An ethnographic audience study of isiZulu-speaking UKZN students' responses to constructions of male characters in *Muvhango*

MELBA NZIMANDE

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SUPERVISOR: Ms FIONA JACKSON

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DECLARATION

I declare that *An ethnographic audience study of isiZulu-speaking UKZN students' responses to constructions of male characters in Muvhango* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and that this work has not been submitted before for any other degree at any other institution.

SIGNATURE: **DATE:** 1 March 2016

Melba Nzimande

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an ethnographic study of the constructions of masculinity in soap opera, and focuses specifically on how a group of isiZulu-speaking students who study at the University of KwaZulu-Natal interpret *Muvhango,* a Tshivenda soap opera. This study also presents how these viewers interpret, analyse, understand and group these constructions of masculinity. An analysis of how the students view each of the male characters is presented, and this is contextualised in terms of current and previous research on soap operas, on masculinity broadly, and on masculinity in South Africa.

Group in-depth interviews were conducted with three different groups — a group consisting of women only, a group consisting of men only, and a mixed group made up of both men and women. The students' reasoning as to why they watched soap opera was investigated. This study purposefully chose to interview isiZulu-speaking Black students as subjects, to understand why a soap opera that is predominantly Tshivenda, with Tshivenda discourses, has an impact on the lives of the isiZulu-speaking viewers who watch. It surfaced during the interviews that watching soap opera is a communal activity that creates a discursive space for multiple responses and for debating the social acceptance of some of the topics expressed by the soap opera.

How the respondents responded to the male characters of *Muvhango* was examined. The students responded negatively to male characters who were passive, as well as those who generally represented hegemonic and aggressive masculinities. The respondents identified with certain male characters whom they recognised as typical of the types of men they would encounter in their everyday lives; however, they found other characters to be distasteful to such an extent that in addition to disliking the characters on screen, they formed negative opinions of the actors as private individuals separate from their acting roles.

In summary, this dissertation examines the consumption of a Tshivenda soap opera by Black isiZulu-speaking students who all attend the same Christian church and who all reside in Pietermaritzburg.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my Lord and saviour Jesus Christ, with whom my faith lies. Without Him I truly believe that this dissertation would not be.

This paper is also dedicated to my amazing family, who have supported me and encouraged me to be patient with this to the end.

I also dedicate this paper to my husband, who has given me his fullest support and has patiently borne with my hectic schedule.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AMR   Average Minute Rating

SAARF   South African Audience Research Foundation

SABC   South African Broadcasting Corporation

UKZN   University of KwaZulu-Natal

VOSDAL   Viewing on the same day as live

1.1 Project title

An ethnographic audience study of isiZulu-speaking UKZN students' responses to constructions of male characters in *Muvhango*.

Key terms: Black audience, soap opera, audience, constructions, masculinity, gender, subtitles.

1.2 Background

My initial interest was in soap operas, and what needs to be distinguished early in this study is that soap operas are not like any other drama, because they give their audience a chance to release their emotions as well as to fantasise (Ahmed 2012). Soap operas create an interpersonal relationship with their viewers in that they discuss romance, marital issues, family problems, and so forth (Ahmed 2012). My interest was stirred by the fact that the soap opera genre is a global phenomenon, and this interest later narrowed to a focus on South African soap opera. In 2012 I looked closely at women's interpretations of the constructions of masculinity represented in the soap opera *7de Laan*, which has one of the largest multilingual audiences in South Africa, even though it is primarily performed in Afrikaans. Non-Afrikaans viewers engage with the soap opera by reading the English subtitles, a process which in itself is an exciting phenomenon. Several constructions of masculinity are presented, but a non-hegemonic depiction (Gordon 2012) is upheld as ideal by the women in the study. Such a depiction, according to Brown (1994), plays specifically to women's emotions. The patterns associated with hegemonic masculinity are, according to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) and Mac an Ghaill (1996), associated with authority, aggression, and heterosexual physicality, as well as with being brave, sporty and competitive. It is this very competitive nature that men use to control women in their lives, and that causes men to act violently, all in the

name of defending their manhood, specifically against other men (Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger 2012).

In this study I focus on a soap opera that represents Black masculinities. I am interested in the increasing isiZulu audience of *Muvhango*, a Tshivenda-dominant soap opera. I am also fascinated by how audiences relate to the narrative constructions of the storylines of this particular production. A significant number of the respondents interviewed watch *Muvhango* with family and friends, suggesting that the interpretations and constructions of what is viewed are discussed and interpreted in groups. The popularity of the communal viewing of soap operas in South Africa suggests cultural frames beyond the family that facilitate the construction of ideas on gender relations, and notions of masculinity. Soap opera makes a dynamic contribution to its viewers in that it not only provides a source of entertainment, but also assists in airing and examining critical issues, such as masculinity, gender, violence against women, HIV/Aids, and so forth, and placing them on the social agenda for consideration and discussion (Population Institute 2009).

Statistics from the South African Audience Research Foundation (SAARF 2013) show that 42,37 % of the male population in South Africa watches *Muvhango*. The prime-time rating for viewers has reached 5 305 000 million, according to a recent Facebook post by Dr Duma Ndlovu, creator and director of *Muvhango* (Venge 2015). This is a soap opera that caters for women and for men, which is one of the reasons why both men and women were interviewed for this research. I selected a soap opera that depicts diverse representations of men's lives: men who have several wives, men who are rich and powerful, men who are poor, and men who are sangomas, businessmen, taxi drivers, and a variety of other callings. *Muvhango* was also chosen because it depicts diverse representations of urban and rural contexts of South African people, whereas other soap operas are usually limited to one such context being represented. *Muvhango* was the chosen text as it offers such a diverse range of male characters.

1.3 Location of the study

This dissertation is an ethnographic study that was conducted in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal.

1.4 The text

In 1997, SABC 2 premiered a 13-episode Tshivenda-language prime-time drama series titled *Muvhango*, which means "conflict" in Tshivenda. The original rural drama series later became a soap opera, created by Duma Ndlovu. This soap opera is inspired by the real-life story of the former Chief of Thathe in Venda, and it also reflects elements of township and Sowetan life.

Muvhango is fully multilingual, featuring all the African languages (including the Nguni[1] languages), which could be one of the reasons for the large number of Nguni-speaking viewers. 47 % of viewers are Nguni, 42 % are Sesotho, 8 % are Afrikaans speakers and only 3 % are English speakers. The base language of *Muvhango* is Tshivenda, which is a minority language spoken predominantly in Limpopo province in the northern region of South Africa. *Muvhango* translates every word spoken, including those spoken in English, and also subtitles diegetic sounds like the phone ringing and knocks on the door. These subtitles are provided in order to accommodate all viewers, including those who are deaf. The multilingual nature of this soap opera has attracted increasing numbers of viewers, since the multiple discourses offer them a variety of situations with which to identify.

Studies conducted by the SAARF (2013) indicate that White, Black, Indian and Coloured audiences watch *Muvhango*. The 2013 statistics provided by the SAARF show that *Muvhango's* audience consists of 2,28 % White people, 7,47 % Coloured people, 0,22 % of Indian people and 90,0 4% of Black people. In the rural scenes in *Muvhango* characters speak a standard version of Tshivenda, with no switches to English, while in the urban scenes they speak a rich mix of languages. While some scenes in the soap opera are performed entirely in English, the performances in other scenes switch between isiZulu, isiXhosa and Sesotho, depending on the narrative context.

1.4.1. Profiles of key Muvhango characters

Azwindini is one of *Muvhango's* main characters. He is the Chief of Thathe, and is married to five wives, two of whom live with him and three of whom do not. He runs

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[1] Nguni refers to African languages that include isiZulu, isiXhosa and Tshivenda.

several businesses in Johannesburg and Thathe. He often uses aggression to show his authority, and confides in his favourite wife, Susan.

Mulalo is Azwindini's brother. He has always wanted to be chief, but because he was younger, he did not inherit the throne. Because Mulalo is jealous of Azwindini, he always tries to cause trouble with him. Over the years Mulalo has created several problems for himself while trying to make ends meet, but as a character he has, however, matured. He is now the respected Mayor of Thathe and has built a good relationship with Azwindini.

Busani is a new character who has shown a great deal of love and dedication to his wife, who suffers from cancer. He runs Mukwevho Milling with integrity and is constructed as a genuine character who speaks the truth and is fair to all.

James is depicted as the typical 'softie' of *Muvhango*. James is labelled as the 'sweet guy', who loves his daughter, respects all the women in his life, and is hardworking and driven. Like all characters he makes mistakes, yet he learns quickly from them.

KK is constructed as *Muvhango's* villain. All his business dealings are rooted in corruption and murder, and he has physically and emotionally hurt all the women in his life, which has made him a lonely person.

Albert is one of the Chief's advisors, and is working really hard to build up Mukwevho Milling. Albert is shy when it comes to women and romance, because he feels emasculated by women.

Thandaza is *Muvhango's* leading lady, and she is represented as strong, smart, beautiful and hardworking. She works as the CEO of Mukwevho Milling, and has earned the respect of all the men in the soap opera, including the Chief. Although she is a dominant woman, she has family problems and can never make a romantic relationship with man last.

1.5 Objectives

- The objectives of this study are as follows:To understand why a Tshivenda-dominant soap opera rooted in Venda culture is enjoyed by selected isiZulu-speaking audiences.

- To explore the nature of selected isiZulu-speaking audiences' responses to the representation of male characters in *Muvhango.*

- To explore the variety of ways in which selected isiZulu-speakers interpret constructions of masculinity in relation to male characters in *Muvhango.*

1.6 Key questions

The key questions posed in this study are as follows:

- What perceptions do the selected isiZulu audiences have of male characters in the soap opera *Muvhango*?

- How do the selected isiZulu-speaking audiences interpret the constructions of masculinity in *Muvhango*?

1.7 Research methodology

Methodological paradigms are traditionally governed by two main approaches: positivist and interpretive (Daly, Willis, Small et al. 2007). For the purposes of this study I focus on interpretive methods, which include ethnography, in-depth group interviews and participant observations.

A purposive sampling approach was adopted. The purposive sampling technique, also known as judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice by the researcher of a respondent because of qualities the respondent possesses (Bernard 2002). Purposive sampling is a non-random technique that sees sampling as a series of strategic choices about with,

whom, where and how to do one's research, and is a technique which does not require a set number of respondents.

