

**University of KwaZulu-Natal**

**A GENDER ANALYSIS OF MUSIC  
VIDEOS ON MTV BASE AFRICA**

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# **A GENDER ANALYSIS OF MUSIC VIDEOS ON MTV BASE AFRICA**

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Arts (Culture, Communications and Media  
Studies)**

**in the School of Media and Communication Studies**

**at the**

**University of KwaZulu-Natal**

**Supervisor**

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# **DECLARATION**

**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (Culture, Communications and Media Studies), in the Graduate Programme in the School of Media and Communication Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.**

**I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. I confirm that an external editor was used and that my Supervisor was informed of the identity and details of my editor. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this research is to explore gender representation in music videos on MTV Base Africa. The study attempts to determine if dominant hegemonic portrayals exist or whether space is made for alternative gender portrayals. The research involved observing and analysing a range and recurrence of masculine and feminine constructions. A random sample of 20 local and international music videos broadcast between January and May 2009 formed the basis of the analysis. A qualitative research design was used and data collected through a focus group method and semiotic analysis of music videos. The focus group sample was representative of selected groups in KwaZulu-Natal (Bluff and Westville). The results show that contesting discourses of power relations (race, class and gender) are in play. It appears that both counter hegemonic and hegemonic gender representations were present within the sample of music videos. The study demonstrates that competing gender discourses, including subordinate, ambiguous, high-class, low-class, middle-class, hegemonic and counter-hegemonic femininities and masculinities are operative. The conclusion reached is that contending gender constructions are present in music videos on MTV BASE Africa.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

This study investigates masculine and feminine gender representation within music videos on MTV BASE Africa. Gender constructions are examined to determine if dominant hegemonic representations exist or whether there is scope for alternate, contending representations. The research intends to answer the following key questions: What are the prevailing gender representations in the texts? Do contesting and counter-hegemonic gender portrayals exist within the texts? What is the range and extent of recurrence of various gender representations within the texts?

The origin of this study may be traced back to early 2003, when the researcher undertook gender and media courses and conducted assignments on various media texts (print media, advertising, and television) relating to gender. The researcher's expertise is located in gender studies. The rationale for selecting this study, amongst others, is the use of gender analysis in the researcher's personal philosophy. Therefore, the research is focused on a gender analysis of music videos on MTV BASE Africa, as a popular medium. It is noted that no existing study on gender relating to this satellite broadcast channel exists. The outcome of the research is the creation of a gender analysis of music videos on MTV BASE Africa.

The Music Television Network (MTV) was created in 1981 in the United States of America (USA) and consists of various channels: VH1, Paramount Comedy and Nickelodeon, MTV USA, MTV Europe, MTV BASE Africa and MTV India. MTV BASE Africa was created in 2005 to cater for African audiences and features music from across the continent (Shevel, 2005:1). A variety of music genres are present on MTV BASE Africa. "*Genre*" is a French word for a category, style or a type of subject (Feuer, 1992: 113). Genre can be described as a subject or category of content on television, for example soap operas, action series, drama and comedy. MTV BASE Africa broadcasts various genres, which include reality shows, documentaries, and local and international music videos. Music videos are further divided into various sub-genres as

follows: Rap, R 'n B, Reggae and Pop music. A random selection of various local and international music videos from January to May 2009 was used in the analysis.

The study consists of three major sections, which delineate the initial chapters' focus on previously established work of gender portrayals on various satellite television music channels. The second component discusses methodologies for gender analysis. Semiotic analysis and focus group methods generate data relating to gender representations on MTV Base Africa. The final three chapters focus on the analysis of findings and conclusions. The discussion identifies social constructs, gender discourses, feminine and masculine portrayals and social issues that are present within the channel.

Perceptions of gender vary in society. The term "*gender*" is highly contested and is shaped by two contending definitions: biological and social. Some scholars indicate that genitalia determine the gender of an individual. Biological determinists indicate that women and men are different because of their sex organs (Hill-Collins, 2004: 4-9). Social constructionist scholars, on the other hand, suggest that gender is a social construct shaped by social organisations and competing discourses (Hill-Collins, 2004:4-5). According to the social concept of gender, individuals' personalities and behaviour are not pre-determined by biology, but are shaped by society and cultures; therefore gender is not fixed from birth and can adapt and transform over time (Hill-Collins, 2004: 4-5). Gender refers to the biological difference of the reproductive sexual organs of men and women, as well as ways to be masculine and feminine (Devereux, 2007: 192).

The perception of gender in this research is based on a social constructionist view. Therefore the gender analysis draws on integral characteristics that shape gender representations, which include competing gender discourses, identities, race, class and gender. Furthermore, gender is frequently associated with race and class (power relations). Thus power relations form an inherent feature of gender. As Derrida (1974:74) notes, relations of power exist between binary opposites represented by black



or white, masculine or feminine and between different social classes. Social definitions of race refer to an ethnic group having a shared culture, usually linked to national, tribal or ethnic identity (O' Sullivan, Dutton and Rayner, 1994: 94). Race has been defined as a fixed entity linked to biological traits, but from a social constructionist view, gender is perceived as an unstable complex of social meanings shaped by political struggle (Hill-Collins *et al*, 2003:4-9). Class refers to a rank or order in society, for example, upper, middle, lower or working class (Oxford Dictionary, 1978: 184).

Discourse refers to ways of thinking and producing meaning, existence in social organisations and everyday practices (Weedon, 2003: 19). Various discourses exist which shape the world and give it meaning. It is noted that there are always competing discourses (ideas and value systems) in society (Gramsci, 1979: 84-84). Individuals are shaped by competing discourses on race, class, gender, sexuality and power relations. Sexual identities can be defined as: heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual. Sexuality as an indicator of gendered behaviour is frequently associated with male and female representations (Hermes and Ritzenhoff, 2007: 191).

Social institutions such as government, media, family, university, church, and workplace contain numerous discourses. A range of social institutions is responsible for the production and diffusion of information and knowledge and such institutions is a pervasive feature of social life (Thompson, 1995: 17). Media and communications are a central element of modern life, whilst gender and sexuality remain at the core of how we think about our identities (Gauntlet, 2002:1). Thus it can be accepted that gender is a fluid construct that shapes identity.

This study draws on both the Interpretive and the Radical Humanist Paradigms. According to the Interpretive Approach, the focus is on "reception", asserts Teer-Tomaselli (2008: 39). This paradigm examines how individuals and audiences interpret content. As an approach, it admits subjective human interpretation in the making of meaning, which is not measurable. According to Gertz, research is viewed from an interpretative perspective. This research examines how people invest meaning within

their world, and negotiate and contest other systems of meaning (Gertz, 1973: 10). The second paradigm that the research draws on is the Radical Humanist Approach, which focuses on “experiences” of ordinary people (Teer-Tomselli, 2008: 39). This paradigm examines how ordinary people subjectively make sense of the power of the media. According to the radical humanist perspective, the researcher interprets how participants make sense of a social activity/phenomenon and attach meaning to participants (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell, 2005: 116).

The chapter on methodology attempts to answer the following key questions: What are the dominant gendered representations within specific MTV texts? What is the range and extent of recurrence of various gendered representations within the texts? In this chapter, a semiotic analysis of a sample of music videos of MTV BASE Africa is applied. Reception analysis is also used to explore a range of gender representations.

A selection of music videos broadcast from January to May 2009 was used as case studies. Three focus group sessions were conducted within selected areas of KwaZulu-Natal ranging from Westville to the Bluff during July and August 2009. Participants were selected through a quota sampling technique from these locations. This enabled the selection of participants of different races and both genders. The use of quota sampling technique enabled access of participants from convenient locations such as the University of KwaZulu-Natal, a scholar environment and the work place. The process continued until the required number of respondents was finalised (Kumar, 1999: 161). As a result, one cannot generalise the results in respect of all perceptions in KwaZulu-Natal.

Through this study, the researcher intends on building an understanding of masculine and feminine representations in music videos. For the researcher, gender portrayals are viewed as an integral aspect, which is present in all social organisations and life. It is through research that gender constructions of femininities and masculinities can be excavated and explored, and possibly provide new perspectives for gender media studies.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Key Concepts

#### **Gender, Sexuality, Femininity, Masculinity and Discourse**

The concepts of gender, sexuality, femininity, masculinity and discourse are fundamental points within the discussion of gender as a social construct. These factors are highlighted in this chapter. Gender is the cultural significance given to biological difference of reproductive organs, and it refers to both men and women, as well as to appropriate and less appropriate ways to be a man or woman (masculinity and femininity) (Devereux, 2007: 191). It can be said that the meaning of women and men are 'fluid' concepts. The notion of women and men is not fixed in a natural world, but is socially produced by individuals and social organizations (Van Zoonen, 1994: 34). The seminal work of Van Zoonen (1994), Weedon (2003), Morrell (2001), Hill-Collins (2004) and Gauntlett (2002) is used to discuss these key concepts.

#### ***Social Institutions***

The media, people, and organisations who use them, for example institutions such as schools, universities, the work place, and the managers and employees who inhabit them, are involved in the complex process of constructing gendered discourses (Morrell, 2001). Gendered identities are shaped by interaction with social institutions, social activities and influences such as race, politics, power relations, and sexuality. Discourse refers to a way of thinking about ideas within a particular group, culture or society or a set of ideas within a culture, which shape how we perceive the world. The discussion on gender discourse of women and men in this research refers to the ways in which cultural descriptions and explanations of men and women's identities are constructed in social life, and the assumptions they commonly set up.

#### ***Gender as a Contested Site***

The media is a social institution that gives meaning to social reality and offers various discursive positions, including modes of femininity and masculinity. Representations of

gender permeate various social institutions such as the media. Gender can thus be thought of as a particular discourse that is a set of overlapping and contradictory cultural descriptions and prescriptions referring to sexual difference, which arise from and regulate particular economic, social, political, technological and other non-discursive texts (Van Zoonen, 1994). The concept of gender should thus be conceived not as a fixed property of individuals, but rather as part of an ongoing process by which subjects are constituted and shaped in paradoxical ways (Van Zoonen, 1994: 33).

Gender discourse is not the only dimension of human identity. Human beings are constituted by the different social practices and discourses in which they are engaged. The discourse on identity has increasingly been associated with a variety of social struggles (Zegeye, 2000: 117). Human beings are constituted by competing discourses of politics, race, class, gender and sexuality. Gender as a concept is part of culture and is subject to continuous discursive struggle.

### ***Gender in Relation to Biological and Social Contexts***

Gender relates to both the biological and social contexts of sexual behaviour and desire. People tend to believe they know whether someone is a man or woman, which is not as a result of conducting a physical examination to determine if the person is biologically male or female (Hill-Collins, 2004: 4-10). Biological determinism is defined as the view that people's behaviour patterns are the results of their genes and their biological inheritance. Biological determinists typically argue that women and men are fundamentally different, and that they cannot help it that they were born that way (Hill-Collins, 2004: 4-10).

However, the social constructionist perspective indicates that people's personalities and behaviour are not pre-determined by biology, but are shaped by society and culture., People are not fixed from birth and can adapt and change (Hill-Collins, 2004). Drawing on this perspective, gender is viewed as a social construct and the meaning of gender is always contested. Gender is a social characteristic of individuals in society that is only sometimes consistent with biological sex (Hill-Collins, 2004: 4-10).

While animals, like people, tend to be identified as male and female in accordance with their reproductive function, only people are described by their gender as a man or woman (Hill-Collins and Anderson, 2004). The concept of gender was adopted in order to emphasize the social construction of masculinity and femininity and the social ordering of relations between women and men. Gender is a term that incorporates both the sexes, women and the role of men in relation to women (Prinsloo, 1999).

### ***Gender as a Social construct***

Gender when defined as a social construct denotes a hierarchal division between men and women embedded in both social institutions and social practices (Jackson *et al*, 2002: 1). Thus, gender is treated as a social construct that is produced, negotiated and sustained at the level of everyday interaction, yet it is embodied and lived by men and women in local, specific, biographical contexts and is experienced as central to individual identities (Cornwall, 1994). Gender thus encompasses the social divisions and cultural distinctions between women and men, as well as the characteristics commonly associated with femininity and masculinity. Gender is treated as a sociological concept because it focuses attention on men and women as social rather than natural categories and emerged out of debates that sought to challenge the 'naturalness' of differences between men and women (Lindemann, 1997). The reason for retaining the word 'gender' is that the term 'sex' is so much more ambiguous.

### **Sex**

Sex can refer to both differences between men and women and to specifically sexual (erotic) relations and practices (Jackson *et al*. 2002). The term sex is associated with male and female genitals and differentiates men and women based on those biological differences. This definition is part of a naturalistic construction which links one's genitals with one's social position (as women or men) and with one's sexual identities and practices; which defines femininity and masculinity as 'natural' and privileges heterosexuality as the normal and therefore legitimate form of sexuality (excluding homosexuality).

### ***Challenging Assumptions***

Theoretically, we need to challenge assumptions that bind anatomy into gender and sexuality (Jackson *et al*, 2002). Gender and sexuality are interrelated terms. Sexuality is gendered in fundamental ways and gender divisions sustain and are sustained by normative heterosexuality. This however, is arguable as there are more than two biological categories of gender (Devereux, 2007: 192). Gender does not assume the same cultural significance everywhere and gender codes have changed significantly over time.

### ***Distinctions between Sexuality and Gender***

It is important to sustain an analytical distinction between the terms 'gender' and 'sexuality' (Jackson *et al*, 2002: 20). If they are conflated, there is a danger of reducing the entirety of gender to sexuality or ignoring the aspects of gender that are not about sexuality. Social roles play a bigger role in shaping sexuality than biology does. Social influences, such as changing notions over time of male and female differences regarding desire, shape sexuality (Jackson *et al*, 2002: 20).

Throughout history, varied explanations of male and female desires have been popular. Historical examples show that women were sometimes portrayed as temptresses, and men are reluctant participants. The biblical stories of Adam and Eve, or Sampson and Delilah, are good examples. In medieval times women were represented as pure in thought/virtuous, while men were portrayed as voracious sexual beasts during the Victorian Era and Roman Times (for example, the Rape of Lucretia by Tarquin) (Hill-Collins *et al*, 2004).

Historical representations exist of women both as cultural icons and national icons. Britannia for example serves as a national symbol within the United Kingdom. Britannia may be perceived as iconic, since she resembles the state of Great Britain and reflects the constitution, economic, naval or colonial power of Britain (Tomaselli and Scott, 2009:135). The icon is embodied in various forms, for example coins, seals, postage stamps, statues and monuments, which are officially commissioned by the British

government (Scott: 2009: 135). However, the versatility of the icon is released when it is removed from a controlled context and inserted into a wider field of reference (Tomaselli and Scott, 2009: 136). Hence, the dynamic potential of the icon is unleashed particularly in association with other images with which it may come into contact, and in its unofficial context (Tomaselli and Scott, 2009: 136). Posters, caricature and satirical images of Britannia have also emerged, which associate the connotations of the icon with humorous, subversive or parodic effect. It is the tension between official and unofficial inclinations within the icon that makes Britannia a rich cultural sign, enabling it to express both a certain continuity and new areas of meaning and interpretation (Tomaselli and Scott, 2009: 137).

Likewise, the *Little Mermaid* serves as an example of a folk cultural and mass cultural icon. The mythological figure of the mermaid has been present in folklore (Ingeman, 1817). Many works/fairytales developed concerning mermaids, and serve as the basis for the transformation of this figure into mass culture, for example, Hans Christian Andersen and Walt Disney (Mortensen, 2009: 47). Anderson, work was inspired by Ingeman's work and he developed tales and folklore relating to the *Little Mermaid* (1937). Danish artist Edward Eriksen developed a sculpture of a mermaid, and placed the statue near the pier in Copenhagen (Mortensen, 2009: 48). However, Eriksen's mermaid is not simply a sculpture. It is a national monument that is undoubtedly associated with Anderson (Mortensen, 2009). Today it stands both as a symbol of Denmark in general and Copenhagen in particular. In 1964 unknown perpetrators defaced the mermaid statue (sawed off the head of the sculpture). Media coverage of the "mermaid murder" was extensive. Evidently, there was a breakdown of tradition from the perspective of Anderson's text, towards an expression of the fact that the mermaid is now living in modern, industrialized folk culture (Mortensen, 2009: 49). Disney, the international children's film production company adapted *The Little Mermaid* for a global audience. The icon of *The Little Mermaid* was embodied on stationery, posters, records, action figure toys and burger meals at McDonald's as part of an international publicity campaign. *The Little Mermaid* is a renowned cultural sign, which

conveys continuity and new areas of significance, meaning and interpretation (Scott, 2009: 137).

These shifting ideas about gender are the social “clothing” for sexuality (Schartz and Rutter, 1998). Sexual identities can be defined as: heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual. Sexuality is frequently associated with male and female representations (Hermes and Ritzenhoff, 2007: 191). Identities are a complex set of constructions. Furthermore, gender serves as a social factor/part of an individual’s sense of self. Race, class and sexuality are key factors that also contribute to an individual’s sense of self. Gender categories are not homogeneous; gender is lived and experienced differently depending on one’s class, race, ethnicity and sexuality (Jackson and Scott, 2002: 1). The notion of gender is linked to corresponding factors such as race, class and sexuality. Gender is a concept that intersects with other social divisions and inequalities such as race, class and sexuality. Sexuality, race and class are discourses that intersect with gender in various contending and conflicting ways. Class refers to social strata whose members share certain social, economic and cultural characteristics (Hill-Collins *et al*, 2004: 4-5). Race is defined as a group of people connected by common descent, tribe or nation (for example Caucasian, Mongolian, Black) (Oxford Dictionary, 1978: 916). There is room for different sexualities within various media (Devereux, 2007: 192).

### ***Masculine and Feminine Constructs***

The concepts ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’, Freud observed, are among the most confused that occur in science (1905). The underlying reason for this is that the character of gender itself is historically changing and politically fraught. Everyday life is an arena of gender politics, not an escape from it (Van Zoonen, 1994: 4). Daily interactions with social institutions, power relations, and race gives rise to gendered notions. Gender terms are thus contested because the right to account for gender is claimed by contending discourses and systems of knowledge. Furthermore, power is a key element of gender. Gender is a concept that indicates how society is structured in terms of power relations (Devereux, 2007: 192). The meaning of ‘woman’ and ‘man’ is



not fixed by a natural world, but is socially produced by a series of competing discourses and is subject to change/transformation. Power takes specific forms in particular societies, organized for example, through relations of race, gender, class, religion and age.

Masculine identities are constructed in relation to femininities. Masculinity does not only focus on male things, and does not only reflect on male sexuality and how it is embodied. Masculinities also construct the social reality of institutions and the identities of women (Ratele, 1998). Gender is not a starting point in the sense of being a given thing, but is instead, a hypothesized social construct, shaped by a matrix of habits, practices and the assertions of discourses Alcoff (1988:1). Furthermore, it is an interpretation of our history within a particular discursive constellation, a history in which we are both subjects and subjected to social construction (Alcoff, 1988: 1). If gender is a social construct then masculinity and femininity are viewed as 'socially constructed' or 'constituted in discourses'. The role of the media in the formation, negotiation and representation of gender identities is crucial. The ideas of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' have been pulled through the social changes of the past few decades in quite different ways: masculinity is seen as the state of 'being a man', which is currently somewhat in flux. Femininity on the other hand, is not necessarily seen as the state of 'being a woman'; instead it is perceived more as a stereotype of a woman's role from the past (Gauntlett, 2002).

Men like their identities to fit within 'masculinity', even if we have to revise that term as attitudes change. Modern women are not generally bothered about fitting their identity within the idea of 'femininity' and femininity is no longer a crucial value for women today. Instead, being 'feminine' is just one of the performances that women can choose to employ in everyday life - perhaps for pleasure, or to achieve a particular goal (Gauntlett, 2002). The media have always been at the heart of feminist critique. Women have embodied pivotal signs and representations over a historical period. Historically the female body has provided very powerful 'signs' such as: the Statue of Liberty in the United States of America (USA) hence, the first encounter of millions of emigrants with the American values of freedom and individualism is a woman (Warner, 1985). In the

western world justice is represented in the image of a blindfolded woman. Women have also symbolized Lee Noble's ideas in Christianity, beginning with Eve's mistake in tasting the forbidden apple. In Roman mythology the goddess of love, Eros is represented as a woman, and the Goddess of War, Athena is represented as a woman.

In the television media content, female characters are often constructed as archetypes of virtue and vice. Media output/content is often ridden with signs and it is up to the semioticians to analyse how particular combinations of signs in sign systems exist. In the 1990s, the importance of recognizing masculinity as a key aspect of gender and of addressing issues of masculinity became acknowledged internationally (Morrell 2001). This was for the most part the result of an international drive for gender equality that has been going on for over three decades. Arising from the intellectual labour of leftist scholars supportive of feminism, a 'new men's movement' emerged; this was in most instances an organic development in which men came together to discuss gender relations and specifically to discuss the role of men in the exploitation of women (Morrell, 2001). By the 1990s governments, development agencies and agencies of the United Nations were beginning to include issues of masculinity within the purview of their gender policies.

Another major development in the 1990s was the emergence of men's movements often, though not always, in opposition to feminism. Across the world, organisations established exclusively for men have flourished: the Promise Keepers (mainly white) and the Million Man March (black) in the United States of America (USA) have been the largest and most influential. Furthermore, in a range of social locations and with differing agendas, movements have developed what many men see as a 'crisis of masculinity' (Messner 1997). Two major features within the crisis of masculinity include children who have grown up without fathers and the rise of women in the workplace who have taken jobs from men and eroded their authority.

### ***Gender and Development***

Cornwell observed in 1997 that gender and development work currently offers little scope for men's involvement (Morrell, 2001). Outdated feminist theory dealt with men at

one stroke: men were classified as a problem, those who stood in the way of positive change. Furthermore, she argued that people working in the field should move beyond generalisations and work with and from personal experience to open up spaces for change amongst and by men. It is with this call in mind that UNESCO and other European agencies have begun to ask questions like 'How can men gain from gender equality?' Efforts are being made to get men involved in striving for gender equality, even though this may mean taking different steps that are sensitive to local requirements and attitudes (Morrell, 2001: 5). The media serves as a central site where discursive negotiation over gender takes place. In subsequent chapters the study discusses competing social constructs and contesting gendered discourses that are present in society, as well as case studies. Evidently, gender is a contested site, shaped by competing social constructs, discourses and instructions.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Literature Review

#### **Masculine and Feminist Paradigms**

This chapter provides an outline of competing masculine and feminine paradigms. Various paradigm positions have shaped the landscape of gender media studies. In this regard, Van Zoonen (1994) and Weedon (2003) establish various feminist positions (Radical, Liberal, Marxist/Socialist Feminism, White Feminism and Afrocentric Feminism). The research draws upon Weedon and Van Zoonen's feminist poststructural perspectives and applies their ideas within the paradigm of the discussion. Connell (1995) and Morrell (2001) discuss multiple masculine modes (Hegemonic, Subordinate Masculinity and New Man/Negotiated Masculinity) that exist in society. These competing masculine modes are applied in this study (case studies of music videos). Power relations (race, class and sexuality) are essential factors that are discussed in conjunction with feminine and masculine modes. Key elements of power relations are used within the analysis.

#### ***Feminist Paradigms***

This chapter introduces various paradigm positions/typologies in feminist critique. Historically, feminism developed in a western context across the United States, Europe and Britain (Morrell and Ouzgane, 2005: 845). Feminist theoretical positions emerge from a Radical Marxist Paradigm, which questions social relations/positions in society. Different feminist paradigms and experiences are rooted in racial, regional and historical variations (Scott, 1996: 1). Steeves (1987: 95) distinguishes between typologies of feminism as follows: radical feminism which has a strong interest in critiquing pornography, liberal feminism which is concerned with equality, stereotypes and gender socialization, and Marxist and Socialist Feminism which focus on the interaction between gender, class and ideology.

## ***Liberal Feminism***

Since the early 1970s, a considerable collection of feminist action and thought has accumulated through media (Van Zoonen, 1994: 12). Liberal feminism aims to achieve full equality of opportunity in all spheres of life without radically transforming the present social and political system (Weedon, 2003: 4). As a paradigm, it aims to transform the sexual division of labour, domestic space and the contemporary norms of femininity and masculinity (Van Zoonen, 1994: 12). This perspective focuses on stereotypes ('fixed gender categories') and gender socialization. Liberal feminism does not offer a radical critique of the family. It takes the basic structure of the nuclear family for granted (Weedon, 2003: 16). According to this position, family life and the decision to have children should result from free, individual choice, and those who choose to have children should be responsible for them (Hall, 2007).

## ***Liberal Feminist Ideas of Individualism and Equality***

The feminist paradigm position focuses on women's rights as individuals regarding choice and self-determination, irrespective of biological sex (Weedon, 2003: 16). The key political objectives include the creation of the material conditions necessary to ensure a woman's self determination, given her role as mother, primary child-carer and care-giver (Weedon, 2003: 16). Yet while families may be seen as natural, the sexual division of labour is not (Van Zoonen, 1994: 7-12). Liberal feminists argue that domestic labour and childcare offer little scope for self-development and self-realization. This is due to the nature of domestic labour, women's economic dependency and their lack of choice in the sexual division of labour (Van Zoonen, 1994: 16). From a liberal feminist perspective, the answers to these problems lie in the creation of the material conditions for women's full equality, which lead to the abolition of the sexual division of labour and ultimately to an androgynous society (Van Zoonen, 1994). Distinctions between men and women would be the result of individual free choice.

This feminist position focuses on achieving equality in all social institutions (for example, the family, and government). As Squires advocates, any organisation truly committed to liberal principles of equality should transcend sexist presumptions about gender differences that discriminate against women (1999: 9). Furthermore, these

organisations should grant equal rights to women and men and enable women to participate equally with men in the public sphere (Squires, 2001: 9). Gender difference is viewed as a manifestation of sexism, as a patriarchal creation used to rationalize the inequality between the sexes (Squires, 2001). Liberal feminists focus on stereotypical images of women.

Before the advent of the women's movement, media stereotypes seemed a given (Cock, 1992: 75-93). Few scholars questioned how stereotypical representations developed, how these portrayals were reinforced, or how these representations were maintained. Certainly the media's role in maintaining these stereotypes was not questioned (Van Zoonen, 1994: 12).

As indicated by Tuchman, early television output features an overwhelming majority of men who dominate the screen and sideline the importance of women (1978: 7). Only in soap operas do women (Tuchman, 1978). Furthermore, she argues that television content reflects that women don't matter very much, except as housewives and mothers (Tuchman, 1978: 7). Tuchman adds that television symbolically denigrates women by portraying them as incompetent, inferior and always subservient to men (Tuchman, 1978: 7). In addition, Tuchman's analysis contains elements of a functionalist feminist media theory. Media reflects society's dominant social values and symbolically degrades women, either by not showing them at all, or by depicting them in stereotypical roles (1978). Such stereotypical roles include the dumb blonde, the domestic house-wife, and hypersexual femininity (often associated with Black femininity) (O' Sullivan *et al*, 1994: 98).

Another scholar who uses the liberal feminist perspective is Margaret Gallagher (1980), who found similarities between western industrialized, eastern communist and southern developing countries. Women are underrepresented in media production, as well as in content (Gallagher, 1980). Moreover, the women who do appear in media content tend to be young and conventionally pretty, defined in relation to their husband, father, son,

boss or another man. In addition, women are portrayed as passive, indecisive, submissive, and dependent (Gallagher, 1980).

### ***Focus of Liberal Feminist Research***

Liberal feminist theory and research on stereotypes are valuable for two reasons (Van Zoonen, 1994:16-18). *Firstly*, research on stereotypes has helped identify and document a comprehensive list of assumptions and prejudices, which women in many countries have used to raise awareness of negative feminine representations. *Secondly*, research on feminine stereotypes has enabled scholars to put pressure on their media to improve images of women (Van Zoonen, 1994: 18).

The assumption that media content can be adequately characterized by a reference to the stereotypical roles of social population is rather incomplete, advocates Van Zoonen (1994: 17-18). The mutual relationships of characters, their contribution to and involvement in the narrative, their visualization and their status in a particular genre are of equal importance (Van Zoonen, 1994: 18). Stereotypical representations of femininity in media content lead to social stereotypical assumptions and perceptions of women. Furthermore, stereotypical images serve as fixed and rigid representations, and cannot move beyond that classification.

Stereotypes are assumptions associated with race, gender or class. The notion of stereotype as discussed by Perkins (1979: 75) refers to a label, which involves the process of categorisation and evaluation. Stereotypes are frequently used in conjunction with representations of social groups, and easily assume that (mostly negative) characteristics are presumed to belong to a whole group (Perkins, 1979). Various characteristics are associated with stereotypes. *Firstly*, stereotypes do not always focus on minority groups with less power. *Secondly*, they can be held within a group (Perkins, 1979: 75). For example, many Zulu men consider homosexuality to be

taboo within their culture and isolate themselves from gay men or ridicule gay men.<sup>1</sup> *Thirdly*, stereotypes are not always false but can be supported by empirical evidence. The stereotype of “Black diamonds” for example, is associated with emerging upper class/elite black people, that provide a new market for consumer products in South Africa. The *fourth* characteristic refers to the nature of stereotypes, which are not always rigid or unchanging (Perkins, 1979: 75). During the colonisation of South Africa, a stereotype of black masculinity as ‘savage and wild’ was upheld. This label changed to the stereotype of new emerging hegemonic power, in the democratic South Africa. However, stereotypes frequently thrive on negative assumptions and generalisations rather than reflecting truth or reality.

Like Perkins, Barker (1989: 206) dismisses stereotypes for misrepresenting the real world and reinforcing false perceptions of femininity and masculinity. For example, stereotypes create the misconception that women are available for sex at any time. In addition, stereotypes show women in the domestic sphere, serving the needs of men (Barker, 1989: 206). Barker argues that it is wrong to view people according to categories (1989). Stereotypical judgements are used to create meaning out of everyday life (Barker, 1989: 206). However, judgements on assumptions and misconceptions of race, class and gender are ineffective and limiting.

While feminist liberalism is criticized for its tendency to favour equality over diversity, it does however remind us of the tragic side of difference, and how liberalism has frequently been the cause of gender inequality, oppression and instability (Enslin, 2003: 3). An enclosed typology such as liberal feminism does not leave room for competing feminine identities and constructions. What is needed is a feminine poststructural approach, which is fluid and encompasses various feminist discourses and the relations between gender and power. Just as the term masculinity cannot be applied to all men

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<sup>1</sup> Conversation with heterosexual Zulu male students reflects their attitude towards homosexual men. Heterosexual men shun many gay men in the township areas, because being gay is viewed as defying the Traditional Zulu culture and masculinity.



equally, so, too, are there problems associated with reducing groups of men to stereotypes based on their behaviour. Morell (2001: 3-9) offers the example of gay men as overly sensitive, black men as sexually aggressive and working-class men as physically violent. To avoid reducing various masculinities and femininities to simplified categories or stereotypes, Connell (1995: 10) recommends, "We have to examine the relations between genders". Furthermore, it is necessary to unpack the milieu of class and race and scrutinize the gender relations operating within them (Connell, 1995: 10).

### ***Radical feminism***

Radical feminism visualizes a new social order in which women will not be subordinate to men and femininity will not be debased and devalued (Weedon, 2003: 4). For radical feminists, the only way that women can assert their autonomy from men and recover their true and natural femininity is through separation from men and the patriarchal structures of society (Weedon, 2003: 4). Furthermore, radical feminism questions the subordination and exploitation of women.

Radical feminism has a strong interest in pornography and how women are objectified within pornographic material. Defining pornography is a problematic issue because there is very little consensus among feminists on what it constitutes (Roots, 2000: 425). As Roots notes, every person writing about pornography appears to conceptualize and define it differently (2000: 245). Issues around sexually explicit material have split the feminist movement into two schools of thought labelled as anti-pornography and anti-censorship (Roots, 2000: 426). These are loosely categorised as representing radical and liberal feminism respectively (Roots, 2000: 426). Feminist views that regard pornography as binary opposites are deceptive, as this blurs dialogue and debate (Badat, 1998: 86). Radical and liberal feminist perspectives have an overlap or consensus on certain issues regarding pornography (Badat, 1998: 86). North feminist debates on pornography focus on addressing sexually explicit material, not simply as a legal issue around regulation or censorship, but as a profound need to address the politics of gender media representations (Roots, 2000: 426).

McCormack (1978) focuses on conflict and inequality and states “pornography would be seen as an extreme form, almost a travesty of sexual inequality in which women serve as sex objects to arouse and satisfy men and nothing more” (1978: 58). Radical feminists argue that pornography contributes to the eroticization of power and violence and hence the construction of forms of masculine sexuality which seek pleasure through power and violence (McCormack, 1978: 58 and Dworkin, 1980: 289). According to this feminist perspective, pornography is viewed as the ultimate cultural expression of men’s hatred of women (Van Zoonen, 1994: 18). In addition, pornography is seen as a form of sexual violence against women and simultaneously a source and a product of a deeply misogynistic society (Van Zoonen, 1994:18). Radical feminists in particular, have initiated most feminist activities against pornography, such as the ‘Take Back the Night’ demonstrations, tours through porno-districts and assaults on porno-shops/adult shops (Lederer, 1980: 333).

A key scholar in the radical feminist debate is Dworkin. She started a feminist campaign against pornography during early 1980 in North America (Dworkin, 1981: 224). According to Dworkin, pornography cannot be considered as a mere representation of sexual fantasies or as potentially liberating depiction of nudity and sexuality. It is rather the glorification of male power over women (1980: 289. See also Tong (1989: 113) and Coward (1982: 9-22). Furthermore, she argues that sexually explicit material is viewed as a genre that celebrates and justifies male power (1981:224). Dworkin views sexually explicit material as harmful because pornography discriminates against women by representing them as sexual objects that are always available to men (1981: 224).

Pornography positions women as willing and ready to submit to the male consumer, building on and reinforcing the patriarchal ideology of women as available objects (Coward, 1982: 9). The pornographic convention of:

*Fragmenting the female body into close ups of her sexual organs reduce women to functional, depersonalized body parts for male satisfaction; and*

*construct an image of women as powerless and submissive, as objects of male desire for sexual power and domination (Coward, 1982: 9).*

### ***Liberal Feminist View of Pornography versus the Radical Feminist View***

Liberal feminists on the other hand, place the onus of censorship on the individual in society to view and respond to material as she/he sees fit (Roots, 2000: 247). According to this perspective, censorship in one area cannot be separate from censorship in another area because censorship works against a desire to create a democratic society (Roots, 2000: 247). Liberal feminists question the radical feminist assumption that pornography is a central issue in feminist politics, arguing that other issues such as education and the family are equally important in the fight for equality (Roots, 2000: 427). Feminism is viewed as censorship rather than opening up possibilities (Ellis, 1990: 27).

According to Roots, both liberal and radical feminism focus on sexually explicit material, and both have merit. However, both perspectives fall into theoretical traps (2000: 247). Radical feminism makes the error of globalizing women's oppression, which renders categories of difference invisible. Questions of interconnection of race and class for example, are ignored (issues of class exploitation and racism in pornography are ignored) (Roots, 2000: 247). Radical feminism is at fault by defining pornography as the central patriarchal tool in oppressing women hence, the possibility for sexually explicit material about women's desires and women's sexuality is denied (Roots, 2000: 247). The radical feminist position does not take into account the existence of complex ambiguous discourses of femininity, where women control their sexuality and their bodies.

Some women choose to position or locate themselves within the pornography industry, for example editors, producers and actors. Examples include Christie Hefner, Vice President of Playboy Corporation and porn actress Jenna Jameson who owns her own pornography company and website. What is needed is an approach that considers various competing discourses of femininity. However, it

must be noted that although some women are positioned as independent and in control of their bodies and sexuality within the pornographic industry, an increasing number of women are still sexually exploited and objectified within the same industry. This perspective does not consider competing constructions of feminist identities. What is needed is a typology that accommodates various feminine identities and the gender relations located within these identities.

### ***Marxist/Socialist Feminism***

Marxist or socialist feminism focuses on the interaction between race, class and ideology (Steeves, 1987). Socialist feminists have shown a profound theoretical and political interest in connecting Marx's ideas of the capitalist mode of production to the oppression of women (Van Zoonen, 1994: 21). From a Marxist perspective, this approach incorporates a political and economic analysis of capitalism, and a conception of human nature as constituted in society: "Specific historical conditions create distinctive human types" (Jaggar, 1983: 125).

However, Marxists only recognize capitalists and workers as human types. Socialist feminism on the other hand, acknowledges that human beings are defined by gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexuality and nationality (Van Zoonen, 1994: 22). Radical Feminists' theoretical challenge has been to relate these differences (gender differences) to historical, social and economic conditions.

Althusser argues that ideology is a permanent feature of society and that ideology is disseminated by ideological state apparatuses (institutions) and maintained by repressive state apparatuses (the police and the army) (1971: 121-122). People become subjects of ideology because of interpellation by the dominant ideology (Althusser, 1971: 121). Gramsci's (1971: 182-183) ideas on hegemony provided an important addition to the concept of ideology. Gramsci defined the term 'hegemony' as a process by which general consent is actively sought for the interpretations of the ruling class (1971: 182). Like Althusser, Gramsci identifies ideological institutions and apparatuses as forces that translate the concepts of the ruling class into the ordinary language and experiences of the worker. Whilst Althusser and Gramsci's theories

ignore the gender issue, the ideological mechanisms they analyze have been a source of inspiration for social feminists, who claim that gender is a crucial component of ideology (Van Zoonen, 1994: 23). Furthermore, the Marxist/socialist feminist perspective views media as contemporary mediators of hegemony and question why particular ideological constructs of femininity are produced in media content (Van Zoonen, 1994: 23).

