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Declaration

I, Tselane Lehlohonolo Mofokeng declare that:

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 - b. Where their exact words have been used, then their writing has been placed inside quotation marks, and referenced.
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Signature:

Date: 1 December 2017

Place: Durban

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Abstract

This research discovers and identifies how South African women's magazines, namely *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines, communicate and represent the myth of black women's empowerment on their magazine front covers. Women's magazines have been studied predominantly by second and third wave feminists (Friedan 1963, McRobbie 1978, Ferguson 1983, McCracken 1993) who viewed women's magazines as important markers of women's role in society, especially in relationship to their representation of femininity and feminism. While there have been some studies on women's magazines in the context of South Africa (Laden 2001, Iqani 2012, Gqola 2016, Ferreira 2011, Donnelly 2000), there is still a comparative lack of current research that focuses on black women's empowerment through women's magazines.

The theoretical framework for this research is derived from black feminist thought and semiotics. Semiotics is defined as the "study of signs" (Chandler, 2002:1) in analysing and interpreting the meaning of texts. Black feminist thought is grounded upon the notion that black women's experiences in society are unique and different from white women's experiences and should therefore be acknowledged (hooks 1984, Collins 2000). This is a qualitative research project that makes use of a textual analysis since magazines are recognised as texts which can be interpreted for meaning. The magazine front covers for this research are analysed through a semiotic analysis which explores and discovers the arrangement and use of content as well as what it conveys and communicates (Ballaster, 1991:29). This methodology is suitable for this research because a magazine front cover functions as both "windows to the future self" (McCracken, 1993: 13) and as a "visual carnival" (Iqani, 2012:440) as it includes an arrangement of images and texts which work together to construct and represent a dominant ideology or myth. The sample consists of twelve magazine front covers of *Truelove* and *Destiny*, six covers of each of magazine from July to December 2016. Through the analysis of the selected magazine front covers, I reveal that black women's empowerment is represented as being liberated, assertive and independent. Both magazines represent the position of black women in society, in terms of their careers, love lives, finances and aspirations.

Keywords

Women's magazines, black feminism, social constructionism, representation, myth, ideology, semiotics.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore how *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines represent the myth of black women's empowerment in contemporary South Africa. A magazine is a text which includes a set of images and representations which construct an imaginary world (Ballaster, 1991:4). I believe that women's magazines are an important object of study for feminist, cultural and media studies because amongst other social institutions such as schools and churches, women's magazines "contribute to the wider cultural processes which define the position of women in a given society at a given point in time" (Ferguson, 1983:1). Women's magazines are a platform that is designed for mass female culture because they encourage woman-to-woman debate and are the only products of popular culture that change with women's reality and acknowledges women's concerns (Wolf, 1991: 72). Through this study, I am to discover how these selected magazines define the position of black women in South Africa in 2016. Women's magazines occupy a privileged position in society as they exclusively address the female market while promoting and encouraging feminine culture for their audience (McRobbie, 1978:3).

Just like other social institutions, women's magazines contribute to the role and function of women in society by constructing and promoting feminine culture within society. Ballaster, (1991:1) referred to women's magazines as objects of consumption and academic interest because they construct gender roles, femininity and circulate ideas of feminism. It is for this purpose that I have chosen to study women's magazines since they are solely targeted at women and they are concerned with both femininity and feminism. I am essentially concerned with the way in which *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazine promote black women's empowerment on their magazine front covers. Feminist scholars such as Betty Friedan (1963), Angela McRobbie (1978), Marjorie Ferguson (1983) and Ellen McCracken (1991) identified the social impact and role of women's magazines since they specialise in femininity and are inherently about the representation of women's lives and roles in society. This research acknowledges the positive role of women's magazines in shaping the female and the cultural construction of femininity in society. I do not view women's magazines as repressive or pervasive to women, rather I view them as societal tools, which, like any other social institution, assists in providing empowering representations of femininity and feminism in a community. The following research objectives frame this study:

- To explore the representation of black femininity in South African women's magazines.
- To examine how empowerment is communicated in the women's magazines.
- To explore how the media constructs the myth/dominant ideology of the empowered black woman.

Background to the Study

Destiny and *Truelove* are South African women's magazines that are targeted specifically at black women. David Gauntlett (2008:193) proposes that women's magazines can be categorised into two categories, the magazines that are produced weekly and the ones that are produced monthly. The magazines that are produced monthly tend to be more glossy, life-style magazines while the weekly publications are colourful and filled with celebrity news and real-life crime stories or life-threatening disasters (Gauntlett, 2008:193). Both magazines are distributed monthly with a combined quarterly circulation of 72 990 in the fourth quarter of 2016 (Table 1: Audit Bureau of Circulations South Africa 2016). This means that more than 70 000 copies of these magazines were distributed from October to December in 2016. It is for this reason that I chose to use both magazines in this research because combined, they have a significant readership. I have only indicated the numbers for quarter three and four of 2016 because that is the relevant timeframe of this research. In quarter three of 2016, *Truelove* had a circulation amount of 42 373 and *Destiny* had 27 105 (See Table 1). The retail cost of *Truelove* is R29.50 and *Destiny* is R30.50, there is price difference of R1. These similarities between *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazine in terms of their target audience and costs validates my choice in choosing to comparatively analyse them.

Table 1: Quarterly circulation figures of *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazine (Audit Bureau of Circulations South Africa 2016).

Name of Magazine	Quarter 3: July- September 2016	Quarter 4: October-December 2016
<i>Truelove</i>	42 373	46 827
<i>Destiny</i>	27 105	26 163
Total	69 478	72 990

Truelove magazine was established in 1975 but was not initially targeted at females but rather black migrant workers (Laden, 2001: 13). In 1984, women's magazines for white

women became very popular in South Africa, thus the publishers of *Truelove* decided to create a new format of the magazine which would be targeted at black women specifically (Laden, 2001: 13). After the first democratic elections in South Africa, the magazine was once again revamped in 1995 to target young black women in post-apartheid South Africa who aspire to succeed in all aspects of their lives, career, family, love and beauty (Laden, 2001: 13). Given the substantial shift in the target market to black women, the content of the magazine inevitably shifted to focus on the needs, desires and aspirations of black women in the post-apartheid era. *Truelove* is produced and distributed by Media24 which is a South African media company. *Destiny* magazine is a women's magazine that was launched in 2007 and is focused on business and professional advancement. It is created and distributed by Ndalo Media which is also a South African media company. *Destiny* magazine is business-oriented and aimed at professional women or businesswomen who are already established in their careers (Masina, 2010:12). I selected these magazines because even though they are different in terms of their focus areas, they are both created and distributed locally and they both target black women. I categorize both magazines as women's magazines because Gauntlett, (2008: 196) contends that women's magazines are about the social construction of womanhood in society. *Truelove* and *Destiny* are about the social construction of women's roles and experiences in South Africa in 2016. Through this research, I aim to demonstrate how they are both created to empower their target audience. Laden (2001:8) argues that black consumer magazines are strategic objects of introducing new cultural practices and social change through their content which is created to educate and entertain simultaneously.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

This study is important because while there have been some academic studies on women's magazines in South Africa, (Laden 2007, Gqola 2016, Iqani 2012) some of the studies are dated and the methodology and theoretical approaches which they have used are different to those that I will be discussing in this research. There has also been a few Masters and Doctoral dissertations on women's magazines (Govender 2014, Masina 2010) however, there is still a lack of publications on women's magazines in South Africa which focus on the empowerment of black women through this platform. Previous dissertations focused on femininity and the representation of women in magazines but did not focus on the representation of empowerment in the magazines. There has not been much scholarship recently on women's magazines in South Africa, and not so much in terms of media studies. Women's magazines first began to be taken seriously during the rise of Cultural Studies at the Birmingham Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies through the research of McRobbie,

1978 and Winship, 1987. Even though most of this seminal work was done in the 1970s and 1980s in Britain, there has recently been several publications that continue to argue the importance of studying women's magazines. Magazines have a significant role to play in our culture since they are sources of pleasure as well as informers and educators and this means that they have a substantial amount of cultural value (Holmes, 2013:510). Tanja Bosch (2011:1) states that there is a shortage of African feminist media scholars and suggests that we need to widen the scope by encouraging a diverse range of voices and opinions. Given this call for more African feminist media research, the importance of magazines in feminist media studies (McRobbie, 1997:191), and the lack of current scholarship on women's magazines in South Africa, I concur that my research is needed in the field of African feminist media studies. This research is vital since I aim to discuss how *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines empower black women in an informal manner.

Since the beginning of democracy in 1994, black women's empowerment has been the key focus area for black feminists in South Africa as apartheid created many inequalities (Rosenthal, 2001: 98) thus, black women empowerment has been the political agenda with women activists voicing women's concerns (Rosenthal, 2001: 98). Empowerment is a process which involves individuals gaining control over their lives and fulfilling their needs effectively to participate socially and politically in the community (McCallum, 2005: 27). There is a significant link between empowerment and feminism because the feminist movement began with the purpose of empowering women (Rosenthal, 2001:98). The aim of the second and third feminist movement was to ensure that women could also take part in the development of society and can make decisions for their own lives. Empowerment is an important process for people who have been previously subjected to discrimination, such as black South African women and is a crucial development process to liberate black women from oppressive structures and beliefs (McCallum, 2005: 27). Empowerment is an important element of this research because the purpose of this research is to discuss how *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines construct and represent the myth of black women's empowerment on their magazine front covers. I believe that the selected women's magazines have a role to play in the empowerment of black women in South Africa in 2016 as Laden, (2001:9) proposes that magazines function as informal mediums of education which aim to impart knowledge to their audience. Magazines that are targeted at black females are distinctive in nature because of the cultural-force that is imbedded in the way they communicate with their target audience (Laden, 2001:9). The magazines are strategically designed to provide pleasure while engaging their readers in new ways of creating social change. Empowerment is a crucial element of black print media, and this is achieved using role models and success

stories (Laden, 2001:9). Hence this research will investigate in what ways the text and images of the magazines' front covers represent empowerment.

Framing the Study: Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is derived from a social constructionist approach to representation, semiotics, and feminism. I contend that magazines are socially constructed to communicate meaning; therefore, this approach is suitable for my research as I seek to discover how the myth of black women's empowerment is communicated and represented on the selected magazine front covers. Patricia Hill Collins (2000:4) defines black feminism using the analogy of "the outsider looking in". This can be described as the way black women look at the world they are supposed to be in but are unable to participate due to issues such as lack of finance and education. This analogy makes black feminism relevant to this research because through the existence of magazines such as *Destiny* and *Truelove*, black women can participate by reading content that is written for them. They are also able to participate economically, as consumers, by being able to afford and purchase these magazines. Black Feminist thought is essentially concerned with the inequalities that black women experience.

Cultural studies aim to challenge traditional disciplines, question cultural information that is produced and transform power relations in educational practices (Franklin et al, 1991:175). Therefore, the purpose of cultural studies is to question and challenge cultural knowledge and information that is produced and shared within societies as well as to transform power relations amongst social groups and institutions. Through this research, I aim to question how *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines communicate empowering messages to black women in South Africa in 2016. "Cultural studies is a politics of writing which aims to heighten awareness and understanding of the present conditions and possible purposes of cultural labour" (Maxwell, 2000:293). Cultural studies is focused on understanding and creating awareness about the current socio-economic or political conditions in societies. Culture creates a set of discourses and practices that generate meaning, identities and political effects. Culture is part of everyday life as it helps people to see and understand things (Durham and Kellner, 2009:7). Cultural studies refer to the study of cultures, more specifically, the study of contemporary culture which can be studied sociologically by objectively describing its institutions and functions, economically by explaining the effects of investment on cultural production or critically through the analysis of texts (During, 1991:1). This study originated in Britain where the *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies* in Birmingham University was formed in the 1950s and was focussed on the study of culture in

relation to individual lives and provided an engaged form of analysis, it embraces several intellectual schools such as Marxism, feminism, critical race studies, structuralism and post-structuralism (Maxwell, 2000: 293).

Methodology

Research approach

Qualitative research refers to the process of producing descriptive data based on a specific topic or area of study (Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault, 7). This research aims to produce descriptive data based in the textual analysis of *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines. Qualitative research is concerned with the meanings that people attached to things in their lives (Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault, 7). This definition is relevant for this research as I am to explore how the myth of black women's empowerment is represented in the selected magazines to create meaning to the target audience. The process of qualitative research includes three interconnected activities which are the theory, method and analysis, however, the personal biography of the researcher also has an influence in the research because the researcher speaks from their class, gendered, racial and cultural perspective (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011:11). Qualitative research is a site of multiple interpretive practices which are conducted for the purpose of providing insight and knowledge on a specific topic (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011:6). I aim to make use of a textual analysis in the form of semiotics to discover how black women's empowerment is communicated and constructed on the front covers of the selected magazines.

Research design

Textual analysis is a data gathering process which is used by researchers who "want to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and how they fit into the world in which they live" (McKee, 2003: 1). The term 'text' refers to whatever is being interpreted for the purpose of generating meaning; it can be in any form or medium such as a film, photography or books (McKee, 2003: 2). Thus, the magazine front covers are texts which have been interpreted for the purpose of identifying the dominant meanings that they convey. A textual analysis allows researchers the opportunity to make interpretations of the texts that they have gathered. Textual analysis from a feminist and cultural perspective interprets a text in terms of its position within a historical moment marked by a particular gender, race or ideology (Denzin and Lincoln, 6). This research will analyse *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines from a black feminist perspective through a semiotic analysis.

Data analysis

This research will conduct a semiotic analysis to demonstrate how black women's empowerment is constructed in the selected magazines. This is a qualitative research approach that undertakes a textual analysis research design, and conducts a semiotic analysis of the magazine front covers only. This research seeks to discover how *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines construct the myth of the empowered black woman and reveal how they portray black femininity. Only the front covers of the magazines will be analysed as magazine front covers function as complex semiotic systems which communicate primary and secondary meanings through language, images, colour and layout (McCracken, 1993:13). Iqani, (2012:440) describes a magazine front cover as a visual carnival (Iqani, 2012:440) because it includes an arrangement of images and texts which work together to construct and represent a dominant ideology or myth. It is for these reasons and details that I will only be analyzing the magazine front covers.

Sample

The sample for this research consists of two South African women's magazines namely, *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines. These magazines are produced and distributed locally for the consumption of women in South Africa. I selected these magazines because they are both targeted at black women. The sample consists of twelve magazine front covers, six covers of each magazine which have been collected from July to December 2016. The timeframe of the sample is based on the period in which this research began as I seek to discover how black women's empowerment is represented in the year 2016 after twenty-two years of democracy in South Africa.

Research Questions

Through conducting the semiotic analysis of the magazine's front covers, I am to answer these key research questions:

- How is black femininity represented in *Truelove* and *Destiny*?
The semiotic analysis will demonstrate how black femininity is represented on the selected magazine front covers. This is vital in exploring how black femininity is signified on the covers.
- How is empowerment communicated on the front covers of *Truelove* and *Destiny*? Through the analysis of the magazine covers, I aim to reveal how

the magazines display texts and images that conote empowerment to their audience.

- How do women's magazines construct the myth of “the empowered black woman” in South Africa?

Truelove and *Destiny* magazine front covers will be analyzed to establish how the myth or dominant ideology of black women empowerment is created and communicated on the front covers.

Structure of dissertation

This dissertation is structured into six separate chapters. This first chapter provides a brief overview of the study, identifying the research objectives and research questions, and framing the theoretical frameworks and research methodologies used. It provides a clear background and contextualisation of the chosen magazines within South African print media/popular culture and it has also explored the rationale and significance of the study, particularly focusing on the study of women's magazines from a feminist and cultural studies perspective.

Chapter Two critically reviews the literature relevant to contextualising the study of women's magazines in South Africa. The literature includes both local and international scholarship on the genre of women's magazines, particularly from a feminist cultural studies perspective. The literature highlights and discusses the functions of women's magazines in society based findings of the previous scholars.

Chapter Three outlines the theories of semiotics and black feminism that frame this study. It moves from a discussion of cultural studies as the broader approach that underpins the study, to a more detailed explanation of semiotics and black feminism.

Chapter Four delineates the study's methodological approach, and provides details on the research design, sampling, data collection and the form of analysis adopted in the following chapter.

Chapter Five is the data analysis and discussion chapter. This chapter is divided into two sections, namely the analysis and the findings section. The analysis section documents the semiotic analysis of the selected magazine front covers per the codes which have been identified. The findings section reveals the findings of the semiotic analysis.

Chapter Six is the last chapter, which concludes the dissertation with a synthesis of the main findings in response to the key questions as interpreted with the aid of previously discussed literature and theory.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Destiny and *Truelove* are South African women's magazines that are targeted at black women. Different magazines address different groups of women and construct social class differences in terms of lifestyle and consumption (Ballaster 1994:18). Thus, magazines such as *Truelove* and *Destiny* cater for black women in South Africa. Women's magazines have been very popular throughout the years and many women across the world indulge in reading fashion, lifestyle and home magazines. Early feminist researchers of women's magazines (Friedan, 1963, Winship 1987 and Ferguson 1983) believed that the magazines portrayed an 'unreal' image of women and thus called for a more positive image that would be in line with the feminist movement. This chapter will outline the key existing literature on women's magazines both locally and internationally, particularly from a feminist cultural studies perspective. The purpose of this research is to explore how the concept of black women's empowerment is represented and communicated in the selected magazine front covers. Women's magazines will be discussed as commercial and cultural objects, commercial because they are products that are based on consumer consumption, cultural because magazines provide and encourage a specific popular culture. Pleasure, sexuality and liberation are vital components to modern-day magazines and these ideas will be explored further in this chapter (Ballaster 1991:30). Lastly, the idea of empowered femininity through women's magazines will be discussed as well as tension between femininity and feminism in women's magazines.

Women's Magazines

The word magazine originates from the French word "magasin" which means storehouse, and the first magazines appeared in France in the form of bookseller catalogues and flyers that book publishers inserted in newspapers (Campbell, Martin and Fabos, 2009:255). Magazines have played a key role in our social and cultural lives since the 1700s in Britain, making them the earliest national mass medium in western countries (Campbell, Martin and Fabos, 2009:255). The first women's magazine in America named the *Ladies' Magazine* was created in 1828 by Sarah Josepha Hale and it included general-interest articles and advocated for women's education, work, and property rights newspapers (Campbell, Martin and Fabos, 2009:260). In the nineteenth century, magazines became an educational platform for women who were excluded from higher education and from the political

involvement. Economically, women's magazines carried advertised products into households, encouraging the rise of a consumer society (Campbell, Martin and Fabos, 2009:260). Magazines are an object of academic interest and an object of consumption which allows them to become an obvious subject for analysis and criticism (Ballaster, 1991:1). They are an object of academic interest because they represent social norms, values and beliefs. As objects of consumption, women's magazines function as a business because they are created and sold for public consumption. Magazines also sell advertising space to retailers who wish to market their goods or services. Women's magazines have cultural significance (Ferguson, 1983:2) because they communicate cultural practices to their audiences, they are cultural objects which communicate the cultural activities and norms of society. Women's magazines are agents of socialisation since they communicate and provide hidden messages behind their presence on the bookshelves (Ferguson, 1983:2). As agents of socialisation, women's magazines provide women with information about how they can improve or make their lives easier in terms of their homes, careers, clothing, finances or beauty. They provide hidden messages about women for women. It is for these reasons and purposes that I chose to conduct my research on women's magazines in South Africa as I aim to demonstrate how *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines function as agents of socialisation and consumption which represent the myth of black women's empowerment on their magazine front covers in 2016. Women's magazines possess different functions within society, thus this section will identify and discuss the various functions as identified and revealed by previous studies that have been conducted on women's magazines. The different functions that have been identified are that women's magazines are commercial cultural objects, they provide pleasure and sexual liberation, they offer beauty and fashion advice as well as represent the modern-day women.

Commercial Cultural Objects

Helen Kopnina (2007: 367) states that magazines function as cultural objects which aim at reflecting the cultural beliefs and values of a society in a visual and textual manner. They are cultural objects because they describe and demonstrate the dominant cultural developments within a society (Kopnina, 2007: 367). Women's magazines are commercial commodities which provide important information about various issues regarding society and culture however magazine producers view their readers as consumers first and citizens second (Rice Lamb 2015: 277). According to John Fiske (1992:31) a cultural system functions in the same manner as an economic system whereby people invest and accumulate capital. The cultural system also promotes and values certain cultural preferences. The cultural preferences of women's magazines are about the promotion of femininity and womanhood to

create an economic capital. According to Joy Watson and Claudia Lopes (2015: 1) women's magazines have proved to be important cultural products in today's world because they provide significant messages and information about the way society operates in terms of the values and norms. There has been a significant change to the print media industry in terms of digital communication and internet usage, however the magazine industry in South Africa still has a significant amount of readership (Watson & Lopes 2016: 1). In South Africa, specifically, many people do not have the means to purchase magazines but the impact of the magazines is widespread because they are shared and passed on from one person to another (Watson & Lopes 2016:1). Magazines are therefore powerful channels of popular culture and social norms (Watson & Lopes 2016:1).

The business of women's magazines in terms of their production, advertising and marketing should be recognized as a cultural realm which is commercially led and market-oriented (Gough-Yates, 2001: 6). Magazines are cultural constructs and should therefore be acknowledged as such. Anna Gough-Yates (2001: 6) was concerned with the business of women's magazines and this led to her research focus on the business aspect of magazines instead of as cultural texts themselves. She conducted interviews with magazine producers and editors to concentrate on the economic and social sides of the magazine production business (Gough-Yates, 2001: 7). Through her research, she discovered that the women's magazine industry of the late twentieth-century emphasizes on understanding the lives, ambitions and aspirations of their target audience so that they can become successful cultural mediators and, therefore, secure relevant advertising contracts for their magazines (Gough-Yates, 2001: 155). Gough-Yates (2001: 155) believed that this factor had been overlooked by previous magazine scholars who were not aware that advertisements found in women's magazines are a result of the research that is conducted by magazine producers to understand the lives of their target audience. This discovery is important for this research as it suggests that the content on the covers of *True Love* and *Destiny* magazines are a result of the research conducted by the magazine producers in the hopes of understanding the lives and aspirations of their target audience. Winship (1987: 133) introduced three purposes of magazines as cultural objects: firstly, they are commodities which are created within a capitalist production for the consumption of women and thus they must be presented as exciting and enjoyable; secondly, they are a media production aimed at entertaining and this regulates the balance between serious and casual content. For example, women's magazines are a combination of fashion, beauty, lifestyle and career features. Lastly, Winship (1987: 133) states that women's magazines are determined by and constructed through the ideology of femininity. Laden, (2001:9) also identified three functions of magazines which are similar those of Winship (1987:133), firstly they are products of the

print media industry and secondly, they are advertisement platforms which promote the consumer culture of shopping and consumption. Lastly, they function as part of the cultural production of shared meanings as well as construct a variety of identity options for their readers.

Fashion, Beauty and the Female body

Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* (1991) argued that while first and second wave feminists fought for liberation, women are unfortunately not liberated against the beauty myth. The beauty myth is the idea that women need to have the perfect physical appeal in terms of body size, hair and physical features (Wolf, 1991: 10). Beauty is a currency system which functions as an economy because it is influenced by politics which reinforce male dominance (Wolf, 1991: 10). The beauty myth, however is not actually about women constantly trying to look beautiful but it is about institutional power. Wolf (1991: 10) suggests that the beauty myth does not evolve or change but rather what people refer to as beautiful in women at a time is merely a symbol of how the behaviour of women changes overtime based on what is desired at the time. When Betty Friedan's 1963 *Feminine Mystique* which represented the "happy housewife" in women's magazines ended in the 1970s, magazine creators realised they needed to create a new ideology which would continue to encourage consumerism amongst their target audiences (Wolf, 1991: 66). Thus, the beauty myth arose to take the place of the *Feminine Mystique*, to save magazines and advertisers from the economic fallout of the women's revolution (Wolf, 1991: 66). According to Dawn Currie (1999: 33) women's magazines provide a high standard with relations to beauty which are unrealistic and unattainable and encourage women to believe that they are unacceptable as they are. The rise of beauty companies, plastic surgeries and diet schemes all demonstrate and imply that beauty should be every woman's calling and achievement (Currie, 1999: 33).

Brian Moeran (2010:492) explored the ways in which international fashion magazines for women such as *Elle*, *Vogue*, and *Marie Claire* portray feminine beauty in textual and advertising content and how their readers react to these portrayals. The study was based on a content analysis of over 700 issues of magazines published in France, Hong Kong, Japan, the UK, and USA which were collected over a period of fifteen-years, in addition, he conducted an ethnographic research amongst fashion magazine editorial staff and readers of the magazines (Moeran, 2010:492). The analysis concentrated on the different kinds of "face" that magazines invite their female readers to put on in terms of fashion and beauty such as make-up and designer clothing (Moeran, 2010:500). He identified women's fashion magazines as providers of grooming practices for their audience which comprise of highly conscious, social aspects of physical appearance, which are manipulated to make a desired

impression on the readers (Moeran, 2010:507). The findings of his study were that women are in some way spellbound by the magic system which encourages them buy into the “beauty myth,” even though many of them are simultaneously conscious of the fact that they are somehow being manipulated (Moeran, 2010:507). In this respect, Moeran, (2010:507) argued that the words used by magazines to talk about beauty do, indeed, have a magical power that encourages women to pay attention to their physical appearance. I agree with Moeran’s (2010:507) suggestion that women’s fashion magazines provide grooming practices to their audience as I aim to demonstrate how the selected women’s magazines communicate empowering messages to their audience, the empowering messages are not limited to those about careers or finances but also include beauty and fashion advice which helps groom black women in 2016. Emily Nömm (2007), conducted a study titled *Fashioning the Female* and she argued that fashion features in magazines are used to communicate and encourage a certain lifestyle to readers which readers want to be part of and imitate for them to be fashionable. Fashion can be used for visual expression and social affiliation while being a collective matter that can be used to demonstrate time, current social movements, attitudes and beliefs which exist in society (Nömm, 2007: 6). Fashion styles can represent a specific era in time and communicate certain social movements. Fashion is a social and cultural expression which communicates culture while having an impact on the way in which people are viewed in society and their status (Nömm, 2007: 6).

Empowered Femininity: The New Woman

Pumla Gqola, (2016:119) conducted a study titled *A peculiar place for a feminist? The New South African woman, Truelove magazine and Lebo(gang) Mashile* which focused on the new woman in South Africa post-apartheid as she was concerned with Lebogang Mashile’s feminist and diverse engagements with the new South African woman through her column in *Truelove* magazine. Mashile’s columns were titled “*In her shoes*” and she discussed various social issues that women faced from a black feminist perspective. Gqola, (2016:119) analyzed Mashile’s columns and outlined features of the new South African woman as a construction of new femininity. Gqola, (2016:134) notes that Mashile’s feminist column highlighted the tension between feminism and idealized femininities in women’s magazines. The tension between recognizing women’s power in society and on the other hand, the inability to provide an arena for women to practice their power without restrictions. Characteristics of the new South African woman are that she is linked to the growth of women’s participation and entry into public and political spaces and Black Economic Empowerment to make financially independent decisions and grow their consumer status (Gqola, 2016:122). Gqola, (2016:123) defines the new woman as “A working, urban,

upwardly mobile woman. She has a career, and she is ambitious and driven. She has smooth skin, straight, shiny hair and “tastefully” manicured nails, and an arched brow”. The new woman is presented in a manner that represents a departure from earlier conceptions of women’s status in colonial and apartheid legislation and exists as an ambivalent and different relationship to historical femininities of black women in South Africa (Gqola, 2016:122). With the aim of catering to the new woman, magazines such as *Destiny* sought to shape a new type of woman through a women’s magazine that includes political and financial content for the new women who read *Truelove* in their twenties and thirties, but require more serious content (Gqola, 2016:122). In a democratic South Africa, the black female body had been disregarded during apartheid had to be imagined anew as free, liberated, independent flourishing and exploratory (Gqola, 2016:120). The intersections of post-apartheid class, gender, and race aspiration produced a range of possibilities for black people, specifically, black women. One of the most highly circulated was the idea of the new South African woman who signified and represented both a departure from the hegemonic apartheid femininities and an attempt to imagine the aspirational existence that women could aspire to in a free country (Gqola, 2016:120). At the very core of the new woman’s emergence in South Africa was the recognition of the limitations of apartheid’s in women’s lives through violent intersectionality of white supremacy, patriarchy, and class oppression, this intersectional triple violence limited women’s life choices, progression and undervalued them through institutional silencing, policing, and legal minoritization (Gqola, 2016:120).

The current goal and function of women’s magazines has been to provide a representation of women as independent, powerful, healthy and beautiful superwomen who define the modern-day woman. The celebrity features in the magazines are used to support and reinforce the idea of the modern-day woman who can navigate through the world as a positive social ambassador while raising a family and looking fashionable and beautiful (Watson & Lopes 2015: 1). Rojek (2001:10) defines celebrity as “the attribution of glamorous or notorious status to an individual within the public sphere”. For example, television stars, musicians, politicians or sports-people who are in the public sphere. “Magazines play an important role in constructing celebrity status and image, and images of celebrity play an important role in magazine economy” (Iqani, 2012: 83). Celebrity status is constructed in magazines because celebrity names and reputation are marketable and profitable both economically and culturally. Economically, magazines make money out of using celebrities on their covers and culturally, the use of celebrity’s increases celebrity culture and popular culture. Media representations of celebrity’s function in two ways, firstly, they represent a status of role model and perfection, and secondly, they portray celebrities as normal people who are flawed (Iqani, 2012: 84). Celebrity names and faces are a type of currency that

women's magazines use because they rely on them to increase their sales, different celebrities will sell more magazines at different times (Iqani, 2012: 83). Modern-day women's magazines possess a fundamental class, gender, race and sexuality assumption. *True Love* and *Destiny* magazines are modern day women's magazines that are targeted at black, middle-class women who are in heterosexual relationships.

Pleasure, Sexuality and Liberation

Women's magazines aim at providing various pleasures of engagement and action to those who consume them (Caldas-Coulthard, 1996: 251). They are centred on woman's lives and desires through the display of ideal bodies and material goods which all work together to achieve the element of pleasure (Caldas-Coulthard, 1996:251). Magazines provide stimulating visual pleasures using images of beautiful people, clothing, destinations and accessories (Caldas-Coulthard, 1996: 251). Women's magazines continue to be a success because they create imaginary shopping experiences which can be referred to as dream worlds or pleasure zones which women can retreat and relax into while reading magazines (Stevens and Maclaran, 2005: 283). Laura Stevens and Pauline Maclaran conducted a reception analysis of women's magazines and the participants stated that they derived pleasure from the physical and mental space which women's magazines offer (Stevens and Maclaran, 2005: 283). They are created as spaces whereby women's desires and wishes as consumers can be explored and cultivated through the display of new products which suggest new meanings and experiences in a literal and fantasy level, this also provides women with a considerable amount of choice and empowerment to view and purchase goods (Stevens and Maclaran, 2005: 283). For example, browsing at new fashionable clothes allows readers to imagine themselves wearing the clothes to an event whereby new experiences will be created while wearing these brand-new fashion items

It is to be noted that there have been significant changes in women's magazines focus areas although they are still commercial femininity drivers, the magazines are now open to the world rather than being escape vehicles (McRobbie, 1997: 191). Women's magazines began to focus on content which would provide self-improvement and empowerment to their readers such as financial independence and career opportunities (McRobbie, 1997: 191). Magazines are an ideal source of sex information for particularly young women because they create an intimate relationship with the readers by including them in the discussion using words such as 'you' or 'we' (Ward, Day and Epstein, 2006:59). It is through sex talk columns in magazines that women can be informed and educated on sexual health issues such as contraceptive options and safe sex methods (Ward, Day and Epstein, 2006: 60). This process can be referred to as education-entertainment and this term can be defined as

the purposeful structuring of media messages to entertain while educating the audience with the aim of creating public awareness about a specific social or health problem such as unwanted pregnancies (Singhal and Rogers, 2004: 5:). Many women read magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* for the sex tips they offer and this shows how women are learning to own their sexuality (Donnelly, 2004: 16).

The cover: From the ordinary to the extraordinary

McCracken (1993:13) describes magazine front covers as the 'windows to the future self' because they are a selective view of reality which is presented to the consumer. The magazine front cover is the most important element of any magazine because it is the introduction to the inside content of the magazine, it announces and introduces the contents to follow (Held, 2005 :4). The magazine cover is crucial to the success of the magazine because it attracts readers not only to buy the magazine itself but also to sell other products inside the magazine (McCracken, 1993: 14). Ferguson (1983: 3) describes magazine front covers as the main advertisements of women's magazines because they communicate directly to their target audience by using titles and images that are directed to women. According to Winship, (1987:499) magazine covers are an ideological construct of women's position in society. The cover usually consists of a woman who gazes directly at the consumer. The photograph of the woman is usually shot using a medium-range angle, from the thighs or waist or at a close-up, which focuses on the head and shoulders (Iqani, 2012: 87). The photograph is often focused on the face, which is the most personally revealing aspect of the human body but the captivating element of the cover are the eyes of the model which are usually fixed on the consumer while suggesting a woman to woman conversation (Winship, 1987: 499). The representation of the woman on the cover is not an ordinary representation because it represents the woman with a seductive expression. The woman on the cover is also presented as the perfect woman, who is beautiful in every way but she is also represented as a sexual object fashioned by beauty products such as make-up, hair and clothing (Winship, 1987: 499). The male gaze was introduced by Laura Mulvey (1989) in her studies about women's objectification in films. She describes it as the way women are used to provide visual pleasure for men in films, however this also applies in print media. Due to this practice, women who purchase women's magazines are obliged to look at the women on the cover from a male's perspective. Women who purchase women's magazines may not only gaze at the woman on the cover but can identify with the woman and desire to be like the woman.

The purpose of a magazine front covers is to provide all the women who look at it an immediate idealised mirror image of themselves. This can be referred to as the connection

between the normal and the extraordinary (McCracken, 1993: 15). The cover helps consumers identify the brand identity of the magazine because they set aside one brand from another. For example, a *Trulove* magazine cover is different from a *Cosmopolitan* cover because the brands are different and thus, communicate different ideas to their readers. According to McCracken (1993:29), the headlines of a magazine cover function in two ways, they can either support what the image on the cover represents or it can contradict it. In women's magazines, specifically, the headlines aim to address issues relating to careers, love, family, health and success (McCracken, 1993: 29).

Women's Magazines and Feminism

Early feminist scholars (Friedan, 1963 and McRobbie, 1978) of women's magazines referred to the magazines as problematic for women and argued that the magazines contribute to the reinforcement of gender stereotypes and inequalities in societies. Through this viewpoint, women's magazines are viewed as objects of oppression whereby oppressive feminine identities are created and circulated to promote capitalism and patriarchy (Gough-Yates, 2003: 7). In 1963, Betty Friedan wrote a book about feminism in the culture of postwar America titled *The Feminine Mystique* which was a concept that was based on the experiences of second wave feminist suburban women in the 1950s and 1960s. The book addressed the desires of women of the second wave of feminism who wanted to start careers and yearned to be more than just wives and mothers. Portions of her book were about women's magazines and how they contribute to the representation of women. She conducted a textual study on women's magazines in America, namely *McCall's*, and discovered that the magazine content was limited to issues about beauty, food, clothing and home but excluded content about matters that were happening around the world, outside of the home. Friedan (1963:37) also engaged with the producers and creators of the magazines who were mostly men and discovered that the producers created content for housewives and not for woman who want to know about world/current events. With this perspective on women's magazines, Friedan (1963:37) recognised women's magazines as alienating to their readers because they separated women from each other and from their true selves through content centring on home, food, clothing and beauty only. During this era, women's magazines were identified as objects that captivated women by continuously reinforcing the dominant ideologies of patriarchy (Friedan 1963).

Angela McRobbie, (1978:2) conducted a semiotic analysis on a British magazine entitled *Jackie*, which was targeted at teenage girls and she discovered that women's magazines

aim at encouraging a feminine culture for their readers by defining and structuring a woman's world based on the various phases of a woman's life (McRobbie, 1978: 6). Different women's magazines address and target different groups of women based on the stage at which the women are in (McRobbie, 1978: 6). Women's magazines provide a frame of what the world should be for its readers (McRobbie, 1978:6). For example, every magazine targets woman of different age groups, races or social class. Women's magazines are an ideological work which is formed upon natural and biological categories. The magazines are targeted at people who are biologically born as female. She argued that even though *Jackie* is a magazine that is targeted at adolescent girls, it too is a powerful ideological force just as television and film (McRobbie, 1978: 3). Women's magazines create a false sense of sisterhood which assumes a common definition of womanhood through the way it communicates to the readers. She discovered that *Jackie* magazine functions in two ways: firstly, the adolescent girls are invited to join an intimate society where advice and secrets about girlhood are exchanged; and secondly, the girls are also being presented with an ideologized concept of femininity which encourages competition and jealousy amongst women (McRobbie, 1978: 3). From the mid-1980s, women's magazines shifted their focus to encouraging improvements in the lives of their target audience by encouraging women to be acquire better careers and financial independence and this later became the underlying principal of most women's magazines (McRobbie, 1997:191). In her study, titled *More, New sexualities for girls' and women's' magazines* McRobbie (1997:191) argues that women's magazines encourage women to not retreat or withdraw from the world but to rather become self-confident and open to the world around them. These points are crucial for this research as I argue that the selected women's magazines communicate empowering messages to black women in South Africa.

Marjorie Ferguson (1983), in her book titled *Forever Feminine: Women's magazines and the cult of femininity*, suggested that women's magazines are contributors to the overall social structure alongside other social institutions because they provide cultural practices that define the role and position of women in society and uphold the "cult of femininity". Ferguson, (1983: 4) conducted a content analysis of the three largest selling women's magazines in Britain; *Woman*, *Woman's Weekly* and *Woman's Own* as well as an investigation of the editorial processes including journalists, artists, publishers and managers through interviews and focus groups in Britain and the United States of America. She revealed that women's magazines foster the cult of femininity since they are inherently about femininity as "a state, a condition, a craft and an art" (Ferguson,1983:1) which has practices and a belief system. This cult is established as a social group that all women can be part off and has a set of practices and beliefs which upholds the group membership (Ferguson,

1983: 184). For example, practices and beliefs can include issues around fashion, make-up tips, and hairstyles. Women's magazines function as being specialist and generalist at the same time since they are targeted for women specifically yet their content is broad and covers a wide range of feminine issues and concerns (Ferguson, 1983: 2). Women's magazines provide women with knowledge, encouragement and entertainment regarding issues of being a woman by being directed to specific target audiences. She also states that women's magazines are carriers of social change and continuity because they assist in shaping a woman's view of herself and society's view (Ferguson, 1983: 2).

Janice Winship (1987: 139) conducted a textual study of *Woman* magazine in 1977 and she revealed that magazines are a spectacle or display that is staged but transfers meaning through its knowledge of everyday life. Women's magazines are created through the knowledge of the everyday experiences of women in society, therefore, they should not be labelled as unimportant. It is for this purpose that I chose to study women's magazines in South Africa as I agree to Winship's (1987:139) view of magazines as a staged production which portrays the lives of women in society. In this research, I view *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines as staged objects that transfer meaning and represent the lives of black women in South Africa. Feminists view women's magazines as "a patronizing abuse and trivialization of women's position in society" (Winship, 1987:133) but she suggests that women's magazines should be viewed as ideological constructs which represent vital contradictions of women's patriarchal subordination under capitalization which informs magazine consumer culture (Winship, 1987: 133). Women's magazines were also celebrated as a form of women's culture by feminist cultural studies scholars such as Winship (Winship, 1987:133) who didn't reject women's magazines but admitted that she enjoyed reading them despite being a feminist. Feminists are constantly negotiating the tension between secretly reading women's magazines for their useful advice on female matters while attempting to break free from the modes of femininity which magazines represent (Winship, 1987: 133). Women's magazines manage contradictions by functioning within a representational system of fantasy and reality (Winship, 1987: 139). They communicate contradictory messages of femininity to their readers such as information about the latest fashion trends as well as information about the importance of saving for example. Winship (1987: 133) analysed the front cover of *Woman* magazines and she discovered that the front covers always consisted of a white female who was young, ageless and always smiling and looking happy. The use of women on the covers of a women's magazines suggests a woman to woman conversation inside the magazine to the reader (Winship, 1987: 133).

Following the previous textual studies on women's magazines, scholars such as Ros Ballaster et al. (1991) and Joke Hermes (1997) saw the need to conduct ethnographic studies on women's magazines to investigate how readers make sense of the magazine content. The study of Ros Ballaster, Margaret Beetham, Elizabeth Frazer and Sandra Hebron (1991) included both a textual analysis of magazines such as *Patches*, *Just Seventeen*, *Chic* and *Cosmopolitan* and reception analysis from discussions by the readers of the magazines (Ballaster, 1991). They argued that women's magazines convey contrasting messages because they are driven by two dominant ideologies, firstly, women's magazines are carriers of pleasure to their readers, secondly, they are conveyers of oppressive ideologies of sex, class and race (Ballaster, 1991: 2). This conflict between these dominant ideologies suggests that women's magazines are a method of selling commodities to women while also being a text which provides images and representations that create an imaginary world and an imaginary reader (Ballaster, 1991: 2). During their studies, Ros Ballaster et al. (1991: 5), interviewed different groups of women who read women's magazines and they referred to them as magazines which relate to their socio-economic and ideological reality by offering them an understanding and presentation of what it means to be a woman. Another finding was that women do not consume any magazine directed at them but rather they are selective and loyal in their choice and use of their magazines (Ballaster et al. 1991: 129). Lastly, Ballaster et al. (1991:129) reached the conclusion that women are indeed conscious of the magazine content that they consume, they are active participants rather than passive readers. Women's magazines aim to represent the lives of women rather than to direct and dictate how women should live their lives, they seek to offer their readers a guide to living and transforming their experiences as women (Ballaster, 1991: 172). Joke Hermes (1998: 83) conducted studies on women's magazines from an audience reception point of view and she introduced the concept of empowerment through reading magazines by suggesting that reading magazines may strengthen the reader's identity in the form of providing fantasies of their ideal selves. For example, women who read magazines may be empowered to better their lives through reading magazines. However, the participants suggested that the notion of empowerment should be discussed regarding the short-comings of women's magazines (Hermes, 1998: 83). Both Ballaster et al. (1991) and Hermes (1998) challenged previous feminist dismissal's of how magazines perpetuate patriarchy and femininity by speaking to women directly since they are the target audience instead of only focusing on the content in women's magazines.

International Studies on Women's Magazines

Based on these seminal studies, emerging from feminism and cultural studies, there is increased study in the genre of women's magazines internationally. Loubna Skalli (2006:11) conducted a study to discover how gender, globalization, and identity are communicated in two women's magazines in Morocco, *Femmes du Maroc* and *Citadine*. The methodology included a reception study, a production study as well as a textual study. The reception analysis included in-depth interviews and focus groups with readers and with the magazine editors of the selected magazines. The textual analysis identified three key areas of analysis, namely, magazine editorials, feature articles and one-page advertisements. She describes women's magazines as a culture and economic enterprise that is influenced and shaped by global forces and local concerns. Women's magazines are "a complex artefact that requires the understanding of the larger context of their production, circulation and reception" (Skalli, 2006: 11). This definition is relevant for this study because as the researcher, I also acknowledge that women's magazines require an understanding of the larger context of their existence in society although I am only focusing on their content and representation. Rachel Mesch (2013) analysed two French magazines launched in 1901 and 1902, namely, *Femina* and *La Vie Heureuse* and she argued that these magazines shaped a new form of womanhood which encouraged women to develop their own creative voices and introduced the image of modern day French femininity which encompassed women who had it all, husband, children, family and home (Mesch, 2013: 6). These magazines aimed to expand the roles of women in France during that time while strategically avoiding political engagement (Mesch, 2013: 6). This research argument is in line with my research since I aim to discover how *True Love* and *Destiny* magazine communicate black women's empowerment. Empowerment can also be in the form of expanded roles of women in society, when women play more roles in society, they become empowered.

Noliwe Rooks (2004) researched three black American women's magazines, namely, *Ringwood's Afro-American Journal of Fashion*, *Half-Century Magazine for the Coloured home and Homemaker* and *Tan Confessions* which focused on black American women's relationship to a culture of migration, urbanization and consumerism that was prominent during the early 1900s. These magazines which were targeted at black American women focused on the social hardships that were experienced by the black community and helped shape the lives of black women by providing advice about social issues such as rape, fashion and black sexual identity (Rooks, 2004: 12). These magazines, including *Essence* and *O, the Oprah magazine* contribute to the development of black American women by reflecting key historical and societal changes in black societies (Rooks, 2004: 176). In their magazines study of female teenagers in New Zealand, Vares and Jackson (2015:702) examined the magazine consumption and reading practices of 71 preteen girls to explore the

ways in which some preteen girls (aged 10–13 years) experience and make sense of their magazine consumption and reading practices. Their focus was on how preteen girls read and use *Total Girl*, *Little Angel*, *Creme*, *Girlfriend* and *Dolly* to locate themselves in and/or distance themselves from the category of being children based on the sexual content of the magazines. The data was gathered through focus groups interviews as well as camera footage from the participants explaining their reading experiences. Through their methodology, (Vares and Jackson, 2015:710) revealed that tween and teen magazines are powerful sexualising agents that provide tweens with sexual knowledge and interest. Magazines also highlight the multiple and complex ways in which the transitional space of young femininity is negotiated and constructed enabling tweens to create their own identities and sexual interests. (Vares and Jackson, 2015:710).

Merja Mahr (2012:852) in her article *The Attractiveness of Magazines as “Open” and “Closed” Texts: Values of Women’s Magazines and Their Readers* examined the widespread notion that people turn to media to find reinforcement for their personal values. Her article aimed to investigate the relationships between readers’ own values and the values they ascribe through magazines. Women’s magazines are popular journals that target women and share a broad set of topics such as home, beauty, fashion or cooking for example (Mahr, 2012:852). She focused on two common groups of Dutch women’s magazines, *Libelle* which is a traditional women’s magazines that targets young to middle- aged women with a families or careers and *Glamour*, a glossy women’s magazine that targets young adults and focus more on fashion and lifestyle than issues that may affect women in society and their individual life-worlds (Mahr, 2012:852). Her findings were that traditional women’s magazines tend to resemble their readers more in the values they represent than glossies simply because glossies function more like “modern fairy tales,” or imaginary worlds that readers may project themselves into but do not seriously strive for in real-life (Mahr, 2012:872). Women’s magazines function as “open” texts, in the sense that individual readers can construct meanings that fit their own needs (Mahr, 2012:872).

South African women’s magazines

In South Africa, there has been a rise of women’s magazines (*Truelove*, *Destiny*, *Bona*, and *Move*) that are targeted specifically at black women since the end of apartheid in 1994, as black women could participate economically and culturally in consumer culture. Sonja Laden conducted various studies on magazines in South Africa and I will elaborate on her key studies on magazines in South Africa. Laden’s (1997:120) study *Middle-class matters, or, how to keep whites whiter, colours brighter, and blacks beautiful* focused on the emerging

black middle-class in South Africa post-apartheid and she suggested that magazines that are targeted at black South Africans construct and represent a culture of consumer-consciousness. She defines the term “middle-class” as a reference to a group of people whose monthly income qualifies them to be active members of the socio-economic environment (Laden, 1997:121). She argues that magazines activate and encourage aspects of cultural change in specific social situations and that they are instrumental in establishing new choices in everyday social, cultural and behavioural norms for their audience through a range of middle-class good, lifestyles and cultural activities such as magazines consumption (Laden, 1997:121). The purpose of Laden’s (1997:122) study was to highlight the role of magazines in the dynamics of cultural change in South Africa post- apartheid, she analysed seven South African magazines namely *Drum*, *Bona*, *Pace*, *Truelove*, *Thandi*, *Tribute* and *Ebony*. Consumer magazines that are targeted at black South Africans have continued to be produced over the past decades because they evoke a “new *kind* of prestige” in their newly-urbanized audience (Laden, 1997:124). She argued that black consumer magazines are becoming increasingly more meaningful to their audience since they provide and encourage new ways of living in the democratic South Africa (Laden, 1997:124). “South African consumer magazines intended for black South Africans provide an excellent vantage point for re-examining the conscious and unconscious procedures embodied in the dynamics of South African social and cultural history” (Laden, 1997:127). Therefore, magazines that are targeted at black South African consumers provide a good platform for their readers to analyze, examine, practice and manage their transitions from a colonial and apartheid history to a democratic experience. I aim to demonstrate how *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines communicate empowering messages to their target audience which encourage them to analyze, examine, practice and manage their lives in South Africa in 2016.

Laden (2001:2) wrote about consumer magazines for black South Africans such as *Drum*, *Bona* and *Truelove* through a political economy analysis and she stated that magazines that are targeted at black people are distinctive in nature because of the cultural-force that is imbedded in the way that they communicate with their target audience: “their cultural force lies in their organizational or motivational/aspirational cogency, that is, in the ways they strategically prefigure and engender new social options for vast numbers of people” (Laden, 2001: 2). The magazines are strategically designed to provide pleasure while engaging their readers in new ways of creating social change in South Africa, post 1994. Towards the end of apartheid, black South Africans were not only engaging in protests for political change, but they were also working towards changing their cultural, social and economic positions and practices (Laden, 2001:2). Empowerment is a crucial element of black print media which

refers to print media that is produced and represented by black people, and this is achieved using role models and success stories (Laden, 2001: 9). The magazines are created as aspirational cultural objects because they are strategically prefigured to encourage new social practices to society and they aim to promote role models who encourage standards of social correctness to the readers (Laden, 2001: 8). Hence this research will investigate the way that selected magazines' front covers represent the myth of black women's empowerment. Magazines are commercial products which function as strategic mechanisms for the creation of new cultural practices and new ideas for social change (Laden, 2001: 2). In South Africa, specifically, there has been a significant rise of urban culture whereby there is an increase in the combination of traditional and modern methods of communicating (Laden, 2001: 2). Traditional methods include face-to-face communication while modern day methods refer to communication via various media such as radio, television, magazines and the internet. Magazines can also be used to introduce new ways of living for black women in South Africa for them to make sense of their constantly changing circumstances (Laden, 2001: 2). For example, during the apartheid years, black women did not have the opportunities which they have today such as education and careers.

Laden's (2007) research focused on the socio-cultural environments of black consumer magazines in South Africa from the onset of apartheid. Her study aimed to assess the cultural functionality and social standing of magazines in the reproduction of individual selfhood and collective identity in urban areas of South Africa. Magazines are effective in shaping the possibilities for advancements in societies through their transmitting of information and their repeated usage by their target audience, "by repeatedly and predictably conveying already-familiar information, magazines contribute to their readers' sense of order and predictability" (Laden, 2007: 598). Magazines are cultural objects and channels or cultural importation that aim to direct people towards consumer behavior while providing them with guidelines or suggestions about life general experiences and possibilities. Sonja Laden (2007:600) argued that magazines for black South Africans are used as cultural tools that communicate information about the challenges and lifestyles of the black middle - class population. She suggests that magazines are socio-semiotic tools which manage existing cultural practices and suggest new cultural practices and behavioural norms for the fast-growing black South African middle-class (2007:600). Empowerment is an important element of this research because the purpose of this research is to discuss how *TrueLove* and *Destiny* magazines represent the ideology of black women empowerment through their magazine front covers. Joy Watson and Claudia Lopes (2015:1), wrote a paper about feminism and women's magazines in South African glossy magazines and they discovered that as much as women's magazines have negative effects on women, they also

have a positive effect as well. Currently, magazines have embraced the women's rights agenda through the portrayal of the evolving roles that women play in society, they depict women as leaders and hard-workers rather than as home-makers like in the past (Watson & Lopes 2015:1).

Tom Odhiambo's (2008) research argued that the black female body is represented as an object of manipulation and intense gaze by media producers who create media advertorials for women's magazines in South Africa. Odhiambo (2008:71) analysed two women's magazines, namely *Drum* and *Truelove* magazine, and suggested that these magazines have taken the role of being purveyors of media advertisements whereby "the black female body embodies both the value of the commodities that 'it' advertises, as well as offering itself as an object of consumption" (Odhiambo, 2008: 72). At present, black female bodies on the covers are being used as objects to promote consumer culture and magazine sales but in the 1950s and 1960s the black women who were portrayed on the covers of *Drum* magazine were creating key political statements about the socio-cultural standing of African women during apartheid as well as selling the magazines (Odhiambo, 2008:74). In this research, I argue that the presence of the black women on the covers of *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazine are empowering and connote positive meanings about the position of black women in the country today just as they did in the 1950s and 1960s. Women's magazines provide their readers with an imaginary world where women can dream, hope and aspire (Odhiambo, 2008:72). The 'cover girl', a term that refers to the model on the cover is the most significant element of a magazine cover because the race of the model is a signifier of the target audience of the magazine (Odhiambo, 2008: 6). The race and physical structure of a cover girl can influence the sales of a magazine, thus magazines place women of the same race as their target audience regularly on the cover. The first few black women to grace the covers of *Drum* magazine represented the beauty of the new modern African women and women like Mariam Makeba and Dolly Rathebe became role models and cultural icons to black women during a time where black excellence and beauty was rarely embraced (Odhiambo, 2008: 6). This process is different to the current process of being on the cover of a magazine such as *Truelove* or *Destiny*, today these publications use women who are already established in the media (actresses, model's businesswomen) unlike before when the publications launched women's media image by using women who aspired to be public figures (Odhiambo, 2008: 6). The Black women on the covers of magazines such as *Truelove* and *Drum* are usually public figures who entice, allure and suggest a specific lifestyle to their fellow black consumers (Odhiambo, 2008: 6).

Sanger's (2008:275) study titled *There's got to be a man in there': reading intersections between gender, race and sexuality in South African magazines* argued that women's

magazines that are targeted at white women sexualize black femininities for the consumption of their white female readers in a manner that is reminiscent of white male colonial obsession with black female bodies. She analysed *Men's Health*, *FHM*, *Blink*, *Fair Lady*, *Femina* and *Truelove* magazines over a period of three years to determine how black sexuality and femininity is represented in men and women's magazines. Through her analysis, she discovered that there are "racialized dimensions of representations of black women's hypersexuality that locates black female sexuality as excessive and abundant, beyond the hypersexual representations of white female sexuality (Sanger, 2008:276). She revealed that the sexualisation of women is racialized and that white women's femininities in magazines that are targeted at white women are depicted as normative while black women's femininities are depicted as different and exotic. Her study further revealed that black women in black women's magazines are represented in a contradictory manner, on the one hand they are portrayed as independent, assertive goal-oriented but on the other hand, the images complementing the text have little to do with their career aspirations. Sanger's (2008:289) revelation is valid, however, I aim to demonstrate how both images and texts work together to communicate the myth of black women's empowerment on the covers of *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines. Her recommendations are that the media has a role to play in shaping our identities and operating as an instrument of transformation and should therefore aim to represent women with integrity, freedom and equality in post-apartheid South Africa.

Nicolette Ferreira's (2011) study focused on two South African women's magazines, namely *Grace* and *The Townships Housewife* which were published and targeted at black women between 1964 and 1969. Her motivation for conducting this study was that even though magazines for black women have existed in South Africa since the 1960s, they have been relatively neglected in cultural studies and few research has been conducted on the black female journalists who created content for black women during the male-dominated era of black press under the apartheid regime (Ferreira, 2011:2). She discovered that the content in the magazines consisted of articles which focused on the upliftment of black people in the communities as well as regularly reporting and documenting on the achievements of the black South Africans (Ferreira, 2011:3). The magazines revealed the African stars in the arts and cultural sphere such as beauty pageants and actors and actresses. Other regular features in the magazines emphasized on the specific needs of the reader's through columns that provided practical advice to the readers in areas of home, beauty and love. Both these magazines signified the emergence of black women's voices in the South African print media during the apartheid era (Ferreira, 2011:3). The magazines were platforms where African women expressed their needs and aspirations within the confines and control

the apartheid government. Ferreira's (2011:2) study demonstrates and reveals how black women's magazines, *Grace* and *The Townships Housewife* were influential in the upliftment of the black community, specifically, black women during the apartheid era. Aimee Carelse and Martha Evans (2017:2) proposed that women's magazines offer a rich method of tracking the complex interplay between beauty, power and politics. Their paper aimed to explore cultural endorsements of femininity which are represented on the covers *Fairlady* from 1985 to 2005 and reveal how the values of Nelson Mandela's Rainbow Nation are communicated. They conducted a content analysis of *Fairlady* magazine front covers to identify the changes in trends in cover model usage before and after 1994. They argued that front covers provide a snapshot glimpse of a publication's cultural allegiances which is widely shared with the public, regardless of whether they purchase the magazine or not. The cultural concept of beauty is an idealised image of femininity which is promoted by mass communication such as films, books, advertising as well as women's magazines, therefore, beauty maintains a unique ability to showcase the political relations of power in a specific time and place.

They discovered that while some of the discourses embraced by *Fairlady* communicate the concept of unity in diversity under the metaphor of the Rainbow Nation, femininity is still presented within the boundaries of racial lines, privileging white Western ideals of beauty over those of blackness (Carelse and Evans, 2017:23). Only one cover in the sample celebrated the beauty of an anonymous black woman in contrast to over 100 covers celebrating unknown white femininity. *Fairlady* magazine struggled to abandon some of the cultural allegiances of the apartheid era since they continue to depict images of white celebrities, royals and beauty queens (Carelse and Evans, 2017:23). "Representation of women in consumer magazines reveals the extent to which representation is contextually bound, shaped according to shifts in social, cultural, historical, economic and political contexts" (Carelse and Evans, 2017:23). The representation of women in women's magazines reflects their current social, cultural, historical, economic and political position within their societies. After apartheid, the female body became a highly politicized space that is filled with ambivalent political and cultural meaning (Carelse and Evans (2017:23). Through this research, I aim to also explain the socio-economic and political contexts in which *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazine front covers are being produced and provide a link as to how they have an influence in the representation of black women in women's magazines.

Nereshnee Govender (2015) focused on the representation of women in two South African women's magazines and their influence on identity construction. Her study aimed to reveal the objectification of women in the editorial content of *You* and *Drum* magazine. Through her

research methodology which included interviews with media producers and focus group discussions with female readers, she discovered that magazine texts do not reflect the progressive roles of modern day women since they contain gender stereotypes that repeatedly represent women as objects for male consumption (Govender, 2015:6). My research is different from Govender's (2015: 6) as I seek to reveal that women's magazines represent empowerment to their audience rather than female objectification and gender stereotypes. Her recommendations were that women's magazines should be challenged to include diversified content and to maintain change and this can be achieved through the inclusion of content which celebrates the achievements of women and promotes a true reflection of women in society (Govender, 2015: 6). For example, magazines should embrace women of different body types and skin color. Deidre Donnelly (2000:17) conducted a comparison of two women's magazines in South Africa, namely *Truelove* and *Cosmopolitan* through a textual and reader analysis to examine their reception by teenage girls. The study aimed to investigate if women's magazines serve as cultural development architects and informal education mediums for girls as they transition from girlhood to adulthood. The girls (aged between 16 and 18) who read *Truelove* responded by stating that the magazine motivated and inspired them. Donnelly, (2000:17) also discovered, through her research participants, that the magazines created an imaginary community of successful, liberated and empowered women which the readers enjoyed being part of. Young girls read magazines for advice on love, relationships and information about beauty products (Donnelly, 2000: 17).

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the early approaches to women's magazines which were initiated by second wave feminists (Friedan, 1963, McRobbie, 1978, Winship 1987 and Ferguson 1983). During their studies, they discovered that the magazines did not portray an encouraging and optimistic view of women. Today, modern-day women's magazines have begun to portray images of confident, liberated women in the hope of providing a positive view of women in society. Women's magazines provide women with guidelines and advice on how to handle the various challenges which are associated with being a woman. The magazines are about femininity and what it means to be a woman today, what to wear, how to apply make-up and how to engage with friends, family and loved ones. This notion of femininity has evolved and modern-day magazines depict an empowered femininity of women who are liberated and confident. Even though there is a fair amount of literature on women's magazines in South Africa (Laden, 1997;2001;2007, Gqola, 2016, Odhiambo, 2008) there seems to be a

shortage of research that discusses the representation of black women's empowerment through these platforms. Most of the literature on women's magazines in South Africa has been written by Laden (1997;2001;2007) however, most of her work was written over ten years ago and this is a challenge because even though it is still relevant, it is unfortunately not current. The following chapter will discuss the theoretical framework of this research which is based on the social constructionist approach. Semiotics, feminism, black feminist thought and representation.

Chapter Three: Theoretical framework

Introduction

This research aims to explore how the myth of black women's empowerment is represented on the front covers of *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines. The previous chapter examined previous studies on women's magazines both locally and internationally. This chapter will outline the two key theoretical frameworks that will be used to analyse the selected magazine front covers namely; semiotics and feminism. Theoretical frameworks are "theories [that] give researchers different 'lenses' through which to look at complicated problems and social issues, focusing their attention on different aspects of the data and providing a framework within which to conduct their analysis" (Reeves *et al.* 2008: 631; Anfara, 2008). Meaning is socially and culturally constructed through semiotics and representation; thus, semiotic theory is suitable for this research. This is a feminist cultural studies approach to magazines and the theoretical frameworks are drawn from the intersection of cultural studies and feminism because cultural studies aim to challenge traditional disciplines and question cultural information that is produced (Franklin *et al.*, 1991:175). Through this research, I aim to discover how *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines construct the myth of black women's empowerment on their magazine front covers. Feminist theory will also be outlined, particularly regarding black feminist thought as a framework in which to discuss the representation of the myth of black women empowerment. Black feminist theory emerged during the third wave of feminism and according to Patricia Hill Collins (2000:4), it was founded upon the experiences of black women specifically because the second wave of feminism was not inclusive for women of different races. While most of the feminist scholarship on magazines emerged with second-wave feminism (Friedan 1963, McRobbie 1978, Winship 1987), I will adopt a third wave and black feminist perspective to women's magazines in South Africa.

The Social Constructivist Approach

Stuart Hall (1997:10) identifies three different theories of representation: reflective, intentional, and social constructionist. In the reflective approach, meaning can be found within an object and language works as a mirror to reflect meaning while the intentional approach argues that it is the speaker or producer who imposes their meaning to the world through language (Hall, 1997: 10). The social constructionist approach asserts that people construct meaning using representational systems such as language, images and signs (Hall, 1997: 11). The constructionist approach will be adopted in this chapter as this has had

“the most significant impact on cultural studies” (Hall, 2013: 5) and it demonstrates how representations and meanings as culturally constructed. Social constructionism recognises “that neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning in language. Things don’t *mean*: we *construct* meaning, using representational systems – concepts and signs” (Hall, 1997: 11). While Hall (2013: 2) argues that the two main theories or approaches to this constructionist approach to representation are semiotics and discourse, this chapter will only focus on semiotics. This research will take a social constructivist approach to representation through semiotics to analyse the ways in which women are represented in magazines in South Africa. The social constructionist approach to representation is concerned with the symbolic practices and processes through which meaning is derived (Hall, 1997: 11). This means that our understanding of gender, race and culture is socially constructed, therefore, femininity and masculinity are also sexually constructed. Race is a social construct because the racial categories that are used in societies to differentiate people are influenced by the social, political, and economic standards of the society (Brooks and Hebert 2006: 297). Physical attributes such as skin colour and hair texture are identifiers and indicators of race (Brooks and Hebert 2006: 297). Gender is also socially constructed because it is society that defines what it means for people to be masculine or feminine (Brooks and Hebert 2006: 297). Rebecca Ann Lind (2004: 6) refers to this as the “process of engenderment, by which a biological female becomes a socially constructed feminine being and a biological male becomes a socially constructed masculine being”. Men and women are taught how to behave, act and think and this is communicated through processes of socialization and through media channels such as television programmes, magazines, music, and advertisements. “The importance of race and gender in our society has nothing to do with physical attributes of race and gender and everything to do with society’s interpretation of what it means to be a member of a particular gender or racial ethnic group” (Lind 2004: 7). Ideology forces recipients of media to see that all cultural texts have unique prejudices or interests which are reinforced and reproduced based on the view of the media producers and dominant social groups (Durham, 2009:14). There are different types of ideologies but the three most important ones for this research are the intersections of race and gender. Political ideologies refer to the oppression and subordination of certain social groups and ethnicities (Durham, 2009:14). Political ideologies can be identified through white supremacy and black oppression during the apartheid era. This refers to the history of South Africa, which is still an emerging democracy of twenty- three years. Sexist ideologies on the other hand focus on the domination of women by men (Durham, 2009: 14). This research aims to focus on the intersections between race and gender in the South African context. Ideology separates and divides society into groups of dominant and subordinates which leads to hierarchy in societies while oppressing and

creating social and ideological divisions of race, gender and class (Kellner, 2003:61). Ideology also constructs social behaviour by suggesting what is acceptable or not acceptable in society and enables the domination or oppression of one race, gender or class over the other (Kellner, 2003: 61).

Social construction of reality in terms of race and gender is based on how femininity is constructed through media representations and how representations construct the myth or dominant ideologies. Identity is socially constructed because identities are negotiated within a social context, at times identities are forced on people and sometimes they are rejected by people (Lind, 2004: 7). "Our identities are culturally formed. This, at any rate, is what is meant by saying that we should think of social identities as constructed *within* representation, *through* culture, not outside of them" (Hall, 1997:220). Identities are a result of the process of identification which allows people to situate themselves within or outside of a culture. Identity is created within representation, which means that people create their identities within their representation which is practiced through culture. Representation refers to how the world is socially constructed and represented to generate meaning (Barker, 2003:7). Through my research, I will make use of semiotics theory to reveal how black women's empowerment is constructed and represented to generate meaning in *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines front covers.

Semiotics: The study of signs

Semiotics is the "study of signs" (Chandler, 2002: 1). It is a method that is used to understand meaning through analysing and interpreting signs to understand their meaning. According to Jonathan Bignell (2002: 7) media texts connect one signified idea with another to attach connotations and provide them with mythic meanings. Media texts such as magazines attach meanings to signs to communicate and convey mythic meanings or dominant ideologies to the audience.

A science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable. It would be part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology; I shall call it semiology (from Greek semeion 'sign'). Semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them (de Saussure, 1916: 16).

Ferdinand de Saussure was a linguist and he defined semiology as a science which studied the role of signs as part of our social lives. The study of semiology, as presented by de Saussure (1916: 16) suggests that a sign has two parts which are only noticeable when analysing them and the two parts are the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the form which a sign takes and the signified is the mental concept it represents (Chandler, 2002: 19). Charles Sanders Peirce (1931: 58) states that "nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a

sign". This means that a sign can only be regarded as a sign when people interpret and derive meaning from it. Pierce described a sign as something which stands to somebody for something and made the distinction between three aspects of signs, the iconic, indexical and the symbolic sign (Cullum and Manning 1994: 467). An iconic sign resembles its referent, an indexical sign stands for or directs something in relation to something else, and lastly, a symbolic that stands for something in a logical way (Danesi, 2002: 40). Peirce proposed that a sign consists of a representamen, an object and an interpretant and that the relationship between these three elements is important because one suggests another (Danesi, 2002:31). In the case of this research, the representamen will refer to the *True Love* and *Destiny* magazine front covers because they are used to represent something. The objects are black women because the magazines are targeted to them. The interpretant will be the meaning that the researcher will derive from the representamen and the objects which will be the myth of black women empowerment.

Ronald Barthes (1964: 107) suggests that for as long as humanity has existed, myths have been a part of human existence and they continue to influence popular culture in today's world. Barthes defines (1964: 107) myth as "a system of communication" and a message that can be communicated from person to person. He suggests that myth is not an object, concept or an idea but rather it is a form, in his words it is a "mode of signification" (Barthes, 1964: 107). Myth also comprises of a tri-dimensional form which includes the signifier, the signified and the sign however myth is constructed from a semiological chain because it is a "second-order semiological system" (Barthes, 1964: 113). By this, Barthes (1964: 113) meant that the signifier and the signified are the first-order semiological level of a sign while myth is the second-order semiological level because it is communicating the general message which the creator or producer aims to communicate. Myth, as described by Barthes (1964:113) is cultural and includes ideology because it is a part of human existence, it is created and shared culturally and socially within societies.

The myths embedded in popular culture are very important for this research because the myth of black women's empowerment will be discussed regarding women's magazines. As discussed in chapter 2, women's magazines are also mythic because they provide an imaginary world for their readers whereby they can be immersed with other people's experiences and view the latest fashion products. "Myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message" as if it is universal and natural (Barthes, 1964: 107). The signification of a myth is never arbitrary but rather it is motivated, and unavoidably contains some analogy because myth serves the ideologies of the bourgeoisie and those in power at that time (Barthes, 1964: 107). The significance of the myth of black women empowerment is motivated by the fact that black women were

previously disadvantaged and oppressed during apartheid in South Africa and through this research I aim to analyse how the front covers reveal the myths of femininity in contemporary South African women's magazines. Semiotics theory is suitable for this research mainly because of the mode of communication that is used in magazines which will be analysed according to semiotic mechanisms such as language, denotation and connotation, socio-political context, textual messages, colours and composition. Some of the key scholars of women's magazines such as McRobbie (1978), Laden (2001) and Iqani (2012) made use of semiotics in their research to analyse the representations of women in magazines. Heidi Nomm (2007) conducted a semiotic analysis for her research titled *Fashioning the Female: An Analysis of the "Fashionable Woman" in ELLE Magazine –Now and Then* and she states that this method of analysis is good for feminist media studies because it allows researchers to discuss the connotative and cultural meanings identified in magazines, films or advertisements.

Feminism

According to Alison Jaggar (1983: 5) the term feminism in the 19th century referred to "the woman movement" which included various groups of women aimed at advancing the position of women in society. Lynn Parry and Beschara Karam (2001: 395) define feminism as the advocacy of the rights of women ranging from political rights of women, equality, oppression and sexual autonomy. A feminist is a woman who seeks social equality with men regardless of her political perspective or opinions (hooks, 2000: 25). Based on this definition, feminism is about social equality between both males and females. Feminist theory was established as a means of providing equal rights to women through rectifying issues of subordination, abuse and oppression (Trier-Bieniek 2015: 19). Feminism challenges and encourages us to critically evaluate power relations and to imagine the world differently to what it is while post feminism encourage imaginations of transformation to desire change in society (Negra and Tasker, 2007: 22). First wave feminists were concerned about equality and rights of women, while second wave feminists focused on the liberation and oppression of women (Jaggar, 1983: 4). This wave focused on women pursuing careers, reproductive rights, addressing violence against women and pay equality in the workplace (Trier-Bieniek 2015: 20). One of the first groups *National organisation for women* headed by Betty Friedan in America declared that media is one of the sites of struggle (Trier-Bieniek 2015: 20). During this period, in the 1960s feminists asked questions such as "how can we free women from the tyranny of media messages that limit them to house and beauty" (Van Zoonen, 1991: 33). Women in the second wave of feminism were represented in the media and in popular culture through the "happy housewife heroine" or "childlike" women who were only

concerned with getting married, making children and buying new kitchen appliances (Friedan, 1963:36)

Third wave feminists identify a deeper level of oppression aside from the second wave's feminine mystique of domesticity (Wolf, 1991: 10). Astid Henry (2004:34) proposes that the third wave of feminism refers to three distinct and interconnected concepts, namely generational age, ideological position and historical moments. In terms of the generational age, third wave feminism is practiced and produced by women and men who are born after 1964, the ideology of third wave feminists is that it is a shift within feminist thought as it is a blend of other forms of contemporary critical theory such as critical race and post-colonial theories (Henry, 2004: 34). Third wave feminism develops out of the realities of the current historical moments that both men and women are facing such as global capitalism, post-modernism and information technology (Henry, 2004: 24). Third wave feminism emerged from the contradiction and complications of the first and second wave, it aims to shift the emphasis in feminism away from a strategy that focuses on equality with men to a view or perspective where women's difference from men is embraced (Budgeon, 2004: 4). This third wave also aimed to embrace diversity by recognizing the different experiences between women of different races, cultures and beliefs (Budgeon, 2004: 5). The critique of third wave feminism is that it is both a continuation and discontinuation of previous feminist waves by completely demarcating from the second wave but at the same time, expanding on the groundwork that was provided by first and second wave feminists (Budgeon, 2011: 5). Third wave feminism embraces and prioritizes subjective and individualized experiences of women with the hope of creating a more individualized form of feminism which responds to diversity. Post-feminist culture aims to include, assume or naturalize elements of feminism while commodifying feminism through images of "woman as empowered consumers" (Negra and Tasker, 2007: 3). It is also inclusive of all people in society, regardless of race, gender or class. Members of a community are valued in accordance with their distinct identities which are embraced and not looked down on. Post-feminism culture focuses on the educational and professional opportunities for women in aspects of their career choices, family planning or sexual educations (Negra and Tasker, 2007: 3). The term "post-feminism" has two meanings, firstly it is used to describe historical periods when feminism and women's movements were scarce and in decline, therefore, indicating the rejection periods of feminism (Henry, 2004: 17). Secondly, the prefix "post" refers to a time after feminism, where feminism was no longer needed as its goals have been achieved and this means that post feminism signifies the success of feminism, post-feminism signifies and represents both the success and failure of feminism (Henry, 2004: 17).

The Beauty Myth

Naomi Wolf is a third wave feminist who wrote *The Beauty Myth* (1991). She was mostly concerned about how patriarchal ideas about women's beauty have affected all women from different ages, races and classes. When the feminine mystique ended and women could go out to work and start their careers, they were then suppressed again through notions of beauty (Wolff, 1991: 12). She states that since the era of industrialisation, urbanisation and globalisation, the notions of beauty have spread from televisions, magazines, newspapers and pornography with an image of unattainable beauty for most women. While women have fought for their liberation, human rights and equality, they have not yet overcome the effects of the beauty myth, which in today's world is harder to do due the overflow of flawless images of women in mainstream media and especially, social media. The beauty myth, according to Wolf (1991: 13), is not about women but rather, it is about institutional power and male domination because in a patriarchal society, men have the power to enforce and suggest what women should look like and how they should be portrayed. "The qualities that a given period calls beautiful in women are merely symbols of the female behaviour that that period considers desirable: The beauty myth is always actually prescribing behaviour and not appearance" (Wolff, 1991: 12). The beauty myth changes overtime and that what one generation views as beautiful is different what the next generation will view as beautiful. It is about the behaviour of women rather than how they look.

Wolf (1991: 12) proposes that "beauty is a currency system like the gold standard. Like any economy, it is determined by politics". It has been twenty-two years since South Africa became a democratic county in 1994 and prior to that, the country was under the apartheid regime. During those years of oppression of races which were not white, the concept and meaning of beauty was based on what the political and social system believed to be beautiful. Since white people were politically and culturally dominant in those days, it also meant that their understanding of beauty was the order of the day. Even though apartheid has ended, white supremacist concepts of beauty are still in play in society and black women are expected to oblige to those concepts. hooks (1994: 179) writes about how black women and women of colour in general, are expected to conform to the beauty standards of white supremacy. "Light skin and long, straight hair continue to be traits that define a female as beautiful and desirable in the racist white imagination and in the colonized black mindset" (hooks, 1994: 179). Thus, black women are encouraged to conform to the beauty standards of white supremacy. Thompson (2009: 88) states that "Black hair is not just about hair; it is about identity" because black hair differentiates black women from women of other races. She goes on to suggest that there is a myth about black hair which suggests that black hair

is unmanageable, ugly and unattractive however, the truth is that black hair is undervalued, misjudged and unloved and the only way to change this perception is by recognising black hair as different, unique, stylish and utopian (Thompson, 2009: 88). Black women need to set beauty standards for themselves and not conform to the beauty standards that are set by white supremacy, just as Wolf (1991:277) suggests that the only way forward for women is for them to define beauty for themselves and live by that definition because “as long as the definition of beauty comes from outside women, we will continue to be manipulated by it” (Wolf, 1991: 277).

The problem that has no-name

Betty Friedan is one of the most influential feminists of the second wave of feminism and in 1963 she wrote *The Feminine Mystique*. In this book, she writes about how the American women of that time were bound by the feminine mystique which implied that the only way for a woman to be a heroine is by being a child bearer, housewife and ignoring the question about their identity and this is the reason why American women of the 1950s struggled to define themselves outside of their husbands and children (Friedan, 1963: 15). Friedan (1963:18) collected her data through interviews with suburban, college-educated housewives and identified what she refers to as ‘the problem that has no name’ and her motivation for researching about this problem was that she realised, through various platforms such as magazines, interviews and discussions with other women that most suburban housewives were generally unhappy but no-one, including doctors, psychologists and writers could find out what the real problem was. Friedan (1963: 18) after multiple investigations, defined this problem as the longing and need that women had for something more than their husbands, children and homes, the longing for their own careers and independence. She also makes note of the myth of the happy, suburban American housewife whose image was all over print media and in television advertisements. The woman was ageless, educated and beautiful. She was only concerned about her husband and children, as well as the latest home appliances and had found true feminine fulfilment (Friedan, 1963: 22). This research aims to challenge this stereotype of the happy housewife on women’s magazine covers and positioning the image of women on magazines as assertive and empowering femininity.

bell hooks (1984: 2) criticised Friedan’s work by stating that she spoke only for a selected group of white, educated, middle- class women who longed to have careers like their husbands and ignored the minority groups of women in America such as Black women and poor white women who were already working low income jobs. Hooks (1984: 2) states that Friedan failed to mention the women who would be employed to perform the house labour and child care should women like herself be granted the opportunity to work. hooks (1984:2) however does

acknowledge that the problem that was faced by the privileged housewives was a serious concern but suggests that there were far more important issues that masses of women were facing during that time such as economic survival, racial discrimination and oppression. hooks (1984: 3) was concerned with the fact that Friedan did not enquire about

the lives and experiences of other women and focused only on the women who were like herself.

The Oppositional Gaze and the Female Body

Laura Mulvey is a British feminist who is known for her ground-breaking essay titled "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1973) which is about the objectification of women in films. She makes use of psychoanalytic theory to reveal how films reflect and portray existing sexual differences between men and women by referring to scopophilia instinct which is defined as the pleasure of looking at someone as an erotic object. According to Mulvey (1999: 833) the process of psychoanalysis demonstrates how the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form by depicting the purpose of women in two ways. Firstly, women function as signifiers of child bearing, and secondly, as signifiers of the male other or the other sex (Mulvey, 1999: 834). In this existing patriarchal culture, women are depicted as objects that men can fantasise about which makes them bearers of meaning while men are the creators of meaning. Mulvey (1999: 837) also states that films provide images of women which arouse pleasure from men and refers to this as active male and passive female depiction.

The male gaze, according to Mulvey (1999: 837), projects its fantasies on to the female body which is usually styled accordingly in provocative clothing. "In their traditional exhibitionist role, women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness" (Mulvey, 1999: 837). In many films, media advertisements, magazines, and newspapers, women are continually portrayed as sexual objects and this is done through visual codes such as clothing, make-up and body posture. According to Diane Ponterotto (2006: 133) there are existing characteristics of female representation in contemporary societies which are influenced by ideologies of gender, class and race such as the continued depiction of a female body which is white, young, physically fit and slim in print media and television advertisements. It is for this reason that feminist media scholars such as Mulvey (1999:133) have criticized the depiction of women in media roles such as films and magazines. Through this research, I aim to discover how black female bodies are represented in the selected magazines.

Black Feminist Thought

Black feminism is composed of a body of knowledge and understanding that positions itself as critical theory to criticize and address social problems that are faced by black women. (Woodard and Mastin, 2005: 265). It is a set of ideas that are derived directly from the historical and contemporary experiences of Black women (Collins, 2000:4). bell hooks (1984:3) states that it was difficult for black women in America to join the feminist movement because during the 1960s womanhood issues of sexism and oppression were less important for black women as compared to the racial struggle that they were facing and they were critical of the race-based assumptions and experiences of white feminists. Collins (2000:4) defines black feminism using the analogy of "the outsider looking in" this can be described as the way black women look at the world they are supposed to be in but are unable to participate due to issues such as lack of finance and education.

Collins (2000: 4) defines oppression as "any unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to resources." This definition is relevant to the South African context of black women oppression because during Apartheid, black people in general were denied access to resources and opportunities because they were reserved for white people only. Collins (2000:5) positions that African- American women's oppression in America was shaped by three core-dimensions. These dimensions as identified by Collins (2000:5) are relevant in the South African context as well. Firstly, she states that the exploitation of black women's labour is an important element because it is still happening in today's world although it was more prominent in the past. This happened in America during the days of slavery and happened in South Africa during the years of Apartheid whereby black women were subjected to working as domestic workers for white people while earning very little income with no labour rights. Secondly, the political dimension of oppression has served as a way of denying black women rights and privileges which were enjoyed by white people (Collins, 2000:5). Prior to 1994, black women, and black people in general were not allowed to vote and were excluded from certain educational institutions and state opportunities which left many black women uneducated and forced to perform cheap labour in the cities and farming areas. Lastly, racist and sexist images which are perpetuated by the society influence the social structure to an extent that they become normal and lead to the justification of black women oppression. According to hooks, (1984:4) it was unfortunate that white women dominate feminist literature because they rarely question if their perspective on women's realities is inclusive of women and not just a select few and this according to hooks was the reason why racism presides in the work of many white feminists and this led to the

reinforcement of white supremacy. Collins, stated that 'Traditionally, many U.S. White feminist scholars have resisted having Black women as full colleagues. Moreover, this historical suppression of Black women's ideas has had a pronounced influence on feminist theory. One pattern of suppression is that of omission' (Collins, 2000: 5). With this said, Collins (2000:5) stated that many white feminist scholars have excluded black women from their work, thus suppressing black women. Nonetheless black women challenged the western dominance of the feminist movement, however, they had to participate in the struggle against racial equality and the struggle against women oppression while white women were only involved in the struggle against women oppression (Collins 2000:5).

Barbara Smith, in her book titled *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (1983:27) stated that feminism was a threatening movement to black people especially in third world countries because it forces us to inspect and observe how we live and treat each other in our societies. As a reaction to the threat of feminism, some black men and women have created and developed myths to divert and distract black women from seeking their freedom. The first myth is that black women are already liberated (Smith, 1983: 27). Liberation, in this regard is being confused with black women's ability to survive under circumstances of oppression, poverty and racism. Underlining this myth is that black women are towers of strength who make it through life without aspirations of wanting the things that other people want such as education or careers. The second myth that Smith (1983:27) identified was that racism is the only oppression that black women experience. Some people believe that once the struggle against racism is over, it will alleviate black women's problems and black women, men and children will thrive and flourish. If black women must wait until the struggle against racism is over before they address sexism, then they will wait for a very long time. A black feminist perspective does not separate or rank oppressions as per the one that is the most important, rather it acknowledges and demonstrates the simultaneity of oppressions that affect black women (Smith, 1983:28). Black women face racism and sexism oppressions all at the same time while white women only face sexist oppressions. The third myth was that feminism is about hating men. This myth demonstrates the misunderstanding of feminism because feminism is not about fighting men individually, rather it is about fighting systematic and institutionalized oppression (Smith, 1983:28). The fact that black feminists were concerned with ending sexist oppression does not mean that they hate black men or men in general, it simply means that they are against the oppression of black women especially by black men. The fourth myth was that women's issues are narrow and that black women need to deal with the larger struggle, this myth suggests that women's oppression is not necessarily a matter of life and death. Unlike any other movement "black feminism provides the theory that clarifies the nature of black women's experience" (Smith, 1983:37). This is achieved through the explanation and

documentation of the unique experiences of black women across the world and by encouraging political action that will change the system that has put black women down for many years.

The purpose of black feminist thought is to resist and contest black women oppression in terms of the practices and ideas that justify it, the aim is to also empower black women within the realm of social and political injustice (Collins, 2002: 22). There is an underlining tension within black feminist thought which links experiences and ideas because all black women experience similar challenges that result from living in a society that has historical oppressive systems towards black women, however, their responses to these challenges are different from one another (Collins, 2002: 25). In the South African context, black women experience similar challenges today because of the apartheid regime which was oppressive towards black people, however, black women respond differently to these challenges and experiences due to influencers and matters regarding their age, race, class, religion or sexual orientation. Shirley Tate (2010:197) affirms that there is a beauty myth in feminist's studies that perpetuates that black women want to be white since white beauty is deemed as iconic and the highest level of beauty, as a result of this myth, black beauty is continuously misrepresented. "Decolonizing beauty studies means that we have to engage in a disidentification from normative discourses in order to decentre colonial ideas on black beauty so that other black beauties can be recognized" (Tate, 2010: 206). The words "other black beauties" refers to Tate's (2010: 205) argument that we need to shift from the myths and discourses which suggest that black women want to be white and rather recognize the options of being different versions of black. It is vital for black women to understand the importance of difference in the construction of black beauty where blackness is understood as difference within unity (Tate, 2010: 207). This argument on differences in black beauty is important for this research since the black women on the covers of *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines represent different features and versions of black beauty which must all be embraced as black beauty regardless of how different it is.

Representation, Popular Culture and Identity

Stuart Hall (2013:15) described representation as an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. Representation involves the use of language, signs and images because these elements play an important role in shaping and developing what people perceive as reality and develops their identity (Hall, 2013:15). Language, according to Hall (2013: 4), is the second system of representation because for people to share meaning, they must first construct it in a common language which can be understood by all.

Kimberly Wallace-Sanders (2002: 7) took a historical perspective on the existing differences in representation of black women in society. She refers to the arrival of the British at the Cape Colony, now known as Cape Town, in the fifteenth/sixteenth century and states that when the white people, mostly male arrived in Africa, they chose to believe that they were superior from the black people that they encountered simply because they were different from them, physically and otherwise. "It was necessary for Europeans to explain the nature of Africans, whom they saw as racially inferior and profoundly different from themselves in skin colour, hair texture, body type, sexual behaviour, religious practices, dress, language and values" (Wallace-Sanders, 2002: 8). According to Sadiya Qureshi (2004) the constant need to try and understand the black body, the black female body led to the inhuman display of Sarah Baartman in England and France in the early nineteenth century. She was objectified and gazed at while on display in a figure-hugging dress which exposed the size of her breasts and buttocks, arousing curiosity from western people, both male and female. This insensitive act that was experienced by Sarah Baartman has demonstrated how Western representations and understanding of black female sexuality has been misguided and misrepresented simply because black women from all over the world are naturally different from Western women. The black female body is not sacred at all, it is publicised, judged and scrutinised by people of other races, black men and unfortunately, black women as well (Wallace-Sanders, 2002: 7).

Debbie Weekes (1997: 124) in her essay titled *Shades of Blackness* identifies a destructive discourse between black women in terms of how light their skin tones are from one another and this creates and causes a rift between them based on skin tone and hair texture. Black hair and skin tones are used as physical signifiers for judging how black a person is, and how close or far they are from whiteness (Weekes, 1997: 124). "One of the most important signifiers for black women is the way we experience our blackness, and negating this aspect of each other can only make it more difficult to challenge the 'thing' which constructs the categories of race and gender which we inhabit" (Weekes, 1997: 125). Black women need to embrace each other's blackness without looking down on each other because of how dark or light skinned a person is. The use of the word "thing" in this regard refers to the ideological construct which asserts that the lighter a black woman's skin is, the more beautiful there are since they are closer to whiteness. Black women need to stop judging each other over their blackness and start working together to challenge this oppressive ideology. The black female body possess a triple burden of negative bodily connotations and associations, the black female body represents the temptations of the flesh and the source of a man's moral downfall, their race, is instinctual to that of an animal which is undeserving of privacy and respect (Bordo, 2004:11).

Hall (1993: 32) defines popular culture as an imaginary place whereby people can find out who they are and fantasise about who they want to become. "It is an arena that is profoundly

mythic. It is a theatre of popular desires, a theatre of popular fantasies. It is where we discover and play with identifications of ourselves, where we are imagined, where we are represented" (Hall, 1993: 32). Popular culture is grounded upon the everyday experiences, traditions and practices of the people, it is interconnected with the aspirations, dreams and hopes of the community (Hall, 1993: 32). Popular culture, whether in the form of television, celebrity fan-culture, music or print media provides a fantasy world whereby people can experience different identities or desires. Black popular-culture provides an arena for black people to express, discover and represent themselves through channels such as films, television programmes, magazines, newspapers or music. *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines are examples of black popular culture because they are created for black women specifically with the aim of creating a mythic arena where black women are represented.

Julie Reid (2007:81) in her *Mythological representation in popular culture today* proposes that mass communication mediums such as films, music or magazines can be semiotically deconstructed to find out more about the way in which people interact with the world. Myths reside and operate through visual mass media and contribute to the way in which readers interpret and interact with the world (Reid, 2007:81). When a myth is represented and observed by readers on a regular basis, and its meaning becomes common amongst most of its readers, its meaning is not only widely agreed upon, but is also widely regarded as an example of the way things are in society. With this research, I aim to reveal how *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines represent the myth of black women's empowerment on their magazine front covers in 2016 and to disclose how this myth is an example of how black women's magazines empower black women in South Africa. Myths function to inform individuals of acceptable societal behaviour and contribute to an ordered social environment, they can also function negatively to represent negative connotative meanings about certain social groups or problems (Reid, 2007:80). To understand the mass media texts that are constructed by mass media to inform our social lives, mythological representations and the ideological meanings that they create and convey must be analysed and uncovered (Reid, 2007:80). Cultural themes, values and identities can only exist if they are represented, therefore, they need to be rearticulated, reconfigured, reinvented and reinterpreted over time for continuation and to encourage the endurance of the societal framework (Reid, 2007:84). In my findings and analysis chapter, I will identify the reoccurrence of empowering messages that are represented on the selected magazine front covers. Reid (2007:94) suggests that it is important for us to be observant of myths "especially in a post-apartheid and post-colonial African climate, where the formation of new collective national identities depends on the successful perpetuation of patriotic myths". This recommendation is very important as it encourages researchers as myself to study myths in South African mass communication mediums post-apartheid since new national identities are being represented in the media.

Peter Burke (2000:1) identified three uses of identity, firstly identity is used to refer to people's cultures, secondly, it is used to refer to people who possess common physical attributes and lastly, identity can be used to create meaning to the multiple roles that people play in contemporary societies. The second and third function of identity recognised by Stryker and Burke (2000:1) are the two most important for this research because firstly, black women possess common physical features such as skin colour and hair texture and secondly, they perform multiple roles such as mothers, career women, wives and business women in South Africa's contemporary society. Identity based on culture, as suggested by Stryker and Burke (2000: 1), is not a central concern for this research because black South African women have different cultures based on their heritage such as Sesotho or isiXhosa, amongst others and their cultures do not have a direct effect on this research because this research is about black women empowerment in general, not based on specific cultural groups. *Styled by Their Perceptions: Black Adolescent Girls Interpret Representations of Black Females in Popular Culture* written by Gholnecsar Muhammad and Sherell McArthur (2015:133) discusses how identity formation is a critical process in shaping the lives of young black women and can present distinct challenges for Black adolescent girls who need to negotiate ideals of self when presented with false and incomplete images representing Black girlhood. They interviewed a group of eight black adolescent girls aged between 12– 17 and asked them about how black women and girls are portrayed in society and mass communication mediums. The findings were that the participants believed that black girlhood is portrayed as being angry, loud, violent, sexualized and judged by their hair (Muhammad and McArthur, 2015:133). This is a social dilemma as black feminists have been speaking about the misrepresentation of black women in popular culture for years, however, black women and girls are still being subjected to racialized representations (Muhammad and McArthur, 2015:133). Thus, popular culture is a key arena of influence on the racialization and gendered identity construction of black girls. Muhammad and McArthur, (2015:133) recommend that the misrepresentation of black women and girls in popular culture needs to end and more black women need to tell their own stories and represent themselves in mass communication mediums.

"Cultural representation is an area of analysis which presents some of the most highly interconnected set of interests between feminism and cultural studies" (Franklin et al,1991:186). Through my feminist cultural study, I aim to demonstrate how women's magazines, which are cultural texts, communicate and represent empowering messages to their audiences, who are black women, thus demonstrating an interconnected set of interest between black feminism thought, representation and cultural studies. Cultural representation requires scholars to explore the textual generation of meaning as well as investigate the way in which meaning is produced in different cultural texts which can be images, books, music, magazines or television programmes because they are created, used and understood in specific social contexts (Barker, 2003: 8). This explanation validates the position of my

research within the cultural studies realm since I aim to analyse how the myth of black women's empowerment is represented in two cultural texts, namely, *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines. Feminist cultural studies evolved in the 1980s through its engagement with both feminist literary criticism and theory as well as ethnographic methods of sub-culture research, one of the first books to explicitly address the intersections between feminist studies and cultural studies is the edited collection of *Women Take Issue Aspects of Women's Subordination* (1978) which comprises of essays that were written by members of the Women's Studies Group at the Centre (Balsamo, 1991:51). Some of the first feminist cultural studies comprised of Angela McRobbie's *Jackie* (1978) and Janice Winship's (1987) *Inside Women's Magazines* which are both key literary texts in the study of women's magazines. They are also vital texts of reference in this research since both McRobbie and Winship studied women's magazines as cultural texts from a feminist perspective.

African Feminism, Culture and Socialisation

Chimamanda Adichie wrote *We Should All be Feminists* (2012:4). In this book, she discusses how the idea of feminism is misunderstood by many people in Africa because they believe that feminism is not part of African culture and that it is a Western idea. The subordination of African women to men is sometimes referred to as being part of African culture but according to Adichie (2012:4) culture is something that changes over time and its purpose is to preserve the continuity of people and not to oppress them. Thus, the teachings of feminism are important to African women and African men because women's oppression and subordination needs to end. Adichie (2012: 12) identifies the concept of gender as a problem because gender prescribes how people should be rather than how they are and this causes gender expectations, for example, women of a specific age group are expected to be wives and mothers and not be single while men are encouraged to be bachelors for as long as they want to. It is a fact that men and women are biologically different however, Adichie (2012:12) states that the process of socialisation has exaggerated this difference by suggesting and prescribing gender roles to men and women.

We teach girls to shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller. We say to girls: You can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be successful but not too successful, otherwise you will threaten the man. If you are the breadwinner in your relationship with a man, pretend that you are not, especially in public, otherwise you will emasculate him (Adichie, 2012:12).

Adichie (2012:12) suggests that the teachings that are currently being offered to young boys and girls by parents, friends and societies are causing more harm than good because what is taught to girls contrasts with what boys are being taught. In African societies, especially, boys are taught to be providers and to be 'strong African men' while girls are taught to do everything in moderation so that they can always be appealing to men. It is important to note this process of socialisation, as identified by Adichie (2012:12) because this research aims to explore how selected magazine front covers communicate the myth of black women empowerment as opposed to communicating black women subordination. "Feminism is defined as approaches to addressing the unequal status of women relative to men, with the goal of mediating gender differences and providing women access to the repertoire of valued roles and statuses within society" (Mikell, 1995: 420). Gqola's (2001: 14) article titled *Ufanele uqavile: Blackwomen, feminisms and postcoloniality in Africa* is about how difference is represented in black women's experiences in Africa and discusses feminism and post-coloniality in the African context. Post-colonial feminism is concerned with subverting colonial and patriarchal systems of logic and replacing them with new creations of representation, new meanings and redefining the terms of black women participation because this is necessary for ending the oppressive systems of colonialism (Gqola, 2001: 14). Cheryl De La Rey (1997) wrote an essay titled *South African feminism, race and racism* where she critically deliberates the shifting understandings of race and difference. She argued that the debates on black feminism in South Africa are based on the notion of triple oppression which includes race plus class plus gender (De la Rey, 1997:7). She affirmed that we cannot fraction out gender who we are and we are simultaneously classed, raced and gendered. Hence, we cannot talk about female experiences without talking about race and class since our social world and others' responses are inextricably tied to all these axes of difference (De la Rey, 1997:7). African feminism is a positive, movement-based term which signals a refusal of oppression, and a commitment to fighting for women's liberation from all forms of oppression internal, external, psychological and emotional, socio-economic, political and philosophical (Salo, 2001: 59). Feminism in Africa is committed to refusing the oppression of women holistically in terms of their everyday experiences in their societies, it is not limited to certain aspects of women's lives but rather it is founded on ending women oppression in all situations, cultures and locations within the African content.

Another challenge for South African feminism has been to incorporate varying traditions within a woman centred agenda that respects different ideas of tradition and cultures. There are a variety of cultural traditional groups in South Africa such as Sotho, Zulu or Ndebele which all provide a challenge towards ending oppression for black women because women are socialised differently in the cultural traditional groups (Frenkel, 2008:2). Frenkel (2008:2)

suggests that the collusion between colonial powers and indigenous male leaders led to female exclusion from higher structures of power across colonial sites in Africa (Frenkel, 2008:2). African women have faced patriarchy through exclusions from higher structures in their communities as well as racialized oppression through colonial, white-supremacy laws. Black feminism continuously negotiates between the knowledge of being simultaneously seen and unseen, included and excluded as it is familiar to studies on race and gender 2). Historically, huge social, economic and political differences have shaped the lives of South African women from different racial backgrounds, but patriarchy has been the one constant non-racial institution. Black women in Africa have had to endure a cultural history that centralises them as they have been excluded from official accounts of history by both their male counterparts and western constructions. “One of the challenges of South African feminism has been to rid itself of such racialised stereotypes and practices, where in this context white women have sometimes been charged with usurping the voice of black women within the name of gendered empowerment” (Frenkel, 2008:2).

Conclusion

This chapter situated this study within the field of feminism and cultural studies, and outlined the two theoretical perspectives framing the study: semiotics and feminism. Semiotics is the study of signs which aims to reveal the mythic meanings and ideologies which are embedded within media texts. In this chapter, I argued that the social construction of reality is based on how femininity is constructed through media representations and how representations construct the myth or dominant ideologies within media texts. Black feminism is concerned with the oppression and experiences of black women as it has been established that black women face racist and sexist oppressions simultaneously. Black popular culture refers to cultural texts that are produced and consumed for black people and I have argued that *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines are examples of black popular culture in South Africa. I have also established my theoretical framework within cultural studies because I aim to demonstrate how women’s magazines, which are cultural texts, communicate and represent empowering messages to their audiences, thus demonstrating an interconnected set of interest between black feminism thought, representation and cultural studies. The next chapter will discuss the research methodology of this study, outlining the research approach, design, and analysis.

Chapter Four: Methodology

Introduction

This research seeks to analyse the representation of the myth of black women's empowerment in two South African women's magazines, namely *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazine. The previous chapter outlined and discussed the theoretical frameworks of semiotics and feminism that underpinned the study. This chapter will provide the study's research methodology, including the research approach, research design, sampling, data analysis, and ethical considerations. The research design used and the reasons for its selection was towards achieving the aims and objectives of the study which are: (i) to explore the representation of black femininity in South African women's magazines; (ii) to examine how empowerment is communicated in the women's magazines, and (iii) to explore how the media constructs the myth/dominant ideology of the empowered black woman. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (2011: 13) define qualitative research as the commitment to study the social world. The aim of qualitative research is to understand social realities through the process of interpreting texts to generate meaning (Flick, 2009: 75). Qualitative research methodology provides a holistic interpretation of the text rather than interpreting a text in isolation (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2015: 9). Therefore, the magazine front covers are analysed and interpreted in the context of the social, economic and political context in which they were created. Moreover, qualitative research operates and is dependent on existing theoretical frameworks which guide the methodology of the research (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2015: 9).

Research Design: Textual Analysis

The research design is a textual analysis of the front covers of the magazines. A textual analysis is suitable for this research because it focuses on interpreting the 'dominant meanings' (Hall, 1993: 315) encoded in the texts. Cultural Studies "cannot, therefore, do without textual analysis" (Couldry, 2000:78). Textual analysis is about making "an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations" (McKee, 2003: 2) of a text and that this interpretation helps to attain a sense of the ways in which people make sense of the world around them. The main task and focus of textual analysis is to uncover power relations (Scott, 2006: 298) hence this research seeks to discover how the myth of black women's empowerment is represented on the selected magazine front covers through a textual analysis research design.

Textual analysis is embedded and rooted in the hermeneutic tradition of textual interpretation and has been organized around the particular procedures implied by semiotics (Scott, 2006: 297). Texts can also be defined as pieces of communication which are constructed from a variety of elements that are publicly accessible for consumption and, therefore, interpretation (Iqani, 2011: 441). Texts are elements or parts of social events as they motivate change through meaning-making which can be in the form of photography, design or speech (Fairclough, 2003: 21). A text is a social phenomenon because it creates and constructs meaning, therefore, magazines are social agents which create and communicate meaning. According to Ballaster (1991: 29) who interpreted magazines in her study and she argued that texts are like any other cultural objects because they have social meanings. A disadvantage of textual analysis is that it is limited to the text alone and the findings are not substantiated by other methods (Fairclough 2003: 21). Textual analysis will not explore how the magazine's actual readers interpret their cultural meanings, for example. However, the aim of this research is to analyse and identify the manner in which empowerment is communicated in the selected women's magazines. It is for this reason that a textual analysis is best suited for data collection in this research rather than a reception analysis. Nonetheless, the views or opinions of the women who read the magazines are not crucial or relevant for this research because "any reading of a text reflects the standpoint of the reader" (Scott, 2006: 298). Therefore, it is vital for me to only analyse the magazine front covers because they construct and represent meaning on their own without the aid of participants. In qualitative research, texts have three functions as identified by Flick (2009:

75) firstly they are the crucial data in which findings are based, secondly, they are the instrument of interpretation and lastly they are the main medium used for presenting and communicating findings. The textual analysis of this research was conducted through the use of a semiotic analysis.

Data Analysis: Semiotics

This research has adapted to analyse these texts using semiotic analysis as a mode of data analysis. Semiotics is a "method of textual analysis, but involves both the theory and analysis of signs, codes and signifying practices" (Chandler, 2002: 259). While the theory of semiotics can be defined as the "study of signs" (Chandler, 2002:1) and was outlined in the previous chapter, a semiotic analysis refers to the use of semiotics in analysing and interpreting the meaning of texts. Semiotics is suitable and useful for analysing the meaning of texts (Stokes, 2012:70). Semiotics helps us to think analytically about how texts work and what their implications are for the broader culture in which they are produced and disseminated (Deacon, S. *et al.*, 2007: 141). Despite the prevalence of semiotic analysis

within cultural studies, Don Slater (1998: 238) argues that “semiotics is all theory and very little method, providing a powerful framework for analysis and very few practical guidelines for rigorously employing it”.

This section will discuss how a semiotic analysis was conducted of the selected magazine front covers. The signs will be analysed according to the identified codes which refer to the conventions or systems in which signs exist. The denotative and connotative meanings of a sign as identified by Barthes (1964) have been discussed and the signs have been analysed according to the socio-economic, cultural and political context in which they exist. The analysis includes the ideology which the signs reinforce or communicate while also connecting the analysis to the theoretical framework of semiotics and feminism as discussed in chapter three. Semiotics comprises of three main areas of study, namely the sign, the codes and the culture within which the signs exist in (Fiske, 2010: 40). Signs are social constructs because they are created and interpreted by people in order to generate meaning in everyday life. A semiotic analysis is a method of textual analysis because it focuses only on the text or image for data. In this semiotic analysis, it is not only words and images but objects such as clothing and hairstyles function as signifiers and have been analysed in order to identify elements of the myth of black women empowerment represented on the selected magazine front covers. Semiotics is one of the most interpretive methods of analysing texts and its success or failure as a method relies on how well researchers express and articulate their interpretation of the text (Stokes, 2012: 71).

The use of semiotic analysis of magazines is well established as Laden (2001:10) conducted a socio-semiotic study on South African lifestyle magazines such as *Truelove*, *Drum*, *Bona*, *Pace*, and *Thanda* because she contended that the socio-semiotic work of magazines expands far beyond their most obvious use. She argued that magazines are visually organised graphic modes of representation in the form of words and images that enable readers to conceptualize the magazine page as an interactive representational unit. A magazine is “a system of messages, a signifying system and a bearer of a certain ideology’ (McRobbie, 1978: 81), and is thus a text which is suitable to analyse using semiotics. Semiotics, “has more to offer than traditional content analysis” because it is focused on the messages that the contents signify (McRobbie, 1978: 91). Magazines are specific signifying systems where particular messages are created and communicated (McRobbie, 1978: 91). Semiotic analysis explores the arrangements and development of content and encourages researchers to focus on formal features of text and their meaning (Ballaster 1994: 29). Scott (2006: 297) states that “the most influential semiotic writer in recent years has been Barthes, and his particular methods have been those that are most widely used in textual analysis”. Therefore, my approach to semiotics is largely drawn and influenced by Roland Barthes.

Mehita Iqani (2012:70) conducted a study on the semiotics of magazine cover displays on newsstands and she found that magazine front covers are visual carnivals because they include various things such as titles and imagery, however, colour also plays a crucial role. Therefore, the colours and text (font, boldness etc.) of the magazine covers have been analysed in terms of the meaning that they portray in order to empower their readers. The main purpose of media semiotics is to study how mass media creates and recycles signs (Danesi 2002: 34). All of these elements have been analysed in relation to the socio-political and cultural context of South African media. A semiotic analysis is a detailed process of analysis; therefore, the twelve magazine front covers are more than enough for analysis and interpretation. Even though these magazines emerged at a particular time in post-apartheid South Africa, it is important for this study to explore whether the myth of empowered black woman is still being constructed today. Rose (2001: 73) writes that “semiology very often takes the form of detailed case studies of relatively few images, and the case study stands or falls on its analytical integrity and interest rather than on its applicability to a wide range of material”. It is for this reason that the sample only consists of twelve magazine front covers to ensure that the covers are analysed in detail. Semiotics is an interpretive method and does not have to be reliable by being applied to a large number of texts (Stokes, 2012: 72). The generalizability of semiotics is not relevant; thus, it is appropriate to study only a limited number of texts (Stokes, 2012: 72).

As a black woman, I am also the target audience of both selected magazines and I’m familiar with their codes and conventions. As Gillian Rose argues in order to do a semiotic analysis you need to be knowledgeable and an expert in the chosen object of analysis (in this case magazines) (2001: 73). For me to understand the ‘dominant’ or ‘preferred meanings’ (Hall, 1993: 515) of the magazine front covers, I will interpret the front covers through a semiotic analysis. All forms of qualitative research share a common focus and goal which is to interpret and construct the qualitative aspects and characteristics of communication experiences (du Plooy, 2009: 30). Magazines provide a communication experience to their readers; thus, it is fitting for this research to analyze the magazine front covers through a semiotic analysis which involves the interpretation of the texts to construct meaning. Previous researchers of women’s magazine such as Winship (1978) were also avid consumers of women’s magazines prior to researching the texts. As the researcher who has conducted this semiotic analysis, I am attentive and aware of the socio-economic and political environment in which both these magazines are created and consumed. My sample is current in terms of the year in which these magazines were produced; therefore, the magazines are not outdated for this analysis.

The advantages of a semiotic analysis are that it considers the social context and cultural meanings of images, text or signs (Rose, 2001:96). This means that the signs were not analysed in isolation since the social, economic and political aspects were also discussed. Semiotics provides a framework for a precise discussion of how signs and objects work to convey meaning (Bignell, 2002:26). Semiotic analysis explores and discovers the arrangement and use of content as well as what it conveys and communicates (Ballaster, 1991:29). This is vital, especially when applied to magazine front covers because they are advertisements which are arranged and structured in a manner that they are able to communicate meaning (McCracken, 1993:13). Another advantage is that the images were analysed in detail according to the manner in which they were structured. The focus on ideology and dominant codes means that researchers cannot avoid considering the social effects of meaning (Rose, 2001: 99). Semiotic analysis is an interpretive method and different readers do not always share the same interpretation of meaning from a text (Stokes, 2012: 72). It is also subjective because it is not reliable in the traditional social science sense, however, this does not devalue it as a method because it is about elevating and enriching our understanding of texts (Stokes, 2012: 72). Semiotics encourages a productive approach of thinking with regards to visual meaning and construction. However, the disadvantage is that semiotic analysis focuses extensively on the text and not on the audiences and this causes concern in terms of reflexivity (Rose 2001: 99). Semiotics has methodological drawbacks because of its preference for detailed readings of individual images and this raises questions about the representativeness and reliability of its analyses (Rose 2001: 99). Another disadvantage is that the analysis of each sign needed to be conducted in detail and this process is time consuming because there were twelve magazine front covers which needed to be analysed accordingly.

Sampling: Magazine Front Covers

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method and the aim of purposive sampling is to select the sample strategically so that the sample is relevant and applicable to the research questions (Bryman, 2015:408). This is the preferred method for this research because I did not choose random magazines to analyse, rather I chose the selected magazines (*Truelove* and *Destiny*) because they were relevant to the research question which seeks to identify the myth of black women empowerment in South African women's magazines. The criteria for the sample was that the magazines needed to be South African magazines and targeted at black women. I chose two magazines instead of one because I wanted to provide a comparative analysis. The timeframe of the sample is from July 2016 to December 2016, which is six months. The sample consists of twelve magazine covers, six of

each magazine. The sample consists of the front covers of the magazine only because this research aims to discuss the complexity, composition and textual meanings which can be identified without reading the inside content of the magazines. The visual images and headlines on a magazine cover provide an intricate and complex semiotic system which conveys primary and secondary meanings through text, photography, images, color, and placement (McCracken, 1993: 13). McCracken (1993: 4) also argues that front covers are “the magazine’s most important advertisement” (McCracken 1993:4). With this being said, it would be applicable to point out Judith Williamson’s (1978:17) iconic semiotic study on advertisements in women’s magazines where she noted that we can only understand and comprehend what advertisements mean by investigating and finding out how they construct meaning. In her semiotic study, she mentions that color tells a story and that there is a connection between the text in an advertisement and the image (Williamson, 1978:21). This connection is vital to this study as well because the texts or words on the front covers have been analysed in relation to their connection to the image on the cover. Both magazines are sold sealed, which means that the front cover communicates all the important content of the magazines. The front covers of both magazines include images and texts which have been analysed as signs for interpretation. The layout, composition and colour combinations of the covers as a whole have been analysed. The language used on magazine covers is intentionally produced as a creative visual production filled with language devices that aim at capturing the reader’s attention (Held, 2005: 5). Language is an influential tool that is used for the construction and implementation of ideologies using elusive and blatant communication about how people should live, communicate or act for example (Williams, 2012:9). Language is used to communicate and reinforce norms, values, behaviours and attitudes for people as individuals and as members of society (Williams, 2012:9). In women’s magazines for example, language is used to communicate and reinforce ideologies about femininity such as careers, beauty, fashion etc.

The verbal text always comprises of the magazine’s name in bold together with many headlines which are created to excite readers about certain features inside the magazine (McCracken, 1993: 20). A headline is a short description of a story which is designed to attract a reader’s attention (McKay, 2013: 167). In fashion and beauty magazines, headlines are used to describe the mood of the magazine through language devices such as puns, rhymes and poetry (McKay, 2013: 167). Headlines need to be in the present or future tense for them to remain current and should always contain a verb which suggests action (Frost, 2003: 167). Another important element of a headline is the shape because it provides a balance between the heading lines, especially if the heading consists of more than one line (Frost, 2003: 167). Magazines usually make use of multi-heading displays however, the

most important story is always bigger, bolder and placed strategically on the cover to draw attention (Frost, 2003: 167). Headlines are crucial in magazines because they are the most powerful, persuasive promotional tool used to attract consumers; the overall purpose of headlines is to sell magazines (Caldas-Coulthard, 1996: 257).

Codes of Analysis

The signs on the magazine front covers have been analysed according to both the text and imagery displayed on the covers. However, the visual signs on the covers were also taken into consideration. The categorisation of the visual signs on the front covers was influenced by Gillian Dyer's (1982:79) semiotic analysis of advertisements. The categories include representations of the appearance of the body, conduct and fashion signs (see figure 1). The categorisation of appearance refers to the physical attributes of the women on the magazine front covers in terms of their race, age, hair and body size. The fashion signs refer to the fashionable items that the women are wearing such as their hair styles, clothing or jewellery. The signs of conduct refer to the representation of the behaviour of the models on the covers, their facial expressions, posture and eye contact.

Table 2: *Codes of analysis*

Appearance	Fashion	Conduct
Race	Dress code	Facial expression
Age	Clothes	Eye contact
Hair	Jewellery	Posture
Body size	Colours	
	Make-Up	

Appearance: These signs refer to the outward appearance of the women on the magazine front covers. The race or hair colour of the women is a bodily sign for it is apparent to anyone who sees the front cover. The age of the models on the covers is a signifier of meaning because they can convey maturity or innocence. Body size is a vital signifier of meaning (Dyer, 1982: 78) especially in media commodities such as magazines because women who are thin are portrayed more often than full-figured women. Therefore, it is important to analyse body size in order to discover whether or not the selected women's magazines display empowering images of women on their covers. Hair is a medium of signifying statements about the self, society and values (Mercer, 2000: 112). In terms of black hair specifically, some hairstyles, namely dreadlocks and afros carry historical and ideological importance because they signify and represent ideologies of freedom and

liberation for black people across the world (Mercer, 2000: 115). As discussed in chapter three, black women have constantly used their appearance in order to communicate meaning about their history and ideology.

Fashion: According to Barnard (2002: 6) the clothes that people wear are political because they communicate a person's attitude and belief towards issues of class and gender identities. The process of analysing clothing as a sign in this analysis is important to this research because the clothes that the women on the magazine covers wear are representative of their attitudes and beliefs towards social, economic and political issues. Clothes are socially constructed to signify and communicate meaning, therefore, it is crucial to analyse their role in communicating empowerment. Colour, is a visual instrument of attracting people's attention to make communication more effective (Tang and Tsai, 2005: 333). Colour is thus, a visual sign which was used in this analysis to deliberate the meanings of certain colours on the magazine front covers. Dress code, jewellery and make-up are fashion signs which are signifiers of meaning because they are influenced by the current fashion trends. The jewellery and make-up on the models have been analysed as signs in this analysis because they carry and communicate meaning.

Conduct: Facial expressions and eye contact are signs because they communicate people's feelings or emotions. Facial expressions are non-verbal codes which show emotion externally. The human eye is an influential non-verbal communication tool because a simple look can communicate desire, power or anger (West and Turner, 2010:165). Thus, the facial expressions of the models on the magazine covers can communicate happiness or serenity which can communicate empowerment and a sense of achievement to the readers. Posture refers to the positioning of a person's body which can communicate various meanings such as confidence, poise and relaxation. Closed posture is when the front part of the body is closed off such as folded arms and an open posture is when the front of the body is visible and observable (Duck and McMahan: 2011:63). A closed and an open posture can convey three types of attitudes, namely, attitudes about the self, others and situation (Duck and McMahan: 2011:63). In this analysis, the types of postures conveyed attitudes about how the models on the cover feels about themselves, the readers of the magazine and how they feel about being on the front cover.

Conducting the Semiotic Analysis

Despite there being no clear guidelines on conducting a semiotic analysis, my analysis was loosely based on Stokes' stages of a semiotic analysis (2007, 74:75).

1. **Define your object of analysis:** The objects that have been analysed are *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazine front covers. These are two South African women's magazines which are targeted at black women. The magazines are examples of black popular culture because they are produced for black women in South Africa specifically.
2. **Gather the texts:** The texts that have been analysed are twelve magazine front covers of *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazine, six covers of each magazine. I gathered the magazine front covers for a period of six months from July to December 2016
3. **Describe the texts:** When analysing each magazine front cover, I described the look and feel of the front cover in terms of its visual and text messages. The visual messages refer to the photograph or image on the magazine covers which I analyse and describe per the codes such as clothing, jewellery, hair or make-up. I also described the textual messages such as the headlines and titles. Each magazine consisted of visual elements and textual elements which I described. I analysed and described the front covers holistically so that I could interpret the texts accordingly.
4. **Interpret the texts:** After describing the texts as well as the different elements within the texts. I interpreted the texts to reveal the meanings which they conveyed. In a semiotic analysis, denotation and connotation are two concepts that are important because magazine front covers portray images and text which contains denotative and connotative meanings to the audience. According to Roland Barthes (1964:89) a sign consists of two elements, namely the denotative and the connotative meaning. The denotative system is the literal meaning of a sign or image while a connoted meaning "is a system whose plane of expression is itself constituted by a signifying system" (Barthes, 1964:90). This means that the connotative meaning is based on the interpretation of a person who is viewing the sign or image. According to Chandler (2002:138) the denotative meaning of a visual image is the obvious meaning that all viewers from any culture or location would identify or know from viewing the image without any interpretation. For me to analyse how women empowerment is represented, constructed or negotiated, both the denotative and connotative meanings needed to be analysed and discussed. The denotative meaning is important because this is the first level of meaning. The connotative meaning was analysed to expose and reveal the cultural, social and ideological

meaning of depicting a black woman on the magazine front covers of *Truelove* and *Destiny*. The process of describing the connotative meaning needed interpretation from the researcher, however the researcher was influenced and directed by the identified codes (see figure 1) and theoretical framework as outlined in chapter three. The interpretations and analysis were not in isolation; rather, they were guided by the semiotic concepts described in this chapter.

5. **Pull out the cultural codes:** For signs to make sense and provide meaning, they need to be organised into groups which are called codes (Bignell, 2002: 10). Codes provide a guideline or process by which signs can make sense to society. Hall (2013: 7) describes the concept of codes by affirming that “they stabilize meaning within different languages and cultures” because they suggest to people which language to use when portraying a certain idea or concept. Codes make it possible for members of a society or culture to communicate with each other and they also function as conventions of communication or practices which are exchanged in a social group (Hall, 2013: 8). The concept of a code is very crucial in a semiotic analysis because it divides signs into groups (Bignell, 2002: 10). Gillian Rose (2001:88) defines a code as a set of conventionalized rules or guidelines for making meaning that are relevant to a certain group of people. This definition of a code is fitting for this research because I aim to explore how the dominant codes and conventions are represented in the front covers to communicate empowerment. The codes that I have adapted for my semiotic analysis as signifiers of black women empowerment are: independence and liberation, empowered femininity, information dissemination, fashion, sexuality and love. My reason for using these codes is because they are similar to those that previous researchers in women’s magazines have identified in my literature review. McRobbie (1978) in her semiotic analysis of *Jackie* discovered four codes: Romance; personal/domestic life; fashion and beauty and pop music. Winship (1978:133) in her analysis of *Woman* identified a variety of codes such as motherhood, beauty and fashion, cookery and home, love, marriage and children. The code of independence and liberation includes all the signs that represent women independence and freedom. Empowered femininity refers to the signs that signified empowerment for women. Information disseminations include the signs which communicate information or advice to the readers. Lastly, fashion, sexuality and love are the signs which refer to the love relationships and sexuality of women, as well as fashion signs.
6. **Make generalizations:** The dominant ideologies communicated in *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines were revealed with reference to the codes that have been identified during the analysis. As discussed earlier in this chapter, a semiotic

analysis considers the social context and cultural knowledge in which signs are constructed and consumed. Since magazines that are aimed at black consumers are strategically designed to provide pleasure while engaging their readers in new ways of creating social change. I made generalisations of the meanings which emerged through my interpretation of the texts.

7. **Make conclusions:** The final stage of my semiotic analysis included making conclusions based on the meanings that were revealed through my interpretation of the signs on the magazine front covers. The findings which might emerge from this semiotic analysis are about black beauty, independence, love, career and finances in relation to black women and their social and cultural progression.

Ethical Considerations

Before the commencement of this research, the researcher obtained an ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee in the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) (see Appendix 1). All the texts analysed in this study are available in the public domain, and therefore no gatekeeper permission was necessary.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research methodology for this study, outlining the qualitative approach, the textual analysis research design, and the steps taken in the process of conducting a semiotic analysis. As discussed earlier in this chapter, semiotics is a method that involves both the theory and analysis of signs, codes and signifying practices (Chandler, 2002: 259). The method of semiotics has allowed me to extract the denotative and connotative meanings embedded in the texts, interpret the texts and extract the cultural codes within the texts. Through this process, I made generalisations based on the socio- economic and political context in which the signs were created. The next chapter presents my semiotic analysis of the magazine front covers, in relationship to the literature review and the theoretical framework of the study (semiotics and feminism). The next chapter focuses on answering the research questions (outlined in chapter one) in relationship to the aims and objectives of the study.

Chapter Five: Findings and Analysis

The last chapter outlined the research methodology for the study, and explained how the semiotic analysis was conducted. This chapter presents the semiotic analysis of the study, and critically discusses the findings in relationship to the local and international literature on women's magazines and theoretical frameworks already discussed in previous chapters. The discussion in this chapter is focused on providing answers to the research questions of this study, which are: (i) how is black femininity represented in SA women's magazines? (ii) how is empowerment communicated in the women's magazines?; and (iii) how does the media construct the myth/dominant ideology of 'the empowered black woman'?

Section one: Semiotic Analysis

Introduction

This chapter is separated into two sections, the analysis and the findings section. This section of the chapter will provide an analysis of *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazine front covers from July to December 2016. As discussed in chapter four, a magazine front cover is a visual carnival that includes images and words (Iqani 2012: 7). The purpose of this research is to analyse and discover the representation of the myth of black women empowerment in the selected magazine front covers. This analysis seeks to discover how the selected magazine covers represent and communicate independence and liberation towards black women. It also seeks to discover how these magazines communicate empowered femininity and information to black women. Lastly, the code of fashion, sexuality and love will be analysed to determine how the selected magazines empower women about their fashion sense, sexuality and love lives. The magazine name and slogan of each magazine will be analysed first, thereafter, the identified codes will be used to discuss black women empowerment in the selected magazines. The findings in each code will be analysed through a semiotic analysis. The denotative and connotative meanings of each sign will be discussed together with the socio-political and ideological context.

Analysis of *Destiny* Magazines

Figure 1: *Destiny* magazine July 2016



The magazine name is in capital letters, bold and placed at the top of every magazine cover. At the denotative level, the dictionary meaning of “Destiny” refers to a person’s fate or future as well as pre-determined power or agency that determines the future but is out of human control (Cambridge Dictionary, 2017). The connotative meaning is that women need to take charge of their fate and destiny so that they may be a success in their lives. The name destiny is future-oriented; therefore, it allows and encourages women to dream about what they hope to achieve in future. The target audience for *Destiny* magazine are female professionals and business women, thus the magazine name also encourages women to work towards achieving their goals in the future. Magazine covers are “windows to the future self” (McCracken, 1991: 17). Thus, it makes sense that even the name of *Destiny* magazine is futuristic and highlights the importance of the future self of the readers. The slogan of the magazine is “Beautiful, Powerful, You”. The denotative meaning is that the readers can become beautiful and powerful if they aspire to be. The connotative meaning is that women can be successful and powerful while looking beautiful. They do not have to neglect their femininity to be successful and powerful, femininity in this cover is being constructed as being beautiful and powerful at the same time. The slogan makes use of the word “you” which speaks to the reader directly.

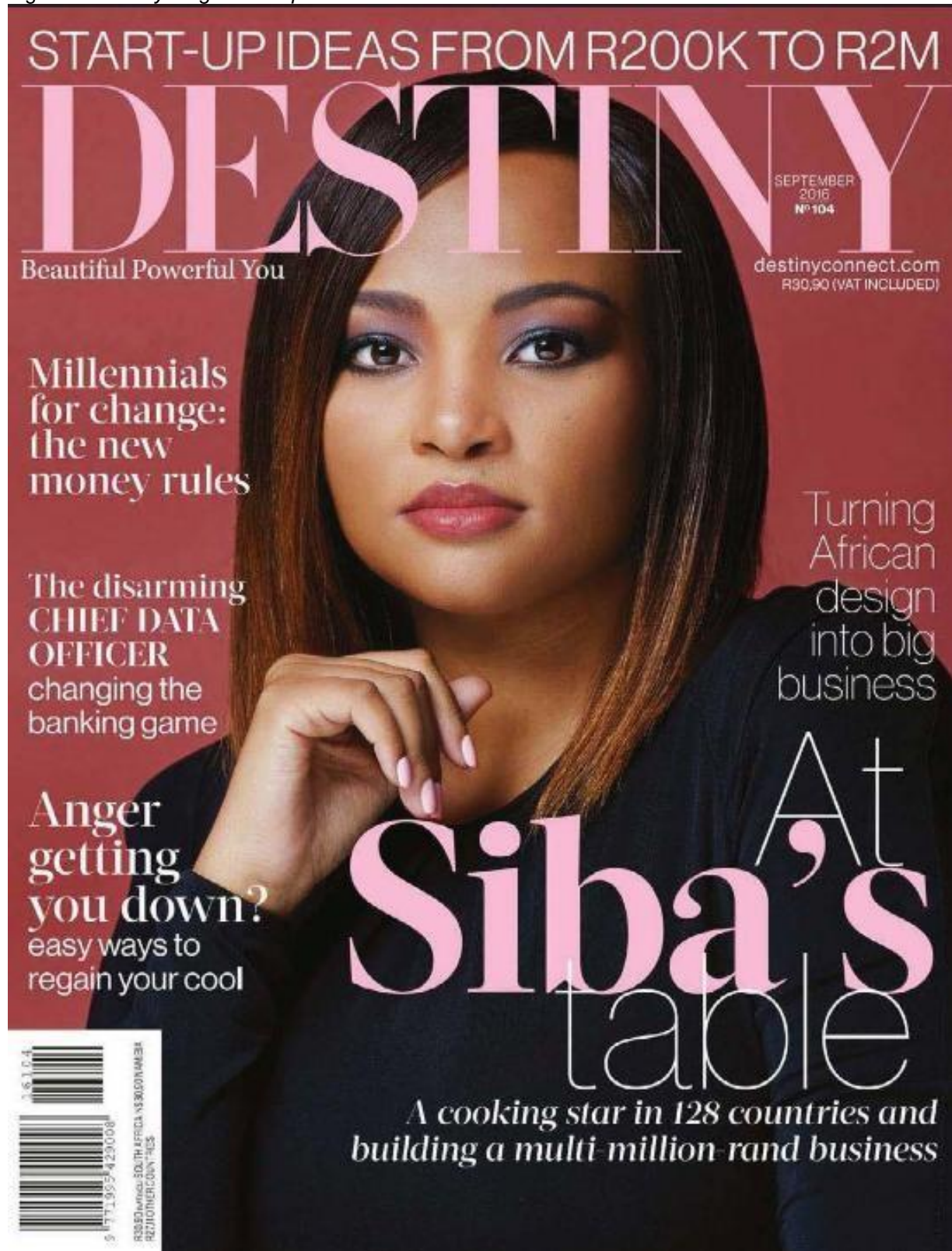
The photograph on the cover of the above-mentioned magazine is Lira, who is a black, female musician in South Africa and a celebrity. At the denotative level of meaning, Lira is presented as a black woman with the title “*Lira UNLIMITED*” suggesting that she has discussed everything about herself in the magazine. A close-up shot is intended to show and focus on the facial features and upper body of a person in the image. Lira’s head is slightly tilted to the side while she makes direct eye contact with the reader. She is not just an object of the gaze, but is also a gazer looking back, she returns the gaze. Her confidence is communicated and signified through her eye contact and angle of the shot. She has her thumb in her mouth which suggests that she is playful or seductive. Her lipstick is red in colour which signifies love, passion and assertiveness. She is wearing a black suit which is formal and regarded as a power suit and this represents her as a businesswoman or a woman who goes against the status-quo by not wearing a dress. Despite the feminine use of make-up in terms of her red lipstick and heavy mascara, the suit and the hat that she is wearing are signs of feminism because the combination of a suit and a hat are traditionally male outfit. The power suit also signifies her liberation and independence to wear whatever she wants. The title is written in capital letters “LIRA UNLIMITED”, also in the colour red which signifies the seriousness of the fact that she has discussed her life in the magazine. The word unlimited means not constrained or restricted (Oxford Dictionary, 2017), therefore,

this means that Lira has not restricted herself but has shared her life, memories, beliefs and values with the readers. This is also reinforced by other words on the front cover such as “her most revealing interview ever”

Her image is presented in a close-up shot of her face and upper body. The image and title of Lira demonstrate a relationship between the text and image which in this case, work together to signify Lira as an epitome of black female independence and liberation. The connotative meaning in this image is that she is an independent, black woman who is not afraid to discuss her life and experiences with the readers and the world in general. She is also not apologetic about whatever she has discussed inside the magazine. Her black suit signifies power and her white shirt signifies purity. The contrast between these two colours, represents the diversity and complexity of Lira as a person. The headline “RISE OF THE ROBOTS Is your job under threat?” speaks about inventions in technology which could influence people’s jobs. Early feminist studies on women’s magazines such as Friedan’s (1963) research argued that the content in women’s magazines centered on matters relating to food, clothing and household activities while excluding general news about what was happening around the world. This is different to the content that is found on the July 2016 cover of *Destiny* magazine. The first part of the sentence “RISE OF THE ROBOTS” is written in capital letters so that it can catch the attention of the reader. The denotative meaning of this sentence is that there is a rise of robots therefore your job might be under threat. The connotative meaning is that technology has become an important component of human existence today. Therefore, the connotative meaning which is being communicated here is that women need to be aware of technological advances in their career fields so that they can avoid losing their jobs in the future. The second part of the title “Is your job under threat?” speaks to the target audience directly by assuming and implying that the reader is a working woman since *Destiny* magazine is targeted at professionals. Femininity in this regard is equated with having a professional career, and being independent not being the happy housewife.

The other headlines on the cover include “200k MBA with UCT’s Graduate School of Business UP FOR GRABBS” this headline speaks about a funding opportunity for an MBA at the University of Cape Town which. Through this headline, it is assumed that black women are eager to study further and *Destiny* magazine is providing them with an opportunity to possibly receive funding for fees. “The Nigerian entrepreneur with Jimmy Choo on her speed dial” this title speaks about a Nigerian entrepreneur who is so successful that she has an international shoe brand on her speed dial for when she needs new fashion items. Femininity is being associated with being powerful and fashionable at the same time.

Figure 2: *Destiny* magazine September 2016



Siba is a South African chef who has her own cooking show called “Siba’s Table” which airs on Dstv channel 175. In her show, Siba cooks and shares local South African recipes with her audience. Her show has become a huge success and it currently airs in 128 countries around the world she is in the process of building her multi-million-rand business through her cooking, “A cooking star in 128 countries and building a multi-million-rand business”. She is also working in a gendered division of labour which is often associated with the home and private sphere but she is using this platform to become successful in the business world which is in the public sphere. She is an example of an independent woman because she has her own cooking show, where she demonstrates her cooking techniques and recipes. Siba, is not only independent because she has a cooking show, she is independent and liberated because she is using her cooking show to build a ‘multi-million-rand business’. The title, “At Siba’s table” is written in the colour pink which is a feminine colour that symbolises femininity. Her name is the only word that is in pink and it is bold and this was done purposively to provide emphasis on her name. “Siba’s table” is the name of her cooking show but it also represents her ownership of the show because it is in her name. The colour pink is used on her name “Siba’s” and she is wearing the same pink colour on her nails as nail polish. Her make-up has pink eye shadow and the whole background colour of the magazine is pink. This extensive yet subtle use of pink signifies Siba’s femininity. She is wearing a black blouse which contrasts the pink used in the background colour. Her body language is positioned with her right arm lifted towards her chin, her facial expression is stern and serious, she is not smiling to the reader. This position, together with her stern facial expression signifies assertiveness and confidence.

“START-UP IDEAS FROM R200K TO R2M” This headline speaks of funding opportunities between the value of R200 000 and R2 000 000 for people who have start-up business ideas. This headline is placed right at the top of the cover, even above the magazine name and all the words in the title are in capital letters which demonstrates the importance of this headline. Black femininity is being represented as being innovative or business minded to be able to take advantage of funding opportunities. “The disarming CHIEF DATA OFFICER changing the banking game” This headline speaks about a Chief Data Officer who is changing the game and being a success in the banking industry. “Millennials for change: the new money rules” and “Turning African design into big business” are about business and finance. The magazine cover provides information about how women can turn African designs into a big business which could make profits. “Anger getting you down? Easy ways to regain your cool” The magazine also provides women with advice on how they can remain calm and not let anger get them down. This signifies that the magazine does not only

provide information about careers and finance but also speaks about handling emotions such as anger.

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more women,
more profit

“How I took
a R200k
start-up
to a R70m
turnover”

We test the
5-DAY
super-cleanse

WHAT
Thuli
DID NEXT

“I think I’ll be more of a
social entrepreneur than a
commercial one”

BIZ TRENDS • DEBRANDING • CLEVER COLLABORATION

Thuli Madonsela is the former State Public Protector of South Africa. She served in office from October 2009 to 2016. Thuli made headlines in the news on numerous occasions due to her findings on corruption cases in government departments. She is a woman who has worked hard and well during her time as the state protector and is known for her “State capture report”. which alleged President Jacob Zuma had spent R246 million on upgrades at his Nkandla home in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Before South Africa became a democratic country, a black woman would have never been a state public protector. The socio-political context of this magazine cover is that this magazine was distributed in October 2016, the same month Thuli’s term ended as the state public protector. In the image, Thuli is wearing a black dress that has lace ruffles on the shoulders. “WHAT Thuli DID NEXT I think I’ll be more of a social entrepreneur than a commercial one”. These words together with the image of Thuli in a black dress work together to demonstrate that even though her job has ended as the state protector, she is moving forward and hopes to become a social entrepreneur. She is wearing her hair in an afro, which is a common African hairstyle which goes against the common beauty standards in women’s magazines of long, straight hair. In chapter 3, the beauty standards of black women were discussed regarding black feminist thought. Black women need to set beauty standards for themselves and not conform to the beauty standards that are set by white supremacy, just as Wolf (1991: 277) suggests that the only way forward for women is for them to define beauty for themselves and live by that definition. Black women, in general have had to overcome beauty standards and stereotypes that are based on western beauty standards. Black women are different from white women therefore the beauty standards need to be different and black women need to set their own beauty standards. Her afro signifies that she is proud to be an African woman.

In this image, Thuli represents many African women who are older and have natural hair. Early feminist researchers on women’s magazines such as Friedan (1963) found that women’s magazines used images of young, child-like women who were always smiling and looking happy on their front covers to promote the myth of the happy housewife. This has changed and it is evident through the magazines that have being analysed in this research. The image of Thuli is not of a young woman who is child-like, her image is of a matured woman who is full-figured with an afro, thus, her physical appearance challenges the status- quo of women’s magazines. Femininity is being represented as being mature and embrative of African hairstyles. The word ‘Thuli’, which is her name, is written in the colour red which is different from the whole magazine cover. Red symbolises passion, strength, power and love therefore, this portrays Thuli as a woman who is passionate about her position in society.

Figure 4: Destiny magazine November 2016



The first three words of this title 'POWER OF 40' are in capital letters that emphasises the importance of the 40 powerful female entrepreneurs. The word power means the ability or capacity to act and to do something in a way (Oxford Dictionary, 2017). Therefore, this title suggests that these are the influential and successful women entrepreneurs for the year 2016. The '40' is written in two colours, black and pink with the 4 being black and the 0 being pink. The colour black signifies power while the pink signifies femininity. Therefore, it is strategic for the zero to be in pink because it signifies femininity and how women can be successful as entrepreneurs and business owners. The socio-economic context is that black women were previously disadvantaged economically during apartheid. Thus, there has been a tremendous amount of emphasis on black women development and economic empowerment post 1994. The image of the three women – Khanyi Dhlomo, Matsai Modise, Jena Mukina - who are successful entrepreneurs and business women is empowering to women because these women are not models or celebrities, rather they are businesswomen who are succeeding in their careers. The denotative meaning of this title is that there are forty powerful female entrepreneurs. The connotative meaning is that women are succeeding and becoming powerful in the entrepreneurship and business field which is predominately male-dominated. Women are starting their own businesses and succeeding in growing them into profitable businesses. This image also connotes sisterhood and female support through mentorship and collaboration. The title also provides names of the three women in the cover image who are part of the forty powerful entrepreneurs. Khanyi Dhlomo, Matsi Modise and Jena Mokina discuss mentorship and self-mastery. These are qualities that are crucial for any woman who wants to become a successful entrepreneur. Mentorship is about providing guidance to someone else and self-mastery is centred on self- development and self-awareness. The background colour of the image is a light blue and the colour blue symbolises peace, confidence and intelligence, which is aligned to the caption "POWER OF 40 Entrepreneurial maestros Khanyi Dhlomo, Matsi Modise & Jena Mukina on mentorship and self-mastery". At the denotative level, this title suggests that these women are entrepreneurs who provide mentorship. The denotative meaning is that these women share their business knowledge with others while mastering their strengths and weaknesses through self-mastery. They are wearing black and white outfits and the combination of black and white symbolises fierceness and power. Femininity is being represented as women sharing their knowledge, collaborating with other women and uplifting each other another. The headline "GIBS DEAN NICOLA KLEYN on building an adaptive business" speaks about a woman named Nicola Kleyn who is the Dean of GIBS Business School. The denotative meaning is that she is building an adaptive business and the connotative meaning is that she is breaking boundaries as a woman and as a business person. This also serves as motivation to other women in the higher education industry.

Figure 5: *Destiny* magazine August 2016



The magazine cover features a central photograph of Terry Pheto, a woman with long dark hair and bangs, wearing a black lace dress with a red beaded necklace. The background is a blurred collage of images. The magazine title 'DESTINY' is in large red letters at the top. Various headlines and text elements are scattered around the cover, including social media tags, a website URL, and a barcode at the bottom left.

#blackgirlmagic with @LootLove & @ThickLeeyonce

DESTINY

AUGUST 2016
Nº 103

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indie darling
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roles, A-listers
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her new LA
chapter

Terry
PHETO

CRUSHING ON TANGERINE, BROGUES & SOFT SILHOUETTES

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Terry Pheto is a successful South African actress who is known internationally for her role in the Oscar winning film titled *Tsotsi*. Her role in this film allowed her to showcase her acting skills and received recognition internationally which led her to feature in the American soap opera called *The Bold and The Beautiful*. Since then, Terry has received roles in international productions as well. At the denotative level the image and title “Hollywood’s indie darling on hustling for roles, A-Lister colleagues & her new LA chapter” represent Terry as a woman who works hard and is successful internationally. The connotative meaning is that Terry is an independent woman who has not only become successful in her country of birth but she has also ventured off internationally. Her photograph is taken outside and is the only photo in the sample which is not shot in a studio and this is done to signify her international success. Terry is an inspirational and empowering black woman because she has worked hard in her acting career while representing black South African women internationally. The image of her is shot outside with a complex background which has various textures and this aligns with the different textures on her black dress which has lace, leather and beaded material. The beads on her dress and her beaded neckpiece represent her African identity. The blue beads flowing south on her dress symbolise peace and serenity while her red neckpiece symbolizes love and passion. Her name and the magazine name are written in the colour pink which symbolises tenderness and femininity.

“#Blackgirlmagic with @Lootlove and @Thickleeyonce” The #Blackgirlmagic is a hashtag that is used on Twitter by black women who demonstrate their accomplishments on social media sites. It is a hashtag that started in America, but became popular all over the world. At the denotative level, this heading speaks about the magic of Lootlove and Thickleeyonce who are local South African female celebrities. At the denotive level, this heading speaks about the mythical magic of black women who can still accomplish their goals in life even though they experience sexist and racist oppression at the same time. The headline is also created in Twitter language which includes the Twitter handles (names that people use on Twitter) of the two celebrities, this signifies the informal, “friend like” conversation that the magazine is initiating with the readers. The headline “SET YOUR START-UP SUCCESS ABLAZE ENTREPRENEUR REPORT” explains the probability of women making their start-up businesses a success. At the denotative level, this headline suggests that women can lead their businesses to profits if they read the entrepreneur report. The connotative meaning is that women can start their own businesses and turn them into profit-making entities. The whole headline is in capital letters which emphasises the importance of the headline. The headline also assumes that the reader has a start-up business through the words “SET YOUR START-UP SUCCESS”, The headline does not ask if the women own

start-up businesses but rather it assumes that the women who are reading the headline are entrepreneurs.

Figure 6: *Destiny* magazine December 2016



Nandi's image is a close-up image of her which focuses on her face and upper-body. Her shoulders are exposed and the only thing that she is wearing on her body is an African neckpiece which is red. The colour red symbolises love and passion. Nandi has a big smile on her face which represents her happiness. Her hairstyle is short and cut evenly on the sides and signifies fearlessness and a care-free attitude to life. Her hairstyle demonstrates the current social movement of women who are not afraid to step out of their comfort zones and try hairstyles that are unconventional and different from the normal straight hair or natural afros in South Africa. As discussed in chapter 2, fashion can be used as a form of communication because the way people dress communicates their beliefs and attitudes while demonstrating current social movements. The heading "New dawn for fertility treatments" introduces a sensitive topic for women in general. The denotative meaning of this title "New dawn for fertility treatments" is that there are advances in treatments for fertility which women consider. The connotative meaning is that women can be fertile and make children if they want to. Fertility has been a topic that is spoken about behind closed doors but this magazine title represents the modern-day women who can share advice and speak about everything that happens in women's worlds. Women are the only ones who can bear children in their bodies for nine months therefore pregnancy is a central element of women's lives all over the world. This title demonstrates that the selected magazines are empowering to women because they discuss even the most sensitive and delicate topics in women's worlds

The heading "Businesses you can start in your PJs" speaks to women about the different business opportunities that they can start while wearing their sleepwear. The denotative meaning is that there are business opportunities for black women. The connotative meaning is that black women can start businesses which are in their comfort zone or area of expertise. It signifies that black women can start their businesses from their homes or anywhere in the world, there are no limitations. This headline also assumes that the reader is looking for a business opportunity through the words "you can start". The headline "Street style couture" discusses fashion in the sense of what people are wearing in public or on the streets. Street style is popular in South Africa and many fashion designer find inspiration in the styles that people are wearing in public. This headline suggests the street style fashion to the reader while connoting that the reader wants to look fashionable according to the styles that people are wearing in public. Femininity is being constructed as being fashionable and staying up to date with street style. "FESTIVE ROASTS with a twist" provides the readers with cooking tips for making a roast. The denotative meaning is that there is a recipe for a roast for the festive season (December) which readers can use. The connotative

meaning is that women are still be subjected to cooking for their families during festive or holiday season.

Analysis of Truelove Magazines

Figure 7: Truelove magazine July 2016



The magazine name TRUELOVE is bold (see figure 1 and 2) and in capital letters so that it stands out and readers can identify the name from other magazine names. At the denotative meaning, the word 'Truelove' means real love for someone or something. The connotative meaning is that women should love and value themselves. On the magazine cover is an image of three young, black women who are actresses in locally-produced soap operas, namely Buhle Samuels and Omuhle Gela who star in *Muvhango* and Thuli Phongolo, from *Generations*. The women are all photographed together which represents sisterhood and women working together and being proud of each other's success. The image of women standing together signifies sisterhood and empowered femininity that women are not enemies to each other but are rather companions. This image is also like the one mentioned above with the three businesswomen from *Destiny* magazine. Even the two images are similar with the use of three women; they also represent the difference in target audience of *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazine. The women in the *Destiny* magazine cover are established business women who are older than the three young actresses on the *Truelove* cover which represents the younger target audience of *Truelove*. However, they both signify and connote sisterhood and collaboration between women. The three women on the cover are making direct eye contact with the reader which symbolises self-confidence. The background colour of the magazine is black which is dark while the text is red and white. This provides a colour contrast between the dark background and the bright colours of the text. The three ladies are wearing a different fashion outfits including jumpsuits, shorts and blazers however, all their outfits are showing a substantial amount of skin which signifies their youth. All their hairstyles are styled in such a way that there is no hair falling on their faces and this shows so that all their faces are visible. Overall, the linguistic message, "NEW TV QUEENS" introduces the ladies as the new actresses who have become royalty in the television industry. The title is written in red which symbolises love and passion, this signifies the passion that the three actresses have for acting.

The headline "BEAT THE BOYS! Top careers to get you there" The first three words "BEAT THE BOYS!" are in capital letters which is designed for the words to stand out from the rest of the cover. The words "BEAT THE BOYS!" are empowering to women because they encourage women to work hard to excel more than boys. The exclamation at the end is placed to add emphasis to the first three words making it more of an instruction or teaching to women. The second part of the sentence reads "Top careers to get you there" this sentence validates the first three words by providing women with direction as to how they can beat the boys. The word "There" implies that the women are not there yet so it is future- oriented and aspirational. It therefore communicates to the readers that there are top careers which can help them beat the boys. This is important because it motivates women to join

careers which are competitive and encourages competition between the sexes. The use of the word “You” speaks directly to the audience while implying that the women are not where they want to be yet in their careers. The denotative meaning of the words above is that women can beat the boys by joining the top careers however the connotative meaning is that women can become the best if they follow top careers which they were previously not able to join. In the past, women were not encouraged to join non-traditional career paths or roles, however, liberal feminists have fought for women to be able to join any career. Liberal feminism is based on the allocation of equal rights and opportunities for women with the hope of stimulating and encouraging women to engage in non-traditional careers and roles such as leadership positions and male-dominated industries (van Zoonen, 1991: 34).

“SIGNS OF A PSYCHO He calls 50 times, threatens suicide...” The first part of the title is in capital letters which grabs the reader’s attention and emphasises the seriousness of the topic being addressed. It is also written in the colour red which symbolises danger or trouble. This colour is relevant because it communicates the danger of a psychopath. The denotative meaning of this title is that there are signs of a psycho which women need to pay attention to. The connotative meaning is that women abuse is a serious social issue, especially in South Africa because women are physical, mentally and emotionally abused daily. The denotative meaning of the sentence headline “#BLESSED Is it the new prostitution? We find out” is that being blessed might be the new form of prostitution. The connotative meaning is that young women are dating or sleeping with older men for money. The socio-economic situation is that young women are dating older men for money. The hashtag #BLESSED emerged on social media due to young women using this word when showing off their gifts from their older suitors. The hashtag soon became a norm for young women to use while on expensive vacations abroad or while showing off their material goods or lifestyle on social media. The question that is asked here is very important because it begins a conversation of social importance. Is being blessed the new prostitution because young women must sleep with the older men to receive money? This title leaves the reader wanting to read further about this issue. The words “we find out” are enticing to readers and are strategically placed to encourage the reader to buy the magazine so that they can find out if being blessed is the new prostitution. The word “we” is inclusive of the reader and suggests that the reader will join this imaginary investigation since women’s magazine create an imaginary world for their readers where ideas are shared and disseminated.

Figure 8: Truelove magazine August 2016



Thembi Seete is a popular South African musician and actress. She is a former member of the iconic 1990s music group called BoomShaka. She has been in the entertainment industry for over twenty years and has been a key influencer for South African popular culture. On the denotative level, her image shows a black woman who is dressed in a figure-hugging skirt which is tight and a shirt which reveals a little bit of her stomach area. The connotative meaning of this image is that she owns her sexuality as a woman black woman. She is dressed in a tight indigo skirt which hugs her body and shows-off her hips with both her hands on her hips in a seductive manner which signifies that she is not afraid to display her body. The black blouse that she is wearing is also tight and does not cover her whole stomach area. A portion of her stomach is out and her skin is visible and this demonstrates her confidence with her body. Her hair is a long weave and ends right at her waist area, where her blouse is cropped and this accentuates her body and sexuality. The headline "MORE MONEY, MORE PROBLEMS How to get out of debt" talks about finances and how women can learn about how to manage their finances better and get out of debt if they are in debt. The denotative meaning for the title "MORE MONEY, MORE PROBLEMS How to get out of debt" means that the more money people have, the more financial problems they acquire. The connotative meaning is that women should take control of their own finances and get out of debt and this headline serves as example of a new, liberated, independent black woman or femininity who can take charge of their finances and become economically independent. Black femininity is represented as being financially independent and liberated. The words "MORE MONEY, MORE PROBLEMS" are written in capital letters because they are meant to grab the reader's attention and create awareness about the fact that the more money people have, the more responsibilities they have such as saving, paying-off debt and investing. This information is empowering to women because they can receive advice about their finances and how to avoid falling into debt or advising women to use their money wisely. McCracken (1993: 57) argued that women's magazines provided women with information that is presented in an informal manner as if the reader is a friend or someone that they know personally. The words "we find out" demonstrates that the information presented in women's magazines is provided in an informal manner, the word "we" is inclusive of the reader and suggests a journey whereby the reader will find out if more money is more problems. The first two words of the title "GREAT SEX it's all about confidence" are in bold and in capital letters which is created for these words to grab a reader's attention. At the denotative level of meaning, this headline advises that confidence is all that's needed for great sex. The connotative meaning of this headline means that women can own their sexuality by being confident about what they want and how they want it. Through this title, women are being empowered to take ownership of their sexuality by being confident and not relying on their male partners for great sex.

Figure 9: Truelove magazine September 2016



Pearl is a radio DJ on Metro FM and a presenter on a show on SABC 1 called *Zaziwa*. The headline “PEARL MODIADIE HAPPY IN LOVE AND READY TO BE A STEP-MOM”

discusses how Pearl Modiadie is happily in love and ready to be a step-mother. The denotative meaning is that Pearl is happy which is signified through her smile in the image and that she has a step-child or step-children. The connotative meaning is that Pearl is ready to take on the responsibilities that come with being in love, which can include accepting, loving and raising children that are not yours biologically. The social context here is that we have more blended families in the 21st century and this headline makes Pearl relatable to the readers who might also be step-mothers in blended or mixed families. It is empowering to know that a celebrity is also experiencing life in the same way that other women are and that she is taking full responsibility for a child that she did not give birth to. At the denotative level, Pearl signifies a black woman and the connotative meaning is that she is happy and not afraid to show her skin as she is dressed in an off-the shoulder blouse which exposes her shoulders, arms and upper-body. Her blouse is a dark blue which matches the soft blue of the background colour of the magazine. She is also wearing shorts which expose her thighs and legs. Her facial expression seems happy and exciting, almost as if she is laughing or having fun during the photo shoot. Her hair is big and curly which represents her unconventional style as opposed to straight hair.

The headline “DEAR BAE, THOU SHALT NOT CALL BABY MAMA, CHEAT ON ME, HAVE SIDE CHICKS... NEW LOVE RULES” speaks about love relationships. At the denotative level, the title above signifies that there are new love rules that men should oblige while in a relationship. On the other hand, the connotative meaning from this title is that women have found their voice in their relationships and they are not afraid to tell men what they expect from them. The term “bae” is a word that is used socially to refer to a love partner, boyfriend or husband. The title reads as if it is a letter that is being written to a love partner and it is written in the first person using the word “me”. The title uses the words ‘Thou shalt not’ which symbolises the ten, Christian Commandments which stipulate how Christians should live their lives, what they should and should not do. Therefore, this title also suggests to men how they should behave when they are in a relationship. The words ‘side chicks’ are words that are used in social settings to refer to the other woman or mistress. The title starts with the pre-requisites that are needed for a relationship to work out and that is followed by the words ‘new love rules’. The rules are written first which suggests that they are the most important part of the title. The whole title is written in capital letters and this symbolises the seriousness and importance of the new love rules. The rules stated above represent some of the main challenges for relationships in South Africa. Many women must deal with their partners having mistresses or seeing other women outside of their relationships and this

causes problems in the relationship. Another relationship threat can be a baby mama. This term refers to the mother of children who do not belong to the current wife or girlfriend biologically. It has happened that some men have cheated on their current wives or girlfriends with their baby mamas which is why some women see baby mamas as a threat to their relationships. The title is written in two different colours, black for the rules and white for the words “new love rules”. Although the colour black symbolises evil or death, it also symbolises power. Overall, this title represents empowerment towards women because it demonstrates how women can have their own rules in their love relationships. It also conveys that women need to communicate what they want in relationships. The second title above “STEAMY SEX New ways to explore outside of the bedroom” denotes that women need to explore their sexuality to have steamy sex. The same title connotes that women need to be adventures and explorative with regards to their sex life. It encourages women to explore other ways of having sex outside the borders of their bedrooms or homes. The social context here is that women have been socialised to have sex in their bedrooms or homes only and to rely on men for their sexual needs while neglecting their sexual confidence and fantasies. Based on Donnelly’s (2004) research, women’s magazines certainly do provide women with sex advice which motivates them to be informed and confident about their sexuality.

The headline “Health 101 WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU DID THAT TEST?” speaks about women’s health and the importance of going for certain health checks. The denotative meaning is that women need to make time to do health checks and the connotative meaning is that women should take their health seriously by completing health checks regularly. The words “WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU DID THAT TEST?” are all in capital letters and the sentence ends with a question mark which serves as a question to the reader about when was the last time they went for health checks. The cover also includes beauty and diet tips such as “CLEAR THOSE SPOTS FOR GOOD! SIMPLE TIPS FOR GLOWING SKIN” and “SHED OFF THE FAT NOW WE TRY FOUR DIETS” both these headlines are written in capital letters which is bold and grabs the attention of the reader. The first parts of each headline are authoritative, instructional in the way in which they provide the beauty solutions or tips. The words “CLEAR THOSE SPOTS FOR GOOD!” and “SHED OFF THE FAT NOW” are instructional and speak in the present tense to convince the reader that they will lose weight or get glowing skin if they buy the magazine to receive the tips.

Figure 10: Truelove magazine October 2016



“MBALI MLOTSHWA THIS IS NOT A CINDERELLA STORY FOR ME” Mbali is a female South African actress who is known for her role in the series *Rockville*. She had just gotten married to a South African musician named DJ Black Coffee who is also an international DJ. At the denotative level, the words “THIS IS NOT A CINDERELLA STORY FOR ME” mean that her marriage to DJ Black Coffee is not a Cinderella story or a fairy-tale. The connotative meaning is that her relationship with her husband has its ups and downs like any other relationship, she is human like every other black woman. She is wearing a two piece which is cut by her waist and shows off her skin. The colour of her two piece is maroon or dark red which symbolises love, passion or desire. She is wearing a long and wavy weave on her head which makes her look glamorous. She has her one hand on her waist which is a powerful position and it shows her wedding ring. The headline “BEST OF FASHION AND BEAUTY Glam up without breaking the bank!” discusses fashion and beauty tips which women can purchase so that they can look fashionable and glamorous. At the denotative level, this headline suggests fashion and beauty options for women to look glamorous without spending too money. The connotative meaning is that women can spend their money on fashion and beauty but they can do so without getting into debt. The socio- economic context of this is that many people are in debt in South Africa so people need to spend money without going beyond their affordability.

The headline “TRAPPED IN LOVE HE ABUSED ME FROM PRISON” speaks about a women’s experience in an abusive relationship with a man who was in prison. The first three words “TRAPPED IN LOVE” are bold and written in red which symbolises danger. The denotative meaning is that this woman was being abused by a man who was already in jail. The connotative meaning is that women can still be abused even if the perpetrators are arrested and are in jail. Women need to be aware of the different kinds of abuse because abuse does not always have to be physical, it can be emotional and mental. Women abuse is a big problem in South Africa and this headline create awareness about social problems such as women abuse. The title “IT WAS PAINFUL TO LEAVE THE GOOD LIFE Footballer’s wife” discusses the experience of an ex footballer’s wife which signifies how the magazine is a platform for women to share their good or bad experiences with the readers. The headline “BOSS I QUIT, read this before you leave” speaks about the things that women should know before they quit their jobs. The word “BOSS I QUIT” are also bold and red in colour which symbolises danger. At the denotative level, this headline informs women about information that they need to know about before they quit their jobs. The connotative meaning is that black women are being encouraged to research about leaving their employment before they do it. Unemployment is a big problem in South Africa, therefore,

women need to do research first before they quit their current jobs because they might actually not get another form of employment in time.

Figure 11: Truelove magazine August 2016



Leleti Khumalo is a South African actress who is best known for her role in *Sarafina* as the lead actress, she has appeared on various television shows but is currently starring in the television drama named *Uzalo*. In her photograph, she is sitting down with her hands resting on her thighs. She is wearing a nude dress with lace on the arms and centre of her dress. She has a gold necklace and earrings. The colour gold symbolises royalty. She is wearing a long and straight weave which almost reaches her waistline. The title reads “Leleti Khumalo, Content and happy in her own skin” the second part of the title reads “My life is not about vitiligo. I’m still an actress, wife and mom and my man still finds me sexy”. At the denotative level, Leleti is happy with her life and her roles as a mom, wife and actress. The connotative level is that Leleti is playing the different roles that women play in society, she is not only a mom and a wife, she is also an actress and a career woman. This signifies her versatility as a woman in society. Leleti’s name is written in white while the words “content and happy in her own skin” are written in red. The combination of the colours seems intentional because the words that are in red grab the attention of the reader so that they can read it. The colour red signifies love and passion; therefore, the use of this colour signifies the importance of being content and happy in your skin.

The headline “When love hurts why women stay in abusive relationships” discusses the reason why women stay in abusive relationships. The connotative meaning is that women need to be educated about the different reasons why other women stay in abusive relationships. This headline highlights the importance of transparency with regards to social crisis’s such as abuse. “PERFECT BAECATION HOW IT CAN SPICE THINGS UP”. A baecation is a couple’s trip and this headline suggests that a couple’s trip can spice things up. The connotative meaning is that women can take matters into their own hands by planning a vacation for themselves and their partners if they want to make their relationships more romantic. Women do not have to wait for their partners to spice things up, they can take initiative and do it themselves. Black femininity, on this cover is represented as being enthusiastic and confident about adding romance in the relationships. “100 HOLIDAY LOOKS FOR BUSY GIRLS”, this headline provides women with 100 different dress options for the holidays. At the denotative level, this headline offers women with various clothing options. The connotative meaning is that even though women are busy (work, school or business) they can still look fabulous and beautiful with these 100 holiday look options. Some women do not have the time to put outfits together for themselves thus these holiday looks will assist them in looking beautiful and fashionable during the holidays. “QUICK SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR SUMMER BODY” offers women with tips for achieving their summer bodies. This heading provides women with advice on how to prepare their bodies

for the summer if they want to. The connotative meaning is that women have an option in getting the summer bodies of their choice through these solutions.

Figure 12: Truelove magazine December 2016



DJ Zinhle is one of the first black South African female DJs who has become successful in a male dominated industry. She is a house DJ and house music is a very popular genre of music in South Africa. The headline “DJ Zinhle, NEW man, thriving biz & parenting with AKA” speaks about DJ Zinhle’s life in terms of her new relationship, thriving business and parenting with her ex-partner, AKA. DJ Zinhle and AKA who is a South African rapper, experienced a very public break-up after their child was born and they are now co-parenting. The denotative meaning is that DJ Zinhle is working on the different elements of her life. The connotative meaning is she is moving-on from a public break-up with the father of her child and she is successful and thriving in her business. She is demonstrating courage and perseverance in terms of her business, career and personal life. Femininity is being represented as being courageous in starting your own business and moving on from a public break-up. She is wearing a short jumpsuit which exposes her legs and her mid-chest area by her breasts. She is smiling and looking happy in the image. She has her one hand on her hips which is a feminine body position which symbolises her femininity. The colour of her jumpsuit is cream white and gold with shades of light brown, which matches the colour of her hair. The colour gold represents royalty and white represents serenity and tranquillity. The headline “COSMETIC SURGERY THE BLACK WOMAN’S NEW DRUG” discusses how cosmetic surgery has become very popular amongst black women. The words “COSMETIC SURGERY” are written in bold and in the colour red. The colour red symbolises danger which signifies the danger or risk of doing cosmetic surgery on your body. At the denotative level, this headline states that black women are getting surgery done on their bodies frequently. The connotative meaning is that black women are not happy with how they look, therefore they are getting cosmetic surgery to enhance their looks. We are living in an era where many women are getting cosmetic surgery because they are not happy about how they look physically. The headline also provides women with information regarding cosmetic surgery so that they are informed about what it is and how it is done. This information is important to the readers so that they can make informed decisions about cosmetic surgery, if they want to do it. “I WAS BORN WITH HIV AND MOLESTED SABC TV PRESENTER” This

headline speaks about the experience of a woman who was born HIV positive and experienced being molested. This headline signifies the experience of a woman who is living with HIV and was molested. She is a presenter at the South African Broadcasting Commission (SABC) and this demonstrates how all women, no matter their careers can be infected with life-threatening diseases and experience being molested. She is also demonstrating her braveness in discussing her experience with the readers. “SMART MOVES for a debt-free festive season” The first two words “SMART MOVES” are written in bold and in the colour black which symbolises the seriousness of the topic. At the denotative level, this headline speaks about how women should be smart with their money during the

festive season. The connotative meaning is that women should be knowledgeable about their spending habits during the festive season.

Section Two: Analysis of Findings

Introduction

This section will provide an analysis of the findings based on the semiotic analysis above.

Six magazine front covers of *Destiny* and six *Truelove* front covers were analysed to discover how black i) black femininity represented in SA women's magazines? (ii) how is empowerment communicated in the women's magazines? and (iii) how does the media construct the myth/dominant ideology of 'the empowered black woman? Through my semiotic analysis, I discovered that *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines construct the myth of black women's empowerment because they are:

Aspirational, inspirational and motivational: The purpose of a magazine front covers is to provide all the women who look at them with an immediate idealised mirror image of themselves. This can be referred to as the connection between the normal and the extraordinary (McCracken, 1993: 15). Through my analysis of *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazine, I discovered that both magazines represent an idealised mirror image of women who are successful in their various careers but also work on their home and love lives. The features of women such as Thuli Madonsela, Siba and Terry Pheto are inspirational to women because these women are successful in their respective careers and they have worked hard to excel in their professions. These features inspire women to prosper and to work hard in their careers without doubting themselves or their capabilities. If Siba, who is a black woman, can start her own business, so can other black women. Magazines are created as aspirational cultural objects that seek to promote role models who encourage standards of social correctness to the readers (Laden, 2001: 9). The features about celebrities such as Pearl, DJ Zinhle and Nandi are motivating to women who have children, are married and have careers because the features of these women discuss the different areas on their lives such as love, careers and children. Women's magazines provide their readers with an imaginary world where women can dream, hope and aspire (Odhiambo, 2008: 72). Through content that relates to the various aspects of women's lives, women can dream and imagine themselves and their lives better to what they already are.

Represent gender: Women's magazine covers are an ideological construct of women's position in society (Winship, 1987: 499). During the analysis of the selected magazine front covers, it was evident that the magazines represented the position of women in society in terms of their careers, love lives, finances and aspirations. The magazine images and titles

are reflective of women's experiences and concerns in society. Women's magazines, specifically the headlines, aim to address issues relating to careers, love, family, health and success (McCracken, 1993: 29). The celebrity features on each magazine front cover portray celebrities as beautiful and glamorous women who experience the same challenges as other women. The content in the magazines consist of articles which focused on the upliftment of black people in the communities as wells as regularly reporting and documenting on the achievements of the black South Africans (Ferreira, 2011:3). This is demonstrated on the covers of *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazine because the celebrity features contain content which demonstrates the achievements of black women in South Africa. The celebrity features communicate the challenges and experiences that the celebrities encounter such as co-parenting, child-birth and marriage which are unique experiences in women's lives. There are also sex topics on the front covers which represent the sexuality of women. Women's magazines manage contradictions by functioning within a representational system of fantasy and reality (Winship, 1987: 139). Even though women's magazines represent women's lives, they also provide a representational system of fantasy and reality. Fantasy through the depiction of an idealised world, where women are successful and powerful, reality through content that relates to the everyday experiences of women such as finances and love advice.

Represent black women: *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazine front covers are empowering to black women as they represent black women in a positive way. The black women on the covers are beautiful in their different skin tones which are reflective of black women in society. We need to shift from the myths which suggest that black women want to be white and rather recognize the options of being black differently because it is vital for black women to understand the importance of difference in the construction of black beauty where blackness is understood as difference within unity (Tate, 2010: 207). The women in the magazine front covers do not have the same skin tone or hairstyles even though they are all black, thus these magazines represent the diverseness of black women (see Figure 3, 6 11 or 12). The hairstyles of the women are all different, some have long weaves, some have afros, natural short hair etc. These hairstyles are representative to black women in society because every woman has a hairstyle preference and these magazines have depicted the different hair preferences in a good manner. The outfits of the women are all different and they also play a role in representing the modern-day, black women who are not afraid to show some skin or to dress conservatively. The beaded elements on Terry's dress and Nandi's beaded neckpiece represent their African roots and African fashion sense. The magazines also portrayed different black, female body types. They did not use one model- like body type but rather the women have different body types, some are full figured and

others are slim. These different body types represent the diversity of the black female body and it is empowering for women to view other women who have the same body types as theirs on magazine covers. Pearl Modiadie (Figure 9), Leleti Khumalo (Figure 11), DJ Zinhle (Figure 12) and Nandi Madida (Figure 6) are all celebrities in South Africa. These women are mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, aunts and career women who run their own businesses. The lives of these women, are a demonstration of the different roles that women play in society. As discussed in chapter 2, women's magazines use celebrity features to represent the myth of the modern-day woman who can be successful in their careers while raising children or being a wife. Celebrity feature on women's magazines are used to represent the idea of modern-day women who can navigate through life as a positive social ambassador while having a family and looking beautiful at the same time (Watson & Lopes 2015:1). The magazine titles above demonstrate how these celebrities are being social ambassadors of women who are thriving in their careers while being active in their home environments.

Leleti Khumalo and Nandi Madida are both married with nuclear families. DJ Zinhle is a single parent who is co-parenting with the father of her child and she has a boyfriend who is not the father of her child. Pearl Modiadie is engaged to be married to a man who already has children and will therefore become a step-mother when they get married. These women might be well-known but their lives are no different to the lives of ordinary women which is why the magazine producers use these stories as their titles on their cover pages. Black femininity is being constructed both as being mothers and wives but also as being independent, successful and business oriented. These titles make these women relatable to all women, even more, women who are black, like them. Sheldon Stryker and Peter Burke (2000:1) identified three uses of identity, firstly identity is used to refer to people's cultures, secondly, it is used to refer to people who possess common physical attributes and lastly, identity can be used to create meaning to the multiple roles that people play in contemporary societies. As outlined in chapter 3, identities hold three uses for societies, however, the second and third are most significant for this research. Identity is used to refer to people who have similar physical qualities. Black women share an identity because they have similar skin tones, hair textures and body types as opposed to white women, for example. Identity also functions to create meaning to the diverse parts that black women are playing in contemporary societies in South Africa. Black women are step-mothers, girlfriends, businesswomen and wives. These roles are empowering because they allow for women to play any role that they want regardless of their race or gender.

Cultural and social objects: Women's magazines are cultural objects because they are a visual and textual reflection of the cultural beliefs and values of a society. They are cultural objects because they establish and communicate the dominant cultural developments and aspirations of a society (Kapnina, 2007: 367). This was evident through the analysis that both *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazine reflected the beliefs, values and aspirations of South African women by providing them with career, business, love and sex advice on how to achieve their aspirations in the different areas of their lives. The analysis has demonstrated that women's magazines are social objects which communicate empowerment and this is accomplished through their thought-provoking titles about social problems that women around the country are facing and how they can deal with these situations. The topics such as "#Blessed being the new prostitution" (Figure 7) and "How to tell that your partner is a psycho" (Figure 7) relate to social situations that women are faced with in society. Popular culture is a representational mythic arena that is grounded upon the everyday experiences, traditions and practices of people, it is interconnected with the aspirations, dreams and hopes of the community (Hall, 1993: 25). As discussed in chapter three, women's magazines are classified as popular culture because they represent the lives of women in society. They are a mythic arena that is based on representing and demonstrating the lives, practices and experiences of women, as well as their hopes and aspirations.

Educational and informative: The analysed magazine front covers portrayed how women's magazines are used as educational tools to educate women about various life issues and situations. The magazines included titles about financial management, fertility options and sex advice and guidance which is educational and informative. As discussed in chapter 2, women's magazines provide women with advice in a pleasurable, yet informative way. The information is also not marginalised but rather, it is diverse and inclusive of the different aspects of women's lives in the 21st century. Titles that speak about finances "MORE MONEY, MORE PROBLEMS How to get out of debt" are educational and informative to the readers because they provide advice on how women can handle their finances better. Some titles discuss business ideas "START-UP IDEAS FROM R200K TO R2M" and "Businesses you can start in your PJs" which is educational and informative to women who wish to start their own businesses and become businesswomen. Empowerment, on the selected magazine front covers is communicated through the use of titles which demonstrate information and knowledge sharing through the words "POWER OF 40 Entrepreneurial maestros Khanyi Dhlomo, Matsi Modise and Jena Mokina discuss mentorship and self-mastery" (Figure 4). This title signifies how successful businesswomen, Khanyi Dhlomo, Matsi Modise and Jena Mokina are open to sharing their experience of mentorship and self-mastery.

Conclusion

The first section of this chapter presented the detailed semiotic analysis of the *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazine front covers to reveal how black women empowerment is communicated on the selected magazine front covers. Section two of this chapter identified and outlined the findings from the analysis of the magazine front covers. Through the semiotic analysis, it was apparent that women's magazine provides various empowering elements to women. They are cultural and social objects which mirror the values and aspirations of society. Women's magazines are educational and informative because they include topics that provide knowledge to women. The magazines also represent women's lives as a whole without focusing on one aspect of their lives only. The next chapter will document the conclusion of this research.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to discover how *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines represent the myth of black women's empowerment in South Africa on their magazine front covers in 2016. This chapter will conclude my research by providing an outline of how the research questions were answered. The objectives of this research were to discover: (i) how black femininity represented in South African women's magazines? (ii) how empowerment is communicated in the women's magazines? and (iii) how the media constructs the myth/dominant ideology of the empowered black woman? The findings will be presented and deliberated with regards to the existing literature and theoretical scholarship. I will correspondingly substantiate on the significance and relevance of this research to the existing debates about the role of women's magazines in South Africa from a black feminist perspective. This chapter will conclude my research by providing a summary of my research dissertation.

How is black femininity represented?

The purpose of the semiotic analysis was to demonstrate how black femininity is represented on *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazine front covers. Ferguson (1983: 184) positions that women's magazines create and maintain a cult of femininity as they are fundamentally about femininity as a skill or craft which has a set of practices and beliefs that maintain the group membership. Through the analysis of the magazine front covers, I discovered that black femininity is represented through the use of texts and images that connote black femininity as liberating and fostering independence. The use of words such as "NEW LOVE RULES" (Figure 3) and "BEAT THE BOYS" (Figure 5) demonstrate how black women are encouraged to create their own love rules in relationships and to work hard in their careers to perform better than males. The belief system that is encouraged on the magazine front covers of *Truelove* and *Destiny* are about independence and liberation since women are encouraged to practice hard work and to be assertive in their love relationships. Black women are provided with advice about how to be confident with their sexuality, for example "GREAT SEX It's all about confidence" (Figure 11). This demonstrates that black femininity is about confidence and self-assurance since women are encouraged to not shy away from their sexuality but to embrace it and become confident. Early studies of women's magazines such as McRobbie, (1978: 3) viewed women's magazines as creators of an ideology of femininity which encouraged

competition and jealousy amongst girls and women. The covers of *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines represent black femininity as embracing of sisterhood, companionship and women working together without being enemies of each other (Figure 4) and (Figure 5). The magazine covers also represent the different roles that black women play in society such as wives, mothers, career and businesswomen. Black femininity is represented as being inclusive of the different elements of black women's lives in 2016, black femininity is about all the aspects of women's lives and it is not restricted to elements relating to issues about the home as previous researchers discovered (Friedan 1963, Winship 1978, Ferguson 1983). Black women on the covers of *Truelove* and *Destiny* are different from each other and it is empowering to see that both these magazines represent women who are physically different from each other while being black. This depiction of difference is important because it demonstrates that these magazines embrace the different types of black beauty on their magazine covers. Black femininity, in *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazine front covers is represented as inclusive of black women who possess different skin tones and hair textures.

How is empowerment communicated?

Through the analysis of the magazine covers, I revealed how the selected magazines display texts and images that communicate empowerment to the audience. Laden (2001: 9) states that empowerment is a central component of black print media and it is accomplished using role models and success stories since the magazines are created as aspirational cultural objects that aim to promote role models who inspire standards of social change and correctness to the readers. This information sharing is vital as it demonstrates how these magazines communicate empowering messages to the readers. Through this information sharing from the above-mentioned celebrities, these magazines inspire and suggest social correctness to their readers. Empowerment is not only limited to advice about progressing in life, but it is also inclusive of how to manage the money that comes with being successful. As Laden (2001: 9) affirms, black print media makes use of role models to inspire change in the lives of the readers. The use of the story about Siba's life and success "At Siba's table: a cooking star in 128 countries and building a multi-million-rand business" is used by *Destiny* magazine to communicate empowerment to the readers and to demonstrate that change is possible in their lives too just as it happened in Siba's life. The use of success stories in black print media is vital in communicating empowerment.

How do women's magazines construct the myth of "the empowered black woman" in South Africa?

This research demonstrated and established how the myth or dominant ideology of black women's empowerment is created and communicated on *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazine front covers in 2016. A myth is a system of communication and a message which is transferred from one person to another, it is not dependent or influenced by the object of its message but by the way in which the object communicates the message (Barthes, 1964: 107). Through my analysis, I discovered that the myth of the empowered black woman is communicated through the portrayal of liberated, assertive, beautiful and confident black women. The women are represented as confident in themselves and beautiful in their skin. Representation is a vital component of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between affiliates of a culture, it includes text, signs and images as these elements are crucial in shaping what people perceive as reality (Hall, 2013:15). Texts, images and signs such as hairstyles, clothing or body language play a role in shaping what people perceive as reality through cultural objects such as magazines.

Through my semiotic analysis, it has been established that the selected women's magazines represent empowering images, texts and signs of black women and this shapes the perceptions of black women in South Africa. Through this empowering depiction of black women on the covers of *Truelove* and *Destiny*, I concur that this influences the perception of black women in South Africa since black women are being recognized as beautiful, liberated and confident in who they are and what their aspirations are. Ideology forces media recipients to see that all cultural texts have unique prejudices or interests which are reinforced and reproduced (Durham, 2009: 14). My finding and argument is that *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines are cultural texts which communicate unique messages of black women's empowerment through their magazine front covers. This is demonstrated using images, text and signs which work together to represent black femininity and the advancement of black women in the various areas of their lives such as career, love, business, fashion or beauty. There are different types of ideologies but the two most important for this research are the intersections between race and gender. Race is demonstrated through the fact that both magazines are targeted at black women exclusively while gender is evident by the idea that both magazines are directed at females and their experiences. Through this research, I have revealed that the dominant ideologies in *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines are about progression, aspiration and development in the lives of black women in South Africa as the content is created to inspire black women to thrive in the different areas of their lives.

Significance of research

This research is relevant to the existing scholarship debates about women's magazines as there have not been enough studies conducted on the role of women's magazines in South Africa from a black feminist perspective. Previous South African studies (Laden 2001, 2007, Iqani 2012, Gqola 2016 Sanger 2009, Govender 2012, Donnelly 2000) on women's magazines focused on the functions of women's magazines in society and the femininities that magazines construct. However, none of the above-mentioned scholars discussed how the myth of black women's empowerment is constructed in South African women's magazines. It is for this purpose that I decided to conduct a research that is focused on the element and function of empowerment in women's magazines. Whilst there has been some limited scholarship on women's magazines in South Africa, these have tended to focus on the political economy of the print media in South Africa (Laden 2001, 2003) and not examined the representation of women in the magazines.

The study and scholarship of women's magazines in South Africa is important because women's magazines play a vital role in suggesting social change and continuity in the lives of black women in society. They provide women with knowledge and information which is helpful in changing their lives for the better. Culture changes over time and the purpose is to maintain the continuity of people without oppressing them (Adichie, 2012: 4). As discussed in chapter two, magazines function as commercial cultural objects thus, similar to culture, women's magazines also change over time and their purpose is to preserve the continuity of women without oppressing them. I suggest that women's magazines have changed over time from the images of the happy housewives in Frieden's book (1963) to the liberated and assertive women that we see on the covers of *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazines in 2016 who represent black femininity in South Africa. Women's magazines no longer represent oppressive images of women who are bound by their homes but rather, they depict women who represent the roles that women play in society today. Before 1994, black women were a marginalised group within a marginalised group but today, magazines such as *Truelove* and *Destiny* demonstrate the evolution of black women in society. They represent women such as Thuli Madonsela who held the position of State Public Protector in South Africa and Terry Pheto, an actress who has starred in *Tsotsi*, a film that won an Oscar Award or Siba, who has a cooking show that airs in 178 countries. These images of black women who are role models on the covers of *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazine demonstrate the unique and diverse roles that black women play in society today.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to discover how women's magazines in South Africa represent the myth of black women's empowerment on their magazine front covers in 2016. Chapter two discussed the previous studies which have been conducted on women's magazines in South Africa and internationally. Through this chapter, it was evident that more literature was needed in the South African context, however, the existing literature on women's magazines provided me with diverse perspectives and approaches. Chapter three discussed the theoretical frameworks of this research, namely semiotics, feminism, black feminist thought and representation. This theoretical framework was necessary for this research as it provided insight on semiotics as a theory, and black feminist thought as an outcome of feminism. Chapter four provided the research approach as well as the data collection method and analysis. The sample size as well as the units of analysis were explained and motivated. The fifth chapter conducted the semiotic analysis of the selected magazine front covers. Two magazines were selected for analysis, namely *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazine. During the semiotic analysis, I discovered that women's magazines are cultural and social objects which communicate the beliefs, values and aspirations of women in society. Women's magazines are informative and educational because they provide women with a variety of information. *Truelove* and *Destiny* magazine are inspirational and motivational as they empower women to work on their future selves as well as their present selves. These magazines represent women's lives, but most importantly, they represent black femininity South Africa. Through this research, it is evident that the selected magazines do represent black women empowerment on their magazine front covers through their images, signs and textual messages which function to construct and communicate empowerment.

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