1.8 Broad problems and issues to be investigated

The term "masculinity" can be defined as the meaning of being a man (Connell 1995; Morrell 2002). Theorists (Connell 1995; Morell 2002) break it down into types of 'maleness' or masculinities. There are hegemonic masculinities, non-hegemonic masculinities, conflict masculinities and subordinate masculinities (Connell 1995; Morrell 2002), which will be discussed in Chapter 3. Masculinity is a complex concept that has received growing attention over the past thirty years. South African masculinities have over the years taken a variety of forms due to the shifting impacts of pre-colonialism, colonialism and post-1994 democracy. Some scholars blame South Africa's past, in particular the apartheid era, for the unsettled lives of South African men, which is evident in the high crime statistics for rape and the abuse of women and children, and the many cases of failure to pay child support brought before the courts (Niehaus 2000; Xaba 2001; Morrell 2002). This has been exacerbated by the lack of education. These shifting contexts through the pre-colonial, colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid eras have caused a severe scarring in Black men that has normalised the violence in which they participate (Xaba 2001). I will examine these issues further in my theoretical framework. Masculinities are constructed in a variety of ways and are expressed according to diverse social situations and contexts.

Although Morrell (2001a) mentions how African masculinity is defined by the effects of colonisation, poverty and HIV/Aids, he does not elucidate specific characteristics of Black African masculinities. Theories of masculinity such as Morrell's lack a sense of depth in engaging with the indigenous cultures of South Africa, and offer a broad definition of masculinity that can be associated with any community. This gap may be attributed to the fact that theories surrounding masculinity have mostly been developed by non-Black theorists who theorise 'South African' masculinities to a certain extent, but have not been able to provide in-depth specific accounts of the masculinities of Black South African men. Thus it is important to draw as well on the work of Xaba (2001) and Ratele (2011), Black scholars who focus directly on issues of Black masculinities. These

scholars analyse Black masculinities as being linked to the history of South Africa, and the effects of apartheid on South African Black men in general. They have adopted a sociological approach and attempt to show how the social conditions of men in South Africa affect their masculine traits. This study has drawn on the works of Black scholars as well as social constructionist scholars in masculinity and gender studies. The next section will elaborate on these theories further.

1.9 Theoretical framework

The primary theoretical framework of this study consists of theories of gender and masculinity, with particular reference to television soap opera. I will be working specifically from a social constructionist perspective, which assumes that masculinity is not just formed by anthropological and biological paradigms that exist, but is also socially constructed. In essence, people believe and act in a certain way because of their social discourses. I will be looking at emergent and residual masculinities, as well as exploring hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities, and how the different shifts in South African history directly and indirectly influence masculinity today. I am aware that masculinity theories are themselves still only constructions that are open to critique and cannot be assumed as definite truths. I concentrate on some of the debates, discussions and research conducted in Africa, and then narrow my focus to South Africa.

Hermes observes that "the media representation of gender consists of a complex system of codes, conventions and rules. Together they produce a version of what societies are about" (2007: 206). Representations of men on television and in other media communicate several messages, to such an extent that mass media today seems to challenge traditional definitions of gender, thus driving social change (Gauntlett 2008). There has also been a new emphasis on men's emotions and problems in the media, which has challenged masculine ideals such as toughness and emotional resistance. As a result, the media now provides alternative representations of men which offer a greater range of masculinities. It has become apparent that viewers today are less passive than before and that representations on television are becoming more complex and less stereotypical. Representations of masculinity on television have become more complex, as have representations of gender. Men and women are portrayed increasingly as

equals in contemporary television and movies, and soap operas like *Isidingo* and *The Bold and the Beautiful* show powerful men and women.

The construction of male characters on television has become less straightforward and more complex and problematic. Equally, gay and lesbian characters have gained a degree of acceptance in mainstream television, even on soap operas that would not previously have included such characters. In essence, television is presenting more complex perspectives on gender and sexuality than ever before in its history. While male and female representations may be equally valued by society today, they still remain different and are open to several interpretations by different viewers from different life contexts. These interpretations emerge from the theoretical perspectives that each individual uses, which dictate how and why they construct gender identities in particular ways.

However, gender identity is only possible once one has considered self-identity (Gauntlett 2008), which in turn is informed by one's social and cultural context. The socio-historical and socio-cultural context of constructions of masculinity in South Africa therefore informs my theoretical framework, as television portrays certain elements of the lived experience of its viewers that reflect such contexts. While these may not always be depicted realistically, they reflect general conditions and experiences that audiences understand and can often relate to. The interview subjects for this study have been directly or indirectly affected by the apartheid era, which may shape the various ways in which they understand and interpret the constructions of masculinity they see on television.

Morrell (2001a) and Connell (1995) put forward similar ideas to Xaba (2001) and Ratele (2011). Ouzgane and Morrell (2005) track how South African history has shaped masculinity today. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), Morrell (2001a) and Ouzgane and Morrell (2005) argue that there are a range of constructions of masculinities, instead of a single type of masculinity. I will explore further the various types of masculinities, as an understanding of this multiplicity plays a fundamental role in my research.

These key themes in masculinities studies suggest a way of contextualising the construction of masculinities in *Muvhango*.

1.10 Structure of thesis

- CHAPTER 1: Introduction

This chapter focuses primarily on motivating and contextualising my study. It also provides an introduction to the chapters that follow, and provides a breakdown of each chapter.

- CHAPTER 2: Literature review

The literature review explores the relevant research that has been carried out in television studies, with particular reference to soap opera and audience studies.

- CHAPTER 3: Theoretical framework

This section critically analyses the relevant theory drawn mainly from gender and masculinity studies. The topic of gender and masculinity during and after apartheid is addressed, and constructions of Black masculinity in South Africa are analysed in relation to these periods. This section also identifies gaps in the research on masculinities.

- CHAPTER 4: Research methodology

In this section I discuss my use of ethnographic methods of data generation, and the qualitative data-analysis processes used. The method of analysis involves the use of key codes and themes extracted through inductive, grounded analysis.

- CHAPTER 5: Overview of research findings

A comprehensive overview of the analysed data is presented and discussed, and is organised in relation to the question sequencing used in the focus group interviews. This chapter focuses on providing a clear overview of the majority and minority responses to the questions posed.

- CHAPTER 6: Thematic and theoretical account of the research findings

The key themes to emerge from the data are presented, and are interpreted and considered in relation to the major theoretical insights presented in Chapters 2 and 3.

- CHAPTER 7: Conclusion

This chapter briefly discusses the extent to which the objectives of this study have been achieved, and provides recommendations for further research.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief motivation as to why I chose my research topic, as well as a brief overview of *Muvhango* that contextualises its narrative and characterisation. Chapter 2 provides an overview and contextualisation of previous research on my research topic in relation to the field of television studies, with a particular focus on soap opera and audience studies, as well as defining my research questions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a survey of relevant research that has been conducted on soap operas, in audience studies and in television studies. In order to provide background context for my research, I also highlight research that has been conducted on South African soap opera.

2.1 Television and audiences

Television is often construed as a passive medium. Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi (1990), for example, state that in many homes television is a wallpaper that allows viewers to experience a mindless realm. However, this assessment is seen by many to be a serious underestimation of television's role in modern culture. The Frankfurt School in the 1930s had already conceptualised television as part of the "culture industry", a term they used "to call attention to the industrialisation and commercialisation of culture under capitalist relations of production" (Kellner 2007: 30), and which was concerned primarily with film, popular music and, particularly, commercial television. Television, in particular, was viewed as being a highly influential medium, as it was a synthesis of radio and film, and thus a fusion of word, image and music.

In Europe the members of the Frankfurt School experienced first-hand the ways in which the National Socialists in Germany used these forms of mass culture to produce submission, and while in exile in the United States, they came to believe that the U.S. media worked to promote U.S. capitalism in a similar way (Adorno 1991). Adorno identified media culture as highly instrumental in influencing how people behaved and thought (Adorno 1991), and I would argue that his ideas still apply to culture today.

Television influences behaviour by shaping certain ideals. In her study of body image and the media, Tiggemann (2005) argues that by prescribing certain choices, such as how to dress or lose weight, television dictates various physical ideals and defines certain roles for men and women. She argues that media pressure is one of the reasons

for men and women's dissatisfaction with their physical appearance, and is why people go to great lengths to look like some of the representations presented to them on television. Television is still an instrument that influences how people should think and behave, as I point out as times in this specific study. In one incident, the women in the interview were so angry at the way that the male character behaved that they began to scream and pull faces.

In this study a specific television programme and its reception are analysed, and the medium is situated within its institutional framework — the culture of Venda. This involves studying the text and its audience, and conceptualising how masculinities are interpreted. Television has tended to construct women as weak and men as stronger and smarter; television has also featured minority groups as inferior (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan et al. 1980). In *Muvhango*, for example, we see an incident where a widow is inferior and is not permitted to make decisions about her life.

In working to understand television audiences, two dominant approaches have been adopted. Earlier work saw audiences as gullible, conformist and victims — in other words, as passive. Subsequent work has, however, identified audiences as individualistic, "impervious to influence", rational and selective — that is, as active in their relationship to what they engage with on television (Bauer 1963: 2–7).

Livingstone (2007), however, argues that there is more to understanding audiences. She maintains that research on the active audience remains controversial since an active audience can be defined by many elements. It could be defined by how alert and attentive a viewer is, but it could also be defined by how politically active or subversive they are. Her argument is that audiences must actively interact with, or do something with the text, and to do this they would need to draw from their own knowledge and experiences (Livingstone 2007). Viewers in this study showed themselves to be attentive and to a certain degree interactive with the text. *Muvhango's* male characters made viewers laugh while some made viewers upset and some made the viewers compare such depictions with real life.

This study adopts an empirical approach which focuses on the audience as an active instrument for interpreting meaning. This approach may involve inquiry shaped by questions such as: "What is the text? What values does it inherit? Who is the viewer

addressed by the text? The specific focus is rather who is the viewer in fact? What role is he or she playing? What is the immediate viewing context? What is the nature of the society within which the viewer is decoding the message?" (Katz 1988: 367).

Debates about passive and active audiences play an important role in understanding television audiences, as well as their reasons for watching certain programmes. Passive audiences are viewers who consider what they view on television to be true, to such an extent that they apply it to their own lives. Active audiences are viewers who interpret what they view on television as a media representation, instead of believing it to be the ultimate truth (Bauer 1963). Some theorists like Livingstone (2007) believe that audiences can never be completely passive because they specifically select the programmes they watch, which in itself is an indicator of activity. It is virtually impossible for an audience to use any medium without choosing to do so, or selecting a medium of interest.