Biases emerge in attempts to reformulate Marxist categories to incorporate the experience of race and gender discrimination. Barrett and McIntosh (1985: 23-24) were among the first feminists to identify biases in socialist-feminist theory, which supplement gender theory with class analysis. Patriarchy, they admitted, could not explain how white women exercise power (based on race) over black men (Barrett *et al*, 1985: 23-24). However, Bhavnani (1986: 85) who is a South Asian feminist, critiques Barrett and McIntosh (1985). Bhavnani and Coulson (1986) argue that Barrett *et al* do not consider other perspectives and avoid the real issue. The difference in power relations between white and black women, and the difference in power relations between various classes of white women is noted by Bhavnani (1986: 85).

### ***White Feminism***

White feminism is a discourse that emerged within the Marxist/Socialist feminist paradigm. Hartsock (1987: 163-164) and Barrett (1985) are scholars that adopt a white feminist perspective. Hartsock treats gender as a separate category that can be isolated from the experience of race and class (1987:163-164). An example of this approach is Hartsock's (1987:163-4) comment that women's experience of the 'sexual division of labour' constitutes them as a social group and forms the basis of a feminist standpoint common to all women. Furthermore, she proposes that feminists lay aside their differences across race and class boundaries and instead focus on 'central commonalities' (Hartsock, 1987: 163-164).

Agnew, (1996: 4-5) critiques Hartsock's perspective. The author argues that whilst Hartsock emphasizes the importance of the individual's material experience, she does

not consider the differences of power between women. Agnew adds that Hartsock treats gender as a separate category, which can be isolated from the experience of race and class (Agnew, 1996: 4). White women too, can subordinate women and men of other races and other social status (working class, manual labour; see also Bhavnani (1986)). White feminists such as Barrett (1985) and Hartsock (1987) are unaware that their different position in society makes them less conscious of the privilege of race and class, and thus leads them to emphasize gender (1996). White feminist perspectives do not allow for competing discourses of feminine identities, which are essential for a discussion of gender representations.

### ***Feminism across Continents***

Feminism varies across different continents and countries. Feminism in the USA (which has influenced liberal, radical and socialist feminism) is different to feminism in Africa (Scott, 1996: 1-2). Due to the diverse nature of the population, addressing feminism in the USA embraces a vast range of experiences which includes the poor southern farmer, the affluent women of New England, the Native American women in the west and African-American women in the Cotton Belt.

### ***Middle Class Feminism***

American feminism is criticized for being the legacy of middle-class, white women. White, middle-class feminists work for the limited emancipation of white well-to-do women seeking suffrage and recognition by society (Scott, 1996: 1). The multicultural and multi-ethnic character of the continent makes it impossible to define American feminism. The problem with this position is that it does not embrace women of colour or white women of lower economic classes. White feminists claim that white women should speak for black women because black women are oppressed and economically disadvantaged and have not yet become conscious of the centrality of sexism (Scott, 1996). However, only privileged white women claim this obligation and those of the lower classes do not (Scott, 1996: 1-2). Contrary to the white feminist view that the family oppresses women, Davis (1981: 30) argues that the family was viewed as

meaningful and emotionally supportive for black female slaves (also see Davis's documentation and research on black slavery (1981: 30-31)).

Davis (1981) questions the commitment of white women to black emancipation. White feminists identify the patriarchal family as the locus of women's subordination and inequality (Hartsock, 1987: 163-164). Feminist scholars from Asia, Africa and Caribbean on the other hand, argue that the family also served as an emotional buffer in a race-biased society and created solidarity between men and women (Agnew, 1996: 1). However, white feminists admitted that they had shown an ethnocentric bias in describing the experiences of their own class and race as the norm, while disregarding the experiences of other women (Hooks 1992, Hill-Collins, 1990, Carby 1982, Barrett and McIntosh, 1985, Kline 1989, Spelman, 1988, and Barrett 1982). Feminists from Asia, Africa and Caribbean revealed biases in feminist theories and practices and attacked the assumption of privilege by white feminists in the community of women (Lorde 1984).

White feminists in Africa (who are descendents of European settlers) separate themselves from the large African feminist consciousness because of their privileged position in society. Ramazanoglu (1986: 84) a white feminist, notes that recognition of ethnocentrism in her work does not in itself render black women's experiences visible. She further adds that when we attempt to take black women's experiences into account, the extremely problematic relationship between general ideas of oppression and women's experiences of oppression becomes understandable (Ramazangolu, 1986: 84). A single typology of feminism does not explain competing feminist experiences and identities.

### ***Asian and Caribbean Feminism***

Feminist theorists from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean use historical data to argue that class and race were as powerful as gender in oppressing and exploiting women (Agnew, 1996: 1-3). These feminist perspectives however, do not focus on the issue of black and white. It is instead, a class issue with racial overtones that accounts for the different circumstances which women of similar classes encounter, advocates Scott,

(1996: 1). Christian, a black feminist finds that white middle-class feminist theorists have made a half-hearted attempt to consider the different experiences of women of various races and classes (1987: 59-60). She adds that white feminists rarely acknowledge that women of colour exist. Black women in the USA are now engaged in producing a black feminist theory which attempts to place women's multiple oppression at the centre of its inquiry (Christian, 1987: 50-51). Rather than a singular feminist perspective, what is needed is a typology of feminism that considers competing gender discourses.

### ***Black Feminism***

Black feminists focus on the oppression of black women and fight for racial and gender equality. Black feminism has emerged to correct prejudice in gender relations (Van Zoonen, 1994: 13; Hill-Collins, 1990: 221-238; Morell, 2005:85). As a feminist approach, it has not been easily recognized in the above typologies (radical, socialist or liberal feminism) (Van Zoonen, 1994: 13). An Afrocentric black feminist perspective is a contemporary approach that emphasizes the ongoing interplay between black women's oppression and activism (Hill-Collins 1990: 221-238). Hill-Collins adopts an Afrocentric feminist standpoint. According to this view, black women are seen as an emerging power and as agents of knowledge (Hill-Collins, 1990: 221-238). In addition, black women have been suppressed and oppressed (Hill-Collins, 1990: 221). This suppression has stimulated African-American women to create knowledge that empowers people to resist domination (Hill-Collins, 1990). Thus Afrocentric feminist thought represents a subjugated knowledge. She adds that Afrocentric feminist thought portrays African-American women as self-defined and self-reliant individuals that confront race, gender and class oppression (Hill-Collins, 1990: 221).

Afrocentric feminist thought views knowledge as an essential part of the social relations of dominance and resistance (Hill-Collins, 1990: 221). By objectifying African women and focusing on their experiences to serve the interests of elite white men, much of the Eurocentric masculine worldview fosters black women's subordination (Hill-Collins, 1990: 222). However, if black women's experiences are placed at the centre of analysis, this offers fresh insights on the prevailing concepts, paradigms and



epistemologies of this world-view and feminist critique (Hill-Collins, 1990: 221-222). According to Hill-Collins (1990:221), viewing the world through a conceptual lens of the simultaneity of race, class and gender oppression creates new possibilities for an empowering Afrocentric feminist knowledge.

Afrocentric feminist thought offers two significant contributions towards furthering our understanding of the important connections between knowledge, consciousness and the politics of empowerment (Hill-Collins, 1990: 221). *Firstly*, black feminist thought fosters a fundamental paradigmatic shift in how we think about oppression. By embracing a paradigm of race, class and gender as interlocking systems of oppression, black feminist thought reconceptualizes the social relations of domination and resistance (Hill-Collins, 1990: 221). *Secondly*, black feminist thought addresses ongoing epistemological debates in feminist theory and in the sociology of knowledge concerning ways of assessing 'truth'. Like Hill-Collins, Smith (1983) views black feminism as radical because it deals with race, sex, class and sexual identity as integrated factors.

Butler (1994: 36) claims that new methodologies growing from this paradigm would be "non-hierarchical" and would "refuse" primacy to either race, class, or gender, demanding instead recognition of matrix-like interaction. This perspective does not consider the views and identities of other minorities: Asian and Latino women. Black women are shaped by various competing feminist discourses and feminist positions. A feminist poststructural theoretical perspective is suggested, since integral power relations structures shape feminist thought.

### ***Shortcomings of Feminist Typologies***

Feminist typologies such as liberal, radical and socialist feminism have undergone considerable change over the past 20 years and encompass a range of theoretical developments and a large diversity of positions. Distinctions that used to be meaningful between these typologies have now become blurred (Eisenstein, 1981: 20), and are at odds with the current fragmentation of feminist thought. A diversity of feminism is not culturally consistent in the sense that, radical feminism in the Netherlands for instance,

differs in nature from radical feminism in the USA or Britain (Van Zoonen, 1994: 13). In addition, presenting feminism in typologies tends to obscure change and diversity (of feminist positions across the world). Discussing feminism according to typologies obscures ways in which, feminist perspectives have developed through debate, critique and counter critique. The line between feminism as an academic discourse and feminist activism has become blurred (Van Zoonen, 1994: 13). Furthermore, the problem with using the above feminist typologies (political and theoretical) is that they are constructed out of general feminist thinking, and then applied to feminist media studies, imposing (a more or less) irrelevant order on the field of gender studies (Van Zoonen, 1994: 13-14).

The ideas of masculinity and femininity have undergone social change over the past few decades in quite different ways. The term 'masculinity' which refers to the state of 'being a man' is currently somewhat in fluctuation' (Gauntlett, 2002: 9). Femininity is not necessarily viewed as the state of 'being a woman'; instead it is perceived more as a stereotype of a woman's roles from the past (Gauntlett, 2002: 9). Femininity is not seen as an essential value for women today; instead being 'feminine' is just one of the performances, which women can choose to use in everyday life (Gauntlett, 2002: 10). Therefore, a typology of radical, liberal, black and white feminism does not seem to be the most adequate tool to introduce some issues in feminist media critique (Van Zoonen, 1994: 13). Instead a paradigm that considers the complex relations of gender and power relations is necessary. Within music videos on MTV BASE Africa, women are positioned in relation to men. These relations are examined in subsequent chapters of this study.

### **Different Modes of Masculinity**

There are different modes of masculinity. For the purpose and relevance of this research study, the following modes are highlighted and discussed:

## ***Hegemonic Masculinity***

Feminist typologies have shaped masculine representations and discourses. “I do think feminism intervened, and shaped masculine representations, whilst we still have men and caricatures of men like that, there’s also been an emergence of the sensitive new age guy, the snag and other competing masculinities in the media that have emerged in response to feminism,” asserts Douglas (2000: 100). Different masculine paradigm positions have also shaped gendered media studies. The arguments of Weedon (2003), Connell (1995) and Morrell (2001) are discussed in relation to these masculine positions.

‘Hegemonic masculinity’ is defined as masculinity that occupies the dominant position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position that is always challenged/contested (Connell, 1995: 77). Masculine post-structural theorist Connell developed this concept to describe how masculinities are always relational and thus, one’s identity is continually constructed in relation to power/authority (1995: 77-80). Furthermore, he views masculinity as integrally connected to power and notes that it is constantly negotiated (Connell, 1995: 77). Hegemonic masculinity as defined by Connell (1995:78) refers to masculinity that is given the most social power in a particular historical context, and this is created in relation to subordinate masculinities. The concept of ‘hegemony’, deriving from Gramsci’s analysis of class relations refers to the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life (1971: 182).

Connell provides examples of visible bearers of hegemonic masculinity such as film actors, or fantasy figures (1995: 78-79). Hegemonic masculinity and its emphasis on power relations (race and class) shape the ways in which men achieve masculinity and offers a potential framework for understanding the ways gender is racialized for minority men (Connell, 1995:78). Hegemony is likely to be established only if there is some correspondence between cultural idea and institutional power, collective, if not individual. Douglas describes hegemonic masculine men as tough masters of technology, emotionally restrained and physically strong (2000: 97). Connell stresses that hegemonic masculinity embodies a ‘currently accepted’ strategy (1995: 78). When conditions for the defence of a mode of masculinity (for example patriarchy) change, the

basis for dominance of a particular masculinity is eroded. New groups may challenge old solutions and construct a new hegemony (Connell, 1995: 77). He adds that the dominance of any group of men may be challenged by women (Connell, 1995:77). Feminine and masculine identities are able to contest and challenge hegemonic power.

### ***Hegemony***

Hegemony is defined as a historically mobile relation (Connell, 1995: 78). The nature of hegemony is described as an outgoing tide/ flow; hegemony is a key element of masculinity (Connell, 1995:78). Connell discusses how hegemonic masculinity, specifically dominant masculinity, is contested, and how new modes of hegemonic masculinity arise (1995: 78). “Hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed character type and not always and everywhere the same” (Connell, 1995: 77-78). It is, rather, a masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position that is always contestable (1995: 77). In subsequent chapters, hegemonic masculinity as well as other competing masculine discourses is considered. Masculine post-structural theory allows for such contending and competing discourses.

### ***The Gender Order***

The gender order is essential in relation to a discussion of masculine hegemony. Prinsloo (1999:46), Connell (1995) and Morrell (2001) discuss the nature of the gender order. Prinsloo argues that the position of gender is always socially constructed, whereby different identities are proposed for masculine and feminine subjects (1999:46). Such identities are dependent upon the discursive processes that shape group and individual expectations of what women and men ought to be. These gender identities are formed by the generation and circulation of ideas and behaviour relating to gender, whether through actual lived social relations in all spheres of life or through representations (Prinsloo, 1999: 47 and Connell, 1995: 75-76). Connell refers to this complex issue as the ‘gender order’ (1995: 75). The gender process *firstly*, proposes masculine and feminine identities as distinct, and then privileges a hegemonic masculinity in relation to femininities, which is also in relation to other subordinate masculinities. Matthews states that a ‘gender order’ is historically a pattern of power

relations between men and women and definitions of femininity and masculinity (1984). Coupled to 'hegemonic masculinity', is 'emphasised femininity' which is defined in relation to the subordination of men and an orientation to the interests and desires of men (Connell, 1987: 183).

The gender order proposes a gender division according to binary opposites, where for example, masculinity is constructed as powerful, physical and rational and femininity as passive, dependent and emotional (Prinsloo: 1999:47). Prinsloo indicates that scholars of gender ideology and media critics have identified different features of hegemonic masculinity (Prinsloo, 1999: 47). Trujillo (1991) enumerates features of hegemonic masculinity in American culture, including physical force and control, occupational achievement, familial patriarchy and heterosexuality. Emphasized femininity is more varied and marked primarily by its subordination to masculinity. Emphasized femininity centres on features like appearance and sexual desirability, the domestic sphere, maternity and the role of nurturer (Prinsloo 1999: 47). Gender and sexuality are empirically interrelated where sexuality is gendered in fundamental ways and gender divisions are sustained by normative heterosexuality (Jackson and Scott, 2002: 20). The intersections of gender and sexuality form an area of focus. In subsequent chapters, categories such as race, class and gender, as well as male and female sexuality are discussed. Sexuality (heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality) is integral to the formation of gendered identities.

Coles argues that while the concept of hegemonic masculinity has proved to be pervasively popular in the study of men and masculinities, there are, however limitations (2008: 4). *Firstly*, hegemonic masculinity does little to account for the variety of dominant masculinities that exist under this umbrella term and how they are interconnected (Hearn 2007). If hegemonic masculinity is one form of masculinity that is culturally exalted over others, then this disregards the complexities of various other dominant masculinities (white, middle-class masculinity and aggressive masculinity) that exist (Connell, 1995: 77-83). It is possible to be subordinated by hegemonic masculinity, yet still draw on dominant masculinities and assume a dominant position, in relation to

other men. It is clear that competing masculine constructions exist in society (Coles, 2008: 4).

### ***Fields of Masculinity***

*Secondly*, while power is certainly important in terms of understanding relations between groups of men, as well as between men and women (i.e, patriarchy), hegemony has limitations (Coles, 2008: 4). Hegemony is limiting as it assumes that groups act to either achieve or maintain a dominant position over others, which is to their own advantage and is perpetuated through social institutions (Schippers, 2007). Where the concept of hegemonic masculinity is currently lacking, is in its ability to account for other dominant masculinities that exist. Various fields exist in masculinity and these fields tend to overlap. Furthermore, various subfields thrive in masculine fields. These subfields overlap within the field of masculinity (Coles, 2008: 12). Within any given field and subfield, there are positions of dominance and sub-ordination. For instance, one may be subordinated as a gay man within the field of masculinity, yet be dominant within the subfield of gay masculinity. Bourdieu's concept of fields allows for a variety of dominant masculinities to exist (1977).

As there are a multitude of fields in which masculinities operate, so too are there necessarily different versions of dominant (and subordinate) masculinities. For example, in the field of business and finance where economic capital is highly valued, dominant masculinity is exemplified in the aggressive market exploits of men (Coles, 2008: 12-13). In the military field, toughness and brute physical strength represent dominant versions of masculinity, and the body is valued as physical capital. Furthermore, these dominant masculinities are crosscut by external fields such as ethnicity and age to form a complex matrix of masculinities (Coles, 2008: 12-15). While the concept of hegemonic masculinity is centrally important to the study of men and masculinities, it is contextualized within Bourdieu's concept of fields, which considers multiple dominant masculinities (Coles, 2008: 12-15). Coles further argues that the focus is on how best to use hegemonic masculinity and build on it to develop a more sound rationale for how men negotiate masculinities (2008: 15). Rather than a single

masculine paradigm position, what is suggested is “masculine poststructural theory” which considers masculinities as collective human projects that are individually lived out (Watson 2000; White 2001). As a theoretical approach, it considers a variety of contending masculine discourses and relations of gender as fluid categories that shape identity.

### ***Patriarchy***

Patriarchy is the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Connell, 1995: 78-79). The structure of patriarchy is not independent of other forms of power: racism, class, subordination and heterosexuality (Weedon, 2003:10). Patriarchy refers to a fundamental organization of power on the basis of biological sex. Viewed from a poststructuralist perspective, it is not perceived as natural and inevitable, but socially produced (Weedon, 2003: 123). Connell (1995: 79) highlights how individual men each enjoy the patriarchal divide, “the advantage men in general gain, from the overall subordination of women” (Connell, 1995: 79). To speak of the patriarchal divide, is to raise exactly this question of interest. Furthermore, men gain a dividend from patriarchy in terms of honour and prestige and are vastly more likely to control a major block of capital as chief executive of a major corporation, or as a direct owner (Connell, 1995: 82). Men are much more likely to hold state power, for instance, men are 10 times more likely than women to hold office as a member of parliament (Connell, 1995:82). Men also own far more firearms than women. Indeed under many regimes women have been forbidden to bear or use arms (a rule that was applied in the armies) (Connell, 1995: 82).

Patriarchal definitions of femininity (dependence, fearfulness) amount to a cultural disarmament, which may be as effective as the physical kind (Connell, 1995: 83). Men continue to draw a patriarchal dividend in the metropolis as well as at the periphery. In 1990, for instance male average incomes were approximately double women’s average incomes, and men virtually monopolized the elite levels of corporate and state power (Connell, 1995: 226). In almost all regions of the world, men still monopolize weapons, and mostly control heavy machinery and new technology (Connell, 1995: 226). As a masculine typology, patriarchy is rigid and does not allow for contesting discourses; it

focuses only on dominance and control of feminine identities. Masculine poststructural theory on the other hand, allows for contending and competing discourses that conform to or contest power.

Masculinity is also a term that refers to a specific gender identity belonging to a specific male person (Morrell, 2001: 7). While this gender identity is acquired in social contexts and circumstances, it is 'owned' by an individual. It bears the marks and characteristics of the history, which shapes it, frequently with salient childhood experiences, imparting a particular set of prejudices and preferences, joys and terror (Morrell, 2001: 8). Masculinity viewed in this particular way, can be understood as something that can be deployed or used. While there are criticisms of this conceptualization of masculinity as voluntaristic, such construction allows for the examination of individual masculinities at work (Morrell, 2001: 9). This further promotes the examination of the micro aspects of masculinity, particularly of the male body - the major bearer of masculine value and symbolism (Morrell, 2001: 8). Furthermore, Coward (1982) adds that the ideology of patriarchy places women as available, submissive, passive sex objects. Patriarchy does not make room for competing, contesting discourses of masculinity that exist. Therefore, masculine post-structural theory serves as the appropriate tool, which incorporates contesting, competing masculine identities.

Connell indicates that with the growing recognition of the interplay between gender, race and class, it has become common to recognize multiple masculinities: black, white, working-class/middle-class (1995: 76). He further discusses a theme of different masculinities. Connell (1995: 76) adds that while men oppress women, some men are also dominated and subordinated by other men. Connell indicates that there is a masculinity that is hegemonic and dominates other masculinities and which succeeds in creating prescriptions of masculinity that are binding (or at least partially so), and which creates cultural images, of what it means to be a 'real man' (Connell, 1995: 76-80). There are also three non-hegemonic categories of masculinity that exist: subordinate, complicit and marginalized (Connell, 1995: 76-83). Morrell highlights that these masculinities developed out of the corridors of power (2001: 9).



A major debate within critical men's studies is concerned with hegemony (Morrell, 2001: 8-9). There are two approaches to hegemony as indicated by Morrell. One approach is based on cultural studies, and the other is based on poststructuralism (2001: 9). This study draws on the poststructural view of masculinity. The post-structuralist perspective focuses on a constantly changing hegemony (Morrell, 2001:9). For example, in specific situations it might be possible to see a shifting of hegemony as the notion of powers is woven by participating actors, each with agency and capacity (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994). As Morrell (2001: 9) puts it, social bodies and people located within these social bodies shape and construct gender identities.

### ***Black Masculinity***

Race relations may also become an integral part of the dynamic between masculinities (Connell, 1995: 80). White masculinity is constructed in relation to white woman and black men (Connell, 1995: 75). As a masculine mode, black masculinity focuses on subordination and aggressiveness and was shaped by massive unemployment, urban poverty and institutional racism (1995: 77). In addition, black masculinity has often been perceived as a sexual and social threat in dominant white cultures (Connell, 1995: 197). Black athletes and sporting stars become exemplars of masculine toughness. Marginalized masculinity is another typology that refers to the relations between the masculinities in dominant and subordinated classes or ethnic groups (Connell, 1995: 81). Marginalization is always relative to the authorization of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group. Thus in the United States, particular black athletes may be exemplars for hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995: 81). Athletes display traits of physical strength, competitiveness and force thus symbolizing examples of hegemonic masculinity.

### ***Subordinate Masculinity***

Within the overall framework of masculinity there are specific relations of gender, namely dominance and subordination between groups of men (Connell, 1995: 78). An example of subordinate masculinity is homosexual masculinity. The most important case as described by Connell in contemporary European/American society is the dominance of heterosexual men and the subordination of homosexual men (1995: 78).

The author provides examples of how gay men are subordinate to straight men in a range of practices (Connell, 1995:78). Gay men are often excluded culturally or politically. In the United States gay men have often been the target for cultural abuse (verbal assaults) and street violence (intimidation, murder) (Connell, 1995). Oppressive positions such as homosexual masculinities are positioned as the bottom of the gender hierarchy among men (Connell, 1995: 78). Gayness, according to patriarchal ideologies, is the repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity (1995: 78). Hence from the viewpoint of dominant/ hegemonic masculinity, gayness is easily assimilated to femininity. Tasks and activities such as fashion, home decoration and hair-dressing are associated with femininity and not considered to be part of hegemonic masculinity. Hobson (1985) indicates that an ambiguous mode of masculinity exists. She notes that until recently, it was only in gay culture that an open display and objectification of the male body for sexual pleasure began to flourish (1985).

There is now an increasing trend for heterosexual males to position themselves as the sexual objects for the camera's gaze (O' Sullivan, Dutton and Rayner, 1994). Some male musicians have consciously feminized their appearance so to create considerable ambiguity about their sexual identity, for example, David Bowie, Boy George Michael Jackson and Prince (O' Sullivan *et al*, 1994: 83). In order to analyze masculine representations, an appropriate theoretical framework is needed: the masculine post-structural approach. As a framework, it encompasses contesting masculine constructions and social relations that intersect with gender.

### ***Complicit Masculinity***

Complicit/negotiated masculinity is a paradigm position, which refers to masculinity that is constructed in ways that realize the patriarchal dividend, without the risks of being authoritative (Connell, 1995: 79). This typology of masculinity recognizes another relationship among groups of men and the relationship of complicity with hegemony (1995: 79). Another change in gender relations that has received less attention has been the change in masculinity (Morrell, 2001: 3). In the 1990s men and masculinity, internationally became the focus of interested speculation, with the media asking the

following questions: are men in crisis and should they be assisted to recover their masculinity? Are men actually entitled as never before and committed to holding onto their privilege, at the expense of women? (Morrell, 2001: 4-5).

Morrell affirms this masculine mode and states that commentators looking for signs of positive change found it in the emergence of the 'New Man' (2001: 4). This was a term coined to refer to men who did not subscribe to stereotypical ideas that all women were nags, that a woman's place was in the home or that women should look nice or say little (Morrell, 2001: 4). The 'New Man' was in favour of women's liberation, looked after children, supported women in their desire to develop their careers and was sensitive and introspective (Morrell, 2001: 4). Morrell and Ouzgane refer to this masculine paradigm as the 'new man' model of masculinity (2005: 85). Evidently, there are competing masculine identities and constructions that exist in society with some dominant and some subordinate characters. Masculine poststructural theory considers these competing masculine modes.

In response to the hegemonic model of masculinity, models of masculinity that stress peace, democracy, tolerance and domestic responsibility, have ushered in a new form of masculinity, that of the 'new man' (Morrell and Ouzgane, 2005: 85). One effect of the 'new man' model of masculinity has been an increasing realization of the values of families for men in order to contribute to healthier gender patterns in the future (Morrell and Ouzgane, 2005). Connell illustrates an example of such masculinity: marriage, fatherhood and community life often involve extensive compromises with women, rather than total domination or an uncontested display of authority (1995: 79; see also Rubin (1976)). A great number of men who draw patriarchal divides also respect their wives and mothers, are never violent towards women, do their accustomed share of the housework and bring home the family wage. Douglas discusses the United States President Barack Obama in an attempt to highlight the example of complicit masculinity (2000: 100). "Obama is very steady, he's strong, he's firm, but he's not a hyper macho 'I'm-gonna-go-out-to-my-ranch-and-clear-the-brush-and-wear-a-cowboy-hat' kind of a guy" (Douglas, 2000: 100). Diverse examples of masculinity are present in society. As indicated by Kellner, one sees interesting multiple masculinities. Furthermore, the

women's movement has shaped the variety of ways in which men have appeared in a whole host of TV shows, movies and music videos (but this is not as prevalent in music videos) (2000:100). The interplay of gender with structures such as class and race creates further relationships between masculinities. Connell points out that hegemony and subordination are relations within the gender order (1995: 80).

Morrell's work reflects on various competing masculine constructions within South African society (2001: 4-190). What could be more different than the image of a grim-faced, rifle-toting soldier clad in camouflage gear, patrolling the streets of a township and a colourful cross-dresser showing off his stuff in a gay pride march? (Morrell, 2001: 3). Morrell identifies a range of masculinities in southern Africa (2001:3-190). Greg Coetzee, a young poet, described South African men as "fossils" (2001). This refrain was further taken up in 1998 when a Durban academic was reported as describing South African men as the "world's biggest pigs" (*Independent on Saturday*, 5 September, 1998). Morrell argues that this unflattering view of South African men is stereotypical. Not only does it isolate specific aspects of masculinity and represent these as common and universal but it also fails to capture masculine diversity (2001: 3). Morrell argues that masculinity is fluid in nature and subject to constant change and transformation (2001: 3-4).

The above masculine positions (hegemonic, patriarchy, subordinate masculinities) have shaped gender studies. However, they omit certain factors that shape gendered representations: competing masculine discourses and power relations.

Competing and contesting feminist and masculine identities exist in society. Integrated factors of power relations and positions of subordination and domination influence gender identities. Based on an analysis of previous feminist and masculine positions, the research employs feminist and masculine poststructural approaches, which include gender in relation to power and discourse. The next chapter discusses past research on feminist and masculine representations in music videos and television programming.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Literature Review

#### **Gender Representations in Music Videos**

This chapter discusses research on gendered representations within music videos on MTV USA, Black Entertainment Television and VH-1 satellite music channels. Emerson (2002), Perry (2003) and Hill-Collins (1994) locate various feminist representations and identities in American music videos (ambiguous femininity, dominant hegemonic femininity, autonomous/positive femininity and counter-hegemonic). These feminist identities are applied in the analysis. Wingfield (2008) and Smith and Beal (2007) identify various masculine modes and identities within music videos and MTV Programme 'Cribs'. The researcher draws on these masculine modes in the study. The themes of race, class, sexuality, and body type are discussed in relation to gender constructions.

#### ***Stereotypes of Black Masculinity in Music Videos***

Stereotypes of black masculinity are perpetuated by media, international corporations and in the music industry (Wingfield, 2008: 90). Today, these images continue to be perpetuated by multi-national media corporations and are distributed internationally in a global economy. Images which white male-owned corporations choose to perpetuate reproduce racist, gender and class stereotypes of black masculinity (Wingfield, 2008:90-91). Alternative representations of black masculinity exist in hip-hop culture, but such representations are virtually silenced (Wingfield, 2008: 90-91). Alternate black male representations do not feature very often in music videos (Emerson, 2002: 90-91). There are alternate representations of black masculinity and femininity in Hip-Hop/Rap music videos. Wingfield asserts that gay black male rappers, feminist, anti-capitalist, black male rappers and middle-aged black male rappers all exist, and offer alternate depictions of black masculinity that sharply contrast with the dominant images found within hip-hop culture (2008: 90-91).

Multimedia corporations have the power to popularize a gender image of black masculinity that is fundamentally constructed *via* negative images around race, class

and hyper sexuality (Wingfield, 2008: 90). Media corporations also have the power to marginalize and censor other images of black masculinity that contrast or challenge racist sexist stereotypes (Wingfield, 2008). Black men generally are critiqued for perpetuating an image of excessive conspicuous consumption, misogyny and criminality (2008: 88). While some black male rappers indisputably depict women as sexual objects in their music videos, these particular images (which are undeniably shaped by race and class), clearly mirror the sexism of the larger patriarchal society (Wingfield, 2008: 88).

It is also important to acknowledge that the dominant image of black masculinity that emerges in hip-hop culture is simply a contemporary manifestation of age-old stereotypes of black men in society (Wingfield, 2008: 88). Stereotypical representations, namely the black super-stud and the dangerous black criminal, were initially created by white elites to justify social, economic and political exploitation of blacks (Davis, 1981). Whilst the dominant image of black masculinity in hip-hop culture depicts black men who focus on generating income through any available means, most black men are faced with prejudice and barriers in social institutions (Hill-Collins, 2004: 9-12). Furthermore, black men's opportunities to secure gainful, paid work that offers a living wage are severely constrained because of restructuring within America and subsequently in the global economy, racist-sexist impediments in educational arenas and institutional and individual discrimination in the workplace (Hill-Collins 2004: 9-12). Using the influential arguments of Hill-Collins (2004), Emerson (2002) and Smith and Beal (2007), this chapter examines dominant representations and social myths concerning masculine identities. These include hyper-sexuality and the 'bling stereotype' that are present in music videos. In subsequent chapters, the focus includes an inspection of whether alternative, contesting representations of masculinity are present.

Andersen (2004) argues that research on gender must employ an intersectional perspective, treating gender as a category that intersects with, and is shaped by race and class. This negative dominant representation of black masculinity accentuates her point that systems of power and domination exist in music videos (2004: 89). Wingfield

adds that a small number of black male rappers are economically rewarded by colluding with these racist, gendered, and classed stereotypes. However, the vast majority of ordinary black men who manifest the images of masculinity perpetuated in hip-hop culture are rewarded with jail time (Wingfield, 2008: 91). The dominant representations of black masculinity that are frequently perpetuated on music videos do not correspond with realistic portrayals of black men in society (Wingfield, 2008 and Emerson, 2002).

### ***Black Male Representation in Hip Hop Music Videos***

The theme of hedonism is frequently perpetuated by black men in hip-hop music videos. When black men buy into hip-hop culture's image of black masculinity, they embrace ideals of hedonism, materialism, misogyny, hyper- sexuality and emotional unavailability (Hooks 1994). Black men following this cultural dictate are encouraged to "get money" at any cost, to engage in conspicuous consumption, and to treat women as sexual objects (Wingfield, 2008:91). An intersectional perspective thus shows how music corporations are able to function as systems of power and domination that reproduce a singular image of black masculinity, while ironically penalizing most of the people who conform to it (Wingfield, 2008: 91).

Black men can and do choose whether they will mirror hip-hop culture's vision of masculinity or not. However, it should be noted that even black men who actively refuse to embody this image are still subject to its influence and impact (Wingfield, 2008: 92). Black men who seek to define themselves through other criteria of masculinity must still function in a society that treats them in accordance with the dominant, common image of black men as hypersexual, criminals and thugs (Wingfield, 2008). For black men, agency is shaped by and must be viewed in the context of the intersections of race, gender, sexuality and class. Wingfield observes that this is an additional new, important direction for feminist and masculine scholars (2008:92). Black masculinity as a typology does not consider the experiences of other masculine positions (Asian, Latino, and white men). Masculine poststructural theory is offered as a suitable theoretical approach because it considers various competing masculine discourses.

Gauntlett (2002: 61) states that music offers a whole range of images and messages about women and men. Music videos further clarify the significance of media as a social institution, and how discourses of race, class and gender are represented and reproduced in it (Emerson, 2002: 115-120). Emerson adopts a feminist poststructural approach and indicates that prevailing discourses of womanhood are present, specifically, autonomous, negative hegemonic representation and counter-hegemonic discourses (2002: 115-120). The author highlights that various representations of American women, black, white and Hispanic are present in music videos. Her work is based on a textual analysis of a sample of 56 music videos that were recorded from the daily broadcast programming of cable networks BET, MTV and VH1 (Emerson, 2002: 119).

### ***One Dimensional View of Women in Music Videos***

Existing research and criticism has focused on popular culture (television programmes, music videos), prominently black hip-hop culture, and masculinity (George, 1998; Perkins, 1997; and Rose, 1994). However women are also positioned as strong, assertive subjects in music videos. Emerson notes that black women have a significant presence in hip-hop music, black culture and in music videos (2002: 115-120). Hegemonic and counter-hegemonic themes of black womanhood are found in music videos, resulting in a complex, often contradictory and multifaceted representation of black womanhood (Emerson, 2002 and Hill-Collins, 1991a).

Black women are often represented as dominant images: the hyper-sexualized 'hot mamma' or 'jezebel', the asexual 'mammy', the emasculating 'matriarch' and the 'welfare recipient' or 'baby-momma' (a colloquial term for a young, unwed mother) (Hill-Collins 1991a). Music videos are able to exhibit and reproduce stereotypical notions of womanhood (Emerson, 2002: 115-120). The videos reflect how race, class and gender continue to constrain and limit the autonomy and agency of black women. Music videos contain imagery that reflect and reproduce the institutional context in which they are



produced, and they are permeated by stereotypical, controlling images of black womanhood (Emerson, 2002; Wingfield, 2008 and Perry, 2003).

### ***Dominant Hegemonic Representations of Women***

Dominant hegemonic representations of black women (emphasising hyper- sexuality) are perpetuated in music videos (Emerson (2002), Perry (2003: 136) and Hill-Collins (1991a)). Social constraints emerge, such as the emphasis on physicality and the female body (Emerson, 2002: 122). Female performers are required to live up to the dominant notions of physical beauty (a homogenized standard of beauty). Both Emerson (2002) and Perry (2003) examine feminine representations in American music videos. They establish that there is a lack of variety in female body size and weight (Emerson, 2002 and Perry 2003). Most women are represented as thin/slender in music videos.

Emerson notes that a common feature within most music videos is that thin, physically attractive performers are clearly constructed as objects of male desire (2002:117-120). Although Emerson's focus was on black female representations, she includes other female representations (Latino and white females). Similarly, Perry (2003) found that Hispanic and white women are objectified in music videos and their body parts are fetishized. Perry (2003: 136) and Emerson (2002: 117-122) argue that many women in music videos are objectified; they appear scantily clad, their body parts became fetishized and their extremities serve as the centre of the camera's gaze. The dominant representations of black womanhood are flat and one dimensional and black woman are not represented in their full range of being. These hegemonic representations are not multi-faceted; instead women are reduced to decorative 'eye candy' and objects of male sexual desire (Emerson, 2002: 123). Women are represented as weak, powerless beings subject to male control.

One-dimensional depictions of black women as sex objects for male pleasure undermine feminine legitimacy and agency as intelligent, significant members of society (Emerson, 2002: 117-120 and Hill-Collins, 1991a). Due to the primacy of their sexual roles, female representations are not taken seriously (Emerson, 2002: 117-120). These dominant hegemonic representations embody highly sexualized images of black women. The emphasis on appearance and physical attraction confirms the notion of the excessive sexuality of black women (Emerson, 2002: 117-120). Such female representations support the ideological controlling image of hypersexual 'sapphire' or 'jezebel', effectively undermining black womanhood and humanity (Hill-Collins, 1991a and Emerson, 2002: 129). Perry (2003), Emerson (2002: 117-123) and Hill-Collins (1991a) indicate that dominant hegemonic representations of black female dancers and video girls are sexually objectified and clearly one-dimensional (Emerson, 2002: 120-129).

### ***Emphasized femininity***

An example of the stereotypical, flat representation of women is embodied through Sarah Palin, former US Republican Vice-Presidential candidate. Douglas uses the example of Palin to describe hyper-femininity: a superficial representation of femininity (2000: 97). Furthermore, Palin represents the most retrograde, sexist ways of evaluating women. She is a beauty pageant contestant and in her debates she winks at the audience, all 'girly-girly' (Douglas, 2000: 97). She reinforces the notion that hyper-femininity is the most important thing for a woman, which is something that feminists sought to drive a stake in the heart of (Douglas, 2000: 97). Palin embodies a hyper-femininity representation of 'I'm a hottie'.. She perpetuates the notion that women don't know anything and they don't have to know anything (Douglas, 2000:97). According to this representation of hyper-femininity, "women can just bat their eyelashes and obtain what they desire" (Douglas, 2000: 97). Douglas argues that Palin reinforces the stereotype that women don't know about politics or world affairs, and don't have to. They can just flirt their way to the top (2000: 97). Such representations of gender on television uphold stereotypical conventions of femininity.

Besides hegemonic representations of women as hyper-sexual, objectified and subordinate to males, other counter-hegemonic representations are established (Emerson, 2002: 115-129). Pregnant women, mothers and women older than 30 are perceived as undesirable objects of the music video camera gaze, thereby reinforcing the sense that only women who young and sexually available are accepted in music videos (Emerson, 2002: 123). Sexual diversity is another crucial element of female representation, which is conspicuously omitted from music videos. This reflects the desirability of perceived sexual availability for men (Emerson, 2002: 123-124). None of the videos studied by Emerson featured performers who were lesbian or bisexual, nor did they feature even implicit homosexual or bisexual themes (Emerson 2002: 123). Most music videos are based on homophobic rhetoric<sup>2</sup>. Emerson observes sexual difference and non-conformity in R 'n B and hip hop music videos that are still not legitimized in black popular culture. Therefore it is not surprising that bisexual and lesbian themes do not emerge (2002: 123). Counter hegemonic or alternative representations of female identity (for example lesbian, bisexuality, or maternal representations of female identity: mother, pregnant women) are discussed in subsequent chapters.

Emerson (2002: 123) notes that the controlling negative representations of women are surprising considering the conventional wisdom that black communities possess. This is in relation to alternative beauty standards, which allow for larger body types. These alternative beauty standards contribute to a more positive body image among black women (Cash and Henry 1995; Flynn and Fitzgibbon 1996; Harris 1994; and Molloy and Hertzberger 1998). However, there is a place for alternate representations of women whilst counter-hegemonic representations are present within music videos. Despite the continuing objectification and exploitation of black woman, there is evidence of contestation, resistance and the assertion of a black female positive identity (Emerson, 2002). Such representations contest the dominant hegemonic notions of women.

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<sup>2</sup> Refer to Katie Perry's music video: *I Kissed a Girl*. This is an anomaly that focuses on lesbian sexuality.

Blackness does not carry a negative connotation; instead it is the basis for strength, power and a positive self-identity (Emerson, 2002: 123-129 and Hill- Collins, 1991a). Black women signify blackness, therefore music videos which explore themes of womanhood directly associate black women with blackness and black life (womanhood, sisterhood and black consciousness). Such codes include visual representations such as care giver and nurturer in domestic space, identification with signifiers of blackness, an assertion of autonomy, vocality and independence: expression of partnership and sisterhood with other black women and men. Blackness is associated with strength, power and a positive self identity (Hill-Collins, 1991b and Emerson, 2002: 128-129). Black women assert their own interests and define their own identity and life outcomes (Emerson, 2002: 125). Strong representations of black identity associated with solidarity are emphasized.

### ***Counter-Hegemonic Representations of Women***

Some representations of black womanhood in rap music assert independence, agency and control of their sexuality (Rose, 1994). Women rappers articulate a feminist sensibility through their music videos. Roberts (1991) cites examples of black female rap artists: An example is Queen Latifah MC Lyte who uses assertive rhetoric, aggressive sexuality and a defiant stance as evidence of a firmly and marked feminist consciousness. Black female performers use music videos to resist sexual objectification and contest hegemonic racist and sexist notions of black femininity (Emerson 2002: 127-129).

### ***Multi-dimensional Representations***

A third representation<sup>3</sup> of womanhood is associated with ambivalence and contradictions (Emerson, 2002: 127). These contradictory representations are imminent in music videos which feature black woman. These videos exemplify a tension between the structural constraints of race and gender, on the one hand, and women's resistance and self-affirmation on the other. Such videos contain conflicting messages about

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<sup>3</sup> The first was the hegemonic; the second the counter-hegemonic, discussed above.

femininity and sexuality. Gendered themes of contradictions and ambivalence are present:

*Sometimes music videos have an ambivalence of contradictory messages: the coexistence of hypersexual images and the denigration and denial of the beauty of black female body. In response to these contradictory notions of black woman black female performers frequently re-appropriate explicit images of female sexuality (Emerson, 2002: 128).*

These contradictions, explicit representations of black women's sexuality, exemplify a process of negotiating contradictory and often conflicting notions of identity. These portrayals represent an attempt to use the space of the music video to achieve control over their own sexuality. A sexualized image often occurs simultaneously with themes of independence, strength, a streetwise nature and toughness (Emerson, 2002: 128-9 and Devereux, 2007). The juxtaposition and combination of sexuality, assertiveness and independence in these videos can also be read as the re-appropriation of a black woman's body in response to its sexual regulation and exploitation. What emerges is an effort on the part of the black female artist to assert her own sexuality and to gain her own sexual pleasure (Emerson, 2002: 130).

Emerson argues in favour of a multidimensional nature of black womanhood (2002: 125-129). A woman does not need to alienate her sexuality to be assertive, nor must she be a one-dimensional sex object, but she can be allowed to express her sexuality, her body and her own life simultaneously (Emerson, 2002: 125-129 and Devereux, 2007). Women are portrayed as being in control of their bodies, sexuality, actions and identities. In these texts, the black woman is constructed through apparent contradiction as being able to assert the pursuit of pleasure without sacrificing her humanity. Contending and competing feminine discourses are present within (Lotz, 2001). Ambivalent and multi-faceted representations of female identity are present.

Gender is concerned with the role of women and the role of men in relation to women (Prinsloo, 1999:47). Therefore, the presence of males in music videos has also influenced female representations. Emerson found that men in music videos are

extremely attractive and also serve as objects of the camera's gaze (2002: 125-129). What is important within the text is that not only men are gaining pleasure from viewing the women in the video, but women serve as viewers as well (Emerson, 2002: 125-129). This portrayal of men and women is not mere role reversal but rather is an example of an articulation of mutual pleasure and enjoyment (Emerson, 2002: 125-129). The black woman is the agent of her own pleasure as well as the vehicle for the fulfilment of the man's desire. Female representations are able to give sexual pleasure but also pursue, receive and accept it (Emerson, 2002: 125-129). These examples of black male and female representations also serve to level the sexual playing field: both women and men can serve as objects of pleasure, as well as subjects of control (Emerson, 2002: 125-129). Such representations resist the dominant hegemonic notion and view of women, and create multi-dimensional gendered representations.

### ***Men Positioned as Sex Objects***

There is an increasing trend that positions men as objects of pleasure (O' Sullivan *et al*, 1994). Emerson found that a large number of music videos feature men as objects of women's desire where men's bodies serve as the centre of the camera's gaze (2002: 125-129). What also occurs in these videos is a reversal of traditional gender roles in which men are objectified. Simultaneously, women remain the object of the camera's gaze (Emerson, 2002: 125-129). What these videos have in common is the construction of the male body as the object of female pleasure. The male body is not merely looked at, but rather it is actively pursued. These women in the videos clearly and unequivocally express what they want, how they want it, and that they frequently get it. What results is a space where the erotic can be articulated on a woman's terms; where the importance of female sexual desire becomes the key. It results in a space for an articulation of themes of freedom, liberty and sexuality (Emerson, 2002: 125). Both male and female bodies serve as object for control and subordination within music videos.

Alongside black women, white and Hispanic women also frequently feature in music videos. Perry (2003: 136) indicates that MTV or BET (Black Entertainment Television)

music channels reflect disturbing images of women. She found images of black men rapping, surrounded by dozens of black, white and Latino women, dressed in swimsuits or scanty clothing (Perry, 2003: 136). Women appear in the videos explicitly as properties, unlike the luxury items (cars, Rolex watches, and platinum and diamond medallions) that also feature in music videos. The male stars/artists of the videos do not get these legions of women because of charisma or sexual prowess. Rather, they are able to buy women because they are wealthy and the message is not, "I am Don Juan" but rather, "I am rich and these are my spoils" (Perry, 2003: 136). Women (black, white and Hispanic) are often presented as frivolous commodities, objects of sexual desire and material possessions.

### ***Dance in Co-relation to Pornography***

Women in music videos are seen dancing in a two-dimensional manner, a derivative but non-intellectual version of black dance (more reminiscent of symbols of pornographic male sexual fantasy than of the ritual, conversational and sexual tradition of black dance). Black dance is a highly sexualized 'boogie dance'; of the deep south (which features polyrhythmic rear end movement, innuendo and sexual bravado (Perry, 2003: 136-137). The use of black women in music videos of male hip hop artists often makes clear reference to the culture of strip clubs and pornography. Women dance around poles; porn actresses and exotic dancers are often featured in music videos and they bring the movement-based symbols of their trade with them. The introduction of porn symbols into music videos is consistent with a larger movement that began in the 1990s in which pornographic imagery, discourses and themes began to enter American popular culture (Perry, 2003: 136-137).

Devereux on the other hand (2007: 194) states that a half-naked woman, in a rap music video offering her for (symbolic) consumption, is not necessarily problematic. Some women who feature in rap music are seen as impressive, powerful women. However such videos focus on hyper sexual femininity rather than positive femininity. Sexuality, body image, race, class and gender are key areas of gender constructions.

### ***Women's Bodies within Music Videos***

The videos have assimilated the African American ideal of a large rotund behind; however, the video ideal also features petite waists, large breasts, and slim, shapely legs and arms (Perry, 2003: 138). Women of various races with slender, thin bodies are featured in most music videos. An emphasis on women and their bodies became an important and necessary focus of gendered media studies and feminist critique (Morgan and Scott, 1993: 407). The study of female bodies should not be marginalized. However, it might be argued that one of the paradoxical consequences of this feminist critique is the relative under-emphasis on male bodies and masculinities. This leaves some aspects of the exercise of men's power unexamined.

Scott and Morgan (1993: 406) add that, where "issues of men and their bodies do come under sociological examination, the consequences are often limited and disappointing". Most discussions concerning male bodies revolve around psychobiological overtones of body language or bodily abuse among young men.

The somewhat one-dimensional picture of men and their bodies emerges, focusing on hardness, aggression and heterosexual performance (an "over-phallusized picture of men"). Instead Morgan (1993: 406-407) suggests a focus on the complexities involved in considering men, masculinities, their bodies and identities. Men and ideas of masculinity are both embodied and non-embodied (Morgan, 1993: 407). It is misleading to see men as straight-forwardly more embodied than women. Many images of men in sport, at war and in advertising are highly embodied, (emphasising physicality and male sexuality) hence we are encouraged to read these portrayals as physical masculine representations (Morgan, 1993: 407). Moreover, pictures of bishops, stockbrokers or dons might not seem as embodied as images of sportsmen or warriors, but if we fail to see their bodies, in these cases this may be because of a prior framework of understanding the links between men, bodies and action. Morrell states that men's bodies are often represented as powerful; as instruments of strength/force (2001: 41).



### ***Masculine Modes on MTV BASE Africa-Music Videos***

Smith and Becky Beal (2007: 103) have undertaken research on male representations in the MTV programme *Cribs*<sup>4</sup>. They affirm a masculine post structuralist position and establish that competing discourses surround masculine representations: high culture, middle-class, hegemonic, lower-class and black masculinity (2007: 103). Various types of masculinity are conflated with race and class. MTV's *Cribs* promotes successful masculine representations, which are displayed through competing discourses of race and meritocracy (2007: 103-106).

Smith *et al* found that *Cribs* presents race and class as styles to be performed, as one of the personal choices needed to achieve a successful masculinity (2007: 103-109). Furthermore, they found that *Cribs* provides a nexus of race, masculinity and consumerism (Smith *et al*, 2007: 103-109). In a post-Fordist economy, marketing lifestyles and desires have opened new and multiple masculinity markets (Beynon, 2002; Crew 2003; Whannel, 2002; and Wheaton, 2005.)

Competing multiple masculine modes and discourses are present within MTV's *Cribs*. Masculine representations in *Cribs* express their manhood through consumer practices (wealth, materialism), race (white and black masculinities) and class (upper-class, working-class and low-class traits). Therefore fluid "hybrid" expressions of various contending masculinities are present (Smith *et al* 2007: 103-109).

### ***High Class Masculinity***

The first masculine mode identified is high class masculinity. The most powerful form of masculinity (upper-class, white heterosexual) is described as "high culture", which is a conspicuous display of wealth, but in a style that highlights refinement and restraint (Smith *et al*, 2002: 107). "High culture" is also marked by certain leisure activities such as reading, travel, opera, and ballet. However, high culture no longer focuses on simply

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<sup>4</sup> See MTV's *Cribs*: a programme that showcases homes, lifestyle and the wealth of European and American celebrities and athletes.

displaying products that are purchased, but rather the experiences one can pay for and the services that can be rendered, frequently in one's own home (Steinhauer, 2005).

### ***Middle Class Masculinity***

The second masculine mode identified is middle class masculinity. The middle-class ethos is reluctant to consider class privilege as the key to upward social mobility which focuses on meritocracy (Smith *et al*, 2007:108). Therefore, certain characteristics are associated with a middle-class ethos such as the belief that success is made by the individual's hard work. Middle-class masculinity is identified by the values of earnestness, effort, delayed gratification and domesticity (Wald, 1997). Accordingly, middle-class power is marked by intelligence and technical competence (Burstyn, 1999, Lott, 1997).

### ***Masculinities of Lower Class***

The third mode identified is masculinities of lower-classes. Low-class masculinities are associated with manual labour, where power is derived from masculinity and physical bravery, which are often contrasted to intelligence (Smith *et al*, 2007: 107-109). Low culture pursuits, activities and expressions tend to be more 'extravagant', such as professional wrestling, comic books, pop music etc. Historically, these leisure activities have been deridingly called 'popular culture' (Smith, 2007: 103-109). In addition, cultural markers of blackness get conflated with this class. Blackness has been associated with natural physicality, including hyper sexuality (Dunbar, 2000 and Hooks, 1992). Such associations uphold a negative, stereotypical representation of black masculinity. Smith *et al* found that black males exude an excessive display of wealth (jewellery, the latest technology and luxury cars), thus reinforcing the 'bling' stereotype (that perceives black people to be primarily concerned with material wealth) (2007: 103-109). Like Emerson (2002), Smith *et al* also argue that although MTV's *Cribs* does highlight certain stereotypes, it is able to move beyond the negative stereotypical representations of black masculinity (2007: 103-109).

Today the world of music serves as a prime sphere where physicality, expressiveness and masculinity are celebrated (Smith *et al*, 2007: 103-109). A hyper heterosexual discourse was located in MTV's *Cribs* (Smith *et al*, 2007: 103-109). An example is the many black males who showcased their bedrooms or jacuzzis and referred to these rooms as places "where action happens with the ladies." (Emerson *et al*, 2002: 103). Another male representation that emerges on *Cribs* is the "Metrosexual". These male representations are found to be unmarried, and fashion-savvy (Smith *et al*, 2007: 103-120). White and black metrosexual representations display their clothes, closets and often discuss their bathing accoutrements and accessories. In addition, they were very articulate about the staging of their houses and the art displayed, often taking credit for the design or knowledge of the art (Smith *et al*, 2007: 103-120).

From a masculine post structuralist perspective, MTV's *Cribs* is able to play with various discourses that represent desirable masculinity (Smith *et al*, 2007: 103-120). Black hippies and muscularity are paired with economic success gained through hard work. According to Bourdieu (1984), new hybrid discourses of masculinity emerge. The new emerging middle class distinguish themselves as different from old wealth, by drawing on popular culture ('low culture') and high-culture symbols. Smith *et al* found male representations on MTV's *Cribs* which correspond with Bourdieu's emerging middle class. These male representations draw from popular culture fields (music, art) and physical competence, to gain wealth and pursue hedonistic pleasures, whilst living with the resources of the most economically elite (Smith *et al*, 2007: 103-120).

### ***Three Models of Masculinity***

Three models of masculinity were identified by Smith *et al* (2007: 103-120). The first is identified as a 'James Bond' model: someone who has a muscular physique, and is athletically competent with upper-class knowledge, tastes and preferences. The second is the 'Cool Pose' model: one who is muscular and athletic with the ability to define oneself outside upper-class knowledge and tastes and celebrates an extravagant lifestyle (Smith *et al*, 2007: 103-120). This model of masculinity displays a radical, individualized notion of power and one that connotes a disdain for dominant hegemonic standards of masculinity. 'Cool Pose' embodies toughness, exudes emotional control

and detachment and incorporates a flamboyant style. Smith *et al* found that 'James Bond' and 'Cool Pose' models of masculinity are frequently perpetuated in *Cribs* (2007: 103-120). What is important about the 'James Bond' and 'Cool Pose' models is that they are physically strong, actively heterosexual and independent from women and children (Smith *et al*, 2007: 103-120).

The third model is the Attentive Dad. This model describes a type of masculinity which has a primary concern for the welfare and comfort of children, as well as the stability of a good, strong family life (Smith *et al*, 2007: 103-120). They found that some men, who were married, seemed to integrate women and children into their daily lives.

'Cool Pose' was exemplified by many black male representations (though not all black males). These male representations displayed their wealth through excessive materialism, as a means to emphasize success (Andrews, 1996, 1997; Majors and Bilson 1992). This is not to suggest that white male representations did not engage in excessive materialism, but there were notable differences in tastes, and the consumption of certain products: cars, technology, and collections.

However, Smith *et al* found that all three models of masculinity were not exclusive; some representations drew on many models of masculinity (Smith *et al* 2007: 107-120). For example, many male representations draw on both 'James Bond' and 'Cool Pose' models of masculinity. These male representations are muscular and athletically competent, with upper-class knowledge and tastes, but are also strongly connected to their history and are aware of their success. Within the two models, Smith *et al* identified a noticeable trend (Smith *et al*, 2007: 103-120). When black males appropriated whiteness, it was for material wealth, not style; when whites appropriated blackness, it was in bodily practices such as style, dress, and language. Thus, male representations draw on contesting and competing masculine discourses.

Furthermore, the models of masculinity were not always specific to race, thus revealing that both white and black males were able to cross over patterns previously assumed to be race-specific (Smith *et al* 2007: 103-120). Both white and black representations on MTV's *Cribs* evoked a middle-class ethos though in markedly different ways (Smith *et*

*al*, 2007: 103-120). Many black male representations made a significant number of references to their families and lessons learnt from families. They discussed hard work and success in different terms than their white counterparts who were more likely to attribute their accomplishments to their own individual efforts rather than family support (Smith *et al*, 2007: 116). Furthermore, Smith *et al* established that many white male representations adopt a middle-class ethos; their clothes (sports clothes, baggy clothes) are often worn in the performance of their sports but are also a part of their lifestyle (2007: 103-120). This is read as a rejection of the upper-class lifestyle and as embracing manual labour, and a working-class ethos (Smith *et al*, 2007: 103-120). By enacting working-class and black masculinities, white middle-class men are able to cloak their race and class privileges (Kusz, 2001). Brayton (2005) argues that some white representations intentionally reject white, middle-class suburban normativity because they desire the embodied power and social independence associated with working-class and black masculinities.

### ***Masculine Representations in South Africa***

Different and competing masculine discourses are present in South Africa. Discussions of men in South Africa can be understood in terms of discourses used (Morrell, 2001: 24). Morrell looks at the different kinds of masculinities that exist in South Africa, including Afrikaner-Nationalists in the apartheid and post-apartheid era, African gold miners, black working-class men, gay men, unemployed youth and migrant workers. He investigates how masculinities frequently change. No single masculinity alone is likely to transmit values and norms. Gender change is a highly complex process, which occurs in social groups, institutions and within individuals (Segal, 1990). The responses of men to changes in southern Africa can be grouped into three categories: reactive/defensive, accommodating and responsive/progressive (Morrell, 2001: 24). These are not watertight categories. Hence there are always areas of overlap and contradiction.

### ***African Migrant Workers***

Men may have multiple ways of behaving, but the performance of masculinity is ultimately located within gender power structures, which locate and place limits on their particular performance. Performing masculinity, as Morrell puts it, is about men making and remaking masculinity, about challenging hegemonic masculinity and reconstituting it (2001: 24). For African men, the past few decades have seen the erosion of their position in South Africa and elsewhere in Africa (Silberschmidt, 1992). Migrant labour is seen as an experience which reduces the male prerogative. Placed in these situations, men long for rural areas, where they were respected and “treated like men”. Migrant workers live away from their families and have to do their own chores: cooking, cleaning and washing their clothes: tasks that were previously done by their wives (Carton, 2000 and 2001: 126-129). Women bear the brunt of these feelings of emasculation and compensatory entitlement. Rural women described the situation as follows: “the countryside (is) a drunkard’s paradise, where men come home to drink and charm their women only to leave them again, penniless and pregnant with another child” (Carton, 2001: 126-129).

Carton highlights that the swarm of the locust returning foreshadowed the coming of migrant workers. This created a resurgence of power struggles between aged fathers and their adult sons, between rural and urban, and between hegemonic masculinity and alternative masculinity (2001: 126-129). Carton found that many older men encountered a struggle to uphold their power against the challenges of migrant workers whose return spawned turbulence. Their testimonies revealed that a number of rival interpretations of manhood existed (2000). These competing expressions of masculinity threatened to undermine the customary authority of the resident patriarchs. Evidently, hegemonic masculinity is not fixed, but rather it is contested by other masculine discourses. There is no fixed masculine identity.

### ***Male bodies as symbols of Power/Force***

Morrell highlights that men’s bodies are often represented as powerful; as instruments of force (2001: 40). However, men’s bodies are not uniform and they do not have equal power. Inequality and oppression resonate in men’s bodies, particularly in South Africa

(Morrell, 2001: 40). The activities of men's bodies have differed and their potential has varied according to context. Colonial and apartheid policies and regimes have meant that white men have used their bodies in strikingly different ways from black men. Under apartheid, white men had power over black men, but this is changing with the country's transition to democracy (Morrell, 2001: 40). The privileged access of white men to positions of power, jobs, guns and sporting opportunities has declined. Some white men have fought to retain their power, but have drawn on images of white supremacy to mobilize their claims (Morrell, 2001: 40). White supremacist masculinity is no longer hegemonic and imitating the *voortrekkers* no longer works to gather support. Thus, masculinities are subject to change.

### ***Guns and Weapons associated with Male Identity***

Morrell indicates that technologies of power such as guns are no longer monopolized by one race group. Guns are now easily accessible. Weapons are supplied to the national defence force, but private ownership is significant. Guns have become an extension of the body and a tool for exercising power. Guns have become a key feature of hegemonic masculinity; their ownership and use varies across racial lines and between institutions, but nevertheless is central to the way many men act out their masculinities (Cock, 1992, 2001: 43-47 and Nathan 1989). In contemporary South Africa, widespread poverty and a high unemployment rate have contributed to the commoditization of various kinds of violence, as a means of livelihood. Cock argues that violence is bound up with male identity in many different cultural contexts in South Africa (Cock, 2001: 43-47).

To a diverse number of young men, guns are a marker of status, and signal a particular style, for example many members of organised crime syndicates in Soweto flamboyantly display firearms indicating the status of being a 'big man' (Wardrop 1996: 8). For several black Sowetan informants, guns were a marker of power and a strong, 'notorious' identity.

Cock points out that, guns are also forms of social display, which can signal male affluence (Cock, 2001: 47). An informant from the Indian community of Lenasia (near

Johannesburg) said that “if you have a BMW, a cell phone and a glamorous woman, you’ve got a lot; if you’ve got a gun as well, you’ve got everything” (Cock, 2001). According to another informant, guns have even penetrated Johannesburg’s white, middle-class clubbing scene (Cock, 2001). Evidently, for many South African youth (of various races) guns are associated with a glamorous lifestyle, together with fast cars and flashy clothes. Cock also found that gun culture not only operates to glamorize war and weaponry, but to ‘normalise’ these social arrangements. Part of this ‘normalisation’ is the notion that private gun ownership is legitimate and a right, not a privilege (2001: 47).

The popular image of the Zulu nationalist is of a man carrying ‘traditional weapons’: a raw-hide shield, knobkerrie and spear. The Zulu king told a mass rally in Soweto that ‘the call to ban the bearing of cultural weapons is an insult to my manhood; it is an insult to every Zulu man’ (Cock, 2001: 47-50). Evidently, the gun is a convenient peg on which to hang traditional notions of masculine power (Cock, 2001: 47-50). Like many masculine discourses, hegemonic masculinity continues to shift.

### ***Unemployed Zulu Youth***

A second form of masculinity that is identified is unemployed youth. For township youth who do not look to ‘tradition’ for their inspiration, there are other ways of rejecting violent masculinities which attempt to re-establish the power of men (Hemson, 2000: 65-68). Hemson shows how township men have tried to accommodate change, making sense of their masculinity through two diverse set of symbols: rural and urban. He examines the lives of young African men who have lived in Durban’s working-class townships. As working-class youth these males are inescapably exposed to violence and potentially caught up in it. In addition, when not within their home area, they are confronted by active hostility from other men and other figures of authority and increasingly risk contracting HIV/AIDS (Hemson, 2000: 57).

Hemson established two masculine discourses: the first *Ukubekwezela*, refers to ‘grasping the pot even though you can see it is hot’, and the second is *Ukuzithemba* meaning to ‘trust in’, or ‘hope’. *Ukubekwezela* refers to the quality of enduring and, when



necessary, accepting pain and this phrase is commonly used when people endure hardship (Hemson, 2000: 65). For example, lifeguards maintain a routine of training, to keep their performance criteria while rescues may expose them to danger. In addition, lifeguards may require strict diet changes. *Ukuzithemba* denotes positive self regard and could apply to women as well as men. It is a recurrent theme in the way lifesavers spoke about themselves. This term does not imply masculine exclusivity. Many lifesavers said that they were proud of their perseverance and their achievements: “I am proud that I made it halfway in life and I’ve got a house, a good salary and a child” (Hemson, 2000: 65-67). There is an implicit rejection of the “us”-and-“them” spirit of Black masculinity, and an echo of the values of *Ubuntu*, a more inclusive notion of mutual respect.

The two concepts *Ukubekwezela* and *Ukuzithemba* are central to the masculinity of which the lifesavers speak and bring together themes of endurance and assertion (Hemson, 2000: 65-67). Despite obstacles, the young African men of *Thekwini (Saving Lives Club) SLC* generate a new masculinity which in significant ways diverges from the black oppositional masculinity of their township peers. This emerging masculinity draws its strength from two changing contexts: a political context in which black people now have a stake and a material context in which career progression and financial security are now possible (Hemson, 2000: 65-67). These changes create possibilities for men to explore a sense of masculinity and autonomy and to break away from what they now experience as the constraints of township masculinity.

### **Struggle Masculinity**

Xaba (1990 and 2001: 108-110) discusses ‘struggle masculinity’, which refers to the type of masculinity that became dominant among young urban Africans during the days of the struggle against apartheid (in the 1980s). He points out that during those days, being a ‘comrade’ endowed a young man with social respect and status within his community (Xaba, 2001: 107-110). ‘Post Struggle masculinity’ is the masculinity which seeks to supplant ‘struggle masculinity’ in post-apartheid South Africa (Morrell, 2001: 4-9). Its main characteristics are respect for law and order, the restoration of ‘public order’, and the resumption of paying for services. Xaba focuses on the heroes of yesteryear

who have become the villains and felons of today. Their main characteristics were opposition of the apartheid system (Xaba, 2001: 107-110). The African township youth, the 'young lions or foot soldiers of the revolution' have become marginalized, whilst some have become full-time gangsters. The journey from fame to notoriety was associated with changes in the culturally projected ideals of masculinity and in the socio-political conditions of post-apartheid South Africa (Xaba, 2001: 108-110). The heroes of the past struggle to adapt to the new social order, and resort to violence and crime to establish their sense of identity and masculinity (Landers, 2002).

The transformation of masculinity occurred when young men trained in the use of military weapons found themselves without any means to support themselves, or get the lavish consumer items they believed they deserved (Xaba, 2001: 107-110). Xaba adds that many former 'exiles' and 'comrades' who were not assimilated into the official Defence Force of the new South Africa cannot return to school, and are perennially unemployed (Xaba, 2001: 107). Xaba adds that a series of events seem have contributed greatly to the ostracisation of the 'comrades' and 'exiles'. These events unfolded after the 1990 unbanning of political parties, change in the political regime and the return of their leadership. This political transition impacted on the African National Congress (ANC), the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) that became part of the government of national unity having gained a majority of votes in the first democratic election in South Africa (Xaba, 2001: 107). 'Comrades' no longer had an impulsion to fight for freedom.

These values as Xaba points out are a world away from 'struggle masculinity'. Some 'comrades' and 'exiles' joined the national army and police force where their skills were put to use, but others did not qualify or were demobilized, These 'comrades' and 'exiles' who were recruited in the past to fight Nationalist institutions now found themselves on the other side of the social, economic and political fence (Xaba, 2001: 108-110).

Without employment, the 'comrades' could not legitimately obtain money to elevate their standard of living or obtain material wealth. Violent actions (rape, assault, and murder) are not accidental but derive from socialization (in families, schools and the violent

1980s) to which former 'comrades' or 'exiles' were exposed (Xaba, 2001: 108-110). This form of masculinity is neither supported by the state nor by communities.

Xaba states that the socialization of former 'comrades' together with their social circumstance led them to commit violent crimes (2001: 108-110). 'Struggle masculinity' may in time, disappear as the numbers of former 'comrades' decline and the social and economic landscape changes (Morrell, 2001: 4-9). However, the likelihood exists that African youth who continue to have limited opportunity for upward social mobility will develop oppositional forms of masculinity ((Xaba, 2001: 108-110). Masculine discourses have the ability to conform to the *status quo* or rebel against it.

### ***Afrikaaner Masculinity***

Kobus Du Pisani draws attention to another mode of masculinity: Afrikaner masculinities in Apartheid and Post-Apartheid South Africa (1998 and 2001: 157-171). The emergence of hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity marginalized alternative masculinities by silencing or stigmatizing them. Hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity was intricately bound up with social and political power in Afrikaner society and hence with Afrikaner Nationalism. Afrikaner masculinity changed over the 50-year period under review by accommodating and absorbing social change and gender challenges which came from sources such as youth, women, global culture and class transformation (Du Pansi, 2001: 157-171). Du Pisani argues that although hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity changed over time, it did not lose its essential puritan character (2001: 157-171). With the transition to the 'new' South Africa, the 1990s has been an age of major change in the country.

Afrikaners have lost their political power and some white Afrikaner males have felt threatened by apartheid (Du Pisani, 2001: 157-171). Moderate Afrikaners have denounced apartheid; some Afrikaner men are trying to free themselves from the regime of apartheid. This can be seen in the texts of recently published novels and autobiographies (Malan, 1990). Today many diverse images and expressions of masculinity co-exist in Afrikaner society. Many Afrikaners left the National Party and joined other parties so that Afrikaners were spread over almost the entire political

spectrum (Du Pisani, 2001: 157-171). Evidently, Afrikaner masculinity cannot be classified as fixed and homogenous, but rather as competing masculine identities that exist. Du Pisani discusses a range of Afrikaner identities: a range of political views in contemporary Afrikanerdom is exemplified by the ultranationalist Eugene Terreblanche on the right, and the ANC's Carl Niehaus and Dirk du Toit on the left (Du Pisani, 2001: 157-171).

The desire to break free from existing stereotypes about the Afrikaner are exemplified by trends in Afrikaans rock music, and the emergence of groups such as the *Jong Afrikaner Anargiste* (Young Afrikaner Anarchists) (Du Pisani, 2001: 157-171). Afrikaner cultural identity and masculinity have undergone change: from rural traditionalism at the beginning of the century, to urban modernism in the middle of the century to a masculine and feminist poststructural world of technology and globalisation (Du Pisani, 2001: 171). Afrikaner masculine identity is therefore not enclosed but open to contesting discourses.

### ***Homosexual Masculinity***

Louw sheds light on the discussion of gay/homosexual masculinity (2001: 228-231). De Vos (1996) adds that it is impossible to talk of homosexual identity in South Africa as a stable entity. Louw argues that, rather, a variety of homosexual identities are produced by a set of power relations within the contexts of neo-colonialism, capitalist developments and racial domination (Louw, 2001: 288). Within these same relations, constructions of masculinities have been forged. Homophobia frequently prevented the emergence of alternative masculinities, but it was not all-pervasive or uniform. Contrary to the dominant images of African Masculinity, Louw sheds light on the emergence of the *Mkhumbane*, an alternative masculine identity of same-sex relationships (Louw, 2001: 228-231). The origins of the homosexual community in Mkhumbane are traced back to city of Durban, South Africa during the mid-1940s.

A large number of African men left their settlements and farms, sought employment in mines and accommodation in single-sex mine compounds (Louw, 2001: 272-288). Same sex 'marriages' were common among mine workers. In these relationships the

need for intimacy is met through the heterosexual orientation of masculinity and is not challenged, as wives and families remain the focus of procreative sex. The distinction between gay and heterosexual sexuality is blurred (Morrell, 2001: 272). Sexuality remains a contested site.

*Isikhesana* describes men who adopt a male homosexual gender. The term is still used today, but its meaning has changed (it may now refer to a gender neutral term) (Louw, 2001: 272-288). The term *iqenge* also describes men who adopt a homosexual gender. A marriage would take place between *iqenge* and *Isikhesana*. With regard to African men, there is no “coherent and stable black manhood” (Louw, 2001: 272-288). Competing black masculinities exist, for example, modern and traditional black men, professional black men and unskilled black men (Louw, 2001: 272-288). There is no fixed or homogenous black masculine identity, but rather various competing masculine identities. A number of terms are used by Africans to describe same-sex relations and the meanings of these terms are contested.

Same-sex marriages between African men in 1950s built on a history which can be traced back to end of the nineteenth century (Louw, 2001: 272-288). The first recorded incidents occurred amongst a gang known as the Ninevites that operated in Johannesburg and Zululand (Louw, 2001: 272-288). The gang also began operating in the prisons under the name ‘28s’. Louw highlights that it was in prison that the discourse of same sex marriage was established. The development of a democratic government has led to the rise of gay and lesbian organisations and the Gay Pride Parade and created space for new, alternative masculine identities (Louw, 2001: 295). Morrell (2001), Smith (2002), Hill-Collins (1994) and Emerson (2002), all claim that there are competing modes of masculinity and femininity. The researcher draws on these claims within her analysis of gender constructions.

Transgressions of male/female classifications are evident. Examples of ambiguous gender identities include Grace Jones, Prince and Michael Jackson. Ambiguous sexuality is present in lesbian and homosexual culture, in the phenomenon of transsexuality, and in the daily lives and experiences of women and men whose

identities contradict the identifiable distinction between men and women (Van Zoonen, 1994: 31). Although lesbians, gays and bisexuals continue to face prejudice and discrimination, there is a growing amount of evidence that society learns a greater awareness of sexual diversity (Gauntlett, 2001: 12). A typology of masculinity or femininity is rigid and enclosed. It is therefore necessary to use an appropriate theoretical framework to examine gender constructions and power relations. These masculine and feminine theoretical perspectives are examined in subsequent chapters.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Theoretical Framework

A typology of feminism or masculinity is enclosed in the theoretical framework and the meaning is fixed. What is needed is a paradigm shift towards a fresh perspective, which includes contending discourses and gender identities. Therefore, feminist poststructural theory and masculine poststructural theory are positioned as the most suitable approaches to explore gender representations in relation to competing gender discourses and power relations. Feminist poststructural theory is able to showcase alternative feminine identities (multi-dimensional womanhood, ambiguous femininity and autonomous feminine identity) that counteract dominant discourses (Van Zoonen, 1994: 13-14). Feminist and masculine poststructural theories are able to show that alternate, diverse and competing gender identities exist.

This new paradigm considers contending discourses and continually changing and conflicting masculine and feminine identities. Gender is associated with the term 'discourse'. Van Zoonen (1994: 32-33) indicates that gender can be defined through the concept of discourse: that is a set of overlapping and often contradictory cultural descriptions and prescriptions referring to sexual difference, which arise from and regulate particular social, economic, political, technological and other non discursive texts. She adds that gender is inscribed in the subject, along with other discourses such as ethnicity, class, sexuality and race (1994: 32-33). De Lauretis argues that:

*The subject [is] constituted in language, to be sure, though not by sexual difference alone, but rather across languages and cultural representations; a subject engendered in the experience of race and class, as well as sexual relations; a subject therefore not unified but rather multiple and not so much divided as contradicted (1987: 2).*

Gender should thus be conceived not as a fixed property of individuals, but as part of an ongoing process by which subjects are constituted, often in paradoxical ways (Van

Zoonen, 1994: 32-33). Gender identities that emerge are therefore fragmented and dynamic. Gender is an intrinsic part of culture and is loosely defined as the production of meaning, and is subject to continuous discursive struggle and negotiation (Van Zoonen, 1994: 32-33). Feminist and masculine poststructural theories view gender as a discursive construct (Van Zoonen, 1994: 32-33).

### **Feminist Poststructural Theory**

This feminist paradigm was influenced by structural anthropology, linguistics, psychoanalysis, and the concept of discourse (Jackson *et al*, 2002:18). Based on the analysis of previous feminist positions, the approach best suited is Feminist poststructural theory. This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the theoretical approach. Feminist poststructural theory enables opportunities for feminist media politics, rather than jeopardizing its political reference as is often feared (Van Zoonen, 1994).

Differences between typologies of feminism such as liberal, radical or socialist feminism have now become hazy and indistinct (Eisenstein, 1981). Brundson (1993: 309) indicates that a typology of feminist studies does not seem to be the most adequate instrument to provide the reader with an introduction to some issues in feminist media critique. Feminist poststructural theory offers a better way of understanding how media relate to gender (Van Zoonen, 1994: 44).

Gender scholars have begun to challenge the boundaries of existing knowledge and dominant discourses, which has given rise to feminist poststructural theory (Weedon, 2003). Rubin (1976) suggested that 'men' and 'women' are social, rather than natural categories and products of marriage and kinship. In the 1980s, the emphasis shifted from cultural and linguistic structures to a more fluid notion of the discursive constitution of subjects deriving from Foucault's work (1978, 1980). At the core of the feminist poststructural approach is the idea of 'gender as discourse'. It is a set of overlapping and sometimes competing cultural descriptions and prescriptions referring to sexual difference and an emphasis on active construction of meanings and identities by



'readers' of media texts (Van Zoonen, 1994: 40). This is important because feminist discourses have a direct relevance to the representations of women which are established in subsequent chapters. Van Zoonen proposes construing gender as discourse, a set of contending and conflicting descriptions of sexual identity and difference (Van Zoonen, 1994: 40-41). Van Zoonen's conceptualization of gender describes the possibility of fragmented and multiple subjectivities in and amongst women (or men for that matter), and allows for difference and variety (Van Zoonen, 1994: 40-41). Media are assigned to 'reflect' reality, representing our collective hopes, fears and fantasies, and performing a mythical and ritual function and portraying reality, but are also socially constructed in discourses that reflect and produce power (De Lauretis, 1987: 2).

In addition, Van Zoonen (1994: 41) indicates that defining gender as discourse leads to the question of what 'role' the media play in gender discourse, and how that role is realized. De Lauretis (1987: 2) proposes that gender should be thought of as "the product of various social technologies such as cinema, of institutionalized discourses, epistemologies and critical practices, as well as practices of daily life". However, at the centre of the discussion of gender is the struggle over the meaning of gender (Van Zoonen, 1994:41). According to feminist poststructural theory, the meaning of gender is always contested. Butler and Scott (1994: 3-4) adopt a feminist poststructural perspective and argue that the term 'women' is a debatable category, complicated by class, race, gender and sexuality, which shape female identities.

A major accomplishment of twentieth century feminism has been the widespread recognition that women are "not born but made" (Dines and Humez, 2003a: 4). This definition refers to a process of taking feminine attributes which begins at birth and requires intensive socialization. However, given the culture of the 'perfect woman', (its gender norms) can shift dramatically in response to changing social and economic conditions (Dines *et al*, 2003a: 4). Dines *et al* adopt a feminist poststructural perspective and argue that feminine (and masculine) identities are unstable, contending and multi-dimensional (2003a: 4).

### ***A Suitable Poststructural theory for Feminist Media Studies***

Weedon (2003: 19) argues in favour of the appropriateness of feminist poststructural theory. This approach is not the answer to all feminist questions, but serves as a way of conceptualizing the relationship between language, social institutions and individual consciousness, which focus on how power is exercised, and the possibilities of change. The term 'poststructuralist' is like all language plurals. It does not have one fixed meaning, but is generally applied to a range of theoretical positions, developed from the work of Derrida (1973, 1976), Althusser (1971) and Foucault (1978, 1979, 1981). There are differences between forms and types of poststructural theory. Not all the forms are necessarily productive for feminism (Weedon 2003: 20). Foucault's theory draws on discursive relations and social practices (1978, 1979a, 1979b, 1981). Weedon is producing a specific version of post-structuralism, which she calls feminist poststructural theory (2003: 19-20). She does so in order to articulate a particular position and method for the reader, which she believes is useful for feminine practice and gender studies (Weedon, 2003: 19-20).

Feminist post-structural theory can also indicate types of discourses from which particular feminist questions come, and locate them both socially and institutionally. According to this theory, the meaning of gender is socially produced, and varies between different forms of discourse (Weedon, 2003: 19-20). Feminist poststructural theory claims that the identity and meaning of women is not fixed by the natural world, but socially produced within a series of competing discourses (Weedon, 2003: 20). Competing discourses provide competing ways of giving meaning to the world, which imply differences in the organisation of social power (Weedon, 2003: 20-22). These discourses become the site of struggle.

Feminist poststructural theory, as indicated by Weedon, generates a fresh theoretical perspective from which the dominant discourse can be criticized or challenged and new possibilities envisaged (2003: 25). Feminist identities are subject to challenge and redefinition. Furthermore, post-structuralist theory must always pay full attention to the social and institutional context of textuality in order to address the power relations of everyday life (Weedon, 2003: 21-25). Social meanings are created in social institutions

and practices in which individuals, who are influenced by these institutions, are agents of change who may either serve dominant interests or challenge existing power relations and discourses (Weedon, 2003: 19-20).

Women and men serve as agents of change which serve the hegemonic interests or challenge it, and create alternative forms of knowledge (Weedon, 2003: 19-25). Identity is shaped by various feminist discourses that compete for meaning. Feminine identity can become a site for struggle where meaning can be reproduced or contested and transformed.

### ***Characteristics of Feminist Poststructural theory***

Fenwick English and Gary Anderson (2005: 347) adopt a feminist poststructural view, and highlight characteristics of this approach. Firstly, feminist poststructural theory reminds us that knowledge and truth are neither fixed nor stagnant; they are slippery, unstable, and open to a multitude of readings or inscriptions (English *et al*, 2005: 347). Indeed, all knowledge is contested; what counts as knowledge depends on who creates it, anoints it and communicates it (Foucault, 1980). According to Foucault, all knowledge is contested and challenged (1980).

Secondly, Foucault suggests that the reason this happens, is because power, knowledge and truths are intricately connected: Truth does not exist 'out there', but is actively produced and proliferated within discourse. Foucault's (1980) concept of discourse, power and knowledge is discussed later in this chapter. English *et al* argue that the reason why specific truths are privileged is because other truths are actively constrained, controlled, and afforded a different status. Truth, hence, is not "objective" or "waiting to be discovered" but is pregnant with societal "values, politics and desires" (St. Pierre and Pillow, 2000: 484).

Thirdly, feminist poststructural theory is not preoccupied with a search for truth; it is more interested in understanding the relationship between knowledge and power, as well as how and why certain truths are enabled and proliferated (English *et al*, 2004: 347). The fourth and final concept of feminist poststructural theory is the notion of resistance (English *et al*, 2004: 347). If knowledge and truth, as suggested above, are

to be challenged or expanded to include many voices (rather than voices of the powerful alone), then one can expect 'new' knowledge and truths to emerge (to include a resistance to powerful voices and accepted claims of knowledge and truth) (Grogan, 2003: 222-223). Feminist poststructural theory acknowledges that competing female voices and identities exist. In a nutshell, feminist poststructural theory aims to understand how women and men are impacted on (linguistically, socially and materially) within discourses to reveal the relationship between truth and knowledge and to open opportunities for resistance (St, Pierre and Pillow, 2000: 1-2). Competing voices of knowledge and truth exist; therefore competing discourses and gender identities thrive in society.

### ***Masculine Poststructural Theory***

Based on an examination of previous masculine theories and paradigm positions, the approach that the researcher feels is most suitable, is masculine poststructural theory. Unlike the previous typologies of masculinity, this approach integrates race, class and power and enables an examination of various competing masculine discourses and identities. Foucault's theory of discourse is valuable in relation to discourses of masculinity (1980). Typologies of masculinity fall short as they fail to capture masculine diversity (Morrell, 2001: 33). Masculine poststructuralist theory on the other hand supports masculine diversity. It shows that masculinities are fluid and should not be considered as belonging in a fixed way, to any one group of men. This paradigm position is able to shed light on the existence of non-dominant masculinities and diverse masculinities. Weedon (2003: 23) provides valuable insight for understanding competing masculine identities and discourses. These competing masculine discourses provide competing ways of giving meaning to the world, which implies differences in the organization of social power, class and race. Morrell's significant work on masculinity establishes masculine poststructural ideas as follows: that "there is no one typical South African man", but rather many, diverse masculinities (2001: 33).

In any given society, there are a range of competing and contending masculine identities and discourses. There is no one, typical man; instead, as Morrell's work

shows, there are diverse competing masculinities, some of which support violence and exploit gender relations whilst others oppose unequal gender relations (2001: 33). The power of men is not fixed nor is it the case that all men share the spoils of dominance equally (Morrell, 2001: 33). Masculine diversity is an inherent feature of masculine poststructural theory. In addition, Morrell argues that a range of different masculinities exist in South Africa, such as struggle masculinity, post-struggle masculinity, gay masculinities, hegemonic masculinity, violent masculinity, post-apartheid Afrikaner masculinity and hybrid identities (Morrell, 2001: 4-288).

Masculinities are subject to continual change and in some cases they accommodate challenges in order to preserve privilege or respond to pressures with various kinds of violence. However, in other situations, they embrace the principles of democracy, and gender equity (Morrell, 2001: 3-9). Morrell further argues that the volatility of gender change is important for two reasons. In the first instance, it shows that masculinity can and does change, and therefore is not fixed or rigid (Morrell, 2001: 3-9). Secondly, gender changes reveal that men differ; not all men have the same masculinity (Morrell, 2001: 3-9). Theorists such as Morrell (2001), Van Zoonen (1994), Weedon (2003), Connell (1987 and 2003) and Prinsloo (1999 and 2006) have attempted to elaborate or expand on this observation by discussing a range of masculinities and femininities. Masculinities, as Morrell points out, are fluid and should not be considered as belonging in a fixed category to any one group of men (2001: 30). Moreover, he indicates that gender identities of men are socially constructed, changeable and often contradictory. Multiple contending masculinities exist.

### ***Multiple Masculinities***

Masculinities are socially and historically constructed in a process which involves contestation between rival understandings of what being a man involves (Morrell, 2001: 7). The concept of masculinity is often and incorrectly used in a manner that implies homogeneity amongst men. Connell corrects this by recognizing multiple masculinities (Connell, 1995: 77-83). In his typology of hegemonic, subordinate, complicit and marginalized masculinities, he describes the characteristics of each type, including their

fluidity, whilst stressing the importance of investigating the relations between the different types. Masculinities are constantly being protected and defended, and are constantly breaking down and being recreated (Connell, 1995: 70-83). For gender scholars the challenge is to identify what forces operate to bring about change in masculinities, when, where and how such changes occur, and what their effects are.

### ***Hegemony***

The masculine poststructural perspective discusses the notion of a frequently changing hegemony. Connell maintains that hegemonic masculinity “occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable” (1995: 77). However, “when the given pattern of relations change the basis for the dominance of a particular masculinity are eroded” (Connell, 1995: 77). Thus masculine identity is fluid in nature and subject to various discourses. Many diverse and competing masculinities co-exist in society. For example, in specific situations, it might be possible to see a constant shifting of hegemony as the complex pattern of power is woven by participating actors, each with agency and capacity (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994: 105). No one masculinity or group alone is likely to be the carrier of new values and gender change is a highly likely process, which occurs within individuals, in groups and within institutions (Lynn Segal, 1990).

Hence hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed entity or character type. It is a position that is always contestable (Connell 1995: 76). Various competing modes of masculinity (black masculinity and negotiated masculinity) always challenge the dominant mode of masculinity. This is applicable to feminist typologies as well. For example, white middle-class feminism is not rigid or fixed; it is always challenged and disputed by other feminist discourses (Black Feminism, Caribbean Feminism, Asian Feminism). New groups may challenge the dominant discourse and construct a new hegemony (Connell, 1995: 77). The dominance of any group of men may be challenged by women. Thus identity is shaped by dominant and oppositional discourses and the ongoing contestation between them.

Morrell observes that race and class are critical forces in determining the life experiences of men (2001: 3-9). In South Africa, for example, being a black man was historically synonymous with being poor. Nevertheless, life circumstances gave men choices even if these were limited by the apartheid context (Morrell, 2001: 208). These choices ranged from how to relate to other men and how to position oneself in relation to other men. A further emphasis included how to relate to other classes (for example, whether one should assume the identity and lifestyle of a gangster, or a worker), and how to relate to women (Morrell, 2001: 208). The author further states that the choices that men make in relation to these questions implicitly affirm a particular masculine style, while opposing or rejecting other ways of performing masculinity. The use of multiple masculinities acknowledges that masculinity has different meanings to different groups of men at different times (Kimmel, 2001: 338). Within any society at any one time, there are multiple meanings of manhood and men's experiences depend on class and race, asserts Kimmel (2001: 338). Furthermore, masculinity is not inherited, nor is it acquired in a unique way. It is constructed in the context of class, race and gender and other factors, which are interpreted through the prism of age (Kimmel, 2001: 338).

In addition, feminist and masculine poststructural theories are able to examine how power relations are transformed (Kimmel, 2001: 31). Gender is viewed as a way of structuring social practice and it is unavoidably involved with other social structures (Connell, 1995: 75). As Kimmel (2001) explains:

*Masculinity is constructed differently by class, culture, race, ethnicity and by age. Each of these axes of masculinity modifies the others. Black masculinity differs from white masculinity, yet each of them is also further modified by class and age. A 30 year old middle-class black man will have some things in common with a 30 year old middle-class white man, which he might not share with a 60 year old working-class black man. Although, he will share elements of masculinity which are different from those of the white man of his class and age. The resulting matrix of masculinities is complicated by cross-cutting elements and without understanding this, we risk collapsing masculinities into one hegemonic version.*

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that multiple femininities and masculinities exist in society. To recognize that there is more than one kind of masculinity and femininity is the first step in understanding this genre. We have to unpack the milieu of class and race, and scrutinize the gender relations operating within them (Connell, 1995: 76-78).

Boys develop a masculine gender identity which is deficient relative to the adult masculinity of men (Morrell, 2001: 8). The stages by which boys become men provide a source of anxiety and a rite of passage. There is no set or prescribed procedure, but the determination to become a 'man' is a powerful feature of masculinity. Morrell adds that while masculinity is not automatically acquired, it is also true that boys and men are not entirely free to choose those images which please them (Morrell, 2001: 8). Their tastes and their bodies are influenced and shaped by discourses of gender, which they encounter from birth. Epstein and Johnson offer the following definition of masculinity:

*Human agents cannot stand outside culture and wield power precisely as they wish. Power is always limited and shaped by systems of knowledge which also shape the subjects and objects of power.... power/knowledge positions us as subjects of particular identities.... in this particular sense, power and knowledge as discourses 'constructs' social identities. (1998: 15).*

According to the masculine poststructural view, competing and contending discourses shape masculine identities. Organisations and the people who inhabit them are involved in a process of constructing gendered discourses (Morrell, 2001: 9). The discourses that become dominant tend to illegalise or censure certain gender constructions (for example being gay), and tend to affirm other gender constructions (for example being heterosexual) (Buchbinder, 1998).

At the personal level people are constantly contributing to undermining and drawing upon gender discourses (Morrell, 2001: 9). While there is an overall pattern which collectively serves to legitimate forms of gender inequality and power, gender talk is highly contradictory (Morrell, 2001: 9). Hearn (1999) illustrates that the capacity of individuals to juggle two sets of opposing views can legitimise and perpetuate gender



power. Men that are violent towards women often use language to normalize the situation whilst, at the same time acknowledging that their actions are wrong (Hearn, 1999). Thus masculine identities are shaped by conflicting discourses.

While the majority of men perpetuate and reproduce dominant gender relations and forms of masculinity, there are some men who, either consciously or unconsciously, oppose hegemonic prescriptions of exemplary masculinity (Morrell, 2001: 3-9). Dollymore (1991) has distinguished forms of opposition into two categories: transgressive or transformative behaviour. The categories describe two types of dissident behaviour, one which transgresses but remains beyond or outside social norms, and another which transgresses and forces change to existing norms and perceptions.

Tony Coles (2008: 1) argues in favour of a masculine poststructuralist model, which introduces the possibility of multiple dominant masculinities. The model also outlines the ways in which masculinities are both produced and reproduced, as a consequence of struggles between dominant and subordinate groups of men (Coles, 2008: 1). Masculinities are constantly in flux. As men age and move through the course of their lives, so too do their identities. Hence masculinities frequently go through change (Coles, 2008: 1).

Coles (2008: 4) further argues that masculinity is understood to be a fluid, socially constructed concept, which changes over time and space (i.e., historically and culturally). Various competing discourses are used to negotiate masculine identity. Masculinity does not mean the same thing to all men. Thus masculinity is a fluid term. It is varied in how it is understood, experienced, and lived out in daily practice (Coles, 2008: 1).

For example, men born into working-class families who are denied access to middle-class occupations by their limited social, economic, and cultural capital and who must opt for working-class jobs may not necessarily see their situation as forced upon them. (2008: 4). They may refuse white-collar work as an effeminate, soft alternative. Through taking on blue-collar work workers view this type of work as skilled, and this

makes them 'real' men by allowing them to use their bodies to perform masculinity (e.g., strength, competency, risk-taking) (2008: 4). Various competing masculine discourses thus impact on masculine identity.

### **Race, Class and Gender**

The interplay of gender with other structures such as class and race create further relationships with masculinities. Connell (1995: 80) adopts a masculine poststructural perspective and shows how race, class and gender shape masculine identities. He uses the example of Information Technology, which has become a vehicle for re-defining middle-class masculinities (Connell, 1995: 36). Neither working-class masculinity nor middle-class masculinity are fixed. The makings of working-class masculinity (labourers) on the factory floor have different dynamics from the making of middle-class masculinity located in air-conditioned offices (Connell, 1995: 36). Evidently, different masculinities are produced in the same cultural or institutional setting such as work in a factory. Masculinities transplanted in labour forces have been shaped by the conditions of settlement which involve poverty and heavy labour. Middle-class men, conversely, are increasingly defined as the bearers of skill. This definition is supported by a powerful historical change in labour markets and the growth of credentials linked to the higher education system, which selects and promotes workers along class lines (Connell, 1995: 36). This class process alters the familiar connection between masculinity and machinery. Furthermore, the new Information Technology has redefined some of the work. Middle-class men, separated by class divisions and physical force, now find their powers spectacularly amplified in machine systems (Connell, 1995: 56). Both examples of masculine modes are being reshaped by a social dynamic in which class and gender relations are simultaneously at play.

Race relations have also become a vital part of masculine and feminine identities. In a white supremacist context, black masculinity plays symbolic roles for white gender construction. For instance, black sporting stars become exemplars of masculine toughness (Connell, 1995: 80). Conversely, hegemonic masculinity among whites sustained the institutional oppression and physical terror which framed the making of masculinities in black communities (Black Consciousness) (Connell 1995: 80). Zegeye

(2008: 26) argues that the black subject can no longer be represented without reference to power relations and sexuality. According to feminist and masculine poststructural perspectives, all male and female subjects should be represented in conjunction with power relations. Connell maintains that hegemonic masculinity “occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations which is a position that is always contestable” (1995: 77). Evidently, hegemonic masculinity and marginalized masculinity are not fixed character types, but are fluid discourses which often thrive in society (Connell, 1995: 81).

### **Foucault’s Concept of Discourse**

Feminist and Masculine Post Structuralist theorists such as Connell (1995), Morrell (2001), Weedon (2003) and Van Zoonen (1994), draw on Foucault’s concept of discourse (1980). Discourses exist both in written and oral form, and in the social practices of everyday life (Weedon, 2003: 3-10). They dwell in social institutions such as schools, churches, universities, the media, law courts, hospitals and homes. In Foucault’s work, poststructuralist principles of plurality and constant deferral of meaning and discursive structure of subjectivity are integrated into a theory of social power. This focuses on the institutional effects of discourse and its role in the constitution and government of individual subjects (1981: 104). Discourses are ways of constituting knowledge together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which are inherent in such knowledge and the relations between them (Foucault, 1981: 104). Foucault views the study of discourse as shifting away from the structure of language to the inclusion of context within the text (1981: 104).

Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. Different competing discourses exist which divide the world and give it meaning. Discourses as defined by Tomaselli can be non-verbal, for example codes of dance, movement, religious rituals, photography, lighting and editing (1996: 42). Discourses are replete with potential meanings (Tomaselli, 1996: 42). Tomaselli adds that discourses work to promote or oppose a dominant ideology or world view; however, this dominance is not static but is always in a state of flux (1996: 42). Dominant discourses are sometimes contested and challenged. We are governed as discursive subjects of discourse. In addition,

discourse constitutes the nature of the body; the unconscious and conscious mind and the emotional life of the subjects which they seek to govern (Weedon, 2003: 105). Neither the mind nor thoughts and feelings have meaning outside of their discursive articulation, but the ways in which discourses constitute the minds and bodies of individuals are always part of a wider network of power relations, often institutional bases (Foucault, 1981:104). Foucault highlights examples of the most powerful discourses in society which have firm institutional bases in law, medicine, social welfare, the media, education, and in the organization of the family and work (Foucault, 1981: 104). Yet these institutional locations are themselves sites of contestation and the dominant discourses governing the organization and practices of social institutions are under constant challenge (Weedon, 2003: 105). These sites/locations for discourses are constantly contested.

According to feminist and masculine poststructural theories, it is conflicting discourses, which constitute us as conscious thinking individuals, and enable us to give meaning to the world, and to act and to transform it (Weedon, 2003: 32). The terms 'subject' and 'subjectivity' are central to the feminist and masculine poststructural perspective (Weedon, 2003: 32). 'Subjectivity' as described by Weedon, is used to refer to conscious and unconscious thoughts, individuals' emotions, individuals' sense of self and individuals' ways of understanding their relation to the world (2003: 32). By making subjectivity the product of the society and culture within which we live, feminist and masculine poststructuralists insist that forms of subjectivity are produced historically, and change with shifts in the wide range of discursive fields which constitute them. At the level of the individual, these paradigm approaches are able to offer an explanation of where our experience comes from, why it is contradictory or incoherent and why and how it can change (Weedon, 2003: 40). This offers a way of understanding the importance of subjective motivation, and an explanation that subjectivity is necessary for individuals to act and function in the world and establish meaning (Weedon, 2003).

However Weedon argues that feminist and masculine poststructural theories extend further than this to insist that the individual is always the site of conflicting forms of subjectivity (2003: 32). The discourse on identity has increasingly been associated with

a variety of social struggles (Zegeye, 2000: 19). As we become socialized, educated and acquire language, we learn to give meaning to our experience and to understand it according to particular ways of thinking and particular discourses (Weedon, 2003: 32). Weedon further notes that these ways of thinking constitute our consciousness and the positions with which we identify and structure our sense of ourselves and our subjectivity (Weedon, 2003: 32). Having grown up with particular systems of meanings and values which may well be contradictory, we may find ourselves resisting alternatives. We are also capable of moving out of familiar circles through education or politics. For example, we may be exposed to alternative forms of knowledge (ways of constituting the meaning of our experiences), which seem to address our interests more directly (Weedon, 2003). Feminist and masculine poststructural theories suggest that experience is subject to a range of discursive systems of meaning which are often contradictory and competing. These ranges of discourses and their meaning in social institutions and practices are integral to the maintenance and contestation of forms of social power (Weedon, 2003: 34). Furthermore, media offers a range of subject positions that exist in historically specific discourses, which are inherent in social institutions and practices (Weedon, 2003: 34).

### ***Discursive Fields***

'Discursive fields' is a concept developed by Foucault (1979) in an attempt to understand the relationship between language, social institutions, subjectivity and power. Discursive fields consist of competing ways of giving meaning to the world and organizing social institutions and processes (Foucault, 1979). Discursive fields offer an individual a range of modes of subjectivity. Dominant discourses of male and female sexuality and dominant social definitions of gender can be found in social policy, medicine, education, media and the church (Weedon, 2003: 34).

Discourses do not exist in simple bipolar relations of power and powerlessness. Foucault argues that discourses are tactical elements or force relations (Weedon, 2003: 107). These force relations are relations of power which take specific forms in particular societies, organized through relations of class, race, gender, religion or age (Foucault,

1981: 101). The field of force relations includes social institutions which are the sites of discursive conflict, over how subjectivities and social relations should be constituted and how social control is exercised (Foucault, 1981: 101). This conflict has important implications for the ways in which individuals are constituted and governed as subjects of discourse. Media serve as a social institution, referred to as a force field or a site of discursive conflict regarding gender, race and class (Foucault, 1981: 101). Furthermore, discourses transmit and produce power and reinforce power, but also undermine and expose it (Foucault, 1981: 101).

Foucault argues that resistance to the dominant discourse at the level of the individual subject is the first stage in the production of alternative forms of knowledge or discourses. Where such alternatives already exist or individuals are won over to these discourses, their social power gradually increases. The possibility of resistance is an effect of the processes whereby particular discourses become the instruments and effects of power (Foucault, 1981: 101). To be effective, discourses require attraction through an agency of individuals whom they constitute and govern in particular ways as embodied subjects (Weedon, 2003: 108). Men and women adopt discursive positions which represent their interests. This is the agenda, which a feminist poststructural theory (and masculine poststructural theory) considers (Weedon, 2003: 108). In addition, the author notes that the discursive constitution of subjectivity addresses and constitutes an individual's mind, body and emotions. This occurs through the individual's identification with particular subject positions within discourses (Weedon, 2003). Discourses as realized in institutional practices (for example in the family, school etc), constitute the meaning of the physical body, the emotions and desire for conscious subjectivity (Foucault, 1981: 109). Discourses define individual identities and the forms of pleasure derived from them.

### ***Power as a key factor of discourse***

Power relations form an essential part of the dynamic interaction between masculinities and femininities. When focusing on media texts, the main task for feminist and masculine media research should be to unravel both the dominant and alternative meanings of gender encoded in media 'texts', and their articulation to other discourses

(for example power relations) (Van Zoonen, 1994: 66). Fundamentally race, class and gender are intersecting categories.

Power relations thrive in discourses. Power is inherent in difference and is a dynamic form of control, compliance and lack of control between discourses and the subjects constituted by discourses (Foucault, 1981: 92). Foucault (1981: 92) states that power is exercised within discourses in the ways in which it governs and constitutes individual subjects. Furthermore, he argues that discourses produce, transmit and reinforce power, but also undermine and expose it, render it fragile and make it possible to shape it (Foucault, 1981: 101). Weedon provides the example of attacks on Asian families in the United Kingdom (2003:110). Over a long period of time, the police have ignored the racial element choosing to look at isolated incidents and avoid the necessity of addressing the issue of racial violence amongst white youth. The Asian families do not accept this account of their experience or the policing strategy which it legitimizes. In this situation the power lies with the police, yet the racist complacency of the police and the public at large has led to resistance by the Asian community. As a result, forms of vigilante groups developed, which aim to protect Asians, but in doing so challenge the law (Weedon, 2003: 110).

Foucault highlights that power also structures relations between different subjects, within or across discourse (1981: 92). Weedon discusses a second example during the nineteenth century, where the law defined married women as the property of their husbands. Women were denied the benefits of legally constituted, autonomous subjectivity (2003:110). This meant that in order to be heard, married women were forced to produce alternative forms of power and resistance. Their strategies included the assumption of male pseudonyms and manipulation from 'behind the throne'. Many frustrated women turned to negative protests such as illness (Weedon, 2003: 110). By living out alternatives, these women threatened the dominant discourse of patriarchy and produced a contradiction, an alternative discourse for women. Evidently, dominant gender discourses are challenged by contending discourses. Foucault viewed power relations as an always-present feature of human societies (1981: 92). While Foucault (1981: 92) takes power relations to be an always-present, structural feature of human

societies, Weedon (2003: 110) indicates that his theory does not prescribe what forms of power will occur in any particular society.

Sex, sexuality and the body are key elements of power relations. The body is central to Foucault's analysis (1981: 147). Foucault argues that sex becomes the focal point of the exercise of power, through discursive constitution of the body. The meaning of sexuality is a site of constant struggle; sex has no essential nature or meaning (Foucault, 1981: 152). According to feminist poststructural theory, feminine identity is fluid, contested and is influenced by various discourses. What Foucault's work offers feminist (and masculine) scholars are a contextualization of experience, and an analysis of its constitution and ideological power (Weedon, 2003).

According to feminist and masculine poststructural views, although the subject is socially constructed in discursive practices, the individual exists as a thinking, feeling subject and social agent, who are capable of resistance and innovation, produced out of a clash between contradictory subject positions and practices (Weedon, 2003: 121). Feminist and masculine poststructural theories allow for contending discourses to shape gender identities. These theoretical approaches allow a subject to reflect upon the discursive relations, which constitute him or her and the society in which he/she lives, and allows him/her to choose available options. Many options are available to women (and men) to define their femininity (and masculinity), social role and the meaning of their experience (Weedon 2003:121). We need to understand the intricate work of discourses, the sites where they are articulated and the institutionally legitimized forms of knowledge to which they look for their justification (Weedon, 2003: 122)

For feminist poststructural theory, biological differences do not have inherent 'natural' or 'social' meaning (Weedon, 2003: 123). According to Weedon, their meanings, which are far from uniform, are produced within a range of competing and conflicting discourses, from medicine, to sociology, liberal feminism, to black feminism, democracy etc (2003: 123). Feminist poststructural theory allows for the articulation of alternative meanings, knowledge or discourses, which shape gender identities. Furthermore, Weedon argues that the principles of feminist poststructural theory can be applied to all



discursive practices. In this way, they can order and analyse how they are structured, what power relations they produce and reproduce, and where there is resistance and weak points that are open to challenge and transformation (2003:123).

From feminist and masculine poststructural perspectives, the process of criticism is infinite, since meaning can never be fixed (Weedon, 2003:134). Every act of reading a text is a new production of meaning. Furthermore, the positions from which discourses are read are in principle infinite and constantly changing (Weedon, 2003:135). At any particular historical moment, there are a finite number of discourses in circulation, discourses which compete for meaning (Weedon, 2003:135). It is this conflict between these discourses, which creates the possibility of new ways of thinking and new subjectivity (Weedon, 2003: 135). Feminine identity and masculine identity are subject to various discourses which shape them.

Feminist and masculine poststructural perspectives allow for competing and alternative forms of knowledge to emerge (for example gendered discourses). Connell (1987) adds that there is no single form of masculinity or femininity in western societies; only different ways of being a man or a woman. Given the complexity of gender relations, no simple or uniform strategy is possible; a 'mix' is necessary. Feminist and masculine poststructural theory embody this mix and create space for dominant, as well as competing gendered discourses that shape gender identities (Connell, 1987).

There is no such thing as a fixed male or female identity, but rather, as Prinsloo (1999: 47-28) indicates, what exists is a variety of different competing male and female identities in South Africa. Weedon states that feminist and masculine poststructural theories are modes of knowledge production, which use poststructural theory of subjectivity, social processes and institutions, to understand existing power relations, and identify areas/strategies for change (2003: 40). The concept of discourse is seen as a structuring principle of society; in social institutions, modes of thought and individual subjectivity, these theories are able to specifically analyze, explain the power on behalf of specific interests, and analyse opportunities for resistance to it (Weedon, 2003: 40). It is for these reasons that the feminist poststructural approach is a

productive theory for feminist media studies, and that the masculine poststructural approach is a useful theory, for masculine media studies. These theoretical approaches open up new possibilities for understanding gendered identities and representations.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Methodology

The purpose of research is to define, explain and consequently predict human behaviour, organisations, products and events (*The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2005: 2). Research is a process that involves obtaining knowledge (quantitative and qualitative), through various objective methods and procedures (*The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2005: 2). This study draws on a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research explores social trends, occurrences, human behaviour and experiences. Quantitative research on the other hand, evaluates objective data consisting of numbers, statistics (physical matter and quantifiable data). The qualitative approach examines phenomena in social world through exploratory, descriptive and explanatory research (*The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2005: 88). Methods such as interviews and focus groups allow the researcher to understand participants' experiences through shared discussion and interaction (Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 1999: 31).

#### ***Advantages of Qualitative Research***

Qualitative research can be used for exploratory purposes, as well as to formulate loaded descriptions and explanations of human phenomena. Qualitative research describes and embodies human experiences, perceptions and understanding. Qualitative methods allow the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the study (Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 1999: 47). Rather than using a measurement scale as an instrument of observation, in qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument of observation. Valuable data can be obtained by means of interviews, focus groups sessions, participant observation etc. Contemporary social science paradigms support the subjective research approach (Bogdan, 1975: 4). Using qualitative methods enables the researcher to know people personally and to obtain a greater understanding of respondent's beliefs as opposed to quantitative methodology, which may reduce people to statistical aggregates (Bogdan, 1975: 4). The gender

representations in music videos on MTV BASE Africa are the instruments of observation in this research.

### ***Outline of Analysis***

The first phase of the methodology includes a semiotic analysis of music videos. A selection of 20 music videos broadcast between January and May 2009 were used in the analysis (four case studies were randomly selected and recorded per month). A semiotic analysis of the case studies using Peircean semiotics (1931-1958, 2.302) is applied. These case studies serve as the basis of step one of the methodology as the textual semiotic analysis. Various music genres were selected, including R 'n B (Rhythm and Blues), Gangster Rap, Jazz, Pop, Rock and Kwaito (both local South African and American music videos). This is followed by the second phase; discussion of reception analysis listed as key themes, similarities and differences between case studies. The third phase discusses findings, and focus group analysis in comparison to semiotic analysis. The semiotic analysis of a sample of music videos studies are compared to the reception analysis of focus groups participants. Further supporting information obtained in focus group sessions is included in the study. A brief discussion of the semiotic approach used in this study is discussed hereunder.

### ***Semiotic Analysis***

A semiotic approach is selected as the appropriate analytical tool, to move beyond a denotative explanation and explore connotative, contextualized and social meanings, as proffered by Tomaselli (1996) in relation to gender representations. A semiotic analysis attempts to reveal how these layers of encoded meanings are structured into television programmes, even in a small segment (Fiske, 1994: 6). Semiotics examines how signs (words, pictures, gestures and sounds) come together to mean and have meaning (Tomaselli and Shepperson, 1991: 2-25). A work of literature is a lifeless object, a fixed pattern of signifiers on the pages of the book, and this only becomes a text when the book is opened up and read. A work is potentially seen as containing many texts, while a text is a specific realization of that potential and is produced by the reader, advocates Barthes (1977b). The polysemic nature of texts means that a text can have plurality of meaning. A text can be articulated in different ways by different readers. Further on in

the chapter, the researcher draws on a picture of an African American Rap artist popularly known as “50 cent” to illustrate Peirce’s triadic process in detail.

Semiotics has been popular in feminist media criticism because of its ability to unravel structures of meaning beyond the mere presence or absence of women in cultural forms (Van Zoonen, 1994: 40). Signs and sign systems consist of codes (gendered codes such as femininity, masculinity, heterosexuality and homosexuality) which are sometimes present in various media texts.

Peirce states that “we think only in signs” (1931-1958, 2.302). Signs take the form of words, images, sounds, odours, flavours, acts or objects, but such things have no intrinsic meaning and become signs only when we invest meaning in them. He adds that “the meaning of representation can be nothing, but a representation”. All experience is mediated through making sense of signs. “Nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign” (Peirce, 1931-1958, 2.172). Anything can be a sign as long as someone interprets it as 'signifying' something, referring to or *standing for* something other than itself. Peirce formulated a model where he theorised that the sign was made up of three parts: the representamen, the interpretant and the object (Peirce, 1931-1958, 2.172). The *representamen* signifies something to somebody, it is the form which the sign takes (not necessarily material). It generates another equivalent and more-developed sign, in the mind of the person (sense or meaning is made of the sign) and this is the *interpretant* of the first sign. The latter idea or representation stands for its *object*, which is something to which the sign refers (Peirce, 1931-1958).

Anything can be considered a sign. Eco (1977: 7) indicates that “semiotics is concerned with everything which can be taken as a sign”. Semiotics involves the study not only of what we refer to as 'signs' in everyday speech, but of anything which 'stands for' something else. In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects (Eco, 1977). Meaning is construed and interpreted by the semantic value produced through codes (De Lauretis, 1987: 167). Ideological codes such as gender representation are present within the text. Semiotics is often employed in the analysis of texts (although it is far more than just a mode of textual analysis) and

it should be noted that a 'text' can exist in any medium and may be verbal, non-verbal, or both (Chandler, 2004: 5). The term *text* usually refers to a message which has been recorded in some way (for example writing, audio and video-recording) so that it is physically independent of its sender or receiver. A text is an assemblage of signs (such as words, images, sounds and/or gestures) constructed and interpreted with reference to conventions associated with a genre and in a particular medium of communication.

The term 'medium' as Chandler (2002) highlights is used in a variety of ways by different theorists. It may include broad categories such as speech and writing or print and broadcasting, or relate to specific technical forms within *media* (radio, television, newspapers, magazines, books, photographs, films and records) or *media of interpersonal communication* (telephone, letter, fax, e-mail, video-conferencing, computer-based chat systems). Some theorists classify media according to the 'channels' involved (visual, auditory, tactile etc.).

Contemporary *social semiotics* has moved beyond the structuralist concern with the internal relations of parts within a self-contained system, seeking to explore the use of signs in specific social situations. According to the contemporary approach on semiotics, signs can be used to portray social situations and representations. Hence semiotics is the appropriate approach for a gender analysis of music videos. MTV BASE Africa serves as a semiotic sign system and medium which consists of texts (music videos). The texts embody a set of signs including images, graphics and visuals. Therefore, MTV BASE Africa is 'heavily laden' with signs such as gender images and representations. A semiotic analysis of the signs within the texts is established in subsequent chapters (analysis and findings). The researcher now draws on a picture of a gender image (a picture of "50 cent", African American Rap Artist) to contextualize Peirce's triadic process in detail.



50centonline.com (July 2007).

### ***Representamen, Interpretant and Object***

The image itself is the representamen. The *interpretant* is the meaning the audience makes of the image or visual, for example, linking it to preconceived notions of race (black), masculinity (aggressive, muscular, violent and successful) and class (working-class masculinity derived from ghetto or slum neighbourhood and upper-class status due to extravagant tastes such as jewellery). The *object* of the sign would be the male artist “50 cent”.

This example of a gender representation highlights that Peircean semiotics insists that the meaning of the sign is not contained within it, but is formed or created through its interpretation (Chandler, 2002). These interpretants could lead to successive interpretants *ad infinitum*. For example, “50 Cents” image and representation could produce further meanings such as fashion trends to be emulated, or the adoption of a gangster persona, or desire for status, wealth and success for some black youth who

grow up in townships or struggling communities. His image and representation could possibly influence those who watch it to reflect on their own perceptions of successful masculinity or aggressive masculinity (in a positive or negative way; gangsterism is negative, but ambition to work hard to be successful can be viewed as positive).

### ***Modes of Relationship in Sign Vehicles: Iconic, Indexical and Symbolic signs***

Peirce further utilized three basic 'modes of relationship' between sign vehicles and their referent: iconic, indexical and symbolic (Hawkes, 1977: 129). An iconic sign represents its object, through its similarity (it does not necessarily have to be visual). An example of an iconic sign would be the image of "50 cent". However, semioticians agree that there are no pure icons, but there is always an element of cultural convention. Take the example of the image of "50 cent" again. The photograph only portrays a certain aspect; "50 cent" as a male rapper. For example, hegemonic masculinity, violent, aggressive, strong and perhaps an aspect which the photographer may find appealing. Many other informative features focusing on his success, achievements, hard work, the hardship he faced living in the ghetto neighbourhood, upper-class tastes and extravagant lifestyle, are excluded. An iconic sign is defined as a mode in which the signifier is perceived as *resembling* or imitating the signified (recognizably looking, sounding, feeling, tasting or smelling like it) and being similar in possessing some of its qualities. Examples of iconic signs include a portrait, a cartoon, a scale-model, onomatopoeia, metaphors, 'realistic' sounds in 'programme music', sound effects in radio drama, a dubbed film soundtrack and imitative gestures (Chandler, 2002).

An indexical sign is one where the sign draws attention to its referent. When looking at the image of "50 cent", one notices the bullet proof vest that he wears. The bullet proof vest draws attention to his body, muscular physique and tattoos. The former sign draws our attention to the latter sign (Tomaselli, 1996: 30-31). Evidently, a link or direct connection is observed between the first sign of the bullet proof vest and the later sign of his muscular build. The index or indexical sign is defined as a mode in which the signifier is *not arbitrary* but is *directly connected* in some way (physically or causally) to the signified. This link can be observed or inferred. For example, 'natural signs' (smoke,



thunder, footprints, echoes, non-synthetic odours and flavours), medical symptoms (pain, rash, pulse-rate), measuring instruments (weathercock, thermometer, clock, spirit-level), 'signals' (knock on a door, a phone ringing), pointers (a pointing 'index' finger, a directional signpost), recordings (a photograph, a film, video or television shot, an audio-recorded voice), personal 'trademarks' (handwriting, catchphrase) and indexical words ('that', 'this', 'here', 'there') are noted as significant for this discussion. At the second level, an indexical idea of masculine toughness is represented (muscular, strong and aggressive). Some black sports stars and celebrities portray exemplars of masculine toughness (Connell, 1995: 80).

A symbolic sign is one in which the idea represented is linked through social conventions and has no observable connection (Tomaselli, 1996: 30-31). The interpretation is usually ideological or mythical and it ties in with one's cultural experience of the world, asserts Tomaselli (1996: 39). A symbolic idea is represented at the third level; the image of "50 cents" body and physique becomes a symbol of force. Morrell adds that men's bodies are often represented as powerful instruments of force (Morrell, 2001: 3-9). Thus, "50 cent" is symbolic of embodying various masculine discourses (hegemonic masculinity, aggressive masculinity and black masculinity). Hegemonic masculinity (muscular, powerful, in control), aggressive masculinity (violent, forceful, strong, muscular) and black masculinity (well-built, tough, aggressive and challenging the *status quo*) has relevance and context for this discussion and research. Black masculinity focuses on subordination and aggressiveness, and was shaped by massive unemployment, urban poverty and institutional racism (Connell, 1995: 80). A symbolic sign is a mode in which the signifier does *not* resemble the signified, but which is fundamentally *arbitrary* or purely conventional, so that the relationship must be learnt. For example, language in general (plus specific languages, alphabetical letters, punctuation marks, words, phrases, sentences), numbers, morse code, traffic lights and national flags are seen as key signs in shaping dialogue or interaction.

### ***Phanerology: Categories of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness***

Peirce's theory extends beyond simply making sense of signs. By using phanerology, he examines "the collective total of all that is in any way, or in any sense present to the

mind, quite regardless of whether it corresponds to any real thing or not” (Peirce 1931-1958). He explains the process of signs becoming signs, and the way that meaning is constructed through interplay between the categories of *firstness*, *secondness* and *thirdness*. *Firstness* is an objective reality of something; it is as it is without relation to anything else. *Secondness* relates that something to something else, but not to a third entity (Morrell 2001: 31-32). *Thirdness* mediates between *firstness* and *secondness*, for example, a meaning or habit (Johansen and Larsen 2002: 123).

***Tomaselli’s Table of Phaneroscopy***

Peirce’s ‘trichotomy’ is woven together in conjunction with the postulates of Barthes (1972), Fiske (1982) and Fiske and Hartley (1978), as well as de Saussure in Tomaselli’s *Table of Phaneroscopy* (1996:37). These correspond to the categories of icon, index and symbol, as illustrated in the table that follows.

<b>Orders of signification</b>	<b>Phaneroscopy</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Trichotomy of signs</b>	<b>Nature of Semiotic Interaction</b>	<b>Phenomenology</b>
1	Firstness: Central Idea	Icon	Encounter	Being-there
2	Secondness: Identity in the face of the other	Denotation Index Connotation Myth	Experience Transmission/ transmitted texts	Activity/Doing Reading/writing Conceived/received texts
3	Thirdness: Codes/syntagma Modes of relations	Myth Symbol: Common Sense Ideology	Intelligibility Making sense	Public Signs

*Table 1: Tomaselli, (1996: 37)*

The Phaneroscopic Table above simplifies Peirce’s theories but also expands and elaborates on his ideas.

## **Level of Firstness**

At the first level is the self-contained sign or the produced inactive text (Tomaselli, 1996: 38). Firstness operates when a general idea is elicited. The idea offers first impressions and contains no specificity. The image of “50 Cent” is taken at face value and the level of firstness is populated with people. Conceptual links such as hegemonic masculinity, connotations or comparison to other gender representations is not considered until the second level when the same or other relations and specificities are identified by the interpreter (Tomaselli, 1996: 57). The viewing of the first level is autonomous as it holds its reality without having to be compared to anything else (Tomaselli, 1996: 57). Also included in this level is a replica of ‘reality’, or of the text itself, as this still relates to the central idea (Tomaselli, 1996: 57).

The medium of viewing a film for instance is different from the activity of reading a comic or a book. The way we read a ‘film’ and the way we encounter the medium is not the same activity as reading a book or magazine (Tomaselli, 1996: 57).

During focus group sessions the researcher encouraged participants to draw on past and recent music videos they had watched and to compare these with the sample of case studies in the focus group sessions. The key focus of music videos and case studies on MTV BASE Africa is gender representations and portrayals. This is presented through many visual signs that were encountered (race, class, gender, body, dress sense and sexuality) in the case studies.

## ***Firstness***

The level of firstness involves a reading of the visual text, but it also covers the process of making meaning of signs (what is there before it is viewed by the audience). Therefore, the reasons why the images were chosen by the music artist and the researcher, and the assumptions or views derived by the readers of the texts are not included at this level. The phaneron is defined as all that is present to the mind and in such an encounter that pre-exists the sign (Tomaselli, 1996: 56). When the phaneron generated by the text produces conceptual links, connotations and/or questions, this refers to the level of secondness, advocates Tomaselli (1996:57). “Secondness as

experience demands practical engagement, as a necessary consequence for an encounter to become meaningful” (Tomaselli, 1996: 58). Signs then, are the vehicle through which an experience becomes intelligible, asserts Tomaselli (1996: 56).

### **Secondness**

The concept of secondness shares a similarity to Peirce’s notion of Index. The phenomenon exists in a dyadic relation to something else and is co-terminous with the index (Tomaselli, 1996: 57). It draws our attention to an awareness and perception of something else. It entails a connotative meaning arising from straightforward, denotative explanation. For example, a participant in the focus group may have read into the text of a rap music video as ‘successful living, successful masculinity, high life’, but may have been convinced otherwise by other music videos depicting violence and the sexual control of women. At the second level, the indexical, simple, motivated (denoted) meaning entails a range of culturally-shaped ways of making sense, derived from the way particular societies, social groups and classes use, value and encode signs (Tomaselli, 1996: 38).

Secondness as experience demands practical engagement, as the necessary consequence for an encounter to become meaningful (Tomaselli, 1996: 58). Tomaselli uses an example of the visual medium of the film *Kapayo* to demonstrate this (1996: 38). Within the film, each character has elements of secondness besides standing apart from one another. The Kapayo from the Yanomani have characteristics which distinguish one from the other. It is characteristic of the exhibition and experience that these characters are not the viewer. Each character is substantively there in the room and they cannot be denied, whilst each person is indexical of their respective society, gender and social positions. Each person is distinctive in the face of others in terms of their individuality, gender, ethnicity, dress and society. Similarly, the characters and gender representations established in the researcher’s case studies have elements of secondness. They have differences between them and each character is indexical of their respective race, class, including social positions, gender, sexuality, and body and dress sense, as advanced by Tomaselli (1996: 38). By giving meaning to signs, we are involved in shaping understanding of experiences.

## Thirdness

A range of cultural meanings come together in the third level (Tomaselli, 1996: 39). The third level connects and links the first and second levels, thus making them intelligible. Thirdness is thereby a mode of relations and a method of combining various elements (Tomaselli, 1996: 39). Thirdness is parallel to the classical communication theory concepts of codes, syntagmas and combination where people share similar mind-sets and thinking patterns when making sense of their worlds (Tomaselli, 1996: 59). Furthermore it operates at the third symbolic level of significant activity (Tomaselli, 1996: 59). At this level, there is a comprehensive cultural view of the world, a society, a class or group perspective of how reality is organized and the way the world is organised (Tomaselli, 1996: 39). An example of these codes would be in the above image of Rap music artist “50 cent”. Many contemporary social codes would possibly interpret his life style as extravagant and flamboyant and his character as physically strong, aggressive, violent and brave. However, in the context of gender media studies, there is a struggle for meaning. Various competing discourses define the masculinity of “50 Cents”. A bullet proof vest will signify violence, aggression, and violent masculinity, whilst his race, aggressiveness or toughness and muscularity signify black masculinity, yet challenge the *status quo*. The bullet proof vest also signifies hegemonic masculinity with his physique, power, control, strength and weapon (gun).

The third level is associated with myth, ideology, common sense and ‘culture’. It is also associated with individual codes known as paradigms (Tomaselli, 1996: 39). Paradigms contest and challenge one another and this is known as the ‘struggle for meaning’ (Tomaselli, 1996: 40). This struggle often takes place between different discourses (Tomaselli, 1996: 40). Competing gender portrayals discussed in previous chapters (literature review) correspond to this category. The nature of gender discourses established in the theoretical framework (chapter four) focusing on contending gender characteristics also falls under this category. At this level, the reader would draw together his/her thoughts and create a perception and view of gender portrayals based on the images (race, gender, class, body and dress sense) and information viewed. The third level is one of significant symbolic activity (Tomaselli, 1996: 59).

The researcher's semiotic textual analysis of case studies of MTV BASE Africa provides a fresh, external perspective of gender constructions. The researcher does not assert that this is an objective analysis. The researcher is not involved with the production or direction of the content on MTV BASE Africa. It is rather a subjective research project which contributes fresh information within the field of gender media studies.

## **Reception analysis**

### ***Focus Groups***

Focus groups were used to obtain information for the reception analysis of gender portrayals in music videos on MTV BASE Africa. Three focus group sessions were conducted within selected areas of KwaZulu-Natal: Westville and the Bluff, between July and August 2009. Each focus group consisted of five or six participants, with mixed racial demographics, in the age groups 18-30 and consisted of both males and females. These areas were selected because they are cosmopolitan and consist of mixed racial demographic groups. The participants for each group were selected through a quota sampling technique. This sampling method was selected because it enabled the researcher to select participants with common characteristics or from a convenient location until the quota was reached (Kumar, 1999: 161). Participants were selected from convenient locations including work, university and within some proximity to the researcher's residence. The aim was to obtain approximately 40 participants from 1 July to 30 August 2010. Twenty-five participants were obtained. Four focus group sessions (three focus groups and one pilot test group) were conducted. The pilot test session enabled the researcher to test the questionnaire, identify weak areas, rephrase and clarify specific questions and to remove any vague questions that hindered participants' discussion. During focus group sessions participants viewed a sample of local South African, African and American music videos of various genres (R 'n B, Rap, Pop and Rock, Jazz and Gangster Rap and Kwaito) from MTV BASE Africa.

Structured questions were used in the sessions to further conceptualize the participants' thoughts and perceptions of gender representations. Vital in-depth information was obtained through the focus group discussions and the questionnaires that were

completed during focus group sessions. A questionnaire is defined as a set of interrelated questions which assist in obtaining information from people. It is therefore a handy data-collection instrument (Fink, 1995 and Foddy, 1994). The researcher's questionnaires enabled participants to conceptualize their thoughts regarding gender perceptions. It also enable the researcher to probe deeper into their views of gender portrayals in music videos. The purpose of the questionnaire is to obtain personal information such as racial background, sex and location of the focus group (Fink, 1995 and Foddy, 1994). Certain considerations had to be taken into account in designing the questionnaire. The questions were short, direct and to-the point and simple for participants to comprehend. Open-ended questions were included at the beginning to encourage discussion of participants' opinions, views and perceptions. Two nominal question presented respondents with a wide choice of descriptions regarding gender representations. A nominal question offers respondents a choice of set responses to questions which have no particular order or ranking (Fink, 1995 and Foddy, 1994).

The researcher further encouraged and guided discussions and sharing of information amongst participants. The questions focused on female and male sexualities, bodies, power relations and dress sense. Focus group sessions were transcribed and recorded. The time allocation for focus group sessions was a minimum 40 minutes and a maximum of one hour. Participants' perceptions, views and opinions of masculine and feminine constructions provided valuable feedback and enabled the researcher to gauge whether or not there were inconsistencies between her textual analysis and her reception analysis. This is discussed in chapter Eight.

### ***Quota Sampling Technique***

Within the quota sampling method, a researcher is guided by some visible characteristic such as gender, race or age of the study population that is of interest to him or her (Kumar, 1999: 161). Kumar adds that the sample is selected from a location which is convenient to the researcher. Whenever a person with these visible relevant characteristics is seen, that person is asked to participate in the study and the process is continued until the required number of respondents and quota is reached (Kumar,

1999: 161). The quota sampling technique served as a suitable method which enabled the researcher to select focus group participants. The aim of the quota sampling technique is to establish whether there is any systematic variation in the ways in which different groups discuss a matter (*The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2005: 354). The researcher positioned herself at convenient locations at work, university, and near home in the Westville and Bluff areas. She encountered potential participants and invited them to participate in the discussions. This process was continued until the quota of participants had been reached. The main consideration for quota sampling is the researcher's ease of access to the sample population. In addition to convenience, he or she is guided by some visible characteristic such as gender or race of the study population that is of interest to him or her (Kumar, 1999: 161).

### ***Advantages of Quota Sampling Technique***

The quota sampling technique is the least expensive way of selecting a sample as it guarantees the inclusion of the type of people that one needs. The researcher does not require any information such as sampling frame, total number of elements or other information about the sampling population (Kumar, 1999: 161).

### ***Advantages of Focus Group Sessions***

Focus group sessions are conducive to a relaxed environment and encourage a free flow of information (Delone and Mclean, 1992: 100). Focus groups have become a popular method for researchers to examine the ways in which people interact with one another and interpret general topics which pertain to the researcher's interest (Oxford University Press, 2004: 346). The method allows researchers to develop an understanding of how people think (Bryman, 2004: 123). The format of focus groups allows the moderator to explore unanticipated and unexpected issues which is not possible within more structured questioning procedures (Morgan 1998). These groups consist of a small group of individuals, drawn together for the purpose of expressing their opinions on a specific set of questions (*The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2005: 201).



Focus group methods are increasingly used in the study of audience interpretations of cultural and media 'texts' (Morgan 1998). Therefore, focus groups served as the right tool to read and interpret gender portrayals in music videos. This methodology offers an opportunity for the researcher to study the ways in which individuals collectively make sense of a phenomenon (gender representations) and construct meanings around it. Focus groups reflect the processes through which meaning is constructed in everyday life and the extent to which it can be regarded as more naturalistic (Bryman, 2004: 348).

A further issue that arises regarding the selection of the group participants is whether to select people who are unknown to one another, or to use natural groups (for example friends, co-workers, students taking the same course) (Bryman, 2004: 354). Some researchers prefer to select natural groups whenever possible. The researcher selected natural groups of people ('pre-existing groups') that she is familiar with, in order to encourage the discussions to be natural, comfortable and easy flowing. Selecting pre-existing groups created a relaxing environment for the participants.

However, not all scholars accept the argument that focus groups are more naturalistic than individual interviews (Bryman, 2004: 354). Bryman (2004) indicates that even when a natural group is used, gathering people to discuss a certain topic (such as a television programme) is not inherently naturalistic because the social setting is contrived to a significant extent. He adds that completing a questionnaire or being interviewed may appear more natural, because such instruments are fairly commonplace, whereas being asked to take part in a group discussion is not necessarily one's choice (2004: 354). The researcher included a questionnaire within her focus group discussions to record participants' thoughts and make participants feel at ease. Wilkinson (1998: 6) suggests that focus groups serve as a good technique for gender research such as feminist studies. There is a greater opportunity to derive understanding that arises from the 'lived experience' of women.

### ***Disadvantages of focus group sessions***

There are disadvantages associated with this design. One of those shortcomings is that participants may influence one another's responses and positions may be modified or

reversed (Krueger, 1994: 36). The researcher encouraged participants to focus on discussions and not stray off the topic. The resulting sample is a probability one whose findings cannot be generalized to the total sampling population (Kumar, 1999: 161). However, this research did not claim to represent an entire target market population from KwaZulu-Natal. This study serves as a simple representative of the findings of three focus groups and the researcher's semiotics analysis. As the focus group facilitator, the researcher guided discussions and through her own concentration on data, she established that participants' views/perceptions generally did not vary widely within groups (A, B, and C) and across groups.

Morgan (1998) suggests that a typical group size of six to 10 members. For her research tool, the researcher selected focus group of six to eight members per group. The aim was to establish the perceptions of selected members of focus groups. Morgan also recommends using smaller groups which enable participants to have more discussion on the research topic (Morgan, 1998). This is likely to occur when participants are emotionally involved in a topic (Morgan, 1998). As the focus group facilitator, the researcher found that some participants were emotionally involved in discussions regarding gender representations and its potential impact on children. During discussions the researcher adopted a formal and professional dress code. This created a formal and professional environment and the discussions were concentrated and focused on the topic of enquiry. The researcher's level of involvement as the moderator within sessions was important. How involved should the moderator/facilitator be? In qualitative research, the aim is to obtain the perspectives of the discussants. Consequently, the approach should not be intrusive or structured (*The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2005: 352). The researcher's goal was not to offend any participants or ask any personal or intrusive questions. She created a sense of anonymity amongst participants.

The researcher encouraged a free and voluntary discussion within the focus groups. Often there is a tendency for moderators to allow great latitude to participants so that the discussions range fairly freely (*The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2005: 352). The advantage of allowing a fairly free reign of discussion is that the researcher stands

a better chance of getting access to what individuals see as important or interesting. When the discussions digressed, the researcher guided the participants to the questions of enquiry. One of the ways that a moderator may be involved is by responding to potential interest points and to the research questions which are not covered by other participants (*The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2005: 352). As the moderator, the researcher was attentive regarding potential interest points.

Prior to the development of the questionnaire for focus groups sessions, a pilot study was conducted to test the initial questionnaire. A pilot study is essential to test the draft questionnaire. This involves asking a few people questions similar to those meant for intended respondents, and to identify and reveal any difficulties, with it with the intention to modify it accordingly (Fink, 1995 and Foddy, 1994). The pilot study provided essential feedback regarding rephrasing, open-ended questions, and ensuring questions were straightforward, simple and direct. This technique enabled the researcher to create a wider range of gender descriptions within the nominal questions. Through the use of methodologies (semiotics and focus group sessions), the researcher was able to uncover diverse and contending feminine and masculine discourses which were present in case studies (music videos). Furthermore, she was able to identify and discuss crucial interrelated categories of race, class, sexuality and gender. These categories are an essential part of social institutions, identity formation and gender media studies.

### ***Limitations***

This study has not addressed certain issues as comprehensively as it might have done, under different circumstances. One such area is male perspectives regarding female sexuality. Only one male participant reflected his perspective that the feminine representations were visual, physical and attractive. The researcher is inclined to believe that her gender as a female researcher may have impacted on the responses and perspectives of other male participants. Subsequent chapters show that the researcher encouraged discussions and posed questions to male participants regarding female sexuality, physicality and attractiveness. However, they were reluctant to talk about their perceptions regarding feminine representatives in terms of physical and

sexual appeal and attractiveness. The discussions amongst female participants regarding female images of sexuality, bodies and physicality may have caused further hesitation amongst male participants to engage a discussion on these points.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **Analysis and Findings**

The analysis and findings of the study are divided into three parts. The focus of chapter Seven is the application of Peircian semiotics, which reveals gender meanings within case studies. This chapter discusses the semiotic analysis of case studies, which focus on music videos from one to 20. The focus of chapter Eight is a reception analysis of key themes, similarities and differences between case studies. Chapter Nine follows with discussion of the findings and the focus group analysis in comparison to semiotic analysis.

#### **Semiotic Analysis of case studies**

Semiotics has become quite popular in feminist media studies because it has the ability to excavate or unravel structures of meaning beyond the mere presence or absence of women in cultural forms (Van Zoonen, 1994: 74). The sample of music videos on MTV BASE Africa serves as case studies. Peirce is considered to have laid the groundwork for semiotics. However, it was not until the 1960s that the work of Roland Barthes introduced semiology to wider audiences, applying it to various texts in popular culture ranging from toys, hairstyles and chips to cooking, soap powders and new Citroen Cars (Barthes, 1957). Van Zoonen (1994: 74-76) has adapted semiotics to gender media studies. Almost anything can be considered a sign. Some obvious examples of signs and sign systems are words combined in the sign system of language or images combined in the sign system of art, photography, film or television (Van Zoonen, 1994: 74-76). The researcher's analysis reveals that visual signs (gender images) combine with the sign system of television music videos to reveal competing gender constructions and discourses.

Media production is jam-packed with such signs and it is up to the semiologist to analyse how particular combinations of signs (in sign systems) construct particular meanings. As indicated by Van Zoonen (1994: 74-76), all sign systems (for example

the medium of television: MTV BASE Africa) are treated as 'texts', which explains the common reference to media output as 'media texts'. Semiotics remains a powerful tool to understand how sign systems in media can evoke emotions, associations, fears, hopes, fantasies and compliance or consent. Through the use of Tomaselli's table of Phaneroscopy (1996: 38), the researcher analysed gender representations in the sample of music videos on MTV BASE Africa.

It was found that all the elements of the semiotic analysis are present in the sample of music videos: first level (icon sign), second level (the index sign) and third level (myth and ideology). The researcher established an analysis of each music video (case study) in relation to the Phaneroscopic Table (Tomaselli, 1996: 38) and also established differences and similarities between case studies. The results of the focus group sessions were compared to the results of the semiotic analysis of music videos.

### **Case Study One**

Case Study one features American female artist *Elecktrik Red*: and is entitled *Drink in my Cup* (2009). It features female video models that narrate and perform for the music video. At the first level, one sees young women dressed sexily, dancing and enjoying a social 'night out at the club'. The images might be perceived at first as another example of sexy, seductive women in music videos on display for male desire. Their dress sense and seductive movements support such a notion. However, other signs in the music video do not corroborate that connotation. At the second level, one sees indexical signs and female representations order their own drinks at the bar. There is an emphasis on women holding their own drinks, women using their bodies to charm men, and women entering public toilets and dancing in toilets. These signs have important indexical elements, connecting the world of music to females (artists and video models) in the entertainment music industry. The signs are combined in such a way that they convey the image of sexy, independent, autonomous and confident women. Women are portrayed as being in control of their bodies and sexuality, as well as being positioned as sex objects for the male gaze. Men are also portrayed as objects for female desire or female gaze. What exists is the mutual pleasure of viewing men and women as objects

of desire (Gauntlett, 2008: 193), as well as men and women that are positioned as assertive and in control of their bodies.

Another syntagmatic relation of signs is present. The female representations are seen “forcing the chef out of the kitchen, and gain illegal entry into the night club, through the back door”. These signs convey the image of strong assertive, brave women who are in control and in charge of their lives. The visual signs of the women dancing in the toilet and illegally entering the property show that they defy the conventional social norms such as obeying the law, societal rules and following the norms of hygiene. These signs radically alter the meaning of the music video.

At the third level, the underlying hegemonic discourse of African femininity is located. African femininity, according to this view, is constructed as hypersexual and untamed. Such signifiers draw from a common frame of reference, which is meaningful in white patriarchal culture (Van Zoonen, 1994: 84). At this level, diverse connotations and myths fit together to form a coherent pattern or sense of wholeness which is the way they ‘make sense’ and is evidence of an underlying invisible, organizing principle, ideology (O’ Sullivan *et al*, 1989: 217). A myth of voracious black sexuality as wild and temperamental is signified at this level. This myth is based on the popular and widespread appeal of the image of the ‘wild savage’, and feeds into western discourses of black female sexuality (Van Zoonen, 1994: 84). The image of wild black sexuality feeds into European colonialist perceptions which provided an occasion to fantasize about an exotic or forbidden human being, projecting upon colonial people and those obscurities of their own unconscious (Mannoni, 1950: 19). The myth about ravenous black sexuality provided an excuse for white slave owners to rape female slaves and made the castration of black males possible long into the nineteenth century, posits Nederveen (1988).

However, the ideology underlying this music video can be approached from different angles. Competing meanings and discourses are present. As Van Zoonen puts it, one should also not expect a semiotic analysis to produce a definitive meaning of the text (1994: 33). Since codes confer meaning on the syntagmatic and paradigmatic

combination of the signs, these signs produce a 'closure' of meaning. Texts are principally 'polysemic', as they contain multiple meaning. Another representation of women that is present is associated with ambivalence and contradictions. Case study 1 contains conflicting messages about femininity and sexuality. At level one, I see women positioned in relation to men. Men merely serve as objects of desire for women within the music video. However, women are also positioned as being in control of their sexuality, desires and identities. Black women and men are both present within the video. The discourse of ambivalent femininity is also present (Emerson, 2002: 121-123). This construction of female identity is associated with ambiguity and contradictions. Women are dressed as sexual beings that flaunt their bodies and sexuality; however they are in control of their bodies, sexuality and actions. There is an articulation of mutual pleasure and enjoyment. Black women serve as agents of their own pleasure, as well as a vehicle for the fulfilment of men's desires (Emerson, 2002: 121-123). A discourse which combines sexuality, assertiveness and independence can be read as an appropriation of black women's bodies in response to their sexual regulation and exploitation, as is present within this text. This is known as the multi-dimensional representation of black women (Emerson, 2002: 121-123).

Men are portrayed as objects of desire for women, thus emphasizing the discourse of complicit masculinity where men are positioned in relation to women in a negotiated relationship (Connell, 1995: 80). Heterosexuality is emphasized in relationships between men and women. Evidently, competing and contradictory gender discourses are present. Case study one contains conflicting messages about female identities and sexuality.

### **Case Study Two**

Case study two is entitled *Little Things* by African American artist *India Arie*. This is an American video. At the level of firstness, I see black women are more prevalent in the video whilst black men and white women feature in the background. At level one, I also observe a black woman getting her hair styled and braided whilst smiling at the camera. Conceptual links such as sisterhood with other black women, autonomy, vocality and independence, (Emerson, 2002:125) are not considered until the second level.



Indexical signs such as braids, braid beads (with the words 'strength', 'courage' and 'wisdom') and *India Arie's* dress sense are important as they convey a meaning of sisterhood as solidarity and strong, independent women. The words 'strength', 'wisdom' and 'courage' signify positive character traits for women or the values emphasised by the artist. Other indexical signs such as women braiding hair signify sisterhood, togetherness and teamwork. The discourse of sisterhood is associated with African American history and symbolises solidarity, teamwork and support.

The underlying ideology of Black Consciousness is considered at the third level. Black Consciousness transmits positive ideas of black race and identity as beautiful and admirable. In addition, the signs are combined in such a way that they convey the image of black as beautiful and the myth of the black hairstyles (afro hairstyle and braids signify a defiance of Eurocentric discourses, in response to how blacks should look). Eurocentric discourses enforced ideals of relaxing and straightening black hair, and a westernized dress sense). Examples of black hairstyles (braids, dreadlocks and the Afro) reflect proud, positive black identity and race. African-inspired hairstyles such as the Afro and modes of dress became popular and symbolized recognition of an African value system supporting group identity (Virginia Historical Organisation, 2004: 1).

With the rise of the Black Power and Black Consciousness movements, black men and women began to wear African clothing to symbolise their African heritage. African tops such as the Dashiki won favour amongst men and women of the African diaspora. The female artist (*India Arie*) in case study two wears African clothing to symbolize her proud black heritage. Black hairstyles such as the Afro or braids symbolise black unity in socio-political struggle (Virginia Historical Organisation: 2004: 1-2). The natural hairstyle and look of the 1960s, and the braid craze of the 1990s are touted as examples of black women rejecting white beauty standards.

A woman is seen braiding *India Arie's* hair, symbolizing sisterhood and unity amongst women and positive female embodiment. According to Dudas (2003: 1), braiding is traditionally a social art. Due to the time it takes to braid hair, women take time to

socialize while braiding and having their hairstyles done. Braiding begins with elders making simple knots and braids for younger children. Dudas adds that in America many black mothers and grandmothers braid and put colourful beads in children's hair (2003: 1). This carries on the tradition of bonding between elders and the new generation.

The group of children that are seen at level one indicate nurturing. At level two, the idea of motherhood is emphasized. At level three, the discourse of community, togetherness, family and motherhood are emphasized. These indexical and mythical signs reinforce the idea that positive black female identity is associated with community and solidarity.

At the level of firstness, I see a suburban house, a sofa and a mirror, which symbolize success. At level of secondness, a suburban home signifies working-class status, having achieved independence and a home. These signs convey a sense of black femininity, which differs from and counters hegemonic sexist and racist notions of black women (Emerson, 2002: 125). Codes of counter-hegemonic female identity include visual representations such as caregiver, nurturer in domestic space and identification with signifiers of blackness (an assertion of autonomy, vocality and independence). This alternate positive female representation is an expression of partnership and sisterhood with other black women and men. These alternative beauty standards contribute to a more positive body image among black women (Cash and Henry, 1995; Flynn and Fitzgibbon, 1996; Harris, 1994; Molloy and Hertzberger, 1998). Blackness, as Emerson puts it, does not carry a negative connotation; instead it is the basis for strength, power and a positive self-identity. The discourse of Black Consciousness, (positive, strong), black identity and sisterhood (teamwork, support for black women) are present within the video. Black women are not positioned as inferior to men or sexualized. There is no emphasis on sexuality (heterosexuality or homosexuality) and no objectification of the female or male body. Evidently, competing discourses exist within the text (sisterhood, motherhood, Black Consciousness and working-class status - having achieved a home, car and economic stability).

### **Case Study Three**

Case study three features international American artist *Prince* and is entitled *Diamonds and Pearls*. A coloured male artist (*Prince*) and white females (video models) are featured in the video. At the first level of signification, I see a male artist playing the piano, singing and holding pearl necklaces. The sign of pearl necklaces has iconic elements in the sense that the signifier (pearl necklace) directly resembles the signified (the song title and words). At the second level, there are important indexical elements. I see the pearl necklace connecting him to a woman (he has a relationship with a woman). I also see *Prince's* feminized dress sense and make-up connecting him to his theatrical performance and dance. Also observed at level one is a female dancer dressed in underwear and this signifies female sexuality. Her body and dress sense also signify female sexuality.

The third level of signification shows that signs (the dress sense, makeup, and words of the song: "If I were a boy or a girl") are combined in such a way that they signify the 'myth' of a closet bisexual. I have also observed that indexical signs, *Prince's* make-up and his dress sense, corroborate with ambiguous male identity. Evidently, various contending discourses are present such as homosexuality, heterosexuality and bisexuality. Underlying the third level are discourses of ambiguous sexuality and subordinate masculinity. Subordinate masculinity is associated with a symbolic blurring of femininity (Connell, 1995: 79). *Prince* dresses in a feminine way, wears make-up and dances in a feminine manner like the female dancer in the video. *Prince's* sexuality is brought into question (signs such as his dress sense, make-up and dance performance symbolise homosexuality, as well as his affection towards women (heterosexuality)). Hence, competing masculine identities are present in the case study. His sexuality could possibly represent bisexuality, an experience that is an alternation between heterosexual and homosexual connections (Connell, 1995: 79). The words of the song "If I were a boy or a girl" could signify ambiguous and bisexual identity. The two female video girls are seen caressing each other, thus implying homosexuality or the male erotic fantasy of lesbian and female objectification for male desire.

However, the syntagmatic relation of signs, his affection towards women, and the pearl necklace that *Prince* gives to the video models can radically alter the meaning of his sexuality. *Prince* could also be symbolic of a metrosexual male. Metrosexual male identity is defined as flamboyant, well-groomed men who take care of themselves, and favour relationships with women (Smith *et al* 2007: 120). *Prince*'s outward sexual orientation could be deemed as "metrosexual". Smith *et al* describe the "Metrosexual" as unmarried, fashion savvy, and conscious of art and decor (2007: 120). Hence, there are contradictory and contending masculine discourses and female discourses in the case study, which shape gender identities. The text is open to multiple meanings.

The artist *Prince* is a coloured male, but he is positioned in relation to two white female video models. At level one, I see him handing over a pearl necklace to a white woman thus symbolizing a heterosexual relationship, and at level three, this symbolises a multi-racial relationship. *Prince* is also seen kissing and caressing a white video model at level one. This indicates that her body is positioned as an object of sexual desire. A white female video model is also seen at level one (a woman is seen dancing and skimpily clad with a veil over her head) thus indicating that her body is an object of desire and pleasure. At level two, the veil placed over her face symbolizes that her identity is secret, but her body is exposed. *Prince*'s chest is exposed through an open shirt, thus there is an objectification of the male body, for female pleasure.

At level two, the sexual embrace further symbolizes heterosexual relations. A white woman positioned in a heterosexual relationship with a coloured man is unconventional and I have seldom observed this within my sample of music videos. Various competing discourses of sexuality (homosexual, heterosexual, bisexuality and high class status) are present within the text. At level of firstness, I see white women dressed seductively. At level two, I see that the video models serve as objects of desire for the artist, *Prince* (the video models' bodies are positioned in relation to his body) thus symbolising heterosexuality and sexual desire. *Prince* is seen embracing and touching the female video model, thus symbolizing heterosexuality. At level three, I observe that the video model and *Prince* are positioned in a multiracial, heterosexual relationship.

The use of words “diamonds and pearls and jewellery” signifies wealth, an elite status and high-class status. Hence power relations, contending sexualities and gender discourses, influence masculine and feminine identities.

#### **Case Study Four**

Case study four features an American music video by *Robin Thicke* entitled *Lost Without You*. At the level of firstness, I observe a white woman, (video model) entertaining the white male artist (dancing for him) and the artist is seen playing a guitar. At the second level, there are indexical signs such as an empty bedroom, an empty doorway and a guitar, which the artist caresses. These indexical elements signify the artist *Robin Thicke's* longing and yearning for his partner, the woman in the video. These signs indicate that he is missing his partner and desires a relationship with her. At the level of thirdness, a discourse of complicit masculinity is present. His wife is positioned as loving and embracing towards him, thus indicating a heterosexual relationship (I have watched a short interview on the production of the video where the artist revealed that the video model is his wife). Complicit masculinity is defined as a type of masculinity, which is constructed in a way that realizes the patriarchal divide, without the tensions of patriarchal behaviour (controlling or dominating women are associated with patriarchal behaviour) (Connell, 1995: 79). It focuses on marriage and relationships where men compromise with women rather than dominate or control women. This representation of the white male artist focuses on his relationship and marriage to his wife (featured as his video model).

#### **Case Study Five**

The fifth case study is entitled *Imisebenzi*. This is a local Kwaito music video featuring black male artists *Shugasmakx* and *Brickz*. Black female video models feature within the video. Level one features iconic signs such as *Shugasmakx* sitting in a restaurant, rapping and *Brickz* performing or rapping at a bar. These iconic signs include a restaurant table, a bottle of water, a bar and a waiter. The iconic signs indicate that the male artists are waiting to be served at a restaurant. At level two, the indexical signs are combined in such a way that it indicates that the male artists are waiting for their partners to arrive. The indexical signs include time and date, *Shugasmakx's* watch and

his behaviour (waiting impatiently), which signify that both males are expecting a date or partner to arrive (and have been waiting for their partners for a long period of time). The index signs, of *Brickz* talking to his girlfriend and *Shugasmakx* talking to his partner, signify heterosexual relationships.

At level three, the discourse of complicit masculinity is present which describes men that feature in relationships with women (Connell, 1995: 76-79). Complicit masculinity further describes men as negotiating their relationships with women and respecting women (Connell, 1995: 76-79). Women are positioned in relation to their partners and they are portrayed and dressed modestly (respectfully), thus indicating that the male artists do not control or sexually exploit women. The expensive jewellery that *Shugasmakx* wears indicates another mode of masculinity; successful masculinity, high-class status and wealth. Furthermore, I have observed that men do not use their bodies to control or exploit women; neither do women display or flaunt their sexuality or bodies. Women are positioned as counter-hegemonic representations; strong, assertive, independent individuals and equal partners within relationships with men. Competing modes of masculinity are present within the video such as high-class status (successful living), and complicit masculinity (men are positioned in relationships with women and compromise within their relationships). Gender portrayals are able to draw on contending discourses.

### **Case Study Six**

The sixth case study is entitled *Nisho Njalo* by black male Kwaito artist *DJ Cleo*. This is a local Kwaito video featuring black female video models. At the level of firstness, I observe *DJ Cleo* going to a party and talking to women. I further see a sofa and crowds of people (predominantly women) dancing, which signifies a social gathering or party. At the second level, indexical signs such as women's body parts (buttocks and breasts) are objectified. This symbolises sexualized representation and objectification of women. *DJ Cleo* is positioned talking to women, which signifies heterosexual relationships. *DJ Cleo* is observed conversing with a woman and then throws her into the pool. This signifies the force and power that he has to reject her and reject the relationship. Women are positioned as sexual subjects in the video. I found that many women within

the case study were objectified. Women appeared scantily clad, and their body parts became fetishized whilst their extremities served as the centre of the camera's gaze.

A video was seen depicting a model showing off parts of her body that are objectified, thus emphasizing that she is an object of sexual desire. I also noticed video female models using their bodies to attract, charm and control the male artist by attaching themselves in intimate embraces with *DJ Cleo* and dancing close with him. Such representations reduce women to decorative eye candy and objects of male sexual desire (Emerson, 2002: 121-127). At the level of thirdness, an underlying dominant discourse of black sexuality is located. These dominant hegemonic representations portray highly sexualized images of black women as weak and subordinate to male control. The emphasis on appearance and physical attraction perpetuate the myth of excessive sexuality of black women, which was upheld by European colonial perception. Men are represented according to the dominant hegemonic view as powerful, and dominant (having control over female bodies and sexuality) and portray high-class status (wealth and success).

### **Case Study Seven**

The seventh case study features white rap artist, *Asher Roth* and African American, Rhythm and Blues (R 'n B) and rap artist, *Cee Lo*. This is an American music video. At level one, I see both male artists performing in a music video with white female video models surrounding them. At level two, I notice a woman's shoe, a woman's body and women's chest, which form the background of the video. Evidently, the signifiers directly correspond to the signified (Van Zoonen, 1994: 34). The symbols suggest voracious female sexuality. Women's body parts are fetishized and serve as the background for the video. White women in the music video position their bodies in relation to the male performers. Video models are objectified as they appeared scantily clad and their body parts are fetishized. Hence women's body parts and extremities serve as the centre of the camera's gaze. The video models' body parts (breasts, legs and buttocks) and shoes are objectified and extend further than serving as the background of the video. Female body parts signify hyper female sexuality.

At level three, I see the performer *Asher Roth* and rapper *Cee Lo* standing in front of the projected image of the woman's body, thus symbolizing hegemonic dominance of male control over female sexuality (Emerson, 2002: 121-124). Women's bodies serve as background image and the male rappers *Asher Roth* and *Cee Lo*, are positioned in front of the image of women's bodies. The positioning of female bodies behind male artists symbolises hegemonic representations of female sexuality where women play a subordinate and subsidiary role to men (and serve as mere sex objects for male pleasure).

*Asher Roth* is presented as powerful, hegemonic and in control of the female body/sexual female image, which is positioned behind him. The models presented in the video are depicted according to the hegemonic controlling image of female sexuality. Hegemonic and dominant representations of women are not multi-faceted. Women in case study seven are reduced to decorative eye candy and objects of male sexual desire (Emerson, 2002: 121-124). I have also observed that *Asher Roth*, a white male artist, takes on the stance of a black male hegemonic position. He takes on the persona of a black male rap artist, (rap music is a genre, frequently associated with black male artists). *Asher Roth* further takes on a hegemonic stance within a rap music video (where women's bodies are objectified and serve as mere sex objects for male control). He also adopts a middle-class ethos; his dress sense (baggy clothes) and rap style of music form a part of his lifestyle (Smith *et al*, 2007: 121-124). Hence, he embraces a black manual labour and working class status. Therefore, competing masculine discourses are present in case study seven (black masculinity, dominant hegemonic representation of femininity, working class masculinity, and white-middle class masculinity).

### **Case Study Eight**

The eighth case study is concerned with black male rap artist *Chingy* and black male R'n B singer *Tyrese* and is entitled *Everytime*. The iconic signs at level one indicate that *Chingy* is socializing with friends, gambling and interacting with a black female video model. The indexical signs at level two such as jewellery (diamond earrings, chain and watch), gambling (poker) and the luxury Aston Martin vehicle signify a lavish,



flamboyant and successful lifestyle, (wealth and status signify having achieved the 'high life'). The bedroom features black male artist, *Chingy* and the video model, hence suggesting that he is in a heterosexual relationship (and that she is his girlfriend). The poker table with friends gambling, expensive liquor and Cuban cigars signify expensive tastes, and lavish and successful lifestyles. These signs signify wealth and a successful lifestyle, which is a common thread amongst a circle of African American men (*Tyrese*, *Chingy* and music producer *Jermaine Dupri*). The silhouette of the woman dancing in the background signifies a stripper (hyper female sexuality) and positioning of a woman as an object of desire.

The underlying ideology of complicit masculinity is only uncovered at level three. *Chingy* is positioned in relation to his girlfriend. He is working on, negotiating and repairing his relationship with her. Complicit masculinity is a discourse, which has certain elements of hegemony (*Chingy* has power, status achieved through his wealth) as well as the ability to negotiate a relationship with his partner (Connell, 1995: 78-79). *Chingy* is frequently positioned in relation to his girlfriend, thus emphasizing the importance of his heterosexual relationship. The 'stereotype of bling' is perpetuated (Smith, 2007: 108) which describes the excessive flaunting of wealth and jewellery. However, the text is polysemic in nature, thus it is open to competing meanings. The silhouette of the woman's body in the background (stripper/exotic dancer) symbolizes objectified female sexuality, which is subject to male hegemonic control (Emerson, 2002: 129).

Furthermore, a hegemonic dominant view of female sexuality is portrayed as highly sexualized and as an object of male desire. The silhouette of the video model signifies an object of male pleasure, which undermines feminine legitimacy and agency as intelligent, significant members of society (Hill-Collins, 1994: 220 and Emerson, 2002: 129). The video model that serves as *Chingy's* (male rap artist) girlfriend is seen rejecting her boyfriend when he approaches her for sex, thus emphasizing a counter-hegemonic representation. This representation shows that women are in control of their bodies and actions and are assertive and independent. Evidently, contending masculine and feminine discourses are present within the case study; for example, complicit

masculinity (where a man is positioned negotiating with his spouse) and the cool pose model of masculinity. Smith *et al* (2007: 108) describe this model of masculinity, referring to men who flaunt their wealth, success and lavish lifestyle, jewellery, sports cars and homes within MTV “*Cribs*”. There are also competing representations of femininity such as dominant hegemonic representation of women as sex objects as well as counter-hegemonic representations of women (as strong, independent and positioned in a relationship with men). Gender constructions are produced through competing gender discourses.

### **Case Study Nine**

The ninth case study is entitled *Thatha Isgubhu* and features local Kwaito Group *Bongo Muffin*. At the first level, I see a group of people socializing and dancing. At the second level, the indexical signs are visible. I observe black men and women teaching white men and women how to dance (to do a traditional black gum boot dance). Furthermore, I see black and white men and women socialising and this signifies multiculturalism and diversity. Two black gentleman feature in the Mercedes Benz ML Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV) and are lost whilst driving in the black township, *Indwe*. This signifies wealth, status, successful living and upper-class tastes. The white gentleman dressed in business suits indicates businessmen, people of high status.

At the third level, various underlying ideologies are present. Different social classes (for example white men in business suits) signify power whilst white hegemony and upper class status could possibly suggest businessmen, or executives. The black men in the Mercedes SUV signify the emergence of a new black upper class, (new hegemony) whilst the man in the blue overalls signifies the black working class in South Africa within the industrial and manufacturing sectors. Thus, the interaction of various different races and classes in South Africa perpetuates the myth of the ‘Rainbow Nation’, and a newly-democratic South Africa. Various racial groups including men and women are seen interacting with one another, which reflect racial harmony, tolerance and the ideology of democracy (respect and equality for all races) in South Africa. I observe a black male offering a white female hitchhiker a lift in the back of his van. This signifies a change of political regime from apartheid to democracy (in the subsequent chapter a

focus group participant discusses this reality). A myth or perception in the former South Africa was that black men (labourers/workers) travelled in the back of a truck or a van. However, within this video, the black man kindly offers a lift to the white female hitchhiker who sits in the back of his van. Men and women in case study nine are positioned as equal, respectful towards one another (both male and female, black and white feet, hands and bodies are used to dance and socialize together) and share an equal space in the video. No men or women are sexually objectified. Case study nine is the only music video, which features racial integration and harmony (racial diversity and democracy within South Africa).

Competing gender constructions, identities and classes are present within the case study. These include working-class black male and female representations, working-class representations, (black male workers in overalls symbolise manual labour) high-class black male identity (elitist black representations with successful status and wealth), working-class white female representations (a white female student/tourist taking a lift, hitch-hiking), and high-class representations of white males (dressed in business suits), thus symbolizing their status and power, as executives. Multiracial and multicultural representations are also present (men and women of various races and classes are seen socializing and dancing together). Evidently, competing gendered discourses are located in case study nine.

### ***Case Study Ten***

The tenth case study features white female artist *Pink* and is entitled *Fun House*. This is an American music video. At the first level, I see the female artist walking around a burnt house and various household items on display (a frame, a teddy bear, a sofa and a lampshade) and clowns in the background (parading around the video). The burning house has important indexical elements as well, connecting the world of domestic quarrel, tension and broken relationships to destruction and burnt ruins. *Pink* throws a frame of a picture of her and her ex-husband and she kicks a toilet pan down signifying that she ends or rejects her relationship, and rejects the domestic sphere (home). *Pink's* couch and lampshade (items inside the home on fire and the teddy bear signify the end of her relationship, and destruction of the domestic space. She uses her body to throw,

kick and reject items, from her home or domestic sphere. She picks up a stick and flings it near the ruined coach. Her actions of kicking and flinging house items signify that she is rebelling against the domestic sphere, relationship and marriage. *Pink's* actions signify that she is independent, aggressive, assertive and violent. Her dress sense and her actions signify that she is in control of her identity and she is not objectified. The clowns that are present within music videos and the use of the words "this used to be a fun house but now it's full of evil clowns" signify that bliss and happiness within her relationship and her home have been replaced by bleakness, mayhem and destruction.

At the third level, I observe the underlying 'myth of burning bra', radical feminist or anarchist view, which rejects domestic sphere and marriage in favour of an independent assertive feminine identity. However, radical feminism is no longer prevalent in contemporary society. where women are free to express their independence and identities and are no longer viewed as 'rebellious' in society, if they choose to do so. A counter-hegemonic femininity (an autonomous, independent, assertive feminine identity) is eminent. The burning of the teddy bear (household items, toilet pan, sofa, and lampshade) is symbolic of *Pink's* rejection of motherhood, maternal feelings, domestic sphere and her marriage. Her words "burn this sucker down" indicate that she is in control of her actions, and chooses to burn the domestic sphere down and reject it. Her use of the words "I rather be out in the street than in his haunted memory", signify that she rejects her marriage and the domestic sphere, and rides off on her motorbike away from the burnt ruins. This symbolizes *Pink's* escape from marriage and the domestic sphere. This representation of an assertive, aggressive, independent woman is in direct contrast to the dominant hegemonic representations of women (as objectified and highly sexualized). By contesting marriage, the domestic sphere and motherhood, *Pink* is able to contest patriarchy (where women are shaped by the domestic sphere and motherhood and subordinated by men), thus establishing a form of female independence and hegemony. Such counter-hegemonic representations of femininity show that women are in control of their actions, identity and bodies.

### **Case Study Eleven**

This case study is entitled *Paparazzi*, by American white female artist, *Lady Gaga*. At the level of firstness, I see *Lady Gaga*, the female artist and her boyfriend (a white male) in a relationship. They quarrel and as a result, she is injured. At the level of secondness, the indexical signs, the boyfriend's aggressiveness, his violent actions (he pushes her off the edge of the wall) and the wheel chair, signify physical abuse and assault. *Lady Gaga's* boyfriend has physically abused her therefore she is injured and bound to a wheel chair.

At the second level, I also observe the relationship between *Lady Gaga* and her boyfriend (the embracing and kissing) signifying a heterosexual relationship. Also located at this level are nurses and butlers, which signify that *Lady Gaga* is in need of medical care as she is injured and assaulted. In addition, I have observed that scenes of murder are emphasised (a female nurse was hanged, a slaughtered nurse is seen lying in a pool of blood). These indexical elements signify murder, violence and vendetta. The nurses were the female artist's caregivers, but she has taken revenge upon them and murdered them. She has projected her abuse and violence onto her caregivers/nurses. The indexical signs show *Lady Gaga* embracing and kissing two women, signifying homosexuality and ambiguous sexuality. Thus her sexuality is ambiguous, as she is positioned in relation to both men and women (signifying bisexual identity). Evidently case study 11 contains contesting and contradictory messages, pertaining to gender identity.

Also observed at level two are crutches, *Lady Gaga's* black lipstick and a ring. The use of crutches and her actions (walking and dancing), thus indicate her medical progress and recovery from the injuries sustained. She is represented as an aggressive, assertive, strong woman. The black lipstick and poison in her ring, (which she uses to kill her boyfriend) serve as a foreshadowing of death (murder and revenge). At the level of thirdness, the signs combine to reveal ideologies that exist. The stereotypical 'myth' of femme fatale (a deadly, seductive, psychotic and charming woman) is present. O' Sullivan *et al* (2004: 102) highlight that among the representations of women within television media, a recent trend is the re-emergence of the 'femme fatale', a seductive

but dangerous woman who manipulates men for her own ends. However, such a connotation of female identity can be stereotypical and rigid. I argue instead, that a representation of multidimensional womanhood is present, shaped by contending and contradictory feminine discourses. Case study 11 displays conflicting messages about femininity and sexuality. Gender themes of contradictions and ambivalence are present. *Lady Gaga's* sexuality is rather ambiguous; it is defined as neither homosexual nor heterosexual identity, but rather as bisexual identity. Although hyper-sexual images of *Lady Gaga* are located, a representation of counter-hegemonic femininity is also present. *Lady Gaga* is in control of her own sexuality, her body and her identity; she is assertive and independent.

The juxtaposition and combination of sexuality, assertiveness and independence can also be read as the re-appropriation of a woman's body, in response to its sexual regulation and exploitation (Emerson, 2002:121-124). *Lady Gaga* serves as an ambiguous female identity that uses her body and her sexuality as a tool to exert revenge and retribution on her boyfriend, who has physically and emotionally abused her. She is also portrayed as victim of physical assault, who then becomes the perpetrator of murder and revenge; thus her feminine identity is ambivalent. Various competing gendered constructions are present within the case study: heterosexuality, bisexuality, ambivalent femininity and a patriarchal definition of femininity (as passive, submissive to male control and fearful). Different classes of gender representations are present, such as working-class white masculinity and working-class black masculinity (black and white male butlers), elitist white femininity (*Lady Gaga* owns the wealthy mansion, indicating wealth and status and the butlers/servants obey her orders; she is the boss within her home).

Her boyfriend's actions, aggressiveness towards her (pushing of the wall edge and physical assaults) signifies the discourse of violent masculinity. Evidently discourses of gender can be contested and challenged thus creating room for a new hegemonic discourse (ambivalent womanhood). Contending and conflicting masculine and feminine discourses and power relations shape gender portrayals.

### **Case Study Twelve**

The case study features African American black male artist, *Trey Songz* and is entitled *I Cant Help but Wait*. At the first level, I observe the artist paying attention to his neighbours, a couple who constantly quarrel. The second level contains indexical elements: the boyfriend breaks the dinner plate, screams at his girlfriend, pushes her around, and as a result, she cries, signifying emotional and physical abuse (inflicted by the boyfriend). The broken plate and the boyfriend pushing his girlfriend also indicate tension and unrest in their relationship and domestic violence. Located at the third level is the discourse of aggressive masculinity, where males inflict violence and abuse on their spouse/partner; this is associated with domestic violence and abuse. The discourse of violent masculinity is present, the woman in the video (abused victim) is positioned as frightened, weak and reliant on her abusive boyfriend. This representation signifies patriarchal definitions of femininity, as fearful and dependable (Connell, 1995: 80). Connell adds that in domestic violence cases often involve abused women, physically able to look after themselves, who have accepted their abuser's definitions of themselves as incompetent and helpless (1995: 80).

In addition, the discourse of complicit masculinity is identified. *Trey Songz* is presented as the caring, sincere neighbour and he is concerned for his neighbour's welfare (female victim). *Trey Songz* wants to protect her and would like to help her escape from her abusive boyfriend. At the same time, *Trey Songz* displays traits of hegemonic masculinity (he is strong, aggressive; he confronts the abusive neighbour) and tries to push him away from the victim (abused girlfriend). Connell refers to this type of masculinity as 'complicit masculinity', which describes men who retain certain hegemonic traits, but negotiates with their partners/wives. The focus is on relationships and the domestic sphere (1995: 80). Evidently, there are competing masculine representations and discourses within the case study. This case study contrasts with previous videos in the analysis (which have a fantasy element: extravagant, flamboyant lifestyles). Case study 12 focuses on realistic social issues such as domestic violence and emotional abuse.

### **Case Study Thirteen**

This case study showcases *Tear Gas* a Local South African Kwaito Group consisting of black male and a black female artist and features Kwaito male artist *Hip Hop Pantsula (HHP)*. The video is entitled: *entitled Take you Out*. At the first level, I see the three performers playing golf (two black guys and a girl). At the second level, I see the game of golf, which signifies upper-class tastes, status and successful living and 'having made it in life'. The expensive jewellery further signifies successful living, wealth and an extravagant lifestyle. The female representation is positioned in a relationship with the male rapper (he lets her drive the golf cart and he teaches her how to play golf) signifying a heterosexual relationship between them.

At the level of thirdness, certain discourses are present. The myth of 'black diamonds' - emerging upper class blacks with expensive tastes - is perpetuated by the symbols: the sport of golf, expensive jewellery. However, other masculine discourses are located in the text. The male rapper further symbolizes the discourse of complicit masculinity. He is represented as negotiating his relationship with his girlfriend and he allows her to drive the golf cart and teaches her to play golf. The black male artists in the video reflect both James Bond: upper-class tastes (playing golf) and Cool Pose traits: such as celebrating an extravagant lifestyle (Smith *et al* 2007: 108).

Competing gendered discourses are present, such as the Cool Pose model of masculinity (a masculinity that subscribes to high-class tastes and preferences such as golf), new emerging hegemonic masculinity (black elitist masculinity that is becoming prominent in South Africa), as well as complicit masculinity (the black male artist is seen negotiating within his relationship with his girlfriend). The positioning of the male and female playing golf together symbolizes the dynamics of a heterosexual relationship. There are also various competing feminine constructions in the case study. The black female artist is also seen playing golf, wearing sports and golf gear, thus symbolizing that she draws on high-class tastes and preferences. Her dress sense and behaviour (playing golf with her boyfriend) reflects that she is in control of her body, actions and sexuality. A shared space for both male and female representations exists in the case study. Video music models are also present. They display their bodies and faces and



their body parts are not objectified nor, is their dress code demeaning. They are not positioned as hyper-sexual or in compromising positions in relation to male artists (*Tear Gas* and *HHP*). However, a standardized form of female representations is present (slender body type of women; black and coloured women are seen as slim and attractive).

### **Case Study Fourteen**

This case study is entitled *Work*, by an African American female Artist: *Ciara*. At the first level, I see women working and dancing in a construction site. At the second level, indexical signs, construction equipment and earth-moving machinery, are visible including a caterpillar crane, power drill and construction trucks, which signify power, strength, construction and civil engineering. I observe women using heavy equipment and construction machinery (heavy crane and the power drill), which signifies strength, independence, hard work, assertiveness and being in control. Female representations in the video (*Ciara* and her video models) wear sexy, modified engineering clothes, thus signifying they are in control of their sexuality, identities and their bodies. At level three, the signs symbolize multi-dimensional femininity, hard working, strong, independent women who are also sexy and in control of their bodies. Emerson indicates that blackness does not always carry a negative connotation; instead, it is the basis for strength, power and a positive self-identity (2002). Codes of positive black identity include visual representations such as caregiver, nurturer in domestic space, and strong female identity. Signifiers of blackness are present in case study fourteen, for example, an assertion of autonomy vocality, independence and an expression of partnership and sisterhood (with other black women and men).

There is an underlying myth that 'construction and civil engineering is a man's terrain', as it is rigid and tough. This case study represents a sisterhood of women who work together in unison and are strong, assertive and establish a space within a predominantly masculine field (civil engineering). Sisterhood is symbolised through representation of blackness, which is associated with strength, power and a positive self-identity (Emerson, 2002). Women represented in this video invade a hegemonic masculine space of construction and civil engineering, and use men's tools

(construction) equipment to assert their own strong identities. Various competing discourses are present within this case study such as working class black femininity (associated with manual labour such as construction work), sisterhood (a sense of harmony, teamwork amongst black women) and a counter-hegemonic feminine identity (as strong, independent and in control of their bodies and sexuality). The absence of men within this case study emphasises that women dominate the visual images. The skimpy dress further symbolizes that women are aware of their sexuality, but are in control of their bodies, actions and sexualities. Case study 14 differs from previous videos, as it features women exclusively within the video.

### **Case Study Fifteen**

This case study is entitled *Turn my Swag* and features African American Male Rap Artist, *Soulja Boy*. At level one, the artist is seen waking up in his home, giving us a tour of his home and socializing with friends. At level two, I see a luxurious house with opulent items/assets, (fancy jewellery/ 'Bling', hoards of money and fancy cars) which symbolise high-status/ 'high-life' and a flamboyant lifestyle. At level three, the music video resembles the modes of successful masculinity, namely James Bond and Cool Pose (Smith *et al* 2007). *Soulja Boy* is seen embracing a large sum of money, indicating that he loves his extravagant and flamboyant lifestyle, 'he has made it in life' and is successful. Symbolic signs located at this level, (such as material wealth, money, luxury items, car, jewellery and mansion) help perpetuate the myth of the 'black diamond' (stereotypical myth, which refers to young affluent, wealthy blacks that live the 'high life'). The excessive display of material wealth, flamboyant lifestyle and success are associated with the Cool Pose model of masculinity (Smith *et al*, 2007: 109). Furthermore, high-class tastes and preferences, such as an Italian sports car (Lamborghini) and a mansion signify the 'James Bond model' of masculinity. Case study fifteen differs from previous Hip Hop and R'n b case studies. This is the only music video that does not feature women. A majority of case studies feature highly sexualized and objectified women. *Soldja Boy's* baggy dress sense and rap style of music signify black working class masculinity. The masculine portrayal in case study 15 is able to draw on competing discourses of class, race and masculinities.

## **Case Study Sixteen**

This case study is entitled *Put em in the Place*, by African American black male Rap Group, *Mobb Deep*. At level one, I observe helicopters searching for someone, black rap artists located in an SUV, in a bank vault, in a ship and near a train. At level two, indexical signs, the name *Mobb Deep* signifies a gang or mob. I notice signs such as, a helicopter with search-lights, and the words FBI, which signify that police (*status quo*) are searching for criminals (*Mobb Deep*). The helicopter and the FBI also signify that a crime has been committed (a counterfeit operation). Indexical signs of transport modes (SUV, a train and a boat) signify that *Mobb Deep* is a well-mobilized gang, which operates through various means. Indexical elements, such as a stockpile of money, and the words “*Mobb Deep counterfeit operation*”, signify a crime, or illegal act. Extravagant jewellery, and an expensive luxury vehicle/SUV, further signifies successful wealth, status, and a “high life”. The style of dress (baggy clothes), graffiti on the walls, the slum/ghetto ‘hood’ (African American term for neighbourhood) and the rap artist’s words and association with the ‘hood’, signify black working-class status. The graveyard symbolizes death. Two black male artists are positioned on chairs like kings, signifying a throne/an empire. Furthermore, *Mobb Deep*’s use of word “*Kings of New York*”, signifies that black male representations are in control, powerful and have (white and African American) women positioned around (who serve as sexual objects, for male hedonistic pleasure and control).

Dominant hegemonic representations of femininity are present. Women are represented as sexualized objects, signifying heterosexual relationships in which *Mobb Deep* (black males) are located. The throne and the use of the words “*Kings of New York*”, could also signify that *Mobb Deep*, have an empire, a powerful mob/crime syndicate, in the city of New York. I observe money in the *Mobb Deep* counterfeit operation which symbolises power, criminal activity, and revenge or vendetta on Chinese and white gangs (recipients of the counterfeit money). A high-tech computer laptop (technology), the words ‘*top secret*’, binoculars, the words ‘*high security*’, a computer hacker and the words ‘*master plan*’, signify that *Mobb Deep* is on a secret mission and engaged in criminal activity (breaking into the secure bank vault to steal money).

At the third level, signs work together to symbolize various underlying ideologies. The wealth luxury vehicle and jewellery signify high-class tastes (successful masculinity, the James Bond Model of masculinity as described by Smith *et al*, 2007: 108). Evidently, the luxury vehicle and jewellery show that black masculinity has upper-class tastes and preferences. The baggy clothes, ideas of gangsterism and slum or ghetto neighbourhood, symbolize working-class black masculinity. The graveyard, the fire in the rap artist's hand, the action of cutting someone's throat, symbolise gangsterism, violence, organised crime and death. These signs further symbolise the discourse of aggressive masculinity and violent masculinity. Competing masculine discourses, which arise from gender constructions, are located within case study 16.

Various forms of hegemonic masculinities are found in the case study. The elderly white men and the use of the words 'old G', (G is African American slang for gangster) his business suit and the words Capitol Hill, signify a politician (existing white hegemonic power). The Chinese man symbolizes Chinese mafia. These hegemonic forms are being contested, overthrown by a new hegemonic power, black masculinity (*Mobb Deep*: black gangsters). Counterfeit money is used as a tool to overthrow the existing hegemonic power (white politicians on Capitol Hill). *Mobb Deep's* actions, breaking into a high security bank vault and stealing money, show that they rebel against the 'law', the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigations)' hegemonic power. Connell (1995) indicates that violence becomes a way of claiming or asserting masculinity in group struggles (gangs fighting for territory such as *Mobb Deep* in New York). Competing and contesting gender constructions and discourses are present in this case study (such as Bourdieu's emerging middle-class discourse, the James Bond model of masculinity, violent masculinity, white hegemonic masculinity and new contending forms of hegemonic masculinity such as black masculinity).

### **Case Study Seventeen**

The study features a local South African, black female Kwaito artist, *Winnie Khumalo* and is entitled *I just want to live my life*. At the level of firstness, I see a woman dancing and performing; she is seen in a recording studio with friends. I further observe an elderly lady sitting at the piano, conversing with a teenage girl. At the level of

secondness, the indexical elements signify a grandmother, teaching her granddaughter how to play the piano, and teaching her grandchild life values/morals. The female representation, *Winnie Khumalo*, is a full-figured black woman that performs and dances, (her dress sense is modest) thus signifying that she is in control of her identity, her body and is independent. Her presence in the recording studio in relation to the men (producers) signifies that her career and music is starting to take off, and that her producers are proud of her hard work. Two black males are present in the video and are positioned, in relation to *Winnie*, as mentors, coaches/ music producers. There are two slim black female video models which feature in the case study as dancers. They are represented as independent, assertive, and in control of their sexuality, identity and bodies (there is no objectification of female bodies in the video). *Winnie Khumalo's* full-figured body directly contrasts to the female video models, but also to the majority of case studies, which feature thin, slender women (performers and video models).

At the third level, the ideology of a matriarch is present. The matriarch is positioned as 'the head of the home'. I observe a grandmother, teaching her granddaughter how to play the piano which signifies that the mother/grandmother is responsible for installing values, and morals in children and raising them (in the domestic sphere). However, I argue that the text embodies more than one meaning. A matriarch is defined as the head of the home and displays 'rock-like' or 'sheet-anchor' qualities of stability (Kilborn, 1992: 47). The grandmother teaching the granddaughter how to play the piano, places an emphasis on the matriarch and her positive influence on her granddaughter. The grandmother serves as a role model for the child. Case study 17 features the theme of family, and serves as the only representation of an elderly woman. Both case study 17 and 19 are the only music videos, which feature the family and focus on the domestic space. Furthermore, case study 17 serves as the only example, which features full-figured women and the larger body type. The remainder of case studies feature the standard format of body type, slender young women (black, white and coloured).

### **Case Study Eighteen**

This case study features African American male artist, *Michael Jackson* and is entitled *You are not alone*. At the first level, I see the male artist performing and singing on a

theatre stage, in front of an empty theatre. I further observe that he is positioned in a relationship with a white woman. I also notice that the artist, is positioned on a mountain top, and is further seen walking away from a swarm of cameras. At level two, I see a man positioned in relation to a white woman. He is seen hugging and embracing her, thus symbolizing a heterosexual relationship. Also at level two, I notice that the artist's appearance and features are feminine; he wears make-up, lipstick, his long hair centre parted, and his lace shirt and dress sense appear to be feminine. Within this level, the artist is seen walking away from and avoiding a swarm of *paparazzi*, thus symbolising an escape from the pressures of fame and bad publicity. The mountain top, on which the artist is positioned, symbolizes a secluded place of solace and peace, a place of escape, away from *paparazzi* and negative media coverage. The empty theatre suggests that he is in lonely and isolated. This is further reinforced by the words of the song: *I'm still all alone*' and *'you are not here with me*'.

At level three, various competing discourses are present. For example ambiguous masculinity: *Michael Jackson's* make-up, hairstyle and dress sense is feminized, thus blurring his identity as a heterosexual male. His heterosexual relationship with the video model, (white female representation Lisa Marie Presley) symbolizes his marriage to Lisa Marie Presley. The female representation is seen as barely clad and exposing her back. Her back and her legs (her body parts) are objectified, for *Michael Jackson's* pleasure. She is positioned as an object of desire, for his control. Lisa Marie Presley is represented according to the dominant hegemonic view of femininity. A multiracial relationship between a black man and a white woman is seen as unconventional, and not prevalent in most case studies (except case studies 3 and 18). However *Michael Jackson* does not display masculine or racial features or the features of an African American male. His facial features are feminized and his appearance is Caucasian.

### **Case Study Nineteen**

Case study nineteen is entitled *I need money*, by local South African black male, Rap artist, *Ricky Rock*. At level one, I see a rusty scrap car, an informal settlement (a shack dwelling), an informal dump and old clothes. A suitcase is seen at level one. I also

observe people sleeping in the street (a black man, a black woman and children). At level two, I see abject poverty; the shack dwelling, the old clothes symbolize poverty and financial struggle, this is further symbolized by the words (chorus) in the song: '*I need money*'. The man and woman sleeping next to each other on the street symbolize a heterosexual relationship (husband and wife) and the children symbolize family. At level two, I also see a sealed suitcase, which contains money, thus symbolizing an escape from poverty and suffering.

At level three, items such as a shack dwelling, rusty car and people sleeping on the street, symbolise social problems in South Africa (extreme poverty, informal settlements shack dwellings, homelessness and rife unemployment). The suitcase represents an escape from poverty and unemployment. The suitcase contains money, symbolizing access to upward social mobility and a better quality of life. The discourse of complicit masculinity is present (the man is positioned as negotiating with his wife and family). The wife is positioned as an equal partner to her husband. This is a counter hegemonic representation of a woman, as a strong, nurturing mother. Evidently competing discourses of gender are present; lower social-class, working-class black representations, and complicit masculinity. Hence gender representations are shaped by contesting discourses of gender, race and class.

### ***Case Study Twenty***

The twentieth case study features a local black female artist, *Amani* and is entitled *Tonight*. At level one, she is seen socializing with girls at her house. Alcohol such as wine and whisky are present. At level two, I also observe *Amani* celebrating within her home. The home, possessions such as art and a painting, signify successful living, wealth, status and independence. Alcohol and a gathering of people signify a celebration/party. I observe a group of women celebrating, thus symbolising unity amongst black females. Sisterhood symbolizes a representation of collective, positive, strong black female identity. The dress code of the women who feature in the video is smart (cocktail dresses), which symbolises an occasion/party.

At level three, I find that various discourses are located. The discourse of sisterhood is prevalent; there is harmony and respect among black females. Possessions in the house (painting) signify successful and a lavish lifestyle and upper class tastes, such as art and decor. No male representations feature within the case study. The women are represented as attractive, flaunting their beauty and sensuality; however they are also positioned as independent and in control of their bodies, identities and sexuality. Competing discourses of race, class, gender and sexuality are located in the case study. These competing discourses influence feminine and masculine constructions and portrayals. Evidently, gender is viewed as a highly contended site, shaped by competing discourses. Gender and power relations, are ambiguous, shifting categories, which are fluid and contestable. Male and female identities are fluid and subject to change and influence from various gendered discourses. Subsequent chapters discuss gendered themes, similarities and differences, between case studies and focus group analysis.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Similarities and Differences between Case Studies

A semiotic analysis of 20 case studies was established in the preceding chapter. The focus of this chapter is a reception analysis of findings (themes of similarities and differences between case studies). The categories of race, class, gender (power relations), sexuality, body type, skin colour, ethnic hairstyles, masculine discourses and feminine discourses are used as key indicators in this analysis.

#### ***Race***

Case study 9 serves as the only example to feature multiculturalism and diversity. There are counter-hegemonic representations of both white and black women, as strong, independent and positioned as being in control of their actions. There is interaction between black and white females of various social classes. The remainder of the case studies focus on racial presentation, of either black or white males or females. A larger number of case studies feature black women. A smaller representation of coloured or white women is featured (case studies 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 18).

#### ***Skin Colour***

Based on my findings, I established that there is a greater focus on light-skinned black women (and a few white and coloured women) in most case studies, (case studies: 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17 and 18) and a smaller emphasis on dark-skinned women. There is a preference for light-complexioned women in music videos (Perry, 2003: 136). Furthermore, Perry adds that while the camera features the face of lighter-complexioned women, it will focus on the physical features of darker skin tone of women. This upholds an assumption that light-complexioned black women are of a higher socio-economic status (or greater sexual desirability) than dark-skinned women. This assumption is a continuing aspect of Black American culture and R 'n B music videos (Perry, 2003: 137). There are many music videos and lyrics that identify the voluptuous body of women who live in housing projects or from the 'hood' (ghetto or

slum) and the working class neighbourhood. Although this cultural phenomenon was challenged during the civil rights era, it flourishes in images that appear in many television shows, movies and books. Furthermore, there is a tendency for black male movie stars, musicians and athletes to choose very light-complexioned spouses if they marry black women (Perry, 2003: 137).

In my findings, I established that case study six reflects the physical features of dark-skinned black women. Case study 6 is a local Kwaito video. The large behind of a black woman is objectified for black male's pleasure and serves as a fetish on camera. However, I have also observed that most of the black female models on videos, which feature in case study six, are dark-skinned. I found that most case studies that feature dominant hegemonic representations of femininity have a preference for light-skinned females. Perhaps it is suggested (by the male artist or director in music videos) that light-skinned women have a greater social standing and sexual desirability, than dark-skinned women.

### ***Ethnic Hairstyles as Symbols of Positive Black Identity***

Similarities were established between case study two and case study nine. There is an emphasis on black hairstyles (braids and dreadlocks). Ethnic hairstyles symbolise a reinforcement of positive black identity. Hairstyles such as braids or Afros signify African consciousness and an affirmation of strong, black identity. Ethnic hairstyles denote a defiance of western discourses and of how blacks ought to look (Virginia Historical Organisation, 2004: 1-2). Furthermore, these hairstyles offer an alternative view, of black identity and heritage as something to be proud of.

### ***Representation of Female Body Type***

The majority of the case studies have a standardized representation of women as thin and slender. A homogenised female body type is present in music videos. Many female performers are required to live up to the dominant notions of physical beauty and measure up to rigid standards of beauty (a homogenized standard of beauty) (Emerson, 2002). I observed that there is a lack of variety in body size, age and weight within my analysis. Most women were represented as uniformly thin and this was a standard

feature throughout most of the case studies, except case study 17. Women of various races, white, coloured, black and Hispanic are all portrayed according to a homogenous format, as slender, attractive and young. Case study 17 serves as the only example of an alternate representation, of a full-figured female body type. Furthermore, case study 17 provides the only representation of an elderly black woman, a grandmother and a teenager (a youth and a grandchild).

### ***Objectification of Women's' Bodies***

There is a greater emphasis on objectification of black women's bodies (behinds and breasts) than White and Latino women's' bodies within case studies. Case study 6 for example, shows the camera objectifying the black female model's breast and buttocks; her body parts are fetishized. Many videos display the black ideal of a large, rotund behind, but the video ideal also features a very small waist, large breasts and slim, shapely arms and legs (Perry, 2003). The body type of video models is frequently represented as homogenous, slender and thin. This perception of female body type and beauty impacts negatively on society and households. Standardized representations of slender female body type have the potential ability to impact on teenagers. It is suggested that adolescents are impressionable and conscious of their image and appearance. Hence, youth can strive to emulate fashion trends and uniform body type in music videos. Such images can be revealing, provocative, and seductive. Women that are portrayed as highly sexual and have their body parts objectified are reduced to weak, submissive one-dimensional representations. This portrayal of women corresponds to dominant hegemonic view of femininity.

### ***Dominant Hegemonic Representations of Women***

Case studies 6, 7 and 16 all feature hegemonic representations of women as voraciously sexual, and wild; their bodies are objectified for male pleasure, and they are positioned as weak and insubordinate to male control. Such representations are frequently perpetuated in music videos. These dominant hegemonic representations depict hyper-sexualized images of women. The emphasis on appearance and physical attraction perpetuates the myth or assumption that black women are sexually voracious (an assumption created by European colonialists). Within the sample of case studies,

the majority of black women were frequently portrayed as hyper-sexual, and frequently dressed to display/flaunt their body parts. To a lesser extent, there is an objectification of white and coloured females within music videos. Moreover, I have observed that the actions and dance movements of women are highly sexualized and provocative. Women are represented as sexual objects and commodities for male hedonistic pleasure.

### ***Counter Hegemonic Representations of Women***

Case studies 1, 2, 9, 10, 11 and 14 have a common theme. I found that alternative representations of femininity exist. These alternate feminine constructions counteract the dominant representation of women frequently perpetuated in music videos. Counter-hegemonic representations of women (black, white, and coloured) are present. Such representations of women are both ambivalent and multi-dimensional. These representations include contradictory characteristics (women are portrayed as strong, assertive, ambitious and independent whilst flaunting their sensuality and sexiness). However, they are in control of their bodies, sexualities and actions. These representations of women are not demeaning and weak. They are ambiguous and multi-dimensional. These case studies reflect that there is no such thing as a fixed female identity, but rather female identity is subject to numerous competing and conflicting discourses of race, class and gender.

As reflected in specific case studies (4, 5, 8, 12 and 13), women are positioned as negotiating the space with men, and are not positioned as subordinate. In case studies four and eight, women are positioned within heterosexual relationships. Furthermore, women are seen negotiating with their male partners.

### ***Feminine Portrayals with Masculine Traits***

Certain similarities were noted between case study 10 and case study 14. I found counter-hegemonic portrayals of women to be present. Furthermore, female representations took on masculine characteristics. Women are represented as strong, assertive and aggressive, taking on a predominantly masculine stance. Case study 10 portrays a white female artist (*Pink*) as strong, assertive and independent. She rejects

marriage and the domestic sphere. Her aggressive actions include burning down her house, assets within the house and her husband's photograph. Physicality, aggression and toughness have frequently been associated with masculinity, thus *Pink's* actions reflect a counter-hegemonic representation of femininity. Similarly, in case study 14, a black female artist, *Ciara*, as well as (white and black) video models are portrayed as strong, independent and tough. The female artist *Ciara* and video models are seen working in a predominantly masculine job (civil engineering and construction) and handling heavy machinery and earth moving equipment such as cranes, caterpillar tractors, cranes and drills. Such representations of femininity counter the dominant representations of women, as weak hyper-sexual beings. Strength, toughness and physicality are characteristics that are frequently associated with men. These counter-hegemonic representations of women take on qualities of toughness, physical strength, assertiveness and independence.

The dress code of the women within case study 14 is unconventional. They are construction workers (with construction helmets on) but their skimpy dress code emphasizes that they are aware of their sexuality and their bodies. These representations of femininity are known as 'ambiguous femininity' (where women flaunt their bodies and sexuality, but are also in control of their sexuality, bodies and actions; they are independent and assertive). No males are featured within the case study, thus symbolizing that women are in control and in charge. These representations are in direct contrast to dominant representations of excessive female sexuality.

### ***Representations of Family/Domestic Sphere***

Case studies 17 and 19 share a common theme. There is an emphasis on positive female morality, values and sisterhood. These case studies feature competing feminine discourses such as matriarchy and sisterhood (women unite and support each other).

These case studies share an emphasis on family and domestic sphere. Case study 17 is also the only video to feature an elderly black woman (a grandmother/a matriarch). Furthermore, case study 17 portrays family (grandmother and granddaughter) conversing, over piano lessons. The grandmother's actions, (teaching the grandchild to

play the piano) are symbolic of the values and life lessons transferred in the family (from an older generation to future generations). Case study 19 is the only video that features a nuclear family consisting of husband, wife and children. Thus, competing gendered discourses are present within the music video; counter-hegemonic femininity (as strong, tough and independent), ambiguous and multi-dimensional femininity, feminine portrayals that take on male traits and characteristics and strong female representations that focuses on domestic spheres and the family. The remainder of the case studies feature homogenous female representations (black, white and coloured women as young and slender with a good figure and silhouette).

### ***Violence in Male and Female Representations***

My findings reflect two types of female representation in relation to violence. The first is an alternate representation of women, which differs from dominant hegemonic portrayals. These representations of women are positioned as violent, aggressive, destructive and hostile. Case studies 11 and 12 portray female violence, aggression and anger. Case study 11 reveals that a female representation displays an aggressive form of violence through arson and pyromaniac activity, burning down her home and assets within her home. Case study 11 shows a relationship between a white male and female and domestic violence in that relationship which results in murder (the boyfriend abuses his girl friend, as a result she then seeks revenge and eventually murders him). Furthermore, I have identified various other forms of violence within case studies, gang-related masculine violence and domestic violence (abuse inflicted on females as a result of male actions). Case studies 10, 11 and 12 have a common thread; these videos display various forms of violence. Case study 16 shows *Mobb Deep*, an African American male rap group, engaging in criminal activity, violence and gangsterism (the black gangsters represented within the graveyard symbolize death and violence). Case study 12 portrays domestic violence within the home of an African American couple (the boyfriend verbally and emotionally abuses his girlfriend). Competing gendered discourses are present within these case studies, such as dominant masculinity, black masculinity, violent masculinity, aggressive counter-hegemonic femininity and a patriarchal definition of femininity (as submissive and afraid of the male partner).

### ***Domestic Violence***

Case studies 11 and 12 also share a similar thread in that both reflect domestic abuse and spousal abuse. Case study 11 represents the male as strong and physically aggressive. He physically assaults his partner, the white female (victim) who is weak and subordinate to him. As an act of violence and aggression, he throws his girlfriend over the wall or ledge and injures her. The victim (female representation *Lady Gaga*) becomes aggressive, and inflicts harm on her care takers, murders the nurses and her abusive boyfriend. Case study 12 displays another type of spousal abuse, emotional abuse. The boyfriend emotionally abuses his girlfriend and mistreats her. The female representations (in case studies 11 and 12) are portrayed as weak, submissive, fearful and subordinate. The male represents the boyfriend who is an abuser and is presented as forceful, aggressive and controlling the women within the relationship. A patriarchal representation of femininity (as weak, subordinate to male control and fearful of male partner) is present in case studies 11 and 12. Spousal abuse and domestic abuse is present in both these case studies. However, in case study 11, the victim fights back, inflicts harm upon her caregivers and is an abuser, and consequently murders them, but in case study 12, the victim remains subordinate to her abusive boyfriend.

### ***Criminal Activity Represented within Case Studies***

Case studies 10, 11 and 16 share common traits. These case studies reflect criminal activities and violence. Case study 16 displays criminal activities (gangsterism, burglary and money laundering). These illegal activities are a direct result of black male thug's actions. Case study 16 displays a criminal activity, which is a direct result of the African American male. Case study 10 displays the criminal activity of arson. The criminal activity is a direct result of female representative's actions (she is aggressive, strong and assertive). Criminal activities are also present in case study 11. The female representation of *Lady Gaga* is portrayed as a physically abused woman by her boyfriend. As a direct result of abuse, *Lady Gaga* in turn inflicts violence on her caregivers and her boyfriend and murders them. She engages in violent acts of homicide. Case studies 10 and 11 provide unconventional counter-hegemonic female representations of violence, aggression and hostility.

### ***Female Sexuality***

Heterosexuality is emphasised within most case studies, however, some case studies (6, 7 and 16) feature dominant hegemonic representations of women as hyper-sexual objects for male hedonistic pleasure. On the other hand, some case studies feature heterosexual relationships between men and women (4, 5, 12, 13 and 19), where both sexes negotiate and share an equal space. Other forms of female sexuality are also present such as homosexuality and bisexuality.

Case study 11 for example, displays female sexual identity as rather ambiguous. The white female representation is observed embracing and kissing women, signifying that she is homosexual. However, she also embraces men, further signifying that she is bisexual and that her sexual orientation is ambiguous. Evidently, competing and conflicting discourses of sexuality shape gender representations. Gender is shaped by contending discourses.

### ***Dominant Hegemonic Representations of Men***

Case studies 6, 7 and 16 feature dominant hegemonic representations of men as powerful, in control of female sexuality and female bodies, and obtaining material wealth and success. This representation of masculinity conforms to the patriarchal view of masculinity. Patriarchy is concerned with the dominant position of men and the subordinate position of women (Connell, 1995: 78).

Certain case studies (6, 7 and 16) show that women are positioned as sex objects for male control and power. The structure of patriarchy is linked to other forms of power such as race, class, subordination and heterosexism as indicated by Connell (1995). I found various competing modes of hegemonic masculinity that are located within various case studies. Masculine discourses include white hegemonic masculinity which is present in case studies 11 and 16; black masculinity which emphasizes a growing hegemonic masculinity is present in case study 6 and 13 and aggressive/violent masculinity is reflected in case study 16 where gangs/mobs fight for territory, control and power. These hegemonic masculinities compete for power and challenge the



existing *status quo*. There is room for competing and contending masculine and feminine discourses in the music videos.

### ***Negotiated/Complicit Masculinity***

The development of a 'new man' or 'negotiated masculinity' has emerged in recent gendered media studies. This negotiated or complicit masculinity draws on hegemonic characteristics and the domestic sphere. A common feature is present within case studies 4, 5, 8, 12, 13 and 19. The male representations within the respective case studies are portrayed as negotiating and nurturing in the domestic sphere and home, and compromising in relationships with their wives and girlfriends. Relationships are seen as a crucial part of male existence. In some case studies, the male representations are seen longing or yearning for their partners/spouses and a heterosexual relationship (in case studies 4 and 5). Such representations show that male and females share a space that is non-exploitive of male and female sexualities. Heterosexual relationships are emphasised through representations of negotiated and complicit masculinity. Men are observed co-operating with their spouses and relationships form a central part of their lives

### ***Objectification of Male Bodies***

Men are also positioned as objects of desire for female pleasure. O' Sullivan *et al* (2004) notes that the objectification and open display of male bodies for sexual pleasure has become a recent thing. I observed that representations of women and men can be positioned as sexually attractive, but they also serve as agents of their own desire. In case study one for example women are portrayed as assertive and in control of their sexuality and their bodies. They seduce men and view men as objects of desire. Both men and women are positioned as sexual objects, as well as being in control of their sexualities and their actions. Men gain pleasure from viewing females in this video, but women also gain pleasure by admiring men. In addition, case study four displays a white male artist whose shirt is open and whose chest is exposed; therefore his chest is objectified. What also occurs in these videos is a reversal of traditional gender roles in which men are objectified. However, the objectification of women is prevalent in most case studies. There is a greater focus on objectification of female bodies (breasts,

buttocks and legs) and female sexuality than on male bodies. Male body parts are not fetishized and reduced to excessive sexual beings.

### ***Male Sexuality***

I found most case studies reflect a male heterosexual orientation (either hyper- sexuality or complicit masculinity). Some case studies portray excessive male sexuality (hyper-sexuality). I found frequent examples of hyper-sexuality, which were present in selected case studies (6, 7 and 16). Such representations incorrectly perpetuate the myth of black masculinity associated with hyper-sexuality (Van Zoonen, 1994). The common thread between these case studies is that (black and white) male artists are surrounded by a variety of women. However, a greater number of black males are positioned according to dominant hegemonic representations. According to dominant hegemonic representation of masculinity, men are positioned as having control over the bodies and sexualities of white and black women. In these case studies, women or models exist in videos as sex objects, for male gratification and hedonism.

I was able to locate alternate representations of masculinity that counteract these dominant representations of masculinity and portray examples of negotiated and complicit masculinity. In case studies four, five and 13 men are portrayed as respectable partners in heterosexual relationships who negotiate with their spouses.

Most case studies reflect heterosexual relationships except case studies 3 and 18. These case studies reflect on the discourse of subordinate masculinity (a term developed by Connell, 1995: 75-80) where male characteristics, behaviour and appearance are not associated with being conventionally 'masculine' (tough/strong/heterosexual). Subordinate masculinity is a masculine mode, which is contested and subordinated by hegemonic masculinity. Case study three portrays *Prince*, the coloured male artist as embracing a woman and positioned in a heterosexual relationship. However, his feminized appearance (make-up, clothing, lace shirt) and lyrics "If I were a boy or a girl", correspond to the discourse of subordinate masculinity, and his actions and appearance are feminized and contrast to hegemonic

masculinity. His sexuality and his identity are ambiguous. Therefore, it is shaped by contending discourses, heterosexuality and subordinate masculinity. Likewise, case study 18 portrays the black male artist *Michael Jackson* in a heterosexual relationship with his wife Lisa Marie Presley. However, his feminized looks (make-up, hairstyle, dress sense) draw on the discourse of subordinate masculinity. Gender identities and constructions are frequently shaped by conflicting discourses.

### ***Class and Femininity***

Various discourses pertaining to class are present in my sample of music videos. Case study 13 serves as an example of emerging upper-class black femininity. A black female artist is seen playing golf (an elitist sport) and driving a golf cart, thus symbolising black upper class tastes and elite status. The emerging trend of black, upper-class femininity serves as a new form of hegemonic femininity.

White middle-class femininity is also located in my sample of case studies (music videos 11 and 14). Barrett and McIntosh (1985) indicate that white middle-class femininity is sometimes less conscious of the privilege of race and class. Case study 11, for example, portrays a white, middle-class female representation, that obtains wealth, a mansion, (male and female, black and white) butlers and servants. According to McIntosh, white middle-class femininity highlights that white women were able to exercise power based on race over black men and women, and white women of lower-classes (1985).

In case study 11, competing representations of femininity are present. The female representation *Lady Gaga* also serves as an example of white upper-class femininity. She has access to wealth, power and privileged status. She is the owner of the mansion with white (working-class) male butlers and white female maids/servants who are subordinate to her. As a white, upper-class female with power and privileged status, *Lady Gaga* is able to exert control and influence over both black and white working class male butlers and white working class female servants. Evidently, many competing meanings and discourses emerge in case studies.

In addition, I have also observed that representations of middle-class black femininity are present. The characteristics of strength and streetwise nature are present in certain female portrayals. Case studies 1 and 14 correspond to working class black femininity. The discourse of black femininity is associated with strength, toughness and the streetwise nature of a black working- class neighbourhood 'hood' (Emerson, 2002).

### ***Class and Masculinity***

Examples of lower class masculinity are present within case studies 9, 12 and 16. In case study 12 elements of black, lower-class masculinity are reflected through gangsterism, gang-related crime, violence, (aggressiveness) and ghetto/slum neighbourhood, thus indicating social struggle. Case study 12 reflects elements of aggressive masculinity. The black male inflicts domestic violence, emotional and physical abuse on his spouse. This masculine aggression is associated with masculinity of the lower-classes. Case study 9 (featuring local South Africans) further reflects an example of masculinity of the lower-class. The black male in the orange and blue work overalls is symbolic of a manual labourer (in the manufacturing sector). This embodies the lower-classes of masculinity and manual labour in South Africa. Indexical elements that signify masculinities of the lower-classes are associated with manual labour, where power is derived from masculinity and physical bravery (Burstyn, 1985; Lott, 1997) as well as aggressive masculinity.

Case study 11 portrays a white male physically assaulting his girlfriend. This display of physical abuse/domestic abuse is associated with the discourse of aggressive masculinity. Furthermore, upper-class status and elitist, white masculinity is signified by wealth, an opulent lifestyle and successful masculinity (a lavish lifestyle display of art pieces and a lavish mansion). Case study 16 demonstrates examples of elderly white gentlemen dressed in business suits and a white politician on Capitol Hill (the White House). These representations signify white, hegemonic power (men that are associated with tremendous power and influence). White upper-class masculinity is signified by their social standing and elitist position in society.

There is room for competing masculine representations. New, emerging and competing forms of masculinity are also present. Case studies nine and 13 reflect new emerging forms of hegemonic masculinity and a new emerging class of black masculinity (black elitist/ black upper-class masculinity). Case study nine demonstrates upper-class black masculinity. Black males are seen driving a luxury Mercedes SUV (Sports Utility Vehicle) and are lost in an unfamiliar area, thus symbolizing that they do not know or associate with working-class, black suburbs, (townships) in South Africa. Their luxury vehicle symbolizes their elitist status, wealth and social standing as emerging upper-class, black masculinity. Furthermore, in case study 13 two black male artists are seen playing golf and driving around a golf cart. Golf is a sport that is associated with upper-class preferences and elite classes of masculinity. The game of golf thus signifies black elitist/upper-class masculinity.

Furthermore, this emerging mode of black hegemonic masculinity corresponds to a successful model of masculinity, namely the “James Bond” model of masculinity. (Smith *et al*, 2007). The ‘James Bond’ model is defined by upper-class tastes. Indexical elements in case study eight (the Aston Martin luxury vehicle), case study 16 (luxury Sports Utility Vehicle and trendy technology such as GPS (Global Positioning Satellite Technology), case study 13 (status sport, for example, golf), upper-class tastes, (imported Italian sports car, Lamborghini in case study 15) signify successful masculinity and upper-class/elite preferences.

Frequently, upper-class black masculinity is paired with the stereotype of the ‘black diamond’ (an association with an extravagant, materialistic lifestyle), elitist tastes and preferences. I prefer not to use the term ‘black diamond’, as it is associated with an enclosed or fixed stereotypical category. Black upper-class masculinity has emerged as a new, emerging hegemonic masculinity in South Africa.

Contending and conflicting masculine constructions and discourses are located in case studies. I have identified examples of middle-class masculinity. Indexical elements in certain case studies: 8, 15 and 16 signify middle-class, black masculinity. The new

emerging middle-classes distinguish themselves as different from old wealth, and draw on popular culture (rap and hip-hop music) and high culture symbols such as wealth, jewellery, diamonds and status (Emerson, 2002). In case study eight, luxury items such as jewellery, a luxury car and money/wealth signify a lavish lifestyle. Case study 15 similarly reflect elements of middle-class black masculinity, the display of jewellery, designer brand clothing (upper class symbols) and gaming technology, (Sony Play Station and expensive audio visual equipment) signify a flamboyant lifestyle. Likewise in case study 16 the display of jewellery, chrome rims on the luxury sports vehicle, and the excessive display of money, symbolize middle-class, black masculinity but also display the streetwise nature and toughness of a gang/mob. Furthermore, these constructions of middle-class black masculinity correspond to the 'Cool Pose' model of masculinity. The 'Cool Pose' model of successful masculinity refers to a display of muscularity and athletic competence. Male representations have independence from the white upper-class, but access to upper-class tastes, toughness and a flamboyant lifestyle (Smith *et al*, 2007).

The 'Cool Pose' and 'James Bond' models of masculinity are identified by opulence and an extravagant lifestyle, a display of wealth and materialism. It therefore gives rise to the 'Bling stereotype' associated with black masculinity. 'Bling' is described as an excessive flaunting of jewellery, wealth (luxury vehicles, homes, money) and a flamboyant lifestyle. Although stereotypes are commonly associated with gender representations, I believe that gender portrayals can move beyond such rigid classifications.

An interesting example of middle-class white masculinity was established in case study seven. The male artist serves as an example of a white man who puts on the black mask (either by means of burnt cork or the appropriation of black aesthetic styles). In this way, he symbolically represents whites crossing over into black culture (Brayton, 2005). This serves as an example of a white male representation adopting a middle-class ethos, *Asher's* style of clothes (baggy clothes) are often worn as part of his lifestyle (Smith *et al*, 2007). I found that the white male artist *Asher Roth* emulates

black identity, black culture and the black style of music (rapping) and adopts a black, middle-class status as tough and streetwise. Evidently, contrasting and conflicting masculine and feminine identities shape gender discourses.

I found that dominant hegemonic representations of women and men are located in both local South African and American case studies. Evidently, some South African case studies (6 and 13) try to emulate the style of the American case studies (8, 15 and 16 that portray excessive 'bling', and the flaunting of wealth, money and opulence). However, some local case studies, which feature South African or African American artists displays counter-hegemonic representations of femininities and alternative representations of masculinity. Similarly, some American case studies also display alternate representations of masculinities and femininities. Evidently, there is space for diverse and alternate masculine and feminine representations, which defy and challenge dominant notions of male and female gender constructions. Hence, categories of power relations, sexuality and contesting gender discourse shape gender portrayals.

## CHAPTER NINE

### Focus Group Analysis in Comparison to Semiotic Analysis

Music videos are open to multiple meanings. Through focus group sessions, I obtained participants' perceptions regarding gendered representations (race, sexuality, body, class and power relations). Through the quota sampling technique, I found racial mixed demographics (both male and female participants) and obtained a quota sample of 26 participants. I conducted three focus group sessions and a pilot testing session which provided valuable feedback and insight. The results of my semiotic analysis are compared to the results obtained in focus group sessions and all disparities and similarities are noted. A semiotic analysis is able to reveal the context of the texts, whilst focus group results are able to provide a sample of the audience's interpretation of the text. An alpha numerical system is used, for example, Group A Participant one. The results of my focus groups are discussed in this chapter.

Semiotics draws our attention to the power of the woman as signifier of almost anything (hegemonic representations, counter-hegemonic representations and ambiguous femininity). However, conceptualizing gender as a fragmentary discourse, which is expressed and reconstructed by technologies of gender (such as media), implies a semiotic approach, which foregrounds the different signs and contradictory processes of signification in media texts (Van Zoonen, 1994: 12). Through semiotic analysis I identified and uncovered different signs and competing and conflicting gender discourses, which are located in case studies.

#### ***Race and Female Representations***

Most of the participants in Groups A, B and C felt that a larger number of black women were prevalent in the case studies, and a smaller number of white and coloured women featured. Similarly, I found that black females predominantly featured in the sample of music videos and a small number of white and coloured women featured. I further established that only a few case studies (such as case study nine) feature diversity



(black and white, male and female portrayals) but a majority of videos feature black males and females.

### ***Dominant Hegemonic view of Femininity***

The majority of focus group participants (Groups A, B and C) found that women to a greater extent are portrayed as sex objects; their body parts are objectified and they are positioned as subordinate to men. Focus group participants identified this theme. Group A Participant one, for example, highlighted that music videos feature sexy female models (positioned with white or black male artists). Such representations reduce women to mere 'decorative eye candy' for male pleasure. In Group A, Participant six highlighted that many black females in past music videos didn't expose their bodies as frequently as they do now. She further indicated that black females have adapted this from white females. Perhaps this participant draws on the dominant hegemonic representations of femininity in mainstream western cinema.

This dominant view of femininity is frequently perpetuated in mainstream media, western cinema, television programmes and music videos. Mulvey (1975: 6) argues that the dominant point of view within cinema is masculine, especially where a woman is concerned. The female body is displayed for the male gaze in order to provide erotic pleasure (voyeurism) and ultimately, a sense of control over her. She is rendered as a passive object. In western cinema women function simultaneously as erotic objects for male audiences who possibly derive scopophilic pleasure from female presence as sexual objects for male protagonists (with whom the male audience can identify) (Mulvey, (1975: 6). Dominant portrayals of women enable the male audience to look through the eyes of the male protagonist and simultaneously to identify and objectify women (to be the male character and look at her); thus the conflict between what Freud has called libido (scopophilia) and ego (identification) is resolved by the cinematic display of women as objects of the male gaze (Van Zoonen, 1994: 89). This tendency is carried to the extreme in pornography, where erotic pleasure from looking is the sole motivation for the production.

Group A participant nine pointed out that a large group of men within the music videos do what they want and get pleasure from female bodies. These men dominate the females and they have control over women. In Group B, participants shared similar view points. Participant three stated that there is greater emphasis on sexualized images of women and physical images of women (body parts). She added that some representations are scantily clad and dance in a sensual manner, suggesting that women are promiscuous. Participant three also compared highly sexualized representations of women to the images of prostitutes. Similarly, in Group B, Participant two stated that, women are portrayed as promiscuous. Participant five in Group B added that such representations of women are derogatory. Furthermore, it positions them as desperate for male attention and is highly provocative. Group C Participant five added that objectified female images are disrespectful and women are viewed as cheap objects in these videos. This participant felt that the portrayal of women in a 'slutty' manner emphasizes that they are highly sexual beings. Participant nine in group C found that women use their bodies as tools to attract attention and they are dim-witted. Such videos show that women constantly need men and construct themselves as sex objects. Participant two, also located in group C, found that women don't promote empowering messages especially when they are represented as sex objects in male-dominated music videos.

There is a common thread between the focus group findings and my findings. I established that dominant hegemonic representations of femininity are frequently perpetuated. In most case studies, (6, 8 and 16) women are represented as sexually excessive and their body parts (breasts, legs and buttocks are fetishized and objectified. I further found that women are portrayed as subordinate to male (white and black) control and hedonistic pleasure.

Many participants in Groups A, B and C (male and female) found that white, black and coloured women were frequently represented as highly sexual. However, most participants (in groups A, B and C) identified that black women were predominant in most case studies. For example, in Group C Participant four highlighted that it is black women that are frequently portrayed as easily available sex objects without ambition or

intelligence. Similarly, I established that black women are predominantly featured within the case studies, and to a larger extent are objectified and represented as hypersexual. Additionally, I found that a smaller number of coloured and white women are objectified within the case studies.

### ***Body Shape***

Two Participants (Group A Participant five and Group B Participant one) indicated that the body shape and size of most women (black, white and coloured) within case studies is standardized. Participant five in Group B noted that since models were predominantly used, a perception of women who have the perfect shape and size is created. Group A Participant five stated that some videos have a gender bias and present a homogenous view of female body type (black, white and coloured) as thin. My findings have similarities to focus group perceptions. I identified that a uniformly slender female body type is present in the case studies. Most women in music videos (coloured, black or white) are toned, slim and conform to a standardized format of beauty and body type. However, on viewing the videos and case studies, I further established that the body parts of Black women (large behind, breasts) are subject to greater objectification than white or coloured women (case study six).

### ***Sexuality***

Most participants in Groups A, B and C (both male and female) found that female sexuality was predominantly represented as heterosexual; however one participant identified a theme of bisexuality. Most participants indicated that women were positioned in relation to men (as sexual objects of pleasure, and control) thus emphasizing heterosexual orientation. However in Group B, Participant five indicated that the theme of bisexuality is also present. This participant found that women are sometimes portrayed as bisexual (as reflected in case study 3), and it is perceived to be socially fine (in music videos) to be with another female, particularly for the attention of wealthy men. There are certain similarities in my findings. I found an implied theme of bisexuality in case study 3 and 11. For example, case study 3 (by the artist *Prince*) features two women who display attention towards each other, thus signifying bisexual

identity, perhaps for the male artist's pleasure. A second example in case study 11 portrays a female artist (*Lady Gaga*) embracing and kissing two females, thus signifying homosexuality. The female representation is also seen kissing her boyfriend, indicating a heterosexual relationship. Ambiguous femininity and masculinity are present in the above case studies, therefore contending gender discourses are located in music videos.

Participant three in Group B believed that case study 10 portrays a female representation (*Pink*) as aggressive and butch, implying homosexual orientation. However, my semiotic analysis differs from participants' perceptions in the following ways: I located indexical signs in case study 10, which indicate heterosexuality and marriage (the photo frame of *Pink* and her husband reflect heterosexuality and marriage). Despite the presence of dominant hegemonic representations of femininity, other competing representations of women exist. Such representations give rise to contesting discourses of womanhood.

### ***Counter-hegemonic Representations of Femininity***

Many participants identified that many different/alternative competing representations of women exist in the case studies (Focus group Participants one, four and six in Group A and Participants four, five, six and seven in Group B). Participant six in Group A observed that some of the videos which feature male artists reflect dominant hegemonic portrayals of men. Focus group members found that some male representations are positioned as having control over women's bodies and women are positioned as subordinate sex objects. However, participants further established that videos which feature female artists offer alternate representations of women (as assertive, independent, strong, and successful).

Participants five, six and seven in group B found that many alternative, positive representations of woman are present in case studies. These participants believe that women are represented as independent, successful, confident, assertive and strong. Participant five stated that some women appear as sweet, pretty, happy and assertive. Participant four believed that some women are represented as ambitious. Participant

two in group C found that some portrayals of women embody a sense of determination and strength (such as the female representation in case study 10). Participant four in group C further indicated that despite the negative portrayals of women as sexual, some women are portrayed as wise, with good intentions.

Participant three in Group C found that the case studies convey contrasting roles of how women are portrayed. Some women are portrayed in a positive manner with decent behaviour, whilst others are portrayed in a negative manner (as provocative, wild and sexual). Participant six in group C also found that most women were portrayed in a sexual manner and seemed undignified, but some women are portrayed as independent and in control. Participant seven stated that whilst some representations of women are weak and demeaning, other representations of women are confident, strong and independent. Evidently, most participants located competing representations of femininity in the case studies.

Likewise in my findings, I established that conflicting constructions of femininity are present and some are dominant, hegemonic representations (of hyper- sexual, insubordinate women that serve as sex objects). Other representations are counter-hegemonic (women are portrayed as strong, independent, and in control of their bodies, sexualities and actions). Evidently, competing and contesting gender discourses are present within music videos.

### ***Multi-Dimensional Womanhood***

Participant six in Group B observed that some case studies show positive representations of women (as assertive, independent, and successful) as well as negative representations of women (dominant, hegemonic representations of femininity as sexual, demeaning). Furthermore, this participant found that local Kwaito music videos also have competing representations of women (some portrayals are highly sexual, whilst other representations of women are strong and assertive). Participant one in Group A indicated that case study one focused on a female artist and music video models. Although women were represented as slender (uniform body type) and sexy,

they are simultaneously portrayed as assertive, tough and independent. Evidently, case studies are open to multiple and competing gender discourses.

I have established similarities in my findings. I located ambiguous representations of femininity. Ambiguous representations of femininity are known as 'multi-dimensional womanhood' (Emerson, 2002: 120). Case studies 1, 10, 11 and 14 reflect multi-dimensional representations of women. In these videos women are portrayed as sexy, slender and attractive but are also simultaneously represented as independent, assertive, and as being in control of their actions, their bodies and sexualities. These women are neither exploited nor disrespected by males, but instead control/dominate the space within case studies. Such representations of women counteract dominant hegemonic representations of femininity (as sexually ravenous, insubordinate and weak). The case studies consist of competing representations of women and contending discourses of womanhood. There is no such thing as a fixed female identity. Female identity is subject to numerous competing and conflicting discourses.

### ***Violent Female Representations***

Case study 10 served as a popular example for discussion among focus group participants regarding violent representations of femininity. Group A Participant two stated that case study 10 contains a portrayal of white female representation who is assertive, powerful, in control of her identity, brave and daring. Similarly, participants six and seven in Group B found this female representation in case study 10 to be aggressive and angry. Participant 11 in Group C indicated that this particular female portrayal (in case study 10) was stronger in comparison to other portrayals of white women. In addition, participant 11 also found that the black female representation in case study two (*India Arie*) appeared stronger in comparison to representations of black woman in the remaining case studies. Participant two Group C indicated that when women dominate or are in control of their music videos, they send strong, positive messages of independence and assertiveness. Participant 11 in Group C further established that the female representation in case study 10 was portrayed as powerful and independent and that she used her sexuality in a positive way (she is in control of her sexuality, her body and her identity). Similarly, Participant six from Group A found

that female representations (in case studies 2 and 10) are positive and independent. She further indicated that within female music videos women show that they are independent and they don't expose most of their body parts. Evidently, case studies encompass competing gendered representations and gendered discourses.

Similarly in my findings, I established that alternative feminine constructions exist. These counter-hegemonic representations include female portrayals of strength, assertiveness, independence and aggressiveness. Case studies 10 and 11 serve as counter-hegemonic representations of femininity. Female representations display characteristics of violence, aggression and hostility. Women are constructed as being in control of their actions, bodies, and sexualities, and are portrayed as strong, assertive female representations. These alternate representations counteract the dominant hegemonic representations of women.

### ***Race and Masculine Representations***

Most participants in Groups A, B and C found that black men were prevalent in most music videos, and a smaller number of white men featured in videos. Participant four Group A for example, observed that mostly black males are prevalent in case studies and a smaller number of white males feature, in the sample of music videos whilst Indians (males and females) are not present in the sample. Similarly, I also found that a greater number of black men were prevalent in most music videos and a small number of white males and coloured males were present in music videos.

### ***Male Representations***

The majority of the participants in Groups A, B and C found that men were portrayed as successful, confident, independent, competitive, dominant and assertive. In most case studies, men were represented as powerful. Discussant eight in group A found that men are viewed as superior leaders in various fields. Participant eight added that men are strong individuals who can influence the people around them.

In my findings, I established similar themes. Various competing modes of successful masculinity were displayed. The 'James Bond' model of masculinity, (Smith *et al*, 2007: 108) is embodied, through high-class preferences, luxury items and an expensive

lifestyle (such as golf, a high status sport in case study 13, and an Aston Martin in case study eight). These items reflect successful masculinity, and high-class status and preferences. Furthermore, a second model of successful masculinity is present, the 'Cool Pose' model (Smith *et al*, 2007: 108). This model of masculinity is reflected through excessive display of an extravagant lifestyle, material wealth and luxurious items. Case studies 8, 13, 15 and 16 reflect this mode of masculinity. Luxury items (such as diamond jewellery, designer label clothing and luxury cars) signify successful masculinity, which is achieved through an opulent lifestyle and abundant wealth.

Participants identified themes associated with stereotypes, race and masculinity. Participant 11 in Group C found that many music videos play on stereotypes in society, for example, black men like 'bling' (extravagant diamond jewellery), and prefer designer label clothing and an opulent lifestyle. Smith *et al* (2007) found that an excessive display of wealth, (jewellery, the latest technology and luxury cars) by black males thus reinforces the "bling" stereotype (that perceives black people to be primarily concerned with material wealth). I observed that the 'Cool Pose' model of masculinity is associated with a lavish lifestyle, an excessive display of wealth, and extravagance and serves as an indicator of successful masculinity. Case study 15 reflects an example of the 'Cool Pose' model of masculinity. For example, the African American male artist, *Soldja Boy* is surrounded by his achievements, lavish lifestyle and success. The measure of masculine success is achieved through material wealth (jewellery, a large mansion, luxurious sports cars and a flamboyant lifestyle). Many other contenting masculine discourses (black masculinity, working-class masculinity and aggressive masculinity) shape representations in music videos. These gender constructions are discussed in subsequent points.

### ***Dominant Hegemonic View of Masculinity***

The majority of participants in Groups A, B and C found that men were portrayed as dominant, powerful, assertive and in control of women. Case studies six and seven served as focal points for focus group discussions of masculine dominant, hegemonic representations. Participant nine in Group A stated that men were portrayed as manipulative, aggressive, and dominating females. Themes of unequal power relations



were discussed by participants in Groups A, B and C. Participant nine in Group A found that the male artists in selected case studies “do what they please with female bodies”, and have control over female bodies. In addition, participant eight Group A indicated that men have superior control over females. Participant one in Group A found that men are portrayed as powerful. Participant two stated that “music videos portray bedroom scenes and inflate male ‘open-chested’ ego”. Hence women are portrayed as sexual objects of pleasure and their female body parts are fetishized, thus emphasizing the heterosexual orientation of men (to a greater extent) and (subordination and control of) women. Group C participant 10 adds that men are portrayed as being in control of their actions, and their behaviour (touching and charming females). Participant six in Group C further indicates that men are mostly portrayed in dominating roles as strong, powerful and being in control. Participant five from Group C also believed that men are portrayed as strong and dominant. Participant nine in group C found that “men are portrayed as having control over women; they are almost portrayed as god”. Likewise participant two in Group C added that men are portrayed as having the ability to provide anything a woman desires. In Group B participant six found that both black and white males were more dominant than coloured and black females. Most participants believed that representations of men (black and white) and their behaviour conformed to dominant, hegemonic masculine discourse and hyper-sexuality. Evidently, representations of hypersexual masculinity are eminent in many case studies featuring both black and white men. Women are positioned as weak, subordinate and subject to male control within many case studies.

My findings reflect a similar theme to focus group participants’ views. I found that dominant, hegemonic representations of masculinity are present. In addition, I found that some case studies (for example, case study seven) feature white men who treat women as sex objects and conform to the dominant, hegemonic perception of femininity (as objectified, and highly sexual). Case studies 6, 7 and 16 portray men (white and black) as dominant and powerful; they exert hedonistic control over female bodies and sexuality. However, a greater number of black men are portrayed according to dominant, hegemonic representation. Women are positioned as sex objects for male desire and power. Hegemonic representations of masculinity conform to patriarchal

views of men being more powerful and superior than women. In the selected case studies, men are represented as having control over female sexualities and bodies.

Sexuality became a focus of the discussions. Most participants in Groups A, B and C (male and female participants) found that men were represented as heterosexual (most men were positioned in relationships with women, or controlling and owning women as sexual objects or positioned as equal partners in relationships). In addition, most participants in Groups A, B and C found that men were represented as sexually voracious. In Group B participant three indicated that black men to a larger extent, are portrayed as sexually aggressive. Such representations erroneously maintain the myth of black masculinity, associated with hyper-sexuality (Van Zoonen, 1994). Blackness has been associated with natural physicality, including hyper-sexuality (Dunbar, 2000; Hooks, 1994). Participant nine in Group C found that most women in music videos exist for male pleasure. Participant one in Group C added that men are portrayed as being sexually active.

Similarly, I located a recurrent theme of hyper-sexuality within case studies. Examples of music videos, (six and seven) focus on hyper-sexuality, associated with black masculinity. Black male artists are seen surrounded by a variety of women. They are positioned as having control over women. In these selected case studies, women are portrayed as subordinate individuals who exist as sex objects, for male gratification. The dominant representations and images of black masculinity that emerge are simply a contemporary manifestation of age-old stereotypes of black men (Wingfield, 2008). Case study seven illustrates a white male displaying hyper-sexual discourse. *Asher Roth* (male portrayal) is presented as powerful, and controls female bodies and sexuality. However, I identified that a greater recurrence of black masculine representations associated with hyper-sexuality is present in my sample of case studies.

Music videos can perpetuate stereotypical images of excessive consumption, misogyny and criminality. Some rappers frequently depict women as sexual objects in their musical lyrics and videos. Such gender images reflect a patriarchal masculinity (where

men dominate over women's sexuality and bodies). Negative representations of black masculinity are associated with negative stereotypes of black men being ravenously sexual (Smith, 2007: 110). Black men (and some white men) are presented as 'sexually voracious'. Such representations uphold a negative, stereotypical perception of black masculinity (and in some cases white masculinity) as a hyper heterosexual discourse. In most case studies, (except case studies 3, 11 and 18) heterosexual discourse is present. However, there is room for alternate ambiguous masculinities and sexuality within the sample of music videos. Case study three represents a coloured male artist (*Prince*) with feminized looks, make-up, and dress sense. He thus embodies an ambiguous male identity and is therefore associated with subordinate masculinity. The female representation in case study 11 is seen caressing women, thus symbolizing homosexuality, and is further positioned in a relationship with a man, symbolising heterosexuality. Her sexuality is thus ambiguous in nature. Evidently, competing and conflicting gendered discourses exist in music videos.

### ***Complicit Masculinity***

Different participants (both male and female) located examples of negotiated/complicit masculinity within the case studies. Participant three in Group A found that white men represented in a sample of videos tend to be sensitive towards women. In Group C participant five found that white men are viewed as strong. Participant two observed that black men are portrayed as aggressive, whilst some representations of white men are passive (represented as being in touch with their feminine side, loving and understanding).

In my analysis, I identified similar findings. I located examples of complicit masculinity which are present in case studies 4, 5, 12, 13 and 19. I found examples of (black and white) men who respect and cherish women/spouses, negotiate with partners and value relationships with women. Unlike participant two in Group A, I found examples of complicit masculine discourses which are present in both white and black males. In case studies four and five, I found examples of men who were portrayed as longing for relationships and their partners. Some case studies, (4, 7 and 13) reflect that men care,

are respectful and considerate towards their partners, and do not exploit their spouses. Complicit masculinity is a discourse where men retain certain hegemonic characteristics but negotiate with women, compromise in their relationship and respect their partners (Connell, 1995). Such representations of masculinity counter the dominant, hegemonic representations of men as powerful, controlling and exploitative of female sexuality.

### ***Aggressive Masculinity***

Some participants in Groups A and B, and mostly in Group C (both male and female), found that men were portrayed as aggressive and strong. Participant five believed that music videos portrayed men as well built, muscular, aggressive and competitive. Similarly in my findings, I established examples of violent masculinity. Some case studies (11, 12 and 16) reflect violence, domestic abuse, aggression, gangsterism and crime. It is overwhelmingly the dominant gender which holds and uses the means of violence (Connell, 1995). Furthermore, my findings reflect competing masculinities. Dominant masculinity can be signified by aggressiveness, competitiveness, and toughness, and is simultaneously indicated through its negative counterpart (not being feminine or gay) (Connell, 1995, Smith *et al*, 2007). Examples of dominant masculinities include violent masculinity, hegemonic masculinities, black masculinity and white masculinity. Violence becomes important in gender politics amongst men. Most episodes of major violence (homicide, armed assault, and gang-related violence), are transactions among men. Indexical signs such as strong muscular physique, strength, physical force and violence are associated with hegemony and power. Morrell adds that men's bodies are often represented as powerful, as instruments of strength and force (2003: 4). Black and white masculinity is associated with strength, toughness and being muscular.

### ***Subordinate Masculinity***

Homosexuality in relation to men also became a focal point of discussion. Many participants located examples of ambiguous masculine representations. Group A participant nine discussed the coloured male representation in case study three, and drew on past music videos and gendered observations that were encountered. Discussant nine asked if I would identify and classify *Michael Jackson* and *Luther*

*Vandross*, (an African American R 'n B artist) as gay. The participant further added that *Michael Jackson's* appearance, dress sense and makeup look effeminate. I commented that *Michael Jackson's* identity could also be seen as ambiguous because he wears make-up, dresses and looks feminized; however, he frequently positioned himself as heterosexual within music videos. I further commented that although *Luther Vandross* was rumoured to be gay, his appearance, words and performance and frequent positioning with female video models didn't indicate aspects of ambiguous masculinity. (See also *Luther Vandross* music Video *Can I take you out tonight*).

In Group B participants six and seven pointed out that the male representation in case study three was 'gay' and a 'homo'. He did not fit into their conventional understanding of masculinity (as straight, heterosexual) and he did not fit in with their perception of how regular men 'ought to behave'. Participant seven stated: "regular men don't wear make up". Participant six observed that male representation's use of the lyrics "If I were a boy or a girl", reflect that his identity is blurred; he is confused about his sex and he is gay. Participant ten in Group C added that the male representation has feminine attributes (jewellery, make-up and feminized clothing). Likewise participant five in the same group indicated that case study two indicates that men are not always 'masculine'. By masculine, he refers to his perception of masculinity as being strong, and not associated with feminine qualities. Participant six, also in group C, indicated that some men dress in a way, which is feminine' and associated with 'gayness', whilst other men dress in a masculine way. Evidently, participants had identified and discussed a mode of masculinity which is not associated with 'conventional' masculine characteristics (strength, bravado, toughness). These are qualities which are associated with 'feminine attributes' (Connell, 1995).

Similarly, I identified a mode of masculinity, which contrasts with and differs to, hegemonic masculine discourses (aggressive masculinity, violent masculinity, heterosexual masculinity and dominant masculinity). Subordinate masculinity is challenged and subordinated by hegemonic masculinity. I observed that male artist *Prince* in case study 3 reflects an ambiguous male identity. *Prince* serves as an example of a male identity which draws on competing and contending discourses. His

attire/dress sense, his theatrical performance and make-up correspond to a 'homosexual' identity, as well as a 'metrosexual identity', (of a well-groomed, fashion conscious man) and a bisexual identity (he embraces a women, and uses the lyrics 'If I was a boy or a girl') thus emphasizing the ambivalent nature of his sexual orientation. Evidently, there is no enclosed or homogenous male identity, but rather a set of contending discourses which shape gendered identity. Where there is a symbolic blurring of femininity, gay masculinity is dominated by and subordinate to hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995: 75-80).

### ***Objectification of Male Bodies***

A few participants (Group A: participants five, seven and eight, Group B: participant four) found that men are positioned as sex objects and their bodies are objectified. Participant seven found that men look sexy and confident in videos. Likewise, I identified that men's bodies can be objectified, as reflected in case studies 1 and 4. However, I found that there is a greater objectification of women (female bodies and their sexualities) in the sample of music videos than men. A smaller number of men are objectified for male and female pleasure.

Both men and women gain pleasure from viewing male and female representations on screen and in music videos (Emerson, 2002: 132). This is not seen as a mere role reversal, but rather as an example of an expression of mutual pleasure and enjoyment. A woman is the agent of her own gratification, as well as the vehicle for fulfilment of the man's desire (Emerson, 2002: 132). Case study 1 shows that female representations give sexual pleasure, but also pursue, receive and accept it. Evidently, multi-dimensional representations of women are present. Women are aware of their sexuality, their beauty and their bodies, but are also in control of their bodies, sexuality and actions. Women are able to view men as objects of desire; simultaneously they are positioned as objects for male pleasure. Such representations resist the dominant, hegemonic view of women and create multidimensional gender representations.

### **Body Type**

A comparison was drawn between female and males regarding body representation and dress sense. Participant seven in Group C found that, most of the time, men do not show their bodies as semi-naked; whilst women are scantily clad and half-naked (they frequently display their bodies). Similarly, participant one in Group B found that men are never seen in their under-garments; they may show their six pack abdominal muscles but they always have pants on. She also found that women are dressed very scantily and promote their bodies.

In my findings, I identified a similar theme. I found that there is a greater objectification of female bodies than male bodies. Female bodies (breasts, buttocks and legs) are fetishized and become the object of the camera's gaze. Furthermore, I established that the male face, chest and muscular physique are the only parts of the male body that are objectified. The objectification of women's bodies is far greater than the objectification of male bodies. A uniform standard of slender female body type is recurrent. Women of various races including black, white, and coloured feature with a homogenous body type in many case studies (with the exception of case study 17). Case study 17 serves as the only example of a woman with a full figure or voluptuous body type.

### **Skin Colour**

In Group C participant five observed that fair-skinned women are seen as more attractive and found that a larger number of fair-skinned women (black, white, and coloured) are prevalent in music videos. Similarly, I identified that there is a greater focus on light skinned women (black, coloured and white) within dominant, hegemonic representations of femininity.

### **Racial Diversity**

Multiculturalism is a theme that featured in the focus group discussions. Participant three in Group C found that most case studies predominantly feature black men or women, whilst few case studies feature white men and women (case study 9 serves as the only example to feature racial diversity). Participant nine in Group C drew on past music videos and discussed a specific example, *Michael Jackson's Black or White*,

which features various racial groups. This participant found that “music videos don’t cater for all races”. Likewise in my findings, I established that there is no emphasis on multiculturalism. Case study 9 (a local Kwaito music video) serves as the only example of racial and cultural diversity in South African society. American music videos did not place a large emphasis on racial diversity and multiculturalism.

### **Class**

Participant three in Group C found that case study seven features a white rap artist, *Asher Roth*, taking on a black persona and black style of music. Likewise, I established that, *Asher Roth*, took on the persona, identity and style of a black rap male artist (fashion sense, rap as a style of music). A white male rap artist is able to adopt a black middle-class status and style as strong, aggressive and streetwise. However, the focus group participants did not draw on class in relation to their discussions. They identified and discussed racial and gender portrayals, power relations, (of control and subordination between men and women) but excluded class in their discussions. My reading of case studies differed from focus group perceptions in the following way: I applied a masculine and feminine poststructural framework. I viewed race, gender and class as interrelated categories of analysis and the idea of discourse as a contested site for gender. Feminist and masculine poststructural frameworks enabled me to gain a greater understanding of gender as a contested social construct, and obtain a deeper understanding of power relations which exist in gender representations.

There are social implications that arise from gender representations within music videos. If dominant, hegemonic representations of femininity and masculinity are continually perpetuated, stereotypes of race, class and gender will continue to thrive. People, more specifically children, may continue to entertain incorrect notions of race, gender and sexuality. *Firstly*, black masculinity may incorrectly be perceived as aggressive and hyper-sexual. *Secondly*, incorrect perceptions concerning black femininity as ravenously sexual and wild may persist. *Thirdly*, dominant, hegemonic representations of femininity, (white, coloured and black) as highly objectified, subordinate and sexualized may continue to be accepted. Social issues such as crime, violence and gangsterism may continue to be glamorised in hegemonic, masculine



representations. Many participants believed that highly sexualized images and gender portrayals can negatively influence children's perceptions of gender.

Some participants felt that negative gender representations impact on children. Participant three in Group B stated that she would definitely keep her children away from these types of music videos, as well as sexually voracious advertisements. She added that highly sexualized images of women are also offensive to the elderly. Participants not only drew on what they observed and gave feedback, but drew on their own understanding of how gender ought to be. For example, a group of male and female participants from Group C established their social and cultural understanding of 'how gender ought to be'. Participant three in Group C indicated that the representations of women in most current music videos impacts on gender perceptions (as to what is right or wrong, what behaviour is acceptable and what is unethical). Participants were able to draw on their own values, morals and societal expectations of how women and men 'ought to portray themselves'. Such negative portrayals of gender, class and race have the ability to perpetuate hegemonic, dominant themes in society. Despite dominant gendered representations, I located alternate representations that counter dominant, negative constructions.

There is room for alternate, competing gender constructions which are positive and convey notions of independence, assertiveness, and strength. Realistic issues that plague South African society are also present in the case studies (domestic violence and spousal abuse, poverty, unemployment and homelessness). Furthermore, family values and morals are also portrayed by alternate feminine and masculine representations. There is an alternate space for representations which counteract negative, hegemonic gender constructions.

Although music videos have the ability to influence societal perceptions of race, class and gender, I do not believe that these are the only texts that shape our perceptions of reality. Various social institutions (school, university, religious institutions, and family) also contribute. As active audience members, people have the ability to select media

content which they consider suitable and wish to engage with, and reject media content they consider unsuitable.

Competing representations of men and women are located within music videos. Multiple masculinities range from ambiguous masculinity, to hegemonic masculinity, to complicit masculinity, to black and white masculinity. Various competing feminine identities are also present: the dominant, hegemonic notion of femininity, ambiguous femininity, white, middle-class femininity, as well as black femininity. There is no fixed masculine or feminine identity, but rather multiple gendered identities which are influenced by competing and contradictory discourses. Through the combination of different orders of signification (firstness, secondness and thirdness), the polysemic nature of texts emerged and contending and conflicting discourses of gender were revealed. Focus group participants interacted with case studies (music videos) and drew on their perceptions, and understanding of gender.

A close reading of the text reveals various competing themes of crime and violence (gangsterism), male violence (domestic violence on spouse/partner), violent/aggressive masculinity, female violence and aggression (murder, arson, crime), a dominant, hegemonic view of femininity (as flat, one-dimensional sex objects), alternative representations of femininity (strong and assertive) and ambiguous female sexuality. Multiple themes are present, such as multiculturalism, competing sexualities (heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual), black consciousness, focus on family and masculine, hedonistic representations (excessive wealth, flamboyance, hypersexual masculinity). Therefore, contending masculine and feminine discourses are present within polysemic texts. Music videos serve as battlegrounds with competing gender discourses.

## CHAPTER TEN

### Conclusion

This study reflects a range of contending masculine and feminine constructions that are present in society. Two important themes were identified. *Firstly*, there is a struggle over the meaning of gender and secondly, power relations (race and class) are linked to gender discourses. This struggle over meaning is reflected through numerous competing and conflicting masculine and feminine discourses, which shape gender representations within the case studies. Gender is thus seen as a contested site shaped by conflicting discourses. Both counter hegemonic and dominant hegemonic gender portrayals are present in music videos on MTV BASE Africa.

Social organisations such as the media play an integral role in identity formation, education and the socialization of individuals (Thompson, 1995: 17). Most people living in the African continent (rural, peripheral and urban areas) are likely to encounter media (print, broadcast or electronic) during their life span. Therefore, it is likely that they would encounter and view messages pertaining to gender representations. These messages have the ability to impact on our perceptions and sense of identity. Media are social sites where the meaning of gender is frequently contested (Morrell, 2001: 9). This study shows that media is part of masculine studies and feminist cultural studies through the content (programmes) that it transmits.

The preceding chapters reflect that various contending modes of feminine identities and masculinities exist (hegemonic masculinity, subordinate masculinity, ambiguous femininity and dominant representations of femininity). As a result, there is no singular mode of feminine and masculine identity. Furthermore, there is no 'fixed' meaning of gender. Rather, multi-dimensional modes of women and men exist. These range from dominant, hegemonic modes of femininity and masculinity, counter-hegemonic masculine and feminine identities, to working class and upper/elite gender portrayals within the case studies.

Masculinity and femininity are fluid entities. South African society contains multiple definitions of masculinity and femininity, with some more prominent than others. In all cases, masculinities are constructed in relation to femininities and express the multiple ways in which gender identity is articulated through the gender order (where gender is not only a property of individuals but a process of institutions and a dynamic of power relations between groups) (Morrell, 2001: 3-9). The results of this study show that the established themes in case studies six, seven and 17 portray male power and dominance, over female sexuality and bodies. The gender order expresses men's power over women (male domination) and the power of some men over other men (by means of race, class, ethnicity, age and able bodied-ness, Morrell, 2001). In addition, the power of men is never fixed, nor is it the case that all men share the spoils of power equally (Morrell, 2001: 3-9). The literature review and findings reveal that competing masculinities and femininities frequently contest and challenge one another.

The theme of hegemony is demonstrated in case studies 11, 13 and 16. Gender portrayals within these case studies reflect hegemonic masculine discourses and dominant masculinities, which are contested by opposing powerful masculinities. Hegemonic masculinities are continually challenged by other masculine discourses. For example, hegemonic Afrikaner masculine identity was contested by hegemonic black masculinity as a rising power during the 1980s in South Africa. Morell (2001: 3-9) asserts that within any society, there are multiple meanings of manhood; men's experiences depend on class, race, ethnicity, the age of the country and its location in the global economy. The use of plural masculinities acknowledges that masculinities mean different things to different groups of men at different times (Kimmel, 2001: 3-9). Hence it can be noted that multiple masculinities dwell in South Africa.

Masculinities and femininities are subject to continual change in that some conform to the *status quo*, whilst others resist dominant power relations. In so doing, they create alternate and new forms of hegemonic power and gendered discourses. In some cases, masculinities welcome and accommodate challenge in order to preserve privilege, or respond to pressures with various kinds of violence. A wide range of gendered representations is present (both hegemonic and counter

hegemonic/alternative representations). Certain case studies (6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 16 and 19) demonstrate that numerous feminine and masculine discourses are present. The above case studies indicate that contesting discourses of hegemonic, black, aggressive, complicit, white, subordinate, working class and lower class masculinities are present. Hence masculinity is always positioned in relation to feminine discourses.

Recurring themes of hyper-sexuality, and hegemonic dominant femininity are reflected in case studies 6, 7 and 16. These themes reflect dominant feminine hegemonic representations, namely a patriarchal view of femininity (as fearful, submissive, highly sexualized and subordinate to male control). In addition, certain case studies (six, seven, 12 and 16) portray hegemonic representations of masculinity as hypersexual masculinity, having power over women's bodies, actions and sexuality.

However, there is room for alternate feminine and masculine representations, which counter these hegemonic portrayals. Counter hegemonic representations of women are reflected in case studies 10, 11, 17 and 19. These alternate representations of women indicate strength, independence and assertiveness. Furthermore, a recurring theme of counter hegemonic representations exists. These representations are located in case studies 12, 13 and 19. These case studies reflect masculinities as negotiating with a spouse or partner, focusing on the domestic sphere and placing a greater emphasis on relationships. Counter hegemonic representation allows for alternate, diverse and competing meanings of gender to thrive. This study contains examples of case studies that draw on realistic social issues such as domestic violence, emotional abuse, physical abuse, poverty, unemployment, homelessness and crime. These social issues impact on South African society. Thus, it can be argued that case studies 12, 13 and 19 portray a sense of realism (social issues that impact on society). Apart from fantasy elements (masculine hedonism, materialism and a lavish lifestyle), social realities are reflected in music videos.

Furthermore, power relations were identified as a key element of gender. It has previously been shown that some masculinities and femininities are oppressed or subordinated by power, whilst others exert power and dominance. Masculinities and

femininities have the ability to conform to the dominant order or *status quo* or merely contest it, thus shaping their identities. Men and women of various races and social classes are able to contest and oppose hegemonic discourse as demonstrated in case studies 6, 10, 11 and 16. Men and women (masculinities and femininities) are now in fluctuation.

It is evident from this study that gender is a fluid concept shaped by struggle. Both men and women are affected by hegemony, the global economy and politics. Carton (2001: 126) shows that migrant workers who leave homesteads in order to work on the gold mines become displaced, and take on feminine duties (cooking, cleaning, and laundry) while away from home, whilst their wives function as the head of the homes and provide for their families (2001). Hence, traditional definitions of femininity and masculinity are being challenged as women and men are able to draw on various conflicting discourses which shape their identities. Recurrent common themes of counter hegemonic femininity are reflected in case studies 10, 11 and 16 where women are portrayed as taking on masculine discourse and assertive, aggressive traits.

Our understanding of gender has moved away from being a constant feature of human life which precedes culture and society, towards the concept of gender as unstable and constructed in social and cultural practices (Van Zoonen, 1994: 12). Gender is regarded as more than a biological construct, but rather as a social construct shaped by individuals' socialisation, mindset and interactions with social institutions.

Feminine identities, like masculinities, are also fluid entities. Examples are demonstrated in numerous case studies (10, 11, 12, 13, 17 and 19). These case studies display a range of competing femininities including heterosexuality, homosexuality, ambiguous femininity, middle class white femininity, and middle class black femininity. Thus identity is subject to and shaped by various conflicting feminist discourses (some constructions reflect passiveness, submissiveness and dominant hegemonic constructions whilst others reflect aggressiveness and strength known as counter hegemonic portrayals). Social relations of power and powerlessness determine

the range of subjectivities that are open to individuals on the basis of race, class, gender, age and cultural background (Weedon, 2003: 103).

Since the meaning of gender is associated with struggle, this struggle thrives in social institutions. Media serves as a social entity where debates over gender meanings take place. Today, we know that gender, class and race are fundamental axes where social, economic, political and personal power are organised and where identities are placed (Kimmel, 2001). Over the past four decades, greater emphasis has been placed on feminine portrayals and constructions in media. Masculine studies and representations have become a recent focus of gendered media studies. The investigation of women's experiences and the interrogation of femininity was a greater focus for academic discourses for the past three decades. We are today, only beginning to understand masculinity (Morrell, 2001: 3-9).

Contemporary studies are beginning to place more emphasis on masculinities and masculine discourses. Masculinity and femininity are both equally integral and interrelated categories that influence gendered definitions, concepts, representations and gender media studies. Hence, masculinity is not only concerned with a male focus and does not only focus only on men's relationships, bodies and sexuality. Femininities and masculinities are interlinked categories, which are present in music videos. Thus, it was imperative that both these categories were considered.

Furthermore, masculinities construct the social reality of institutions and the identities of women (Ratele, 1998). One cannot consider the former without the latter. Feminist studies have indeed shaped and influenced masculine representations and multiple, competing masculine discourses. As Douglas puts it, feminist paradigms have shaped the variety of ways in which men have appeared in various media (2000: 97).

It is suggested that this study adds value to the fields of feminine media studies and (recently developed) masculine gender studies. It could also contribute to a body of knowledge in masculine and feminine gender studies. In addition, this study creates an awareness of dominant hegemonic gender representations and alternate counter hegemonic gender representations. It is hoped that this study creates an awareness

among future media scholars and producers so that they consider contesting feminine and masculine representations, realistic social issues and power relations as integral points of gender and identity.

Products of media culture provide materials that help shape our identities, our sense of selfhood and our notion of what it means to be male or female, our sense of class, of ethnicity and race, nationality, and sexuality (Kellner, 2005: 2). Gender identity is a site for the struggle of meaning. Media texts such as MTV BASE Africa are thus polysemic in nature (open to multiple meanings and interpretations). These competing gender discourses provide competing ways of giving meaning to the world.

Within the field of gender media studies, typologies of feminism and masculinity have become outdated and enclosed, and cannot account for competing and diverse gender discourses which shape feminine and masculine identities. This study encompasses theoretical approaches that include competing discourses and the link between power relations. These new paradigms (feminist and masculine post structural theories) are able to explain how masculinity and femininity are subject to change and appropriation. There is a paradigm shift toward perspectives where meaning is understood as knowledge constructed out of historically and socially situated negotiation, between institutional producers of meaning and audiences as producers of meaning (Van Zoonen, 1994: 4-12). Thus, the meaning of gender is no longer perceived as a fixed entity, but is seen as a contradictory and contested site consisting of multiple messages.

In addition, feminist and masculine poststructural theories help us to resist the ways in which we have already been classified and identified by dominant discourses. It allows for alternative and competing meanings of gender. Feminist poststructural theory can be viewed as creating opportunities for feminist media politics, rather than jeopardizing its political reference as is often feared (Van Zoonen, 1994: 44). Masculine poststructural theory embraces masculine diversity. It shows that masculinities are fluid and should not be considered as belonging in a fixed way to any one group of men



(Weedon, 2003). This paradigm position sheds light on the existence of non-dominant masculinities (subordinate, submissive, marginalized, and complicit masculinities). Though hegemonic gender categories have not been shattered, these alternative gender ideas and images have nevertheless created space for a greater diversity of identities (Gauntlett, 2002: 1).

The paradigm position of feminist poststructural theory is able to showcase diverse female identities (multi-dimensional womanhood, ambiguous femininity) that counteract dominant feminist discourses. Feminist and masculine poststructural theories show that alternate, diverse and competing gender identities exist. Thus, gender identities are heterogeneous and diverse. There is no typical South African man (Morrell, 2001) or woman. Instead, there is a range of competing and contrasting masculinities and femininities within South Africa and across the globe.

Peircian semiotics enabled the researcher to excavate the texts (to move from a denotative or surface meaning to a connotative and deeper meaning). As a methodology, it allows one to move beyond the surface meanings and explore the context of the texts (Tomaselli, 1996: 29). It has been argued that media output consists of sign systems (the MTV BASE Africa television medium of music videos) which have a combination of signs (iconic, indexical and symbolic signs) that construct particular meanings (competing gendered discourses and identities). Competing discourses of gender are encoded within the music videos. Gender does not carry unequivocal interpretations and may signify a variety of concepts and myths (there are always possibilities for negotiated or oppositional readings (Van Zoonen, 1994).

The television text, like all texts, is the site of a struggle for meaning (Fiske, 1994: 93). This research has shown that media texts carry multiple meanings and are open to a range of interpretations. Competing meanings draw from various contending gendered discourses. Media serves as technologies of gender that construct multiple discourses of gender. This semiotic analysis and different levels of signification (firstness, secondness and thirdness) was able to reveal that femininities and masculinities are

constructed as fluid entities (powerless, powerful, assertive, aggressive, and ambivalent). Masculinity and femininity are not homogenous, but diverse in nature.

Audiences are no longer seen as positioned or interpellated by media texts, subject to vicious intentions of patriarchal power and ideology, but are considered to be active producers of meaning, interpreting and accommodating media texts to their own daily lives and culture (Van Zoonen, 1994: 12). As active audiences, we are able to select, negotiate and reject which media content and meanings influence our perceptions and identities.

Dominant hegemonic representations of femininity and masculinity may continue to be perpetuated by media. Gender inequality and disparity in power relations still exist in social institutions. The theoretical observation that gender is a constructed and shifting subject position (unstably formed by an intersecting array of heterogeneous discourses), should not lead to the conclusion that conventional forms of oppression and inequality have disappeared (Van Zoonen, 1994:190). However, it is through gender media research that we become aware of these inequalities and disparities which exist, and the emergence of diverse and alternate gender identities. For this reason, awareness is the first step to address these discrepancies and to alert scholars about forms of inequalities in gender media studies. The feminist poststructural movement does imply that the struggle for social and cultural transformation cannot be seen as a struggle against a single configuration of power, nor can it be expected to take on a universal and perdurable form (Van Zoonen, 1994: 190). However, feminist poststructural theory does highlight the negative connotations, associations and representations which are perpetuated in the media. Therefore awareness is the first step towards possibly making a difference in the field of gender media studies.

Things change and are changing, advocates Gauntlett (2002). Media format, programmes and content also undergo change and transformation. As a result feminine and masculine identities will continue to develop and thrive. Views of gender and sexuality, masculinity and femininity, identity and selfhood are all subject to slow but steady processes of change and transformation. Hence societal issues (such as crime,

HIV/AIDS, politics, economics) that permeate through various social institutions influence various masculine and feminine identities. Media messages are diverse, conflicting and contradictory. Furthermore, people are changing and building new identities based not on the certainties of the past, but organised around the new order of modern living where the meanings of gender, sexuality and identity are increasingly open (Gauntlett, 2002: 16). In addition, radical uncertainties and exciting contradictions are what contemporary media like modern life is all about (Gauntlett, 2002). The development of new media technologies such as I-pods, electronic/digital radio broadcasts, pod-casts, touch screen technology and interactive web cameras will shape and influence media content and gender representations. Fundamentally, race, class, gender and sexuality, interact with all facets of human life; thus they simultaneously structure the experiences of all people in society (Hill-Collins and Anderson, 2004: 7). Therefore, power relations are social categories that persist in shaping identity formation.

The research hypothesis reflects a representative sample of selected focus groups of KwaZulu-Natal (Bluff and Westville). One cannot generalise the results in respect of all perceptions in KwaZulu-Natal. Men and women have, and will continue to be the focus of media (print, electronic and broadcast) critique. It is through research that representations of women and men can be highlighted and explored, and provide fresh perspectives for gender media studies. Research within this area can encourage greater awareness of dominant stereotypes and discourses regarding race, gender, sexuality and identity, and create room for emerging alternative and diverse gender identities. We have, and we will continue to, encounter gender politics and competing gender representations in all social arenas of life.

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## APPENDIX 1

### DVD A (contains Case Studies 1-10)

#### **Title 1 on DVD**

##### **Case Study One**

Entitled *Drink in my cup* by

Artist: *Elecktrik Red*

American Music Video

#### **Title 2 and 3 on DVD**

##### **Case Study Two**

Entitled: *Little Things*

Artist: *India Arie*

American Music Video

#### **Title 4 and 5**

##### **Case Study Three**

Entitled: *Diamonds and Pearls*

Artists: *Prince*

American Music Video

#### **Title 6 and 7 on DVD**

##### **Case Study Four**

Entitled: *Lost without you*

Artist: *Robin Thicke*

American Music Video

#### **Title 8 and 9 on DVD**

##### **Case Study Five**

Entitled: *Imisebenzi*

Artists: *Shugasmakx* and *Brickz*

Local Kwaito South African Music Video

#### **Title 10 on DVD**

##### **Case Study Six**

Entitled: *Nsha Njalo*

Artist: *DJ Cleo*

Local South African Kwaito Song

#### **Title 11 on DVD**

##### **Case Study Seven**

Entitled: *Be By Myself*

Artist: *Asher Roth* featuring *Cee Lo.*

An American Video

**Title 12 on DVD**

**Case Study Eight**

Entitled: *Everytime*

Artist: *Chingy featuring R'nB artist Tyrese*

American Music Video

**Title 13 on DVD**

**Case Study Nine**

Entitled *Thatha Isgubhu*

Group: *Group Bongo Muffin*

Features local Kwaito/ South African Group

**Title 14 and 15 on DVD**

**Case Study Ten**

Entitled *Fun House*

Artist: *Pink*

American Music Video

**Title 16 on DVD**

**Case Study Eleven**

Entitled: *Paparazzi*

Artist: *Lady Gaga*

American Music video

**Title 17 on DVD**

**Case Study Twelve**

Entitled: *I can't help but wait*

Artist: *Trey Songz*

An American Music Video

**Title 18 on DVD**

**Case Study Thirteen**

Entitled: *Take You Out*

Artists: *Tear Gas featuring HPP*

Local South African Music Video

**Title 19 on DVD**

**Case Study Fourteen**

Entitled: *Work*

Artist: *Ciara*

American Music Video

**Title 20 on DVD**

**Case Study Fifteen**

Entitled: *Turn my Swag on*

Artist: *Soulja Boy*

An American Music video

**Title 21 on DVD**

**Case Study Sixteen**

Entitled: *Put em in the Place*

Artist: *Mobb Deep*

American Music Video

**Title 22 on DVD**

**Case Study Seventeen**

Entitled: *I just want to live my life*

Artist: *Winnie Khumalo*

Local South African Music Video

**Title 23 on DVD**

**Case Study Eighteen**

Entitled: *You are not alone*

Artist: *Michael Jackson*

American Music Video

**Title 24 on DVD**

**Case Study Nineteen**

Entitled: *I need money*

Artist: *Ricky Rock*

Local South African Rap Song

**Title 25 on DVD**

**Case Study Twenty**

Entitled: *Tonight*

Artist: *Amani*

A local African Music Video

## APPENDIX 2

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**  
**RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FOCUS GROUP METHODOLOGY**  
**A GENDERED ANALYSIS OF MUSIC VIDEOS: A SAMPLE OF MUSIC VIDEOS FROM MTV BASE**  
**AFRICA**

Gender of respondent

M

F

Race:

\_\_\_\_\_

Location:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Questions for Discussion**

1. What is your perception of female images in music videos?
2. How do you think sexuality is portrayed in female images?
3. What are your perceptions of female racial representations in music videos?
4. How do you think women are constructed? Please tick all relevant descriptions

(A) Sex Objects	(B) Independent	(C) Weak	(D) Assertive	(E) Powerless	(F) Confident
(G) Undignified	(H) Ambitious	(I) Stupid/dumb	(J) Strong	(K) Intelligent	(L) Passive

5. What are your perceptions of male images in music videos?
6. How do you think sexuality is portrayed in male images?
7. What are your perceptions of male racial representations in music videos?
8. How do you think men are constructed? Please tick all relevant descriptions.

(A) Powerless	(B) Independent	(C) Weak	(D) Strong	(E) Violent	(F) Brave
(G) Confident	(H) Intelligent	(I) Aggressive	(J) Sex Objects	(K) Competitive	(L) Intelligent

General:

Please feel free to add any additional comments on views that you feel may be necessary



### APPENDIX 3 Invitation to Focus Group Participants

Dear Participant,

I am reading for a Master of Arts Degree in Media and Communication at the School of Media and Communication Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My supervisor is Professor Franco Frescura. The title of my Research is: A Gendered Analysis of Music Videos. I am conducting a research on gendered representations within music videos using a sample of music videos from MTV BASE Africa.

The aims of the project are: to explore a range of gendered representations within music videos; to investigate the dominant representations and to investigate whether alternative gendered representations exist. As part of my methodology, I am conducting focus group sessions to find out the views on gendered representations. **You are invited to be one of the participants within the focus groups on the 17 July 2009 at 1pm at the post-graduate seminar room on the ground floor of J Block, Westville Campus.** I have selected three focus groups: Two from Westville and one from the Bluff area. I will employ mixed racial demographic representation within the focus groups and a representation of both male and females.

You are assured that your anonymity and confidentiality will be protected (your name or personal information will not be mentioned within the research). No personal questions or information will be requested. The only information that is requested is your gender, perceptions and views of gendered representations that you will view. As part of the procedure for focus group discussions, there will be a selection of a few music videos from MTV BASE Africa shown to participants in the board room. After viewing selected music videos, participants will be encouraged to discuss their views on male and female representations and images. Participants will also be given an opportunity to capture their views and perceptions in writing in response to the questions. The estimated time for the session is minimum 30minutes to a maximum of 40 min. The duration of involvement is for one session. Your involvement in this study will serve as a valuable contribution to the field of gendered media studies. As participants, you are free to withdraw from the research at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences to yourself.

The data will be stored at the University for a period of five years, in accordance with the University Policy, after which it will be disposed off.

Thank you for your valuable time and input.

Kind regards,

Carmelle Subban

Email address: [cammy330@gmail.com](mailto:cammy330@gmail.com)

Telephone: Cell: 072 2444 559 or (031) 467 0621.

I ..... (full name of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....  
...

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **Abbreviations**

MTV	:	Music Television Network
USA	:	United States of America
R'n B	:	Rhythm and Blues
BET	:	Black Entertainment Television
VH -1	:	Video Hour 1
SUV	:	Sports Utility Vehicle