as reasons for choosing South African television:

Anna: It's just tiresome to watch all these old war shows about how Zanu PF fought for our freedom and so on. I understand their role but it seems we are indebted to them for doing this. So they keep showing us these old programmes that are poor quality.

Ratidzo: The presenters and some actors they have on ZTV shows are half baked. They are so shoddy that sometimes it seems they are practising for something and not actually playing a role that is serious. The poor standards really put me off.

Anna's sentiments are echoed by Ranger (2004) who states that Zimbabwean media, particularly the national broadcaster, practises what he terms 'patriotic history' which is divisive as it places people (media practitioners, politicians and so on) as binary opposites of either being patriots or sell outs. Content in the national broadcaster privileges narratives that favour the ruling party while dissenting voices are labelled sell-outs or unpatriotic. ZTV

broadcasts documentaries and movies emphasising the ruling party role in the liberation war, most of which were produced in late 1970's or early 1980's and are of a poor quality (Ranger 2004, 2005 and Malleus 2012).

Access to South African television, as previously stated, was gained through free-to-air decoders: Wiztech, Phortec and Philibao. Most respondents acknowledged this was their primary access to SABC television until July 2013 when the signal to free-to air-decoders was scrambled by Sentech (see chapter two). Currently most respondents receive SABC through a DSTV South Africa account.

Duduzani: I watch SABC through DSTV. After people were cut off there are business people or companies who started offering subscription services giving them channels that have SABC, so for them business is booming.

Nobe: I went to the extent of going by bus to Johannesburg after we had been cut off and bought a decoder. I subscribed to a DSTV compact bouquet so that I could watch South African television.

The lengths that Nobe went through in order to gain access to South African television reflect the popularity of that country's television for some local viewers.

It is imperative to point out that popularity of South African television in Bulawayo, in particular, stems from the ethnic and political contestations that exist between the Ndebele minority ethnic group against the Shona majority ethnic group (Thompson 2013). As noted in Chapter Two, Ndebeles feel marginalised in Zimbabwe and this is further reinforced by their minimal representation in the country's media such as Zimbabwe television. This is a primary reason why some Bulawayo respondents feel they can identify with South African television through its representation of Nguni languages such as Zulu and Xhosa. The following section will highlight the attraction for South African television through language proximity.

6.1.1 Cultural proximity and attraction to South African television

As previously discussed, Straubhaar (2000)'s cultural proximity theory highlights people's preference for media products that are similar or closely related to their own. Familiar dress, language, culture and familiarity with actors play a critical role in attracting geo-linguistic audiences. The attraction to South African television for some Bulawayo viewers is that the country's programmes reflect values that are proximate to Ndebele culture.

Sometimes language attraction to foreign media may help at a “subnational level” when viewers are attracted to media that reinforces local culture against the national one (Straubhaar 2007: 69). People are more attracted to media that reflects lifestyles and values that are familiar to them. Furthermore audiences want programmes that, although may differ in dialects and accents, may generally concur with local identities and dialogue where “jokes are funny without explanations” (Straubhaar 2007: 43). In this section I will bring out how local Ndebele language and its similarity with Xhosa and Zulu identities justify attraction to South African media.

ZTV’s ideology of promoting Shona language and culture perpetuates a feeling of exclusion for some Bulawayo viewers. ZTV’s programme line up shows that besides news broadcasts in Shona and Ndebele, there is only one other programme in the channel that is in Ndebele, called *Ezomgido* (zbc 2014). Although the musical show’s title is Ndebele and infers that it showcases Ndebele music, in reality there is a medley of Ndebele, Shona and at times regional (African) music. Talk shows, magazine programmes and documentaries are either in English or Shona. English subtitles are not provided for Shona programmes. This exclusion of Ndebele representations and language has created a scenario where some Bulawayo viewers feel they can identify with South Africans more than other Zimbabweans.

Ben: I watch [SABC] because I feel their programmes closely resemble Ndebele language, unlike here where you have to know Shona in order to understand most television programmes. I want to watch something that I understand, that is why I choose South African television. Studio 263 started on a good note but ended up with mostly Shona speaking characters, I did not like that so I ended up disconnecting from it. In South African television I think the programmes try to support unity, you learn other people’s languages and appreciate them.

Lazarus: Since we don’t have a local option, and in the absence of local Ndebele drama, I watch Zulu drama. They are culturally appealing showing the lifestyles of people in townships and the use of slang. We see that also in our own communities and we use the same street language. They also cater for other cultures that are in their country which is not done by local TV.

Inadequate representation of viewers’ Ndebele identity and culture impacts on their viewing preferences. As Lazarus highlights, he prefers South African television as it fills a vacuum left by ZTV’s focus on Shona values and culture. Lifestyles of people in townships and use of slang depicted in Zulu programmes is representative of his social environment, hence he is attracted to them. Ben alludes to the fact that most Zimbabwean programmes are either in English or Shona yet English subtitles are not provided for programmes that are in Shona. To him this subtle symbolic annihilation of Ndebele identity means that ZTV is promoting

disunity, unlike in South African programmes where English subtitles are provided for vernacular languages. Ben feels he is ‘included’ through subtitles offering insight into languages that he does not understand. Therefore for him, South African media producers promote unity, unlike the Zimbabwean ones who privileges one group over others.

Ben also refers to a Zimbabwean soap opera called *Studio 263* which he believes initially had a broad cultural focus but later turned to projecting Shona values at other cultures’ expense. As the soap opera incorporated more Shona than Ndebele characters, he felt disconnected from the programme. As Hall notes, “Representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture” (1997:15). Therefore exclusion, through inadequate representation makes some Bulawayo viewers feel disconnected from the Shona narrative (culture) that is privileged in the country’s television at the expense of their Ndebele culture.

Sometimes the culture and language of media producers may differ from that at the point of reception. Local culture may not necessarily coincide with national culture and “local viewers may not understand or identify with all the elements of the national culture as projected in national television” (Straubhaar 2007:198). For viewers like Ben, national culture at the point of production (Shona culture in Harare) is something that he does not identify with (Ndebele culture in Bulawayo), hence his refusal to engage with ZTV programmes. Choosing South African over Zimbabwe television for these Bulawayo viewers is to engage with media that is proximate to their language, culture and helps fortify local identity (Straubhaar 2007).

Hall (1991) posits that unlike in the past where identities were a stable source of reference, the notion of a nation state and national culture is changing. Global media forms now transgress frontiers and language restrictions are overcome by its global focus, for instance through the use of English language (Hall 1991:22, 27). This situation creates emancipatory opportunities for Bulawayo viewers. Instead of being stuck with their country’s poor television, they can view South African television that may satisfy their information and entertainment needs.

In this section I have analysed the attraction to South African television due to language similarities between Ndebele and South African Xhosa and Zulu. In the next section I will highlight reasons for the popularity of *Generations* for Bulawayo viewers.

6.2 Popularity of *Generations*

Soap operas are mainly targeted at women and producers ensure that the genre focuses on material that is interesting for the group, such as focus on family, fantasy, destiny and romance (Buckman 1984, Geraghty 1991, Modleski 1982). Until late 1980's to early 1990's gay relationships were symbolically annihilated in this genre. Things that could easily be pardoned were portrayed in soap operas; that is abortions, infidelity, alcoholism and so on, while "homosexuality, which could explode the family structure rather than temporarily disrupt it, is (was) simply ignored" (Modleski 1990:93). However homosexual visibility and presence in soap opera has advanced due to strides made by media producers to project gay identities. The intention was to attract the gay market, whose numbers help entice advertisers to their television networks (Becker 2004). This change was also reinforced by gay rights groups' advocacy and challenging stereotypical representations in the media (Fejes and Petrich 1993).

Soaps have been used to raise contentious issues and create opportunities for their discussion (Geraghty 1991). The genre's open-ended form and slow progression allows producers to ease audiences into a narrative (Buckman (1984). Therefore viewers are not necessarily "shocked" when the whole story unfolds. Viewers watch soap operas to be "entertained, frightened, happy and uplifted" and they tolerate controversy as long as it entertains them (Buckman 1984: 90). In the following sub-sections I will highlight various factors that attract Bulawayo viewers to *Generations*.

6.2.1 *Cultural proximity as attraction to Generations*

Certain themes prevail in the episode under review and the soap opera as a whole. It is imperative to note that the gay story-line is one of the main themes in the soap opera. Other themes involve issues of traditional beliefs and values and heterosexual relationship contestation. Although the focus of the thesis is about the gay relationship in the soap opera, these other themes will be highlighted to bring out aspects that justify its popularity to Bulawayo viewers.

Heterosexual relationship dynamics in relation to traditional values and beliefs are themes brought out in the soap opera. A couple called Phenyo and Dineo highlight this theme as they have problems of Dineo miscarrying and physically abusing her husband. She initially sought

help through counselling but this did not yield positive results and they eventually consult their families to help resolve their marital problems. Resolution involves a family meeting and counselling as well as a cleansing ceremony to appease ancestors, bless the couple and help them resolve their issues. This shows the privileging of traditional channels of conflict resolutions, which involve the immediate family and appeasement of ancestors.

Another reflection of the dynamics of a heterosexual relationship and traditional values is shown in the polygamous relationship between Khaphela, Sarah and Khethiwe. Khaphela has two wives, Sarah being the first wife and Khethiwe the younger, second wife. Dynamics of this relationship were explored as the young wife lives with the husband in the city while the second wife lives in the rural homestead. The second wife is eventually exposed as a gold digger who clandestinely inherits her husband's wealth when he dies.

These themes which reflect African beliefs, cultural dynamics and way of life are what respondents find appealing in the soap opera:

Siphiwe: There are cultural things that I identify with in the soap opera, like when someone dies they show that people have to gather and hold a funeral wake and mourn that person. In soaps like the *Bold and the Beautiful* they may wear black but they just carry on with their lives and go to work unlike for us where you skip work for some days while you mourn. Cultural aspects like that keep me captivated.

Duduzani: Problems that Dineo and Phenyio have result in them having to consult their immediate family for help and they have a ceremony to appease ancestors. This shows that the issue of conflict resolution in the African context is shared among family members and the married couple do not deal with their problems on their own.

Ben: On the issue of polygamy you would realise that the young wife is usually in the urban areas with the husband while the older wife is in the rural areas and all that is reflected in the soap opera. The young wife cheats on him and when the man dies she gets the bulk of the inheritance.

For Siphiwe the manner of mourning and grief that she is accustomed to is reflected in the soap opera. Duduzani acknowledges that traditional channels for conflict resolution may involve the immediate family while for Ben the attraction is to see African relationship dynamics such as the reflection of a polygamous marriage. These representations are culturally proximate to the viewers' culture and account for their attraction to *Generations* (Nyathi 2001).

Gay representation using proximate identities have an impact on viewers' interface with the soap opera. Senzo and Jason are shown as 'local' (South African) identities, a Xhosa and a

Zulu. They dress and speak in an unassuming manner which does not outwardly show their homosexual identity. Sipiwe believes this has played a crucial role in helping her understand the couple and their role in the soap opera:

I think it was a conscious effort made by the producers to give us identities that are similar to our own, that of Zulu and Xhosa. Remember these are dominant tribes in South Africa so this makes it palatable and we are keen to know how these familiar characters or identities live.

These representations which are illustrative of ordinary South African identities provide representations of the gay couple that are proximate to ordinary people of Bulawayo. To viewers like Sipiwe this has piqued her curiosity and justifies her continued engagement with the programme, to see how the gay couple live.

6.2.2 *Viewing Generations as a social process*

Watching *Generations* as a group is another factors that makes the soap opera attractive to some respondents. It is essential to uncover aspects which justify the attraction of the soap opera to some respondents, as it may help substantiate their continued engagement to it. The viewing process and conversations that accompany this viewing are some factors that make *Generations* attractive to some respondents. In the following section I will highlight this from my observation of workers at a hair salon.

I arrived at Diva hair salon around 7:30 a.m. to observe how the workers interacted with the soap. On arrival they (workers) clean and set-up their work stations so that at 9 a.m. most of them are seated and ready to watch the soap. The viewing process is quite involved and there is minimal chatter among them. However during commercial breaks they discuss what has just happened in the soap opera, giving their own interpretations, predictions and reference to previous occurrences.

Total engagement with the soap is evidenced by one incident I observed. In that episode, Dineo was about to catch her husband Phenyio sleeping with another woman. As this story unfolded there was constant chatter and predictions about how the impending scenario would play out. The excitement mixed with ominous anticipation was palatable among the hairdressers. As Dineo barged into the bedroom, Diva workers' exclaimed and cat calls resounded. Dineo proceeded to pull out a gun and shoot at the roof a number of times possibly to scare her husband and lover. For each bullet she (Dineo) fired this was punctuated

by screams by the women in the salon and one could note the recoil and horror they felt as they watched the scene.

Such close and sharable emotions are some of the things that respondents in the salon love about the soap opera and motivates their preference for watching *Generations* at the salon than at home.

Revonia: We watch it here (at the salon), we chat about it together while watching and it is usually quiet at that time so there isn't that much noise to disturb our viewing.

Noe: Even if I watch it at home the previous night, I come to work then I watch it again with everyone and we chat about the soap opera.

Nhlanhla: We watch the soap opera re-run at 9 am, if we love what was featured in that episode we watch it again in SABC 3 at 10:30 a.m. During the weekend, although it would be busier than usual, we also watch the omnibus to make sure we did not miss anything.

Although respondents like Noe have access to SABC 1 at home, the atmosphere and conversations that accompany viewing at the salon draw her to that viewing space. These conversations involve critiques of characters wardrobe, especially hairstyles. They also include applying their historical knowledge of events and characters and predicting how they may impact on current developments in the programme. Watching *Generations* for Diva workers is quite involved as shown by Nhlanhla. For these viewers, engagement with the soap opera as a group is more interesting and they are fulfilled when they watch together.

Seiter (1999) highlights that viewers acquire cultural capital from television such as knowledge about "soap opera's history...gossip about stars" and they use this cultural capital as "currency of friendship, or polite conversation with neighbours" (1999:26). For Diva hairdressers the shared viewing space and attraction to *Generations* give them a chance to acquire cultural capital which they use in conversations about the soap opera and life in general. Their viewing process may account for the attraction to the soap opera and the decision by respondents to keep watching the soap opera even when it introduced the gay couple.

6.2.3 Routine watching of *Generations*

Watching soap opera is routine for some, as illustrated by salon respondents. They highlighted that *Generations* fits into their routine so that watching is not necessarily about what is interesting, it is now a habit. This involvement with the soap opera is also cemented

by its scheduling at a set time which makes it easy for viewers to make it a “habit” or “routine” that they fit in with their daily practises (Spence 2005).

Eve: I watch news all the time on SABC 1 and the very next thing that comes is *Generations*, so I just got used to sitting and sliding from news to *Generations*. We were first introduced to *Generations* on ZTV, which is the first time we really fell in love with the soap opera. When decoders came the story had progressed but we followed through because we had watched it before.

Noma: It has just become part of my routine. It is the only programme that I let the girls watch on television during the week and they do so just before bedtime so it is just something we are used to doing before they go to sleep.

Reference to *Generations* on ZTV by Eve refers to its 2001 screening by the national broadcaster, which was later scrapped when the 75% local content quota was imposed (Thompson 2013). This routine watching of the soap opera by Eve and Noma highlights Spence’s assertion that for most women the seriality of soap operas “perpetuates the entrenchment of habit....watching soap operas is part of a pattern of weekday life, another activity in a task oriented perception of time” (Spence 2005:152). *Generations* has been accorded its time so that it is part of daily life. Noma watches with her daughters and implies that *Generations* is a marker of time as they watch the soap opera “before bedtime”. This routine watching of the programme for some respondents explains their failure to extricate themselves from this practise, the viewing process is naturalised so that they always watch it apart from whatever themes explored.

For long time viewers of the serial like Eve and Noma, the important issue is that they can connect with the history of the characters – they bring that historical knowledge to every episode they watch. Allen (1996) notes that the prolonged serial, often for decades for soap operas in developed countries, give viewers a sense of community which they share with characters they have seen over many years. Knowledge of the characters’ individual histories and attributes cement the attachment that viewers have for the programme (Spence 2005).

The bond that long time viewers have for the soap opera despite contentious issues explored, such as homosexuality, helps explain why viewers continue watching the programme. The next section will uncover central themes about gays in the soap opera and bring out their hegemonic readings.

6.3 The gay representation in *Generations*

The gay theme in the soap opera, as previously highlighted, is brought out through two male characters that have a son. Contrary to Buckman's assertion (1984) that soap operas ease their viewers into a controversial storyline and are thus not shocked when it unfolds, most respondents stated that they were stunned when gay characters were introduced in *Generations*. This was further compounded by the gay kiss which marked the beginning of the relationship, something that viewers found shocking and unsettling as they had never seen it before on television (mambaonline.com 2010). For Tammy the gay story-line had an impact on viewing dynamics at home:

When that (introduction of the gay couple) happened my dad banned us from watching *Generations*. At 8 o'clock he would be in the living room to make sure that nobody watched and would ask "what do you think you are learning from this nonsense". He emphatically said we can watch all other soap operas but not *Generations* as it would give us an idea that it was acceptable to be gay. As time passed he was not that forceful but instead would leave the TV room as he said watching the programme with us would be as if he was endorsing homosexuality.

Although Tammy's father rejected the soap opera due to its gay theme and remained resolute, most respondents' stated that their protestations were short lived as they soon resumed watching. They mostly attributed this to curiosity as they were eager to see how the story would develop. This resonates with what Spence calls to question about viewers' "servitude" to soap operas, that "Broadcast after broadcast, soap opera, after soap opera, they watch on" (2005:79). To Bulawayo respondents the will to tune into the programme was out of curiosity about gay relationships as it is something hidden in their society.

The next section will address central themes of the gay couple in the chosen episode of the soap opera (see Annexure B). I will also provide a narrative arc depicting how the couple is generally framed in *Generations* and provide thematic examples of this representation. The text will be analysed under the following thematic headings: constructions of masculinity, camera use and intimacy and gay couple social positioning and community.

6.3.1 *Constructions of masculinity*

Gender roles are emphasised in the episode as Senzo is presented as the effeminate partner in the relationship. Effeminate qualities in gay characterisation are their constructions as carers, who cook well, buy expensive things and project flamboyance in their actions (Jones and

Gelb 2007). Senzo's effeminate qualities are shown by his construction as the primary carer of Mngqobi. He is the one who discovers him convulsing and vomiting while his partner, Jason, is shown drinking (possibly an alcoholic beverage) after a day at work. Senzo is weepy, agitated and struggles to speak coherently to Jason as they rush their son to the hospital.

Jason is presented as the calm and level headed partner. He constantly calms panic stricken and hysterical Senzo. At the hospital Jason asks pertinent questions that are not tempered with morbid anticipation and hysteria. Senzo is constructed as the weaker one who cannot withstand pressure while his partner takes the upper hand by keeping things calm and facing 'problems' without panicking.

Senzo effeminate construction is further emphasised by Scott, Senzo's workmate. He is unsettled that Phenylo Dlomo (Senzo's cousin) is part of the opposing team bidding for a mobile TV tender and reasons that they may lose as "the Otlogiles trust the Dlomos", disregarding that Senzo is also a Dlomo. When Senzo brings this to his attention he ignores him, and instead hopes that his (Scott's) relationship with the Otlogiles will count in his favour. Scott infers that he does not have faith that Senzo's abilities and stature as a Dlomo would count in their favour. This dismissal is similar to how women often treated, being sidelined and belittled as Senzo is being treated by Scott (Lorber 1994).

Most media representations of gay couples have one partner showing effeminate qualities through dress, grooming and exaggerated gestures among other things (Rahman and Jackson 2010). In *Generations* Senzo and Jason are shown as 'normal' males who dress and behave in an unassuming manner. Senzo's construction as the weaker and effeminate partner is emphasised through his behaviour. He is depicted as being overtly emotionally expressive (crying), concern about domestic matters and being the primary carer of their son. Jason on the other hand is constructed as a dominant masculinity in the relationship. He is ambitious about work, is never shown being emotional (crying) and is rarely seen in the nursery to see or take care of Mngqobi.

Although *Generations* text frames Jason as the dominant masculinity in the gay relationship, he is also constructed as a subordinated masculinity by Sibusiso. Senzo met the Dlomo family as an adult as his father, Sibusiso, was not aware of his existence. As Sibusiso did not have another son, Senzo was a welcome addition to the family as an heir apparent. When Jason and Senzo started their relationship, Sibusiso's disapproval largely stemmed from his

concern that his heir was not “man enough” and would jeopardise the survival of the family name as the couple would not sire children. Sibusiso’s anger culminated into a showdown where he horse-whipped the couple when he caught them kissing in his house.

Sibusiso is concerned about wealth creation, family values and having an heir to carry the family name. When these values are threatened he reacts violently to protect the family’s honour. Sibusiso’s construction reinforces Morrell’s claims regarding hegemonic masculinities:

Among its defining features are misogyny, homophobia, racism and compulsory heterosexuality. Hegemonic masculinity is not stable. It is constantly responding to challenges, accommodating or repelling rival representations of masculinity... and gay men are excluded from or subordinated to hegemonic masculinity. (1998: 608)

The soap opera manages to reinforce this hegemonic masculinity represented by Sibusiso when he horse whips the couple. *Generations* does not provide a “response” to this hegemonic masculinity as the couple tolerates Sibusiso’s aggression and do not retaliate or challenge his homophobia. In this instance the soap opera construes the gay relationship as a subordinated masculinity (Hanke in Saavedra 2009). Morrell notes that for hegemonic masculinities, violence is often used to assert their domination or status and reacting violently is “manly behaviour” expected of them (2007: 18). Placing the gay couple at the receiving end of this violence and without retaliation reinforces the preferred reading of the couple as subordinated masculinity.

Subordination of the gay couple is highly reinforced by the labelling of the couple by Sibusiso. The common derogatory name he uses is *izitabane*. This term in isiZulu refers to a hermaphrodite (Reid 2003), however in Ndebele it does not carry any particular meaning “but is associated with disgust and hatred of the queer. It carries a similar meaning to words like ‘faggot’, ‘dyke’ or ‘moffie’” (Msibi 2012:255). Sibusiso labels the couple by using this negative and homophobic term and juxtaposes this construction by inferring that the couple are “not men, just *izitabane*”. Thompson (1984) highlights a mode of ideology called fragmentation, whereby differentiation is used to emphasise distinctions among people. In this instance Sibusiso constructs himself as a “man” denoting power, esteem and respect unlike “*izitabane*” who are emasculated and are a pervasion and deviant group.

The soap text distances itself from Sibusiso's antagonistic reaction to the couple. Although the gay couple may be read as subordinated as they do not retaliate, in a way their actions reinforce the absurdity of Sibusiso's actions; to horse-whip grown men into changing their sexuality. The text's distancing from Sibusiso is emphasised when he makes a public announcement about Senzo's sexuality at his sister's (Sibusiso) tombstone unveiling. He barges in in a drunken stupor and curses his son before everyone. Focus is subtly shifted from the revelation of Senzo's sexuality to the disgrace of an inebriated Sibusiso disturbing a sombre moment. Most people present, including his wife and close friend, rebuke his actions and he fails to garner support in his condemnation of the gay couple. Eventually this is reinforced when Sibusiso accepts his son and partner and welcomes them to his home.

Although Sibusiso eventually accepts the couple he maintains his domination over them using his financial muscle. Jason is usually at the receiving end of this domination, mostly through the carrot and stick enticements of what he needs to do to live up to the Dlomo name. On the other hand Jason is supported by Sibusiso in his domination over Senzo. He tells Jason to "handle", "control", "sort-out", "keep in-line" Senzo so that he does not shame the family. Therefore although Jason is subordinated, he himself is construed as the dominant male in the relationship whom Sibusiso tasks with keeping his partner (son) under check.

6.3.2 *Camera use and intimacy*

Camera angles, such as close-ups and extreme close-ups, are used extensively in soap operas. Timberg (1984) notes that technological aspects such as camera angles, shot size and editing play a determining role in story-telling. He states that camera use in soap opera is an "expressive one" as it tells a version of life from a determined vantage point (1983:76). Close camera angles are particularly useful when projecting intimate scenes. *Generations* does project scenes of sentimentality between the gay couple, however they are measured. The couple is rarely shown kissing, cuddling, talking intimately or flirting.

The episode viewed by respondents shows the couple faced with their ill son. An establishing shot is used to show Senzo rushing into the living room while Jason is sitting on a couch. The scene progresses to include wide shots and close ups to show the anguish in Senzo's face and concern by Jason. This close interface with the couple's reactions of concern and anguish portrays the couple as caring parents, concerned about their son's welfare. At the hospital we encounter a tired and stressed Senzo, while Jason consoles his partner looking into his eyes.

This is projected through wide shots and medium close ups, at the end of the scene Jason embraces Senzo and this is shown by a wide shot. This moment of intimacy is captured with some distance between the viewer and the couple, especially when compared to heterosexual scenes where a close-up and extreme close up camera shots are used.

This aspect is especially emphasised during the heterosexual encounter between Senzo and Noluntu. Although Senzo is gay, this single, chance run-in resulted in the birth of Mngqobi. The camera takes an establishing shot of the hotel room where the couple meet. It zooms in to show the romantic setting: rose petals on the bed and champagne. When Senzo and Noluntu kiss, the camera shows this intimacy using close-up and extreme-close ups. On the other hand when Senzo and Jason kiss, the viewer is left to deduce that this has taken place as the kiss itself is edited out (cut off). This soap opera text emphasises intimacy between heterosexual viewers while the homosexual couple's sentimental scenes are edited out and projected at a distance from the viewer through wide or medium shots.

The symbolic annihilation of gay sentimental scenes in the media is an ideological strategy used by media producers according to Gross (1989). He writes:

.... the suppression of positive or even "unexceptional" portrayals, serve to maintain and police the boundaries of the moral order. It encourages the majority to stay on their gender-defined reservation, and tries to keep the minority quietly hidden out of sight. (1989:137)

Keeping to the predetermined stereotypes by media producers, of what is involved in gay relationships, is a hegemonic strategy meant to preclude homosexual relationships from public domain according to Gross. Saavedra (2009) also notes that gay representations on television are only allowed as long as they do not connote any sexual or erotic desires. As *Generations* presents a sanitised version of gays to Bulawayo viewers, I intend to explore their views on this construction, considering that they interface this in a homophobic environment.

6.3.3 *Gay couple's social positioning and community*

As I have already mentioned, the gay couple are Dlomos, and the patriarch Sibusiso is the owner of a successful media company called Ezweni communications. The couple hold positions of influence in the company, Jason as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) while Senzo is the Managing Director (MD). They are portrayed as urban, upper-middle class and successful.

Although initially rejected by Sibusiso, most people in the couple's social circles readily accepts them. In this regard Altman notes:

...there is some evidence in a number of societies that those who proclaim themselves 'gay' or 'lesbian', that is, seek a public identity based on their sexuality, encounter a hostility which may have not been previously apparent. (2005: 415)

In *Generations* the couple does not encounter this hostility among their friends and colleagues. It is imperative though, to highlight that the text exposes the naivety and assumptions that people have about gays. When Queen, projected as a flamboyant, social butterfly hears about the couple's sexuality she tries to befriend Senzo. Her intention is to obtain a "gay best friend" that she would chat to about fashion, men and so on. The hegemonic reading of Queen's actions is that she has a stereotypical view of gay men and her views are belittled when Senzo rebuffs the invitation.

Furthermore the soap opera takes an 'educative' position when the couple's friends ask them about their sexuality and the particular categorisation they inhabit (for instance are they gay, transgender or bisexual). The couple then become 'educators' of sorts by explaining the differences in their identities and emphasising their own preferences. On the other hand one work mate capitalises on Jason's sexual preference to undermine his authority and seek workplace leverage. The work mate (Nicholas) falsely accuses Jason of sexual harassment. Nicholas is constructed as an ignorant opportunist when he tells Jason that "you are gay anyway so everyone would believe that you have assaulted me". Nicholas 'assumption that being gay denotes deviancy, a person without scruples and that others would believe any negative allegations against gays in matters of sexual misconduct. However the soap opera text distances itself from this construction as Nicholas is later exposed for this false accusation and loses his job in the company.

6.4 Bulawayo Viewers' reading and perceptions of the gay storyline

After highlighting the hegemonic representation of the gay story-line in *Generations* in the last section, I will next discuss the respondent's views towards this representation. I will do this by first highlighting some viewers' background and structural features that impinge on their reading of the gay storyline. Then I will illustrate viewers' preferred readings of gay thematic issues in the soap opera, some background information on other respondents will also be included where necessary to emphasise viewers' interpretations. Direct quotes from

respondents will be used to clarify their sentiments and supporting literature from relevant scholars will be used to underscore audience interpretations.

6.4.1 Social structures and meaning making

Readings on gay representation in *Generations* may be influenced by structural features such as religion, culture, political context and education. Fiske notes that “the reader produces meanings that derive from the intersection of his/her social history with the social forces structured into the text” (1987: 82). Therefore when interviewing respondents I sought to uncover the impact that structural features may have on meanings the respondents make.

Blessing’s education and life in South Africa has impacted his readings of the gay story line. He studied Law up to post-graduate level at the University of Cape Town, and he lived in that city during his study and five years thereafter. As a student he worked as a waiter and this put him in a position to see the social scene in the city, and to be exposed to gays and lesbians. Blessing speaks disapprovingly about this exposure and states that it only served to reinforce negative sentiments about the group:

My exposure to gays in Cape Town really reinforced in me the glaring sham of these relationships. One may never justify this errant behaviour. Coming back to Zimbabwe I appreciated their obscurity of course probably cemented by the laws of the land, also meant to curb social decadence.

Personally Senzo and Jason are a portrayal of dysfunctional sexuality and deviant behaviour. Alcoholics can find solace in the thought that “flesh is weak but the spirit is willing” in struggling to quit drinking. Gays and lesbians have no similar consolation. There seems to be no struggle between spirit and flesh. It would appear that there is total absence of control and their world is one in which no boundaries exist.

Three years ago Blessing moved back to Zimbabwe and he is a practising criminal lawyer. Instead of appreciating the need for a liberal environment like Cape Town and disparaging Zimbabwean homophobic sentiments, he appreciates gays’ obscurity in Zimbabwean society. He perceives the relationships as “errant” connoting lack of control and being wayward. Blessing’s education also impinges on his perception of gay relationships. He believes gays lack restraint and reasons that there is “total absence of control and “no boundaries exist”. The influence of his education is apparent in his juxtaposition of heterosexuality (as right) and homosexuality (as wrong) possibly influenced by his law education, that of seeing things in either black or white. Blessing’s exposure to gays in a liberal society of Cape Town did not

result in his appreciation of a similar situation in Zimbabwe, instead it reinforced a desire to symbolically annihilate the group and Zimbabwe's homophobic society provides it for him.

Duduzani on the other hand is conflicted about his sentiments towards homosexuality. He is educated (undergraduate degree) and works as a news reporter for a Bulawayo daily newspaper. His exposure to political contestations in Zimbabwean society, education, his Ndebele culture and upbringing have impacted on his readings of the gay couple in *Generations*. He explains:

I was brought up in a conservative Ndebele culture and Catholic religion that regards homosexuality as a sin. My understanding of their relationship is likely that it is something unacceptable and strange. I find the political environment intolerant and I struggle daily against it at work. President Mugabe and his sentiments about gays to me it is nothing but an exhibition of intolerance.

Education has, admittedly, made me try and be tolerant of such relationships. It has made me aware that marriage cannot simply be defined as a man and woman living together, even a man and another man's relationship should be accepted as marriage. In a sense I am divided on my opinion on Senzo and Jason's relationship.

Duduzani acknowledges that although his culture and religious beliefs reject homosexuality, his experience at work of witnessing and experiencing political intolerance have impacted on his views and he does not identify with homophobia. He accedes that education has opened his mind so that he understands and tries to tolerate homosexuality. Duduzani acknowledges that the pull between (i) his religious, cultural beliefs and (ii) the endeavour to reject intolerance and his education has led to conflicted sentiments towards homosexuality.

Siphiwe, a single office administrator who lives with her mother, contends that although she is aware of biblical rejection of homosexuality, this does not impact on meanings she makes about gays in the soap opera:

On religion of course the bible does not allow homosexuality but really when I am watching that is not at the top of my mind. I felt it was ok for *Generations* to show gays so people would be aware and accept it. I just want the government to leave them alone and stop beating them up, they are just happy people.

Siphiwe lives close to a Bulawayo GALZ office. Although she has never visited the premises, she explains that the group generally keep to themselves and she has witnessed their victimisation by police. This has affected her sentiments towards gays and she argues that they should be left alone and police should stop 'beating people up'. Siphiwe's social experience of seeing law abiding gays being victimised by police has reinforced a positive

conception of gays. The fact that they keep to themselves and have not ‘imposed’ their sexuality to her or others in her neighbourhood has impacted on her sentiments on gays so that she feels they are harmless and must be left alone. This has helped her maintain a positive conception of gays that is not influenced by homophobia prevalent in the country.

I noted that most respondents basically had an essentialist approach to homosexuality, which is “biological sex equals male or female equals sexual desire directed towards the opposite sex” (Rahman and Jackson 2010: 17). This has been reinforced by culture, society and religion. Political intolerance exhibited by the police force and the ruling party have helped undermine dominant homophobic sentiments as people have also been on the receiving end of this intolerance and do not want to be associated with it (Muzondidya 2004). Duduzani and Sipiwe’s first-hand experience of an intolerant political player, President Mugabe’s Zanu PF, and the police force has forced Sipiwe to confront her heteronormative sentiments. Duduzani determines that he does not identify with political intolerance perpetuated by the president and the ruling party.

Educational levels influenced disparities on meanings made, particularly expressions, by respondents in the research. I noted that interviewees with a lower level of education, particularly at the salon, were not thoroughly expressive of their sentiments about homosexuality. During the interview process they were keen to comment on watching *Generations* and their views about the programme. However when the aspect of gays in the soap opera was brought up most of the respondents were evasive. Ignorance was exhibited by one hairdresser who determined “This is something that only happens in South Africa, not in Zimbabwe”. Other hairdressers were also noncommittal, stating that “it is unusual”, “boring”, “do not understand gays”, but would not thoroughly express what influences their sentiments. The symbolic annihilation of gays in Zimbabwean media has given the impression to some viewers that homosexuality does not exist in the country.

Although education levels’ had an impact on some respondents’ ability to express themselves, there was no clear distinction between that structural feature and audiences’ views on homosexuality. This was particularly emphasised by Blessing who although was exposed to a progressive environment and is highly educated, he still did not accept gays as he believes that they are deviant. Duduzani also emphasises that although education had taught him to be tolerant of gays, his social and religious upbringing clashed with that so that he was conflicted on his views on homosexuality. In this regard this shows that education

does not have a clear impact on viewers' sentiments on homosexuality and the gay storyline in particular.

6.4.2 Views on different masculinities in *Generations*

Generations portrays the gay couple as subordinated masculinities who depend on Sibusiso for employment (material gain) and shelter as they also live with him. Sibusiso's violent reaction towards the couple was denounced by most respondents;

Lazarus: Sibusiso represents strict fathers whose values are embedded in culture. While his treatment of Jason and Senzo was inhumane, it is to a lesser extent expected in our culture as violence is often used to correct someone. It is, in its own way, normal. I don't support Sibusiso's actions in as far as whipping his son is concerned. At their age beating someone would not change them (sexuality), but I support the way he has learned to tolerate his son's choice.

Blessing: When Sibusiso took out his sjambok (horse-whip) and hit the living daylights out of Jason and Senzo when they first came out, for me that was a real reaction. Consider that we were also disciplined that way when growing up. However I feel the beating was senseless and possibly meant to shame society's outrage against homosexuals. Sibusiso's temper worked well to illustrate the sentiments of African tradition toward abhorrent practices.

Nobe: When Sibusiso was giving them a hard time, especially Jason, I felt empathy for him. So I started seeing him as a person and was not offended by that (gayness). I also understood his (Jason) frustration; we have heard of stories where someone is rejected by in-laws and even chased away. At times they may even refuse to accept *Lobola*¹ from him because they do not want him in that family. So I understand his feelings because I am single and would like to marry and it would be hurtful if my future in-laws reject me like Sibusiso did.

Lazarus and Blessing state that Sibusiso's violent reaction was expected and 'normal'. As Sibusiso is constructed as a culturally rooted character, they understand this hegemonic characterisation so that they expect him to act in a violent manner to protect his and the family's honour. This interpretation is reinforced by respondents' own upbringing; common to most African households is the use of corporal punishment for discipline (Connock and Magona in Morrell 2001). Therefore they perceive Sibusiso's reaction as 'normal' and 'reflecting' reality, although they reject its application to the couple. The respondents state that corporal punishment was used in their upbringing thus justifying their rejection of its application to grown men. This further explains Lazarus's assertion that it would not change their preference as corporal punishment is meant to discipline (or correct) someone.

Lazarus' sympathetic viewing of the gay relationship may also be understood through his background. He is a news editor for a Bulawayo weekly newspaper; he is single and lives

alone. His career in the media entails that he keeps abreast with news around the world and his knowledge about the treatment of gays in South Africa justifies his empathetic sentiments towards gays and his disapproval of violence against them:

I don't support Sibusiso's actions of whipping his son. I am aware of the violence that is taking place in South Africa against lesbians especially the aspect of corrective rape. Therefore any act of violence against homosexuality should be rejected.

Lazarus' empathy for homosexuals stems from his knowledge of group's abuse reported in South African media. It is noteworthy that Blessing, who had actually lived in South African society was probably aware of this violence; this did not rouse empathetic feelings in him. To Lazarus however, Sibusiso's violent reaction to the gay couple is representative of violence/abuse that is levelled at gays, something he rejects.

Blessing negotiated the dominant reading of Sibusiso's reaction as representative of homophobic sentiments towards homosexuality. His textual reading is that the soap opera aims to shame African societies' violence towards gays, something he also rejects and deems senseless. On the other hand Nobe inflects this rejection to her own lived experience. She points out instances where a spouse may be rejected by prospective in-laws. Therefore as a single woman who intends to marry, awareness of this possibility evokes her empathetic sentiments towards Jason.

Sene, on the other hand, adopted an oppositional understanding of the gay couple's living arrangement. She explains:

In African societies it is not uncommon to find many people from one family living together. We generally have a strong sense of community and value family ties. Culturally it is essential and I could say even expected of you to open your home to family members. I remember at home we always had this cousin and that aunty living with us.

Fiske states that audiences are "active maker(s) of meaning from the text and not passive recipients of already constructed ones", and expands that "people manage to make their own meanings and to construct their own culture within, and often against, that which the industry provides for them" (1987: 260 and 286). Instead of Sene conceiving the gay couple as emasculated or subordinated, she reflects upon her understanding of family dynamics in her lived experience to interpret the couple's living arrangement. To her it is just an example of her own life, as her family often opened their home to extended members of the family.

Sene also highlights how media coverage of the actors' real lives influences her perception of the gay couple in *Generations*:

I feel that they do not project the gay couple well. It's like they have to brace themselves before they are intimate with each other, and we can see it's fake. We often read about Senzo and Jason in magazines and that they date women so for me that makes the whole thing so unreal.

Magazines highlighting actors' heterosexual preferences show that they have a 'normal' existence outside their role in the soap opera. Fiske (1991) determines that most primary texts (like soap operas) have spawned secondary texts such as fan magazines which promote or extend viewers interaction with the programme and its characters. This relationship between primary and secondary texts is also referred to as intertextuality. Hayward (1997) also contends that secondary texts are aimed at providing added insight into aspects that may influence reading of primary texts, for instance contractual matters, actors who may be leaving the programme and so on. This knowledge has an impact on viewers reading of texts so that Feuer (in Morley 1992) emphasises that in reception research it is increasingly difficult to separate text being studied to other material audiences may interface, such as fan magazines.

In this instance, intertextuality has served to undermine *Generations*' hegemonic reading for Sene. To her, magazines showing actors' heterosexual preferences reinforce the fictional aspect of the gay relationship. Gross explains that this (gay characters' lives in magazines) is meant to provide some form of protective distancing for characters and the audience, "It is not only the audience who appear to require protective distancing from gay characters and themes. We are frequently treated to showbiz gossip intended to convey the heterosexual bona fides of any actor cast in a gay role" (1989: 136). *Generations* gay couple's appearance in magazines impinge on the reading that Sene has so that she feels the gay couple is fake thus she does not take them seriously.

Blessing had an oppositional reading of Jason and Senzo's construction as subordinated masculinities:

Jason has become a yardstick for Sibusiso, he is everything his son ought to be but isn't. It is the biggest factor behind Sibusiso's 'acceptance' (of the gay couple). Much of the plot revolves around Sibusiso's dissatisfaction with Senzo and his need to gain a son who is representative of his views and ambition.

To Blessing the gay couple's acceptance by Sibusiso was not necessarily influenced by his tolerance for their homosexual identity. He also rejects Jason's construction as subordinated masculinity but explains that Sibusiso has taken a mentorship role towards Jason. Through him he is able to satisfy his desire for an ambitious son as Senzo falls short of this requirement.

6.4.3 Perceptions on social positioning and community

Some Bulawayo viewers expressed their dissatisfaction with the ready manner in which the couple was accepted in their society. Others appreciated the 'educative' role played by the soap opera in highlighting peculiarities of gay relationships that they were not aware of. This is expressed in the following sentiments:

Duduzani: We did not see the rejection of friends as they continued as if nothing had happened and the shock was minimal. I think in reality, especially in our African society, there will be shock and at times rejection. The only person who was ticked off in the soap opera was Sibusiso and I don't think that is real. People have a social and cultural understanding of how men should act and behave. When that is changed, like to know that one is attracted to men that will shock me and I may at first distance myself from the person.

Eve: When they showed us Queen's views and assumptions that really helped me as well. I had my own assumptions about gays, especially how they dress and behave. Most TV programmes in America show them being colourful, expressive (gestures) and fashionable so I learnt to expect that from gays. When I saw toned down gays like Jason and Senzo I understood that I should not make assumptions about people. In Zimbabwe since they are not allowed I am sure they are among us, living their lives but we do not "know" them as they don't act like those American gays.

According to Duduzani, the hegemonic representation of Jason and Senzo being readily accepted by others in society is unrealistic. His interpretation is influenced by the essentialist understanding that men should love women (Rahman and Jackson 2010). When his heteronormative understanding is ruptured, Duduzani states that it will negatively impact on his sentiments towards that person and he may distance himself from them. Seeing this essentialist/heteronormative conception being glossed over in *Generations*, is unrealistic to Duduzani, hence his rejection of the text's preferred reading.

The dominant reading of the couple's representation in *Generations* by Eve is influenced by her comparison with American gay portrayals. She brings out the stereotypical characterisation of gays projections in that media as "expressive, colourful and fashionable". For her, Jason and Senzo's representation in the soap opera, suggests a muted version of gays

in African societies, different from what she has seen in American television. Thompson (1995)'s symbolic distancing concept highlights that the media may provide a point of reference for people to gain insight of their own lives when confronted with how people from different societies live. This knowledge may constitute a resource for viewers to think critically about their own lives and life conditions:

It enables viewers to compare their own life conditions with those that appear to prevail elsewhere; it also enables them to form views both of their own life conditions and those of elsewhere which may diverge from the official government interpretations that are routinely presented to them. (1995: 176)

For Eve, *Generations* provided a resource to make sense of gay identities in the “African” context. The homophobic environment she inhabits plays a role in this reading of gays, she is aware of their general existence but their invisibility in Bulawayo leads to her comprehension that they may be muted (closet) gays.

Noma is a married mother of three girls and has privileged cultural capital. She lives in upper middle class area and travels extensively to Europe and America. She owns a holiday home in Pretoria, South Africa and is highly educated (post-graduate level). Her privileged upbringing has given her a conception of how other communities further from home live. She has an open mind, undiluted by social and cultural constraints in Zimbabwe, and she intends to project this progressive attitude to her daughters. For Noma the gay representation in *Generations* is satisfactory so that she can show her children authentic relationship dynamics:

Noma: I have travelled to other countries and have seen how they live in progressive societies. Watching *Generations* and the girls seeing Jason and Senzo, it's about them being aware that this is life and this is happening in the world we live in. That is why I try as they grow up to give them answers that are as close to the truth as possible, taking into consideration their age because if you lie, and when you later try to tell them the real truth it is a total shift from what you have already said.

Noma adopts a hegemonic reading and believes the soap opera's portrayal of the gay couple project realities of 'life'. To her *Generations* is a conduit of a progressive society and being in a homophobic society yet witnessing progressive views, provides a resource to conscientise her children about realities in other societies.

Rejoice also asserts that the representation is satisfactory for gays to gain a concept of what it means to live freely:

I think that they are also trying to encourage gays to come out because they did not cause what they are. If they marry they are not being real and they would hurt their wives. I think the soap tries to encourage them to come out and be free, to help them make peace with who they are instead of having fake marriages.

Rejoice believes the soap opera has given an insight to gays so that they are encouraged to pursue their sexual interests, instead of adopting false identities that may impact negatively on others, in particular the wife one may marry. This reading is a negotiated one as it is “not situated in a position of conformity or opposition to the dominant ideology in general, but is modified or inflected to meet the needs of their specific situation” (Hall in Fiske 1987: 64). Seiter notes that although negotiated readings may involve a hegemonic understanding of the text, a reader may “shift” the text subtly to fit their own interests (1999: 14). Rejoice’s conception of the programme, although adopting the dominant reading of the gay couple, involves negotiation so that she believes the text encourages Zimbabwean gay men to come out of the closet and be true to themselves

6.4.4 Audience views on gays and intimacy

Soap operas are an emotive genre and sentimental scenes are the core ingredient for attracting the female target audience (Hobson 1982, Spence 2005). The thematic analysis of the *Generations* episode provided insight into the couple’s concern for their son and love (and support) for each other. Some reactions to the gay affectionate scenes were expressed in the following extracts:

Blessing: When they show the gay couple showing affection like kissing, it is so unconvincing. When you see it and the poor manner with which they reflect that relationship that is when you believe that homosexuality is so unnatural.

Nobe: The fact that they do not kiss and stuff is not a big deal. I cannot recall one incident when I saw my parents kissing in front of us (children). So I got to believe that these things happen in private and we do not need to see them. In *Generations* generally they do not get too much into sex scenes so that makes it easy to watch and that is why I think when Jason and Senzo don’t kiss it’s not that different from other couples in the soap.

Lazarus: Affection is normal for any couple, but I have a feeling of discomfort when the two kiss. This is because of the belief that has been inculcated by my culture and experiences in society, that a man can only make love to a woman.

Blessing observes that the couple seem ill at ease when showing intimacy. Rather than the soap opera succeeding in putting across its hegemonic reading that Jason and Senzo are

intimate with each other just like any other couple, it in fact gives an oppositional reading to him. In Blessing's view as the actors poorly project their intimacy, then it reinforces the "unnaturalness" of homosexuality.

On the other hand Nobe's upbringing helps her understand and justify the absence of public displays of affection by the gay couple. She emphasises that as she has never seen her parents kiss; to her this cements the understanding that sentimentality is ascribed to the private domain. Saavedra highlights that the symbolic annihilation of sentimentality is to enable gay themes' exploration in main stream media. He explains:

Homosexual images are presented in a way acceptable for heterosexual audiences by reinforcing traditional values like family, monogamy and stability. Most of the erotic connotations of homosexuality have been eliminated. Gay male characters in particular are only welcomed in mainstream mass media as long as they do not infer any sexual desires and practises (Saavedra 2009:8).

Although Saavedra asserts that the exclusion of erotic gay scenes is an ideological decision made by media producers, for Nobe this symbolic annihilation makes *Generations* palatable, family friendly and justifies her continued engagement with the soap opera. It resonates with her belief that sentimentality happens in private. Lazarus also contends that his socialisation and culture impact on his conception of relationships, that making love should be with a woman therefore gay affectionate scenes make him uncomfortable.

Some respondents expressed that the soap opera may have helped create awareness and a conception of how to deal with gay relationships on a personal level;

Lazarus: During the course of their relationship, Sibusiso has not accepted the gay aspect of his son's life but he is tolerant. This serves as a good reminder to me and other homophobic Africans that while we shun homosexuality, we can be tolerant of those who choose to be in gay relationships.

Ben: It was common knowledge that it happens in society, that people of the same sex can marry, but *Generations* helped to bring that to the fore. Those who are gay may be given a boost to come out in the open about their sexuality so it gives a good example in that sense.

Duduzani: It somehow helped to further legitimise gay relationships because I think generally when you see something the first time it has a shocking effect, but if you keep seeing it you loosen up.

Generations has given viewers an appreciation of gays living in liberal societies. Lazarus states that Sibusiso's negative reaction is representative of African homophobic views yet he

managed to tolerate the couple. He reads this as a lesson for him and other viewers that although they may not understand or accept gay relationships; they should learn to live with it. Lazarus' sentiments reflect that the soap opera has provided an emancipatory view towards gays so that he is challenged and educated to tolerate homosexuality. Ben and Duduzani believe that the soap opera has provided insight into gay relationships and that it may have given a boost for gays in Bulawayo to come out of the closet. Duduzani confesses that although he was initially shocked by the gay representation, the soap opera has helped to 'naturalise' the relationship so that he has adjusted with its interface.

Conclusion

In this chapter I presented and analysed data gathered in the research. I highlighted the popularity of South African television to Bulawayo viewers and how cultural and ethnic contestations between Shonas and Ndebeles have played a role in attracting Bulawayo viewers to South African television. I further emphasised preference for South African television by interrogating the attraction to the soap opera, *Generations*. Qualitative content/thematic analysis helped bring out key themes about gays that are in the soap opera and I analysed viewers' perceptions and sentiments about these themes. The next chapter will provide a broad summary of the study and highlight limitations encountered as well as opportunities for further research.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter provides an evaluation and conclusion of key issues uncovered in this research. This study sought to explore interpretations that Bulawayo viewers have of the gay story line in *Generations*. I endeavoured to understand meanings that viewers derived out of viewing the soap opera considering the homophobic environment they inhabit.

I explored political, social and historical factors on Zimbabwean society. I further highlighted the portrayal of gays in western and African media and evaluated how they gained prominence in Zimbabwe and subsequently the current conditions they live under in the country.

The media imperialism thesis and its ethnographic critique was the springboard for this study. It helped establish the existence of regional media and that widely spoken languages are a currency which extend and advance their reach. In the African context, I brought out that South Africa has effectively spread its tentacles in the region through its Multichoice Africa subscription service. The cultural proximity theory helped investigate reasons that motivate Bulawayo viewers' preference for South African over Zimbabwe television.

This research intended to highlight the African experience, the meanings made by Bulawayo viewers in their interface with the continent's regional media. I used the qualitative interpretive approach which helped bring out people's organic interpretations in light of their own lived experience. Qualitative content/thematic analysis, non-participant observation and focus group interviews were research tools used to gather data. These methods helped elicit personal interpretations of Bulawayo viewers, underscored complexities that influence their decisions to watch South African television and their negotiation of the gay story line in *Generations*.

Summary

I established that Bulawayo viewers' preference for South African television was mainly influenced by lack of a better channel that resonates with their Ndebele identity. Ndebeles feel side-lined by government and the media. The national broadcaster has been used as a

propaganda tool to promote Shona (and Zanu PF) values yet marginalising minority ethnic groups.

Ndebeles feel that they can identify with Nguni identities portrayed in South African media. This has also perpetuated the belief for some Bulawayo viewers, that South African television promotes unity and diversity. The country's various languages are captured in its media and English subtitles give a conception of conversations in various local languages. I also uncovered that aspects such as the poor quality of programming and standards in the national broadcaster (quality of presenters and actors) and the continued politicisation of television content have contributed to viewers shunning ZTV.

The study also uncovered that cultural proximity is another factor that justifies the attraction to South African television for Bulawayo viewers. African life stories showcasing polygamy, belief in ancestors and familiar mourning processes resonate with respondents' life experiences. Familiar scenery and locations such as townships and shebeens also help reinforce the realistic aspect of that country's programmes to these viewers hence their attraction to them.

The research explored how the group viewing of soap operas, routine watching of the serial and its cultural proximity justify the continued engagement by the audience to *Generations*. Viewers' preferred readings of the gay story line were explored. I revealed that most viewers have an essentialist understanding of homosexuality. Structural features such as respondents' refusal to ascribe to prevailing hegemonic discourses of homophobia and political intolerance and awareness of violence perpetuated against homosexuality has impacted on some viewers' perceptions on gays.

Respondents' education level brought out an interesting finding in this research. I noted that respondents from the salon were mostly noncommittal in expressing their views on gays. I attributed this to their lower education level so that they were unable to extensively express their views for or against homosexuality. This was further reinforced by a respondent who thought that gays only existed in South Africa as she had not seen them in Zimbabwean media. On the other hand I believe the hairdressers' reservation reinforced Epprecht's (1998) assertion that Zimbabweans are reserved so that some do not feel comfortable talking about sexual matters.

Another finding on education was that there is no direct relationship between one's level of education and their views/sentiments on homosexuality. Some respondents expressed that education had taught them to be tolerant yet they did not directly attribute its influence on their views on gays. Another respondent, a highly educated lawyer who had insight in victimisation of homosexuals in South Africa, rejects them as he believes they are deviant. Therefore these findings highlighted that although education has played a role in giving respondents insight on homosexuality, this has no direct impact on whether respondents support or reject homosexuality.

The soap opera also provided insight that viewers can tolerate homosexuality even if they do not accept it. For the interviewees, the symbolic distancing offered by the programme helped bring out that as Zimbabweans inhabit a homophobic environment, gays in the country may be less obtrusive in comparison to their counterparts in liberated societies.

Findings from this research were obtained from a small sample and may not be generalised for the whole of Bulawayo. Nevertheless the research established that although Zimbabweans live in a homophobic society, this does not necessarily permeate to the rest of society. Locals distance themselves from views which connote violence and intolerance against the group by the state apparatus. They endeavour to embrace a progressive spirit that is highlighted in *Generations*.

Scope for further research

During the research I noted the need for more academic literature that explores the African experience. There is a dearth of literature about African perspectives, Zimbabwean in particular, on gays and their life stories. Further research may explore the group's representation in the media and how they interpret these portrayals.

Further research may also explore particularities of regional media in the African context, highlighting the situation prevailing such as the growing trend of producing culturally proximate programmes in Multichoice. It would be interesting to evaluate the strategies used by African media to glocalise and hybridise productions they import from other regions.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: THEMATIC QUESTIONS

Popularity of South African television and *Generations*

Why do you watch South African television?

What appeals to you in South African television?

Why do you watch soap operas? How long have you been watching them?

What do you find appealing in *Generations*?

Does *Generations* reflect your culture and values? How is this achieved?

Gay story-line and meaning making

When the gay story-line was introduced in *Generations* what were your sentiments?

In the episode that you have just seen, how do the following factors influence your understanding of the gay storyline in the soap opera?

- i) Culture
- ii) Religion
- iii) Political environment
- iv) Education

Has this representation of the gay couple helped your understanding of gay relationships?

Have your sentiments towards gays been altered by the soap opera? How have they been altered?

APPENDIX B: Audio-Visual description of episode under review

| Characters in the episode | Camera shot descriptions (Rose 2000) |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Ruby (R) | ECU- Extreme Close up |
| Dineo (D) | CU- Close Up |
| M.J | MCU- Medium Close Up |
| Mrs Banzi (BZ) | WA- Wide Angle |
| Scott (ST) | E- Environment |
| Senzo (SZ) | |
| Nicholas (N) | |
| Queen (Q) | |
| Khethiwe (K) | |
| Akhona (A) | |
| Shaun (S) | |
| Jabulani (JB) | |
| Mary (M) | |
| Doctor (Dr) | |

Scene One

| Segment duration | Visual | Verbal |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Scene begins 2` 05`` | <p>WA shot of Dineo's office. She is with her mother Ruby. Dineo is fitting a garment on a mannequin while Ruby is sipping from a mug. Series of WA shots leading to CU on each character's face</p> <p>Ruby clicks her fingers to punctuate suddenness. Dineo looks wary and uneasy</p> <p>WA Dineo looks uneasy and grabs her mother's bag, nudging and almost pushing her towards the door. The camera tracks their movement</p> <p>Ruby looks rushed</p> | <p>R: That man has no heart?</p> <p>D: Ma?</p> <p>R: He knows it's hard for me to have him around. Suddenly he wants to stay.</p> <p>D: If he has no choice...</p> <p>R: His wife is sick</p> <p>D: He can't cure her. But if he has money...</p> <p>R: Cancer is a terrible thing. Remember when I found that lump? Only my family and friends kept me going.</p> <p>D: What? No one forgives like...At least I haven't chased him away. I hope it changed things for you and Pheny</p> <p>D: Like you said-things take time</p> <p>R: Just focus on the baby, it will all work out.</p> <p>D: I don't mean to be rude but I'm expecting a client. Tell Queen I need the proposals</p> <p>R: Can't I at least finish my coffee?</p> |

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Scene ends 3`36``</p> <p>Total 1`31``</p> | <p>Dineo closes the door, leans against it and sighs while holding her head in exasperation. She calls Mary.</p> <p>Camera zooms on her as she speaks ending with a CU on her face.</p> | <p>D: I'll call you later</p> <p>Good day is this Mary? It's Dineo Dlomo from Gloss magazine. We spoke yesterday? I'd like to start on that article I told you about. Would you like to meet sometime?</p> |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Scene Two

| Segment duration | Visual | Verbal |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Scene begins 3`37``</p> | <p>Mrs Banzi speaks to MJ who is out of shot. She lets him into her house and he walks into the setting. WA shot shows they are in the living room.</p> <p>Mrs Banzi looks at MJ with suspicion.</p> <p>Mrs Banzi maintains some distance from M. J. She side steps him and has her back to the camera.</p> | <p>M.J: Mrs Banzi?</p> <p>BZ: Yes?</p> <p>M.J: M.J Memela....I'm a friend to Khethiwe Ngcobo.</p> <p>BZ: Khethiwe? But how...She doesn't know where I live. How did you....what do you want?</p> <p>M.J: Khethiwe misses her son. I was hoping we could organise a visit</p> <p>B.Z We can't just...Look it doesn't work like that. She must apply through social services. If the social worker says its ok then we can.</p> <p>M.J She is in a bad space right now. An hour is all I ask.</p> <p>BZ: You'll have to talk to Lindi</p> <p>M.J: Can't we organise this without her?</p> <p>B.Z: I don't mean to be difficult, Mister...</p> <p>M.J: M.J</p> <p>BZ: M.J. It's about protecting an innocent child.</p> <p>M.J: What harm can letting a kid play with his mum do? I know what it's like to lose a mother; I'd give anything to spend time with her. I can't imagine what Khethiwe is going through.</p> <p>BZ: Okay okay, But she can't come here.</p> <p>MJ: You mean...</p> <p>BZ: And I can't leave her alone with him.</p> <p>MJ: Thank you</p> <p>BZ: A restaurant would work</p> <p>MJ: You can come to my house. I'll send a driver</p> |

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| <p>Scene ends 05` 18``</p> <p>Total 2`21``</p> | <p>ECU on MJ's face who looks pleased.</p> | <p>BZ: No, give me the address. Please don't tell Khethiwe where I live.</p> <p>MJ: I won't. I really appreciate this.</p> <p>BZ: Don't get too excited. It's a once off thing</p> |
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Scene Three

| Segment duration | Visual | Verbal |
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| <p>Scene begins 5` 20``</p> | <p>WA shot of Scott and Senzo entering Scott's office at Ezweni Communications. Scott closes the door.</p> <p>CU on Scott's face who looks uneasy and upset.</p> | <p>ST: It's not that the meeting went bad</p> <p>SZ: You don't think that's enough to hook Otlogiles?</p> <p>ST: Did I make a mistake by skimming over content?</p> <p>SZ: Once we have the tender, we can develop content. And the fact that you know Marcus should count for us.</p> <p>ST: Uhh Mobile TV is a powerful tool that will appeal to Marcus.</p> <p>SZ: We should get legal to go over the pitch. They can give us pointers on what to highlight. Phenyo will milk that angle.</p> <p>ST: Phenyo?</p> <p>SZ: I wanted to tell you...but with Mngqobi being ill and everything its...anyways Phenyo is working with Jason</p> <p>ST: Since when?</p> <p>SZ: Since the beginning apparently. I didn't know until...Friday?</p> <p>ST: and you only tell me now?</p> <p>SZ: What difference does it make?</p> <p>ST: You have to ask? Phenyo started Mobile TV in</p> |

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| <p>Scene ends 06` 41``</p> <p>Total 1` 21``</p> | | <p>South Africa and Namibia. He has a score to settle with us. And the Otlogiles trust the Dlomos.</p> <p>SZ: I am a Dlomo</p> <p>ST: Let's hope my relationship with them helps us clinch this deal.</p> |
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Scene Four

| Segment duration | Visual | Verbal |
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| <p>Scene begins 06` 42``</p> <p>Scene ends 07` 10``</p> <p>Total 68``</p> | <p>WA shot shows an open plan working space at Memela media. Two ladies are inaudibly chatting over a document. Nicholas moves into the shot and speaks to the ladies.</p> <p>Camera tracks him as he proceeds to a table. He furtively looks around and takes a stack of papers from the table. ECU shows they are photographs of Akhona and Sean. They look happy and cosy. ECU shows a displeased Nicholas. He leaves, taking the pictures with him</p> | <p>N: Hey, have you seen Akhona.</p> <p>Lady: No</p> |

Scene Five

| Segment duration | Visual | Verbal |
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| Scene begins 7`11`` | CU shows a distracted Khethiwe. WA shows Queen who stands in front of her desk. | Q: Hello? The mock-ups for BMTV? K: Thanks? Q: Are you ok? K: Yes. Q: Are you sure? I have to ask you've hardly said two words to me today. K: I am busy Queen Q: Doing what exactly? K: Working. What are you doing? Q: Are you drinking again? K: No! Q: Umhhh hhh K: Get out of my face Queen Q: Your eyes are red. K: I mean it Queen. |
| | Queen walks behind the desk, next to Khethiwe and sniffs about. | MJ: Good morning ladies Q: Hello darling, careful your girlfriend is in a mood. K: I am not his girl... |
| | MJ walks into the room and stands in front of Khethiwe's desk, next to Queen. | Q: Whatever darling... K: What do you want? MJ: I have a surprise, but you must come to my house. K: I made it clear. I don't want to see you MJ: It's not a charm session. You told me to back off and I respect that. You've been so down. I wanted to cheer you up K: I have to work MJ. MJ: Work can wait K: I am in no mood... |
| | Queen walks away. | MJ: it's the last time I'll bug you. Promise. If you want me to back off after this I will. K: Geez. Fine. If it's the only way to get rid of you. Let's go, it'll better not take long |
| Scene ends 08`21`` | An annoyed and agitated Khethiwe picks up her hand and strides off. CU shows MJ looking smug, he follows her. | |
| Total 1`10`` | | |

Scene Six

| Segment duration | Visual | Verbal |
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| Scene begins 8`25`` | <p>E shot showing dusk setting in outside. A tarred street possibly in a business area and cars are moving about.</p> <p>WA shows the Memela open plan working space. Akhona is looking for something on her desk and she what she is looking for. A lady is sitting next to her.</p> <p>Nicolas approaches Akhona.</p> | <p>A: Where are they? (To the lady), Have you seen my photos?</p> <p>Lady shakes her head</p> <p>N: Hey, did you get my e-mail?</p> <p>A: No, I haven't checked. (Rhetorically) is this someone's idea of a joke?</p> <p>N: What's wrong?</p> <p>A: There were photos on my desk. They can't just disappear!</p> <p>N: What photos?</p> <p>A: Of me and Shaun. It's so annoying</p> <p>N: I wouldn't think they're that important.</p> <p>A: I wouldn't be stressed if they weren't.</p> <p>N: Ever heard of backing up?</p> <p>A: They gave me hard copies. Get off my back</p> <p>DM: Akhona Griffiths?</p> <p>A: That's me. Flowers! How sweet. Thank you. Who are they from? (to Shaun) It was you?</p> <p>S: What?</p> <p>A: You're spoiling me! And after the day I've had. You are a sweet, sweet, man.</p> <p>S: wait, I didn't.....</p> |
| Scene ends 9`42`` | <p>Nicholas looks pleased with himself.</p> <p>A delivery man approaches. Akhona signs for flowers, he leaves.</p> <p>Shaun approaches. Akhona embraces and kisses him while speaking to him.</p> <p>As Akhona keeps kissing Shaun, Nicholas looks more and more upset, he losses it and eventually punches Shaun. Shaun and Akhona look at him in horror. CU showing Shaun holding his cheek then of Nicholas who still looks angry.</p> | |
| Total 1`17`` | | |

Scene Seven

| Segment duration | Visual | Verbal |
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| Scene begins 9`44`` | WA of Jason in a living room, pouring himself a drink. He walks to the couch, sits while loosening his tie. Senzo shouts for him and rushes into the living room | <p>SZ: Jason!</p> <p>J: I'm here.</p> <p>SZ: Get the car. We must go. I found him and he couldn't</p> <p>J: Calm down</p> <p>SZ: I found him vomiting and convulsing....</p> <p>J: Have you called the doctor?</p> <p>SZ: I'll call on the way. Let's get him to hospital! Just hurry we have to go</p> <p>J: Did you get his diaper bag?</p> <p>SZ: Just come!</p> |
| Scene ends 10`10`` | <p>Senzo rushes out of the room</p> <p>Commercial Break</p> | |

Scene Eight

| Segment duration | Visual | Verbal |
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| Scene begins 13`01`` | E shot shows night time with street lights, traffic lights in a city street. | K: Damn traffic! If Senzo realises that I am not there... |
| | | MJ: Stop stressing |
| | WA showing Mrs Banzi sitting on a couch in the Memela house and Mpilo on her lap. Khethiwe and MJ walk in, Khethiwe is talking to MJ. Khethiwe notices Mrs Banzi and Mpilo. MJ looks smug | K: We're pitching for BMTV tomorrow, and I don't have time to... |
| | | BZ: Hello Khethiwe. |
| | Khethiwe takes Mpilo from Mrs Banzi. | MJ: I told you I would cheer you up |
| | Mrs Banzi leaves them alone and moves away to stands next to MJ. | BZ: Look who's here big boy, look. Mommy! |
| | As Khethiwe talks to Mpilo he is unsettled and crying a little. | K: (to Mpilo) Look at you all grown up. Oh how much I've missed you boy. |
| | | MJ: (To Mrs Banzi) Thank you so much for this. |
| | | BZ: I meant what I said; everything goes through Lindi from now on. |
| | | K: (speaking rhetorically to Mpilo) Are you happy at Auntie Bridgette? She'll look after you until mommy is better. It doesn't mean mommy doesn't love you. You are my whole world. |
| Scene ends 14`02`` | | |
| Total 15`13`` | | |

Scene Nine

| Segment duration | Visual | Verbal |
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| Scene begins 14`04`` | <p>WA showing at Memela media, Akhona is pressing a bag of ice against Shaun's face, he winces and snatches the bag from her.</p> <p>Nicholas joins the two</p> | <p>S: owwww owwch!</p> <p>A: Don't be a baby. It'll stop the swelling</p> <p>S: It feels like I've been kicked by a horse</p> <p>A: I'm sorry I assumed the flowers were from you</p> <p>N: Geekboy didn't have the decency to correct you</p> <p>A: He didn't get a chance</p> <p>S: Geez, I can speak for myself.</p> <p>N: Can you really? Wow, who knew?</p> <p>A: (To Nicholas) what is your problem?</p> <p>N: I am looking at it</p> <p>S: (To Nicholas) You have it bad.</p> <p>N: What?</p> <p>A: (To Shaun) You are not helping. (To Nicholas) You, you must go.</p> <p>N: (To Shaun) If you have something to say, say it to my face.</p> <p>A: Nic just go</p> <p>S: This has gone too far</p> <p>N: Damn right it has</p> <p>A: (to Nicholas) Go before I call security. And you (to Shaun) keep quiet.</p> <p>N: You know what, I don't need this nonsense.</p> <p>S: I mean it. This has to stop.</p> <p>A: He deserves it.</p> <p>S: I just got beat up! You must level with him before he breaks my bones.</p> <p>A: Fine, if you insist.</p> <p>S: Today!</p> <p>A: Fine!</p> <p>I'm sorry</p> |
| Scene ends 15`13`` Total 1`09`` | <p>Camera tracks Nicholas who turns and walks away. He pauses, listens to what Shaun says but continues walking away. WA of Akhona and Shaun</p> <p>Akhona tries to help press the ice pack on Shaun's face, but he pushes her away</p> | |

Scene Ten

| Segment duration | Visual | Verbal |
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| Scene begins 15`14`` | <p>WA shot shows Ruby standing near a stove in her kitchen. A happy Jabulani walks in. Ruby is obviously glum and is not pleased to see him.</p> <p>Ruby opens a pot and stirs it. Jabulani smiles and rubs his hands with glee</p> | <p>JB: Hey Ruby!</p> <p>R: What do you want?</p> <p>JB: Can't a friend just drop by for a chat?</p> <p>R: A friend? Only when it suits you.</p> <p>JB: Why so bitter tonight? Thanks for doing the ceremony.</p> <p>R: I had to do it for the sake of the baby</p> <p>JB: And now you must control your daughter. Yes, she must stop beating her husband.</p> <p>R: If Phenyo stops upsetting her</p> <p>JB: That smells good! Can an old man get a plate?</p> <p>R: Go back in and place an order</p> <p>JB: I'm family. What'll people think if I pay for food?</p> <p>R: I'm tired of men taking over like they own the place. First Patrick, now you.</p> <p>JB: You can't compare me to him</p> <p>R: Men can be selfish</p> <p>J: Patrick left his sick wife to be here for his daughter. Give the man a chance!</p> <p>R: A chance to do what?</p> <p>JB: A chance to be the man of the house.</p> <p>R: Not in my lifetime.</p> <p>JB: Ruby's it's time to forgive and forget.</p> <p>R: See? Now you are preaching to me, in my own house? Leave Jabulani! Get out!</p> <p>JB: Ok</p> <p>R: Get out now!</p> |
| Scene ends 16`49`` Total 1`35`` | Jabulani leaves and Ruby goes back to tending her pot. | |

Scene Eleven

| Segment duration | Visual | Verbal |
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| Scene begins 16`50`` | <p>WA of Dineo's office. She walks in, closely followed by Mary who is appreciatively looking around the office.</p> <p>Mary looks curiously at Dineo's after her eager answer. Mary points at blown up pictures of magazine covers</p> <p>Mary looks eager at the mention of money</p> <p>Looking slightly embarrassed by her admission, Mary adds</p> <p>CU showing a pleased Dineo.</p> | <p>M: Am I late?</p> <p>D: I can always make time for you.</p> <p>M: I am sorry I have trouble finding the place. I'm not good with directions.</p> <p>D: You look good. How far along are you?</p> <p>M: Only two months</p> <p>D: Perfect! For the story I mean</p> <p>M: Will I be on the cover like those girls?</p> <p>D: They're sponsor driven. I want to do a series of articles from now on until birth.</p> <p>M: I almost didn't keep the baby.</p> <p>D: What? You wanted to abort? Take a seat.</p> <p>M: Yes, but after speaking to the other girls at Itsoseng I decided to keep it.</p> <p>D: A girl like you must have dreams. Aren't you worried your life will change? When you're a mother you won't have time and money to do other things. Like go to school and socialise. Have you considered adoption.</p> <p>M: Yes, but....</p> <p>D: There are so many people who'd do anything to have their own child. Even pay.</p> <p>M: Pay? How much?</p> <p>D: I don't know. If they're desperate enough. Would you ever consider something like that?</p> <p>M: Yes! If they have money why not? I'm sure they'd take care of my baby better than I could.</p> <p>D: I'm sure they would.</p> |
| Scene ends 18`20`` Total 2`10`` | | |

Scene Twelve

| Segment duration | Visual | Verbal |
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| Scene begins 18`21`` | WA shot shows a hospital waiting room. Senzo is pacing up and down looking agitated | <p>SZ: We've been here for hours! I can't take this.</p> <p>J: Babes, no. Give it time. We will get answers.</p> <p>SZ: Why is it taking so long? What is he had another seizure? Or the first one...</p> <p>J: Don't say it. Don't even think about it.</p> <p>SZ: We haven't spoken to a doctor. Nobody's telling us what's happening. I can't just stand here.</p> <p>J: Take a deep breath. Everything will be fine</p> <p>SZ: You don't know that.</p> |
| | Jason holds Senzo by his arms and looks into his eyes as he tries to calm him down. | <p>J: He's getting the best care that money can buy. Have faith</p> <p>SZ: I'm sorry, it's just...you should have seen him. If I hadn't checked on him, he could've died.</p> <p>J: Don't do this to yourself</p> |
| | Doctor passes by | <p>SZ: Doctor! How is he? Did he have another...</p> <p>J: Give the doctor a chance. Please doctor; tell us what's going on.</p> <p>Dr: He's fine so far</p> <p>SZ: meaning?</p> <p>Dr: We've stopped the seizures. We're keeping him sedated</p> <p>J: What caused it?</p> |
| | At the mention of medical history the couple looks concerned. | <p>Dr: We're not sure. We'll run some tests and we'll check his family's medical history.</p> <p>J: Do you need both biological parents?</p> <p>Dr: Whoever is available</p> <p>J (relieved) Ok</p> <p>SZ: Can we see him?</p> <p>Dr: Give us five minutes</p> |
| Scene ends 19`41`` Total 1`20`` | <p>Senzo throws up his hands in frustration. WCU of Jason standing behind Senzo, he embraces him.</p> <p>Episode ends, running titles accompanied by music.</p> | <p>J: its ok, everything will be alright</p> |