The uses and gratification theory is a means of understanding why and how audiences seek specific media genres to meet their needs (McQuail 1994). The uses and gratification perspective credits television audiences with an active role; in other words, it examines what people do with media rather than what media does to them. This paradigm takes into account the fact that an audience engages with the medium and its message, and the responses of individual viewers will differ. However, it remains limited by "its insufficiently sociological or cultural perspective, in so far as everything is reduced to the level of variations of individual psychology" (Morley 1994: 17).

Hall's (1973) encoding and decoding model is particularly useful for establishing an understanding of audience participation. Hall maintains that while producers of a programme or show may have certain meanings they wish to portray, each viewer will interpret the content according to his or her own social experiences and assumptions, which may at times be completely different to what the producer intended. Hall's (1973) argument was helpful in understanding the informants in this study, as each had diverse views and comments according to their own social experiences.

Three arguments emerge from the debate on whether audiences are active or passive: firstly, audiences have to interpret what they see to create messages with meaning; secondly, audiences diverge in their interpretations because of different cultural

contexts; and lastly, the viewing experience stands at the interface between the media (and their interpretations) and the viewer's life experiences, concerns and knowledge of different situations (Livingstone 2007). The implications of these insights provide motivation for audience studies in general and this was seen in the interviews conducted in this study. It can be argued that it is important to continue examining these arguments by investigating how the similarities and differences between various audiences in response to specific media texts. In this specific study I wanted to examine if male, female and mixed gender groups understood masculinity in similar or different ways, as well as if the experiences of different gender socialisations led to different meaning making amongst the informants.

2.2. A brief overview of South African television history

Since this is a South African study of a local audience's responses to a South African soap opera centred in Black South African culture, it is important to contextualise the study in relation to the history of South African television. Under the apartheid regime Black South African individuals were excluded from the broadcasting process. Broadcasting was originally only in English and Afrikaans, with none of the country's Black languages being broadcast. (South African History Online n.d. *a*; SABC n.d.).

During the apartheid regime Black actors were always cast as subservient to White people in the dramas enacted (Krabill 2010). Only in 1996 was it officially acknowledged that South Africa is a multilingual country, when the country recognised eleven languages in its constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996, Section 6). The Act also provided for the establishment of the Pan South African Language Board to promote multilingualism and to see the development and use not only of the official languages but also of the Koi, Nama and San Languages, as well as South African Sign Language.

2.2.1. The history of the South African Broadcasting Corporation

According to the South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) official site, it has, since 1994, positioned three main channels, SABC1, SABC2 and SABC3, to serve

different markets. SABC1's programming is aimed at South Africa's Black youth, and is offered in isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele, siSwati as well as in English. SABC2 caters predominantly for Afrikaans-speaking viewers, with Afrikaans news, programmes, soap operas and magazine shows. However, the channel is not exclusively Afrikaans, and caters for other English, Setswana, Xitsonga, Tshivenda and Sepedi viewers. SABC 3 is aimed predominantly at English-speaking viewers, with all of its programming in English. However, *Muvhango* is multilingual, catering to all viewers and is aired on SABC 2. In the context of this research *Muvhango* will be located in relation to its soap opera genre.

2.3. Soap opera

Soap opera originated in the 1930s in America in the guise of daytime radio serials (Hobson 2003). After radio became a mass medium, American manufacturers expanded their markets into television. Thus began the mass production of soap opera, which spread to Britain, Australia and then eventually to developing countries such as South Africa (Marx 2007). Geraghty (2005, in Wasko 2005) challenges Hobson's historical assessment of soap opera, by arguing that academics who emphasise the fact that it originated in the United States automatically "privilege a particular national version of soap opera", and a particular social context where "the format emerged from the radio sponsorship by detergent companies in the 1930s" (Geraghty 2005: 9).

Geraghty (2005) does not dispute the emergence of soap opera as a genre from the U.S., and points out that British soap operas "were developed in deliberate counterpoint to the U.S. programs" (Geraghty 2005: 10). She emphasises, however, that we should focus on how soap opera has evolved instead of on how it began.

Initially soap opera was specifically designed to attract the attention of female listeners or housewives, who were presumed to be at home during the day. The scheduling of radio serials reflected times when women would take a break from their household duties. Allen (1985) argues that the word "opera" acquires meaning through its ironic and double inappropriateness. "Linked with the adjective 'soap', opera, the most elite of all narrative forms, becomes a vehicle for selling the most humble of commodities" (Allen 1985: 9). However, Geraghty (2005, in Wasko 2005) shows that if soap opera is a

women's genre, it is not only because of the time of day at which soap operas air, or because of the way in which they play to women's emotions, but is also because of the way that viewers feel about the programmes. Gauntlett and Hill argue that "academics should stop talking about soap opera as a 'women's genre'" (1999: 246) while not presenting evidence for why women watch and why soap opera caters for women. Men also watch soap opera, and *Muvhango* caters to both male and female audiences. *Muvhango* is also shown during a prime evening slot, which does not suggest that it is aimed purely at the general housewife who is expected to watch during the day. Tager's (2002) study highlighted similar findings in this regard, in that *Muvhango* also caters to masculine audiences and does not air during the day.

2.3.1 Characteristics of soap opera (narrative pattern)

Some of the most crucial or defining features of soap opera, which enable viewers to distinguish it from other types of television programmes, are that soap opera resists narrative closure, emphasises dialogue, foregrounds problem solving, reveals intimate conversations, and contains multiple plots and characters. Soap opera also makes use of a narrative temporal strategy that parallels actual time, and presents the idea that the action takes place whether we watch or not (Brown 1994; Fiske 1994; Tager 1997, 2002; Gledhill 2003).

Soap opera has a convention of intertwining storylines; a beginning is never shown on screen and there is no end in sight (Gledhill 2003: 352). Characters are faced with situations that began long before the present storyline, and this makes viewers curious about how the characters' lives began, and what has influenced them.

2.3.2 Format of soap opera

Gledhill (2003) identifies the following features that define soap opera as a genre: format and medium, subject matter and plots, narrative pattern and character times. In this chapter I go into the details of the format, subject matter and patterns of soap opera as per Gledhill's features. Gledhill (2003) furthermore points out that soap opera usually consists of 30-minute time slots on radio or television. Soap operas evoke a

reality experience through distinctive elements such as the authentic appearance of characters, naturalistic sets, and convincing situations. Tager (2002) explores these elements in her study of how Black South African students engage with an international soap opera. In her study Tager (1997, 2002) shows that the majority of her respondents watched *The Bold and the Beautiful* regularly, because of what they perceived to be convincing situations. Her study shows similar findings to mine, in that viewers watched because they were genuinely captivated by what they viewed. What also interested Tager was why Black students would be interested in such a "White" medium, while my study is partially motivated by why isiZulu-speaking Black students are so interested in a Tshivenda programme that actively communicates to them with the use of English subtitles. Tager (1997, 2002) concludes that there are many things that engage viewers — the storylines, the actors, the convincing situations, the culture of the programme and so on — which is why her respondents kept watching. Tager identifies these as the elements that establish emotional connections with the viewers (1997, 2002), and they correspond with why my respondents kept watching *Muvhango*.

A number of sources (Brown 1994; Fiske 1994; Allen 1995; Burton 2000) indicate that there is an assumption that soap operas should be characterised as stories dominated by female characters, some of whom are matriarchs. The structure comprises male characters, who are sensitive or weak, a large cast of characters who are polarised around a few core families, and diverse narratives. More recently, however, there has appeared to be a move towards more dominant male characters than soap operas have traditionally presented.

Muvhango shows some of these attributes (it has a large cast of characters, and the narrative revolves around core families) but portrays the male characters as more dominant than weak. Such a narrative structure of traditional soap opera is argued to be 'feminine' in its derivation from women's culture and practices, and from other female genres, such as women's magazines. These arguments will be explored further in Section 2.5.

2.3.3 Soap opera subject matter

The main themes and subject matter of soap opera, according to Brunsdon (1984: 78), are mainly representations of "romances, families and attendant rituals such as births, engagements, marriages, divorces and deaths". Brunsdon (1984) claims that the subject matter of soap opera focuses on local and personal issues, such as families, community life and personal relationships, jealousies, infidelities, dirty dealings, secrets and their exposure, and abortions, and a number of other theorists (Modleski 1982; Allen 1989; Gledhill 2003) present similar ideas.

2.3.4 International soap operas compared with local soap operas

The Bold and the Beautiful is watched by 250 million people in 99 countries and is said to be the biggest soap opera in the world. When it first aired in the 1980s the narrative focused on two families: the wealthy Forresters, who ran a leading fashion company in Los Angeles, and the Logans, who were regarded as more humble. Such representations have an impact on the way that viewers perceive and negotiate meanings. Another crucial way in which viewers are affected is in the way that soap opera simultaneously inverts and affirms gender roles. American soap operas in this sense tend to embrace feminism, while South African soap operas tend to present higher levels of patriarchy. In her study of *The Bold and the Beautiful,* Tager (2002) shows how characters like Brook, Taylor and Stephanie in *The Bold and the Beautiful* are portrayed as dominant, powerful and very capable sexually and in the business world. In *Muvhango*, however, the women characters are not as dominant or powerful as the men. The men in *Muvhango,* unlike those in *The Bold and the Beautiful,* are depicted as stronger than the women, and as possessing the power to influence the lives of other men and women.

Tager (1997) also speaks of audiences conflating actors with their character roles. Viewers can at times get so caught up with the storylines that they forget that what they are watching is in fact fiction, even though there may be elements of truth or reality revealed in the programme (Isotalus 1995: 59). This phenomenon proved to be true for the Black students that Tager interviewed. It also proved to be true for the respondents that I interviewed for my study — there were certain storylines that caused them to become very upset and emotional. An example of just how literally viewers sometimes

take storylines appeared in a recent article in *The Star* about KK, one of the *Muvhango* characters, who is abusive towards women. MacDonald Ndou, who plays the role of KK, mentions a few accounts of certain cashiers in Gauteng malls refusing to assist him because of the role that he plays in *Muvhango* (Masetha 2011). Viewers can get personally drawn into the lives of soap opera characters, a situation which was evident in my study and in Tager's study, as well as in Isotalus's study.

In *The Bold and the Beautiful*, men are capable of tears and deliver passionate speeches declaring undying love. They are also portrayed as emotionally weak in relation to women and are often involved in a number of sexual relationships with the women close to them. Soap opera functions as an arena allowing viewers to critically engage with several representations of men and women and so define their own identities and cultural agendas (Flockemann 2000). This is echoed in Tager's study and in my own, in that the storylines of soap operas enable viewers to come up with new meanings as they view the spectacle of soap opera on their television screens.

Flockemann's examination of women's critical and active reading of conventional forms derived similar ideas from Jane Bryce's *Women and Modern African Popular Fiction* (1997). In Bryce's study women are shown as lovers of romance fiction, one form being soap opera. In her study of male participants, she found that they shared thoughts on how soap opera is considered unmasculine, because the men in soap operas are seen as soft in comparison with men in reality. Women viewers of soap opera have conflicting wishes about men's masculinities (Gordon 2012), in that women at times want men to play hegemonic roles and at other times want men to play non-hegemonic roles, and this is why women find soap opera to be so interesting, simply because for some women it plays into roles they desire to see at home but do not experience there. In a previous study I conducted on women's perspectives of men in South African soap operas, the women participants expressed how they longed to have these dream men who only existed in soap operas in their real lives (Gordon 2012). The main audience for soap opera is still often women, simply because women find themselves identifying with the characters, who are constructed to acknowledge and address women's cultural practices (Brown 1994). Soap operas portray sensitive men who are empathetic and caring. This ideal man loves to talk about the same things that women do and he is a

good listener. This again draws on women's culture and makes women enjoy soap opera (Brown 1994).

This becomes an interesting phenomenon, because in a short space of a time a soap opera can have repercussions on a culture. Soap operas like *Dallas* achieved tremendous popularity with their viewers. Ang comments that, "You can no longer avoid talking about the popularity of *Dallas* when people started using categories from it to help interpret their experiences" (Ang 1985: 5). In other words *Dallas* was not only popular in that it drew many viewers and was one of the most popular shows on television, but it also became a cultural referent for the real-life events of its viewers. The impact of popular soap operas such as *Dallas* was radical. Not only do soap operas play to women's lot, but they also enable communities to find a sense of identity.

Gillespie (1995) conducted a study on fans of a soap opera called *Neighbours* from an Indian community in Britain. *Neighbours* is a European soap opera that portrays a Westernised community. The Indian community drew on this soap opera as a cultural resource in their everyday interactions, whether it was with their peers, parents or other adults, "as they endeavoured to construct new modes of identity for themselves" (Gillespie 1995: 143). What makes soap operas so unique and potentially invasive in the collective consciousness is the fact that they run for decades, which means that they become embedded in the collective consciousness in ways that other genres never can (Brown 1994; Tager 1997, 2002; Gledhill 2003).

Since soap operas evoke complex emotions from viewers, conducting research based on audience studies becomes a complex matter unless one speaks directly to viewers. Most audience studies have set out to discover how people interact with the content they view on their television sets, how they decode what they see and hear, how they refer to the medium, and how they classify and criticise programmes (Liebes & Katz 1993). Using a similar approach to that of Liebes and Katz, this study aimed to examine how audiences decode and absorb aspects of *Muvhango* into their daily lives.

2.3.5 Popular local soap operas: Muvhango

South Africa has experienced major shifts in its political, economic and cultural paradigms. Examples include the emergence of the apartheid regime, which caused a dynamic change within South Africa's political, economic and cultural paradigms. Other causes of major shifts were the 1994 elections, which affected these paradigms. These paradigms are depicted in the production of meaning in South Africa's popular culture, and more particularly in soap opera (Marx 2007). This section will investigate South African soap opera, particularly *Muvhango,* in the context of South African television, as well as how audiences receive the text *Muvhango.*

Currently the SABC has three popular local soap operas that air daily. The most popular local soap operas from each of the three national channels are *Generations* (SABC1), *Muvhango* (SABC2) and *Isidingo* (SABC3). *Muvhango* caters for audiences from a range of age, gender and race demographics. Table 1 and Table 2 present statistics on South African soap opera audiences and viewership.

What also contributes to why soap opera receives such a large viewership is the fact that some viewers watch communally in a space where they can discuss what they watch. A large number of respondents in this study watch *Muvhango* with friends and family. This suggests that there is consensus about *Muvhango's* content that makes it accepted as a genuine representation of issues, such as the state of masculinity in this country at this time and its complexities, the frequent dramatic changes in masculinity, and how *Muvhango* is closely related to gender issues. Tager (1997), in her Durban-based study of *The Bold and the Beautiful* involving isiZulu-speaking viewers, showed that students largely watched soap opera communally. This is true 20 years later for my respondents.

Tager's (2002) findings support my own finding that in South Africa watching soap operas is a communal event. Students choose to watch together, and "when watching at home, they [are] always accompanied by family, friends or neighbours", making this an "extremely social experience" (Tager 2002: 6). This differs greatly from the research conducted in the United Kingdom and the USA, where viewers often watch in isolation. This phenomenon of communal viewing shows that there is a group of persons who enjoy watching soap opera in groups to tap into discussions.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the audience language statistics for three South African soap operas, provided by the South African Audience Research Foundation, at the time the focus groups were conducted (SAARF 2013).

Table 1. Viewers of popular South African soap opera (SAARF 2013)

HOME LANGUAGES				
Soap opera	English %	Afrikaans %	Nguni %	Sotho %
Generations	6	7	56	31
Muvhango	3	8	47	42
Isidingo	19	10	47	24

The statistics reveal that the majority of *Muvhango*'s audience consists of Nguni speakers. My sample group of isiZulu speakers thus falls squarely within the core demographic of the *Muvhango* audience. The 2015 statistics of these shows provided by TVSA show radical growth in all the categories of South African viewers.

Evaluating the impact of a televised programme and analysing its viewership provides essential information that enables the producers to create content that effectively caters to its viewers (Balaure 2002). Information on the audience assists producers in evaluating the programme's success and in implementing certain advertising strategies, which is an important source of income.

I have gathered the viewer statistics for *Muvhango* in Table 2, and have given the importance of the ratings and how they are measured. Average Minute Rating (AMR) refers to "the average number of viewers per minute, at a certain time, for a certain TV channel" (Budacia 2012: 65). Adhesion (ADH) refers to "the importance of the audience of the target group analysed in the total of TV audience. 'Total audience' is represented by a group of reference (the value of ADH is always expressed as a percentage). *ADH = AMR analysed target / AMR reference target x 100*" (Budacia 2012: 65).

Table 2 illustrates *Muvhango's* viewership with reference to men and women viewers as provided by the SAARF in 2013.

Table 2. Viewership for *Muvhango*

Market	Target	Description (grouped)	Activity
National	Total Individuals (excl. guests)	*Muvhango*	Live + VOSDAL
Profile Header	**Profile Details\Variable**	**AMR**	**ADH %**
Gender	Male	1 773 764	42.37 %
	Female	2 410 902	57.63 %
Age Groups	4–6	275 331	6.49 %
	7–10	332 906	7.87 %
	11–14	369 609	8.78 %
	15–24	739 781	17.63 %
	25–34	700 361	16.61 %
	35–49	917 213	22.15 %
	50+	419 721	11.14 %
	50–64	424 421	9.20 %
	65+	206 437	4.50 %

Table 2 reveals that there is a high number of both men and women ranging from their teenage years through to their twenties who watch *Muvhango*. The viewership of *Muvhango* has grown to 4 839 000 according to the 2015 statistics of Prime Time TV Ratings (TVSA 2015).

2.4. Introduction of soap operas to South Africa

In South Africa, soap operas were first introduced on radio in 1953. They were broadcast on Springbok Radio (one of the SABC's channels) and their popularity with female audiences was repeatedly mentioned in the SABC annual reports (Teer-Tomaselli et al. 1989: 197). All soap operas aired on SABC's radio and television

channels were international (i.e. in English) or Afrikaans. It was only in 1994 that local and more linguistically diverse language programmes were aired. South Africa's transformation agenda after 1994 meant that the broadcasting industry, which had been instrumental in perpetuating all kinds of stereotypes, including racial and gender stereotypes, had to be transformed to cater for all sectors of the population (Esipisu 2005).

2.4.1 Post-apartheid introduction of local Black soap operas

Prior to 1994, over 60 % of SABC programming comprised of overseas programmes and soap operas that had very little relevance to Black, Indian and Coloured South Africans. The transformation after 1994 resulted in the production of *Generations*, South Africa's first soap opera to be produced on SABC. Earlier soap opera productions such as *Egoli* (produced in 1992) were aired only on MNet, a paid channel. The difference between *Egoli* and *Generations* was that *Egoli* was produced in a mixture of Afrikaans and English, and *Generations* was produced in a mixture of Nguni languages, with English as well as Afrikaans, which made *Generations* the first soap opera to accommodate Nguni viewers. Afrikaans soap operas like *7de Laan* later had English subtitles to cater for all viewers and to an extent formed a part of the lives of its viewers (Van Der Merwe 2012).

In former president Nelson Mandela's State of the Nation address in May 1994, he emphasised that freedom cannot be achieved if women are not emancipated from all forms of oppression:

> It is vitally important that all structures of government […] should fully understand […] freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression […] unless we see in visible and practical terms that the condition of women in our country has radically changed for the better, and that they have been empowered in all spheres of life as equals. (Mandela 1994)

This extract from Mandela's speech serves as an example of the country's commitment to gender equality. In light of this, this study uses *Muvhango* as a reference to examine

the way in which television reflects such topical issues related to gender and masculinities, through the portrayal of men in soap opera, and how they treat women.

Producer Mfundi Vundla spoke of his objective in producing *Generations*:

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

While *Generations* still currently airs on SABC 1 each weekday at 8 pm, *Muvhango* presents a different perspective to what Vundla is saying here. It accepts that many traditional beliefs are entrenched in modern culture and cannot be described in the way that Vundla does. *Generations* is still recognised as one of the most popular South African soap operas, together with *Muvhango*. 2015 Statistics from TVSA show that *Generations* has over 5 million viewers while *Muvhango* is the second most popular soap opera with over 4 million viewers (TVSA 2015).

The history of South African television is an important frame for understanding the history of South African soap opera, and the constructions of masculinity presented in the way stories about Black people are told. During the apartheid regime, plot narratives on television dramas were controlled and regulated by the apartheid government. This meant that only certain stories could be told, and these could only be told in a way that the government approved of.

This resulted in local soap operas on television imitating international, Westernised soap operas, with *Generations* being an example of this. Many of the students interviewed in Tager's study (2002) referred to *Generations* as a local version of *The Bold and the Beautiful*, in that *Generations* explored the same values and themes as *The Bold and the Beautiful*. However, while *Generations* reflected international ideas, it also represented the stories of Black people in a better light (Duma Ndlovu, pers. comm. 2013). Dr Ndlovu, the writer and producer of *Muvhango*, expressed the view that all programmes at the time imitated Western ideas, and that individual stories about Black people were not represented (pers. comm. 2013). One of his reasons for creating

Muvhango was to represent the stories of typical Black people, which included issues surrounding polygamy, witchcraft, sangomas, business life and rural life.

2.4.2. The history of Muvhango

In 1997 when *Muvhango* first started, the story of how Black men lived at that time was expressed. The reality of how men would leave their homes in the rural areas and go to the city of Johannesburg to work as miners was depicted, and complex associated issues were raised around how men had wives at their rural homesteads while also having sexual relationships with other women in the city. In the first episode in 1997, Mashudu Mukwevho, a successful businessman and a chief in waiting, passes away while working in Johannesburg. Catherine, his learned city-lawyer girlfriend, wants to bury him, while at the same time his wife who lives at the rural homestead, Vho-Masindi, feels entitled to bury her husband. Today this is still a typical situation, where men see nothing amiss in having multiple partners, and many women have to contend with living under strict patriarchal conditions. From its first day on air, *Muvhango* has continued to tell stories that reflect the daily lived experiences of African people.

The following section presents theory related to television audiences. Such theory is crucial to this study, as this study focuses on a specific audience.

2.5. Audiences

Audiences are usually defined in relation to a certain text. A wide range of media can be considered texts, including films, soap operas and news bulletins. A wide variety of techniques are used to study audiences. The contexts within which texts are placed, and the meanings made by viewers out of the texts, are examined in the field of audience research (Smith 2006; Van Der Merwe 2012). Audience research is primarily empirical research aimed at observing and interrogating the audience and its behaviour, and distilling these observations into hard data (Smith 2006). This has thus become of crucial interest to all those involved with media (Abelman & Atkin 2002).

Audiences are usually segmented according to particular traits and characteristics. According to Webster, Phalen and Lichty (2006), audience attributes can be grouped into the following categories:

- **Demographic variables**: The demographics most commonly reported in audience data are race, ethnicity, age, gender, income, education, marital status and/or occupation. Of these, age and gender appear to be the most important.
- **Geographic variables:** Geographic variables often used in audience research are country of residence, province and residential area, as well as type of area (rural versus urban). Newspapers, radio stations, television channels and other media are often directed at specific geographical areas.
- **Behavioural variables**: Behavioural variables distinguish between people on the basis of particular behavioural patterns. Behavioural patterns become important to advertisers because they want to reach the audiences that are most likely to buy their products.
- **Psychographics**: Psychographics draw distinctions between people on the basis of particular psychological characteristics, such as values, attitudes, motivations and/or preferences (Smith 2006). Psychographic variables that have attracted attention recently are audience loyalty, involvement and/or engagement (Webster et al. 2006). It has become important for media professionals as well as advertisers to know which groups of people are particularly loyal and/or committed to particular media products in order to ensure that they are catered for accordingly.

For the purposes of this study I focus on demographic and psychographic variables. These variables are important from a statistical point of view in audience research, as they provide a way to analyse audiences. However, they do not provide insight into how viewers watch and interpret programmes, and so the primary method of this research is an interpretive ethnographic study. The above variables provide a good foundation from which to develop this audience research, as they identify how audiences can be researched through geography, behaviour, psychology and demographics. These variables also simplify audience research and they will be further explored in later chapters.

Although this audience study does not evaluate media consumption in relation to the reception of individual texts specifically, it does, in its attempt to evaluate media consumption and lifestyles, focus on the ways in which Black isiZulu-speaking audiences "actively and creatively make their own meanings and create their own culture, rather than passively absorb pre-given meanings imposed upon them" (Ang 1996: 136). Ethnography is a qualitative approach to research that draws on its anthropological tradition in order to understand people and their behaviours. Media ethnography looks specifically at media texts and contexts (Kitzinger 2005), which is what this study intended to do. As an audience study, this study employs the established traditions and methodologies of both reception analysis and ethnography as a means to better understand isiZulu-speaking audiences, their media consumption, their practices of masculinity and their lifestyles. I have chosen to interview Black isiZulu-speaking audiences who engage with the text on a weekly basis.

2.5.1 Why people watch television

Television has a diverse audience to whose needs it caters with the intent of producing a profound impact on its viewers. Uses and gratifications theory is an approach to understanding why audiences use certain media — in other words, *why* audiences watch television, rather than *what* they watch on television. This approach was developed from a functionalist paradigm, which emphasises the needs of the individual.

"As applied to the media institution, the presumed 'needs' have mainly to do with continuity, order, integration, motivation, guidance, socialisation, adaptation etc." (McQuail 1994: 77). People watch television for various reasons, such as to fulfil certain emotional needs, for entertainment and as a way to escape reality, and some watch because of loneliness. Loneliness is described in several studies as being a characteristic of soap opera viewers in the United Kingdom and the USA (Tulloch 2000). This is where viewers enter into a relationship with "their favourite characters as a substitute for real human interaction" (Tager 2002: 87). The respondents that I interviewed did not show or suggest that they were watching because of loneliness; they watched for many other reasons that included wanting to see other cultures. Tager's study also reveals that the

students that she interviewed did not watch soap opera because of loneliness but for pure enjoyment.

Further reasons for people watching television, and specifically soap opera, will be explored later in the chapter in the sections on soap opera. There are many ways to theorise why individuals watch soap opera. Uses and gratifications theory assists in examining how individuals use mass media, in this case, soap opera. This perspective is based on perceived needs, and social and psychological characteristics, as well as how the relevant individuals use and experience related gratifications (Papacharissi 2008).

Television producers explore strategies to draw certain viewers to certain programmes; these include storylines that keep viewers watching on a continuous basis. Soap operas in South Africa occupy the local television channels' top programming slots (Koenderman 2004) because they deal with everyday people and situations that their audiences identify with. Soap operas also air during the evening when most working viewers are home. *Muvhango,* for example, airs at 9 pm every weekday evening. It is assumed that at this time every family member is home relaxing in front of the television screen. Viewers engage with and feel that they are participating in the lives of their favourite actors or actresses because of the stories that continue on a daily basis. This is different to a cinema experience, where the viewer's engagement is for a short period of time. The viewing experience in relation to serial television dramas is complex in the sense that viewers are invited to sit back and relish the spectacle presented to them, while they also engage with characters as emotional representatives to whom they can relate. Soap opera specifically plays into these emotions (Corner & Harvey 1996).

At the same time, South African soap opera often incorporates dialogue about the country's present situation, which creates a familiar frame of reference for viewers and an illusion of real life. An example of this can be seen with material related to the country's elections that is often portrayed on soap operas just before voting day. Brief dialogue about how important voting is may be incorporated into the storyline. *Isidingo*, for example, touched on such issues during the voting season, and Van Der Merwe comments in her study of women's perceptions of soap opera on how "*Isidingo* employs positive role models to transmit pro-social messages to its viewers" (2005: 19). In

essence, individuals watch television for a range of different reasons. These include entertainment, a perceived sense of engagement with actors and actresses, and learning new perspectives on life (Gordon 2012).

2.6. Female audiences

Soap opera is the single narrative television genre originally created specifically for women. A key issue is thus whether soap operas actually incorporate elements of 'women's culture', or whether they represent a masculine view of 'women's culture' and women's experience. The structure of soap opera has been linked to other 'typically' female media, such as women's magazines (Brown 1994). These magazines, like soap operas, are produced at regularly scheduled times and create a sense of anticipation. Through their 'problem pages', women's magazines deal with various emotional dilemmas that women readers, who are often seen as having secrets and problems, may face. Such difficulties are often constructed as 'part of a woman's lot'. These elements rest on the assumption that women have a certain way of engaging, including emotional and personal styles of discourse, that is different from men's. This is an interesting phenomenon that has been explored in this study. Women and men have similarities and differences when it comes to the exploration of emotions and in their engagement with soap opera (Gledhill 2003). It is ironic, however, that the producers, directors and writers of soap operas are frequently men who think they have insight into women's lives.

From this perspective, soap opera may be viewed as portraying and validating certain situations and events that usually happen privately in people's homes, in a public forum. 'Speaking up', 'gossiping', or 'talking' are argued to be elements of women's culture that interpret private facts in public terms, and which validate feminine pleasures and meanings (Brown 1994). Soap operas can also be seen as offering fantasy substitutes for perceived 'lacks' in women's real lives. For example, it is frequently suggested that women enjoy watching soap opera because they desire true romance, which they may not be experiencing in real life. Soap operas often present 'sensitive men' who are empathetic and caring.

Studies of media reception involving women (Burton 2000) highlight women's reports of talking over the phone, at hair salons and on lunch breaks about issues that arise in soap operas. Women find themselves identifying with the characters in soap operas because soap operas acknowledge and address the general characteristics of women's culture, practices and gossip. This public exposure and validation of women's private and intimate experiences and emotions can be seen to be giving women a voice, albeit in an unusual way.

Women's constant, active, playful discussions around soap operas can be seen to open up possibilities for viewers to understand how social groups can incorporate ambiguous television texts into existing gossip networks, and provide space for a kind of female politics in which subordinated groups are validated and heard (Brown 1994).

However, these views can be contested and have been contested by feminist scholars (Gauntlett & Hill 1999). Soap operas can be seen as a product clearly targeted at female consumers, but constructed within normative, male-dominated values concerning female roles and interests. In other words, most soap operas have an alpha male, who is dominant, business minded, and commands respect from the women in his life. An example of this is the Chief in *Muvhango*. He is within a masculine dominant state, is respected, and is looked after at all times by his wives, who bow before him and are forbidden from calling him by name. While his wives maintain their own careers, they spend most of their time being homemakers for the Chief. These ideas can be contested in the sense that not all women are full-time homemakers and mothers, and a significant number of women do not like soap opera and the presumed feminine associations linked to it (Gauntlett & Hill 1999). In fact, in recent years many women have risen to higher positions than men, and have men subordinate to them, which makes the representation of women and men in soap opera open to contestation.

Academics such as Geraghty (1991, 2005), Brunsdon (1997), and Brown (1994), have tried to identify what links women with soap opera. They have established that soap opera plays to women's emotions. This is consistent with Tager's findings (2002) that certain female respondents have an emotional connection to *The Bold and the Beautiful,* such as the participant who liked the character of Taylor because she reminded her of

her mother. It is also consistent with some of my findings, which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Yet, at the same time, a significant number of men and women feel that soap opera is an insult to women (Gauntlett & Hill 1999). This view was found to be common in younger women and men of different ages in Britain in 1999 (Gauntlett & Hill 1999). Such findings challenge earlier views of soap operas as purely a women's genre, in that even male viewers can engage emotionally with soap opera. Certain studies show that women watch more soap opera than men, but the fact that men watch cannot be disputed (Geraghty 2005). Similarly, Tager (2002) found some of her male respondents engaged in discussion with others over happenings in *The Bold and the Beautiful*, despite this being characterised by some as 'gossip' and 'feminine'. In my study some of the male respondents identified *Muvhango* as their favourite programme on television, and shared a deep sense of emotional connection to the show. These South African findings also challenge earlier international constructions of soap opera as simply a women's genre.

2.7. Male audiences

While in the past soap opera was presented as appealing almost exclusively to women, contemporary forms clearly do appeal to some men. Soap operas such as *Dallas* (U.S.) and *Bade Acche Lagte Hain* (BALH) in Britain have male audiences of over 30 % (El Gody 2007). In Britain, soap operas were largely shunned by men in the 1970s, simply because content from soap opera formulas in the 1970s did not appeal to men. Soap opera today has become relatively popular with men all over the world. Some of the reasons offered for this development lie in the storylines. The way that soap operas used to be formulated in the 1970s is different to how they are formulated today. The discourses that exist in soap opera today have elements that cater to men, which they did not have then (Gauntlett & Hill 1999). Soap opera today involves a greater sense of drama, action and a more realistic portrayal of current issues than it did in the 1970s; this may be one of the reasons why it attracts more male viewers (Gordon 2012). Soap operas also used to air in the morning and afternoon in time slots that used to fit tea-time schedules for women viewers. Today some soap operas have new time slots, such

as prime early and late evening slots, which cater to all viewers. Employed men have returned home from work at that time, which may also account for the increased male audience.

In contrast with British soap operas, which appeal to men via drama and a bit of action, South African soap operas secure male appeal by dealing with the key recent socio-political shifts in society. One reason identified for male interest in these soap operas is South African soap operas' engagement with the fundamental social and political changes that the country has gone through and is still going through (Marx 2007). Some of the social changes that the male respondents in this study suggested were the fact that a man struggles to admit that he is wrong, as well as the fact that some men do not know how to work with women in general society, because women are fragile beings and men often feel afraid to abuse women unconsciously. Studies into the appeal of soap opera for South African men are limited. This is one of the reasons for my inclusion of male viewers in this study.

While the audience for soap operas thus does include men at times, some theorists, as mentioned above, still argue that the gender of the viewer is 'inscribed' in the programmes so that soap operas address women in particular (El Gody 2007). This becomes relevant to my study because a significant number of men do watch soap opera, which then means that while these programmes are inscribed for women, there are significant elements that cater for males and give male viewers an experience that gives them pleasure. For this particular study I interviewed both men and women.

More and more studies have begun to explore men's viewership of soap opera. Brunsdon (1997) argues that men watch soap opera but that it is still a feminine-driven genre. Tager's (2002) study shows that a significant number of South African men watch and enjoy soap opera. Her respondents were not embarrassed to share their viewing experiences with their communities and friends. Some of her male respondents showed an intense emotional connection to both local and international soap operas. In this study too, men showed an intense response to *Muvhango*. British studies by Gauntlett and Hill (1999) also argue that many men are keen viewers of soap opera and that men engage in the characters' unfolding storylines and are not afraid to talk about their viewing experiences, even though soap operas are perceived as a feminine genre.

My review of contemporary research shows that soap opera caters for both women and men. Nevertheless, the work of earlier theorists such as Brown (1994) and Dow (1996) is important in identifying soap opera and how it caters for the needs of certain women of a particular time and place. Brown and Dow provide key frameworks for understanding why women watch soap opera, how soap opera liberates women, and how soap opera defines woman's emotions, and their work provides a good entry point into understanding soap opera and its audiences. Brown (1994) and Dow (1996) also argue that soap opera has been predominantly labelled as a medium that caters for women, yet recent research has shown that men do watch soap opera in a number of contexts. This means that Brown's (1994) and Dow's (1996) work is not useful in accounting for all audiences of soap opera since their studies are framed around assumptions of women being the only or prime audience for soap opera.

It is difficult to state categorically what men and women like to watch. Studies done by Gauntlett and Hill (1999) show that while women are more interested in watching soap operas, 16 % of men consider them 'very interesting'. The fact that men do not rate soap operas highly does not mean that they do not watch them, and does not mean that they do not engage with soap operas (Gauntlett & Hill 1999).

2.7.1 Why men watch

There are various reasons for male viewership of soap operas, including entertainment and unemployment. Morley (1986) interviewed 18 families in a South London context and found that households in which men watched soap opera presented a pattern of unemployed fathers or men whose wives were the main breadwinners.

However, a large number of South African men who watch soap opera are employed (SAARF 2013) and simply watch soap opera for enjoyment, rather than for reasons associated with unemployment and boredom, which suggests that unemployment is not the only reason for men turning to soap opera. Watching soap opera may, in fact, fulfil some sort of emotional need. This is relevant to this study because the informants who watched *Muvhango* did not watch because of boredom or unemployment. The students were positively drawn to what *Muvhango* offers in terms of both entertainment and spectacle as reflections of realities in their lives.

2.8. Representations of gender roles in soap opera

Media representations of gender are important because they enter the collective social lives of audiences and reinforce culturally dominant (hegemonic) ideas about gender, which most of the time depict females as subordinate (Almy & Weinstock 1984). This study specifically investigates the representations of men in television soap opera. Sociologists argue that media representations not only stereotype masculinity and femininity into fairly limited forms of behaviour, but also provide gender role models that men and women are encouraged to aspire to (Almy & Weinstock 1984). These representations of gender are present in *Muvhango* in the roles that men conform to; for example, the idea of men not disowning their children is encouraged, as well as the idea of a chief having one wife instead of many wives.

A large variety of media transmit the view that masculinity is based on physical strength, aggression and violence. This is seen, for example, in superheroes, action characters and successful businessmen, and is therefore accepted by many as a natural goal for boys to achieve (Easthope 1986). The type of masculinity that expresses aggression and strength is termed hegemonic masculinity, or "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell 1995: 77; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). Over time a 'new man' has emerged who presents a different model of masculinity, one which is a more feminine version of the male self. The new man, accordingly, is less aggressive, and more gentle and feminine (Hunt 2008).

In the late 1980s, print media and television in Britain and America started depicting different ideas of masculinity, such as the idea that men can be emotionally vulnerable. Men were depicted as being in touch with their emotions, as treating women as equals and as starting to care about their appearance. Theorists termed this type of masculinity the 'new man'. This 'new man' depicted elements of a non-hegemonic (non-dominant) way of life. Media representations of this new type of masculinity led to postmodern sociologists speculating that masculinity was responding to new societal changes and the growing economic independence and assertiveness of women (Gauntlett 2008). However, hegemonic masculinity and the non-hegemonic 'new man' are more complex

than being simply binary opposites, as representations of men contain combinations of both hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities.

2.8.2. Differences in representations of men in diverse local soap operas

Even though representations of gender in movies and soap operas may have predictable trends, they are still diverse. The representation of men in *Muvhango* is different to the representation of men in other South African soap operas, such as *Generations* and *Isidingo*. The lead male characters in *Muvhango* are typically constructed as saviours of women in the storylines, and as heroes. For example, the Chief is willing to do anything for his wives, and even kills someone to save them. While *Muvhango's* leading men are shown as heroes, the leading women are portrayed as attractive and intelligent; in other words the female characters accommodate and support these storylines. In contrast, the lead male characters in *Generations,* Sbusiso Dhlomo and Kenneth Mashaba, are often abusive towards the women in their lives, and are hungry for money and power. Similar representations of masculinity are evident with the male characters in *Isidingo,* such as Barker Haines, who struggles to show affection to his family and is constantly trying to accumulate more wealth.

This chapter has discussed *Muvhango* as a South African soap opera whose storyline focuses on rural and urban Black communities, and which has a relatively diverse audience. Relevant research on soap operas, audience studies and television studies has been reviewed, highlighting how women viewers in particular have conflicting issues in relation to masculinity, and how soap opera so uniquely becomes part of the lives of its audience.

This chapter has also drawn on insights from Tager's (2002) work, because of various correspondences with aspects of this study. Both studies deal with isiZulu-speaking students, even though Tager deals with comparing an international and a local soap opera, and I deal with a local soap opera that airs in a different language and deals with a different culture from that of the audience being studied. In both studies, men and women watch and participate in the interpretation of soap opera, and both of the audiences studied watch soap opera communally instead of individually. However, the game changers and influencers in the soap operas in Tager's study were the women,

while in my study they are the men. Tager's (2002) study shows that while the international market for soap opera opens up room for the development of strong women characters, soap operas created in the South African context reflect how patriarchal society still is for many people.

Soap opera has also been shown in this chapter to be not a purely feminine genre, but one that has an active male audience. This chapter also reveals how soap opera has shifted over the years, from being focused on housewifely fantasies, where soap opera would air stories representing housewives with secret lovers and men who could express their feelings, to telling authentic stories that share more of a sense of the lived realities of the audience. Soap opera has also gradually moved from depicting patriarchal storylines to including stronger storylines for women, reflecting the influence of the rise of feminism. At the same time, soap opera has become more progressive in airing several types of masculinities and femininities, including gay and lesbian characters who would not previously have been considered for inclusion in storylines.

Chapter 3 will critically analyse theory relevant to this study, drawn mainly from gender theory and masculinity studies. The topic of gender and masculinity in South Africa during and after apartheid will be addressed, and constructions of Black masculinity in South Africa will be analysed in relation to these periods. Finally, gaps in research in the area of masculinity will be identified.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter critically analyses relevant theory drawn mainly from gender theory and masculinity studies. The topic of gender and masculinity during and after apartheid is addressed, and constructions of Black masculinity in South Africa are analysed in relation to these periods. This section also identifies gaps in research in the area of masculinity. The primary theoretical framework of this study consists of theories of gender and masculinity. I am aware that masculinity theories are themselves constructions of masculinity that are open to critique and cannot be assumed as definite truths. I concentrate on some of the debates, discussions and research conducted in Africa, and then narrow my focus to South Africa.

3.1 Understanding masculinity

Masculinity refers to a collection of norms, values and behavioural patterns that express or depict explicit and implicit expectations of how men should act and represent themselves to others. In essence, "masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting" (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 836). Ideologies of masculinity are similar to those of femininity in that they are culturally and historically constructed. Their meanings are continually contested in the process of ongoing renegotiated meanings in the circumstances of existing power relations (Lindsay & Miescher 2003). Not all forms of masculinity have equal power and legitimacy in society. In other words, certain forms of masculinity are culturally elevated; different types of masculinities exist in contestation with each other (Connell 1995).

Researchers use the following three general models to carry out scientific research on masculinity (Fouten 2006):

1.   **Biological models** attribute differences in social behaviours between males and females, as well as between males, to innate biological differences.

2.   **Sociological models** emphasise that the accommodation to a sex role is specific to one's biological sex, due to socialisation.

3.   **Anthropological models** emphasise that variations in the behaviours and attributes of men, associated with being a man, are linked to cultural differences.

3.1.1 Biological models

Biological models focus on inborn (biological) behaviours that men perform. These models are generated as a way of explaining how men behave towards other men and towards the women around them. Some perspectives argue that the differences in endocrine systems (glands that release hormones) are the central cause of gender difference. Scholars such as Devor (1989) and Sisk et al. (2003) maintain that oestrogen predisposes women to being emotional, passive, tender and soft, while testosterone in men predisposes them to aggression, violence and lack of emotion, which promotes behaviour completely different to that of women. Biological models are fundamental, but they are not crucial to this research, because this research recognises that the behavioural patterns of men are influenced not only by biological factors, but by other factors too, such as sociological issues that contribute to who men are and how they behave.

3.1.2 Sociological models

Sociological models focus on gender socialisation, with gender referring to the socio-cultural dimension of being female or male (Maccoby 1996). Theorists argue that human beings are not born with any pre-existing knowledge of, or orientation to, their world. The argument here is that we learn through socialisation those social mechanisms through which gender development occurs. This then implies that biological factors are not the only contributory factor to people's gender identities and behaviours.

Thus, understanding and theorising masculinities cannot be achieved simply by focusing on something innate, but needs to involve an examination of the context one is born into and that influences and informs who one becomes. "The method lies in taking a consistently relational approach to gender — not in abandoning the concepts of gender or masculinity" (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 837). Socialisation then becomes a process by means of which a child defined biologically as either male or female grows into a social individual through learning to adapt to his/her environment.

Typical examples of how gendered socialisation is introduced include:

1. **Culture**, such as in the ways in which the people around growing children express beliefs and perform roles that play a crucial role in shaping the person that the child will become. An example of this is how, if a boy sees that his father is abusive to his mother, he may also be abusive to his wife. This is not a deterministic fact, but is an underlying influence on men who become abusive. The specifics of the roles and how the socialisation occurs may be different in each culture. For example, in traditional African cultures women are expected to play a domestic role by staying at home, cooking and bearing children. However, the specifics of that socialisation may differ from those of a White woman who, while perhaps also being a stay-at-home mother, has grown up within different discourses. While the idea of toys, culture, and how children are dressed from a young age emphasises that gender is something we are born with, it does not imply that gender is purely inborn. Gender is also the things we do and the things we perform (Butler 1990).

2. **Dress code**, such as how children are generally either dressed in blue or pink according to their sex (Pomerleau et al. 1990).

3. **Toys**, such as how children are given gender-specific toys to play with that prepare them for their roles in adulthood. Through popular toys such as tea sets, doll houses, and newborn-baby dolls, young girls learn that their major roles will be performed in the home, and that their duties will involve doing household chores and nurturing children. Soldiers, police cars and wrestling kits are examples of toys that encourage boys' aggressive behaviour and that establish the masculine traits of being dominant and competitive from a young

age. What may be common is a strong sense that men and women are different and must perform different roles (Pomerleau et al. 1990).

These theories of gender socialisation are not just limited to toys and dress, but are far more complex. Culture in itself is complex, and can only be considered in a simplistic way if one is working with a small, specific understanding of culture. In certain gender socialisation theories there is a belief that gender categories are taught and stereotypical gender roles are reinforced (Fouten 2006). At the same time, different forms of socialisation construct gender in different ways. In other words, different cultures have different ideas on how men and women are different, and the specifics of gender roles and the way socialisation occurs may be different in each culture.

Within the field of masculinity theory, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been formulated. The theory of hegemonic masculinity focuses attention on the way that men may behave aggressively and exhibit traits that construct and reinforce patriarchy, but hegemonic masculinity is also grounded in the social conditions and psychosocial realities of men as individuals (Ratele 2008). Research into hegemonic masculinities continues to proliferate, and has been a way of talking and theorising about males across many socio-geographical contexts and disciplines.

This notion of hegemonic masculinity is a sociological concept that has been and still is largely used in Australia, Europe, North America and Africa. Originally the concept of hegemonic masculinity referred to those elements that promoted women's social subordination to men (Ratele 2008). In other words, hegemonic masculinity was originally considered to involve a mesh of social practices that produce gender-based hierarchies. These include the violence necessary to endorse and maintain these hierarchies, which support unequal relations between women and men within a group (Connell 1995: 77; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Ratele 2008).

In essence, social processes constitute masculinity. Men construct their identities through complying with socially prescribed hegemonic masculine ideals (Connell 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). The task of being a man involves taking on and negotiating hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). Connell's formulation of hegemonic masculinity has a number of advantages. Firstly, it allows for diversity in that the study of masculine identities occurs in the plural rather

than in the singular (Wetherell & Edley 1999). Secondly, it pays attention to issues of gender power. Thirdly, it draws attention to the fact that the formation of gendered identities is reliant on the relations between men as well as the relations between men and women (Wetherell & Edley 1999). Research has shown (Mac an Ghaill 1996; Morrell 1998; Kimmel & Messner 2001) that men may construct masculine identities in relation to women, specifically those concerning the ownership and control of women. Masculinity is construed as being powerful because its definition is based largely on how men seek to control women (Fouten 2006).

Within South Africa, there is a specific atmosphere that reinforces traditional gender roles. During the apartheid regime Black men were emasculated because the White males who enforced this regime held all the power in South Africa. This meant that Black men did not fit into their specified gender roles in society simply because their masculinity was stripped from them (Morrell 2001a; Xaba 2001; Ratele 2008). Black individuals were not allowed to vote, and were rarely given the opportunity to be educated above a certain level. This often left Black men without employment, which meant that they could not provide for their families. Towards the end of the apartheid era Black males started looking for ways to regain their power, leading to the increasing prevalence of acts of violence against the White government in the townships in South Africa (Beck 2000).

The migrant labour system also isolated Black men from their families by putting a significant physical distance between them, which led to them having to adapt to two distinctly different forms of masculine behaviour — one enacted in their family role, and the other in their urban employment context. This idea is depicted in *Muvhango* in the character of the sangoma. Mulimisi, in the rural area, is a trusted and respected sangoma, but when he goes to Johannesburg to assist his girlfriend with her career, he struggles to understand his place in a completely different social setting and feels somewhat out of place.

Sociological models assist in the understanding of constructions of masculinity and masculine roles in society. More recent models represent shifts from a fixed notion of masculinity to fluid notions of masculinities (Xaba 2001; Fouten 2006; Hunt 2008; Ratele 2008). Fixed understandings of masculinity are associated with biological

models, and to an extent with anthropological approaches, because they naturalise the establishment of cultural constructions and roles. The fluid models favoured in this study are those of the socio-cultural approach because they acknowledge the difference between biological sex and gender roles, and view gender as a socially situated, complex and dominant performance.

The final model utilised in masculinity studies is rooted in anthropological perspectives.

3.1.3 Anthropological models

One of the main problems facing researchers is how to explain observable variations in cultural comprehension of the categories 'men' and 'women', and the fact that certain notions about gender appear in a wide range of different societies. Some anthropologists, such as Borowsky (1994), have suggested that the universality of gender differences comes from specific cultural adaptations to the environment, whereas other theorists like Ratele (2011) describe the cultural variations of gender roles as seeking to demonstrate the fluidity of gender and the primacy of cultural organisations.

The gender differences rooted in Western history, with patriarchal ideology being presented as natural and universal, represent only one among the many social and historical possibilities of constructing the relations between men and women (Maccoby 1996). In *Muvhango*, biological models do not assist in understanding the constructions of masculinity as much as sociological models, which make more sense in understanding men. Sociological models assist in the understanding of masculinity, and provide insight into why men act the way they do, as well as where the sources or material used for the construction of the characters on television is to be found. These models can be strengthened by interviewing real men, thus contributing an additional dimension to understanding how men behave, rather than merely making assumptions using existing theory. While existing scientific models aid science and research in understanding masculinity, they only present a broad understanding of masculinity, and provide little insight specifically on Black men in Africa. The models of society they present are predominantly imported from the West rather than locally derived (Ratele 2011).

In South Africa, for example, some contemporary expressions of masculinity are characterised by a struggle between traditional male practices and men's desire to be responsible, modern and respectable, in the manner suggested by Western models (Walker 2005).

The impression one gets from all these models is that they are divergent in their explanatory powers, yet each can make a contribution to specific research. No single model on its own can fully explain the range of gender roles and their relationship to sexual differences as well as to socio-cultural differences. An example of this is how men's violence is often rooted, not in their biological make-up, but in the imperatives of a patriarchal society. Social structures of unequal power in the household of a typical man may have the ability to shape a man's thinking, and encourage him to develop a culture of violence. The impression that one gets of masculinity in South Africa is that the behavioural patterns of men have changed substantially over time because of the radically different political practices that have existed.

So far I have mentioned how masculinity has been affected by several categories and models globally. In South Africa masculinity has been influenced by issues of race, class and colonialism, as well as by various other socio-political issues. The following sections expand on various types of masculinity and attempt to create a timeline of how masculinity in South Africa has evolved.

3.2 Masculinities

There are a range of masculinities instead of a single type of masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). Colonialism has transformed existing masculinities and created radically different masculinities (Ouzgane & Morrell 2005). There is no doubt that constructions of masculinities are changing, particularly in response to a global policy commitment to gender equality, which in turn has been motivated historically by feminism (Connell 1995). It is apparent that masculinities take multiple forms as a response to a variety of factors, such as global and socio-economic location, age, race, sexual orientation and religion (Ouzgane & Morrell 2005).

3.2.1 Hegemonic and emergent masculinities

The idea of emergent masculinities arises from Connell's (1995) and Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) theories of hegemonic masculinity. The idea behind this thinking was the reality (at that time) that men had dominance over women, in several respects, physically and socially. Hegemonic theory identified the relationship between a certain expression of masculinity and patriarchal dominance. In hegemony, two forms are identified: internal and external. External hegemony refers to the institutionalisation of men's dominance over women, while internal hegemony refers to the social ascendancy of one group of men over other men (Demetriou 2001; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 844).

Williams (1977: 125) questions whether it is possible for people to have pure social dominance: "No dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human intention". He argues instead that "new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship are continually being created" (Williams 1977: 123). In essence, hegemony is not a mere pattern of domination that is forced on certain individuals. Hegemony concerns "cultural consent, discursive centrality, institutionalization, and marginalization or delegitimation of alternatives [which] are widely documented features of socially dominant masculinities" (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 846).

This then led to an awareness of emergent masculinities that embrace new masculine dynamics and cultures not embraced by hegemonic masculinities. While hegemony would strive for dominance and power, emergent masculinities would strive for a transformation of dominance and power. Emergent masculinities, for example, may be expressed in a heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, asexual man's desire to want to care for and love the people around him, his desire to use protection during intercourse and to want to date before entering into marriage (Inhorn & Wentzell 2011). There is a fine line then between defining a man as purely hegemonic or non-hegemonic, because "men can dodge among multiple meanings according to their interactional needs. Men can adopt hegemonic masculinity when it is desirable; but the same men can distance themselves strategically from hegemonic masculinity at other moments. Consequently,

masculinity represents not a certain type of man, but rather a way that men position themselves through discursive practices" (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 841).

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005: 849) argue that existing hegemonic masculinities can be analysed at three levels:

1. **Local**: constructed in the areas of face-to-face interaction with families, organisations, and immediate communities, as typically found in ethnographic and life-history research;

2. **Regional**: constructed at the level of culture or the nation-state, as typically found in discursive, political and demographic research; and

3. **Global**: constructed in transnational arenas, such as world politics and transnational business and media, as shown by emerging research on masculinities and globalisation.

This study focuses primarily on analysing masculinity at the local level, since it uses an ethnographic approach to examine how members of a particular community respond to constructions of masculinities within *Muvhango*.

3.2.2 Residual masculinities

The concept of residual masculinities expresses certain meanings and expressions of the dominant culture. "It is crucial to distinguish this aspect of the residual, which may have an alternative or even oppositional relation to the dominant culture, for that active manifestation of the residual this being its distinction from the archaic which has been wholly or largely incorporated into the dominant culture" (Williams 1977: 122).

Residual masculinities have been formed by the past, and are still active in the cultural process of the present. In other words, because women were subordinate to men in the past, men operating with residual masculinities would still consider them to be subordinate, and would see women's 'prescribed' duties as being the same as those in the past.

3.3 Masculinity in South Africa

Understanding contemporary South African masculinities necessitates some historical understanding of the impact of apartheid on local masculinity, and specifically Black masculinity, and a recognition that everything needs to be viewed through lenses of race and class. With this said, constructions of masculinities are an ongoing project of meaning-making, as competing versions of masculinity are reproduced and revised (Buiten & Naidoo 2013). In South Africa, race and class are imperative in determining how men understand their masculinity and how they deploy it (Morrell 2001b). Young men in the South African context are raised with a burden of responsibility and the expectation that they will be the breadwinner and contribute economically. In the South African context responsibilities are often placed on young Black men in working-class environments at an early age (Morrell 2001b). In South Africa, masculinities are historically connected with some of the most pressing social issues today that include gender-based violence, and HIV/Aids. Furthermore, masculinities in South Africa are not static, but are complex, diversely socially situated, and evolving.

There are two stages in the evolution of masculinities in South Africa that may assist in explaining audience responses: "struggle masculinity" and "post-struggle masculinity". While each of these stages can be viewed as dominant for the time periods they represent, they were not the only variations of masculinities during those specific periods (Xaba 2001). The conditions that produced struggle masculinity were impoverished and poorly serviced townships, coupled with the strained relationships that township dwellers had with state institutions. Under apartheid rule, men who confronted authority often perpetrated and were subjected to violence. The men who fought against the apartheid government received praise from their own communities for being 'real men' (Xaba 2001). Those who did not fight against apartheid were positioned as weak men.

Post-struggle masculinity has been characterised by a respect for law and order, the restoration of public order, the resumption of paying for services, respect for state institutions, and cooperation with the police. The struggle and post-struggle accounts of masculine identities illustrate how a particular configuration of masculinity forged in one historical moment can become obsolete and/or dangerous in another. In addition,

class issues within the Black South African community have become more complex in the post-struggle era (Xaba 2001). Under apartheid, the possible spectrum of class divisions in the Black community was suppressed by practices such as job reservation policies. Post-1994, a more differentiated Black upper and middle class has emerged. Even though this differentiation is expressed in relatively small numbers in comparison with the vast numbers of still impoverished Black communities, the emergent class complexities have caused issues. These issues will be further explored in the section on apartheid and how it affected masculinity.

The key themes in masculinity studies and in regard to the project of masculinities in South Africa are highlighted here as a way of contextualising the construction of masculinities in *Muvhango*. A major theme in contemporary South African literature on masculinities is the perceived 'crisis of masculinity' and its impact on male identity and action (Mager 1998; Campbell 2001). Buiten and Naidoo (2013) refer to the ways in which people's construction of masculinities respond to wider social processes, including responses to the ways in which historical patriarchies are upset and challenged through social change. Media representations have reflected these tensions and changes. One example is the liberation of sexuality that has been associated with the break from the apartheid era, during which some researchers maintain there was an attempt to restrict and confine Black individuals (Buiten & Naidoo 2013).

South Africa has had a new constitution for several years that emphasises equality and freedom for all. Yet there are still high levels of violence (even though statistics reveal that there has been a decrease in violence since 1994, (South African Government News Agency n.d.). In 1992, for example, more than 20 000 people were reported to have been murdered in South Africa in political and criminal violence. At the time, there were 380 000 reported rape cases in South Africa every year, with 95 % of the victims being Black. Between 1983 and 1992, the murder rate increased by 135 %, robbery by 109 %, housebreaking by 71 %, car theft by 64 %, and rape by 62 %. Since the 1994 elections, South Africa's murder rate has decreased by more than 50 %, with a similar trend evident for attempted murder (South African Government News Agency n.d.)). One of the reasons for violence still being an issue in the country is because Black men have been emasculated for so long, and felt rudderless after the apartheid regime. At the same time South Africa's democratic government introduced new laws that ensure

women's equality and empowerment in the workplace in order to close the inequality gaps that women have experienced over the years. This could be a contributory factor, as some men may feel that this emasculates them. The apartheid era created a radically fragmented society with a racial hierarchy that emphasised different forms of masculinity. For Black men, the harshness of life on the edge of poverty and the erosion of their political power gave their masculinity a dangerous edge (Xaba 2001; Ratele 2011).

This socio-historical context of constructions of masculinities in South Africa informs my theoretical framework. Television portrays certain aspects of living conditions that reflect such a socio-historical context. These may not always be realistic, but audiences can understand and identify with them. It is assumed that the people interviewed for this study have been directly or indirectly affected by the apartheid era, and that this may shape the way that they interpret constructions of masculinity on television.

Contemporary sociological approaches to masculinity studies stress the existence of a range of constructions of masculinities instead of single masculinity types (Connell 1995; Morrell 2001a; Ouzgane & Morrell 2005). Understanding the spectrum of current South African masculinities requires careful attention to how South African history has shaped masculinities today, thus implicating race along with class (Ouzgane & Morrell 2005).

3.3.1 The migrant labour system

Another aspect of South African history that affected Black men was the migrant labour system, which created two different categories of Black workers: Black workers coming into South Africa from other neighbouring countries, and Black workers who were South African citizens living in South Africa. The system enforced racial segregation because it was based on the cheap labour of Black people working for White-owned corporations, which included farms, mines, factories and businesses.

Black migrants were not allowed to live permanently in areas where White people resided. They were also not allowed to bring their wives or children to their place of work. This resulted in a fracturing of the family unit, leaving women with the

responsibility of raising children, and Black men with few opportunities to be father-figures or role models for their children, as they would be away for months without seeing their families (Beck 2000). Life was incredibly difficult for Black men, because over and above this system of racial segregation, apartheid deprived Black men of political rights. This period in history completely emasculated Black men.

3.3.2 Apartheid and masculinity

The apartheid and post-apartheid eras have had a monumental impact on South Africa as a whole, and have thus directly and indirectly affected masculinities in South Africa. This section will examine the lives of Black men before and after the apartheid regime.

Timeline:

1910–1948

During the first half of the 20th century South Africa was under the dominion of Britain, and during this time several early Acts that made Black people subservient were implemented, such as the Mines and Works Act (1911), which ensured White dominance in the mining industry. This meant that Black men could not own anything in the mining industry; they could only work for White owners. This emasculated Black men, because they could not have ownership of large entities, but had to be subservient to White men. Shortly after this the Natives Land Act (1913) was passed. This Act regulated and limited land ownership by Black people to 8 % of the total land area of South Africa. These regulations further emasculated Black men, since they were limited to a certain percentage of land and could not live freely where they wanted.

Beck (2000) has identified three phases in the development of apartheid from 1948 to 1994.

PHASE ONE: 1948–1959 is termed classical apartheid and was a time when White people had full dominion over Black South Africans. The National Party government enacted legislation such as the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949) and the Natives Resettlement Act (1954), which meant that Black people were not permitted to have the same privileges as White people (Beck 2000). Further legislation, such as the

Bantu Labour Act meant that White people had more power over Black people in the workplace.

PHASE TWO: 1959–1973. This phase came with the creation of the Bantu homelands. The Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act (1959) meant that Black people were not allowed to live or work outside of the bantustans or homelands unless they were permitted to do so by the government. This situation of forced living conditions emasculated Black men, since they could not choose where to live and where to stay. This phase further deepened apartheid in South Africa and made it a brutal stage in the history of this country (Beck 2000).

PHASE THREE: 1973–1994. By the time that South Africa reached this final and last stage before the end of apartheid, the large majority of Black people had been affected detrimentally. Most of them were poorly educated, unskilled and unable to conform to the standards required by their White employers. This period was characterised by violence and unrest aimed at ending apartheid. Black liberation movements that had emerged in the mid-1960s became tremendous pressure groups to such an extent that the then president, F.W. de Klerk, released Nelson Mandela from prison, and negotiations were initiated, which led to the dismantling of the apartheid system and to universal suffrage and a new democratic constitution in 1994 (Beck 2000).

These historical phases point out how Black men were emasculated during much of the 20th century, and were subjected to numerous indignities and denied human rights. The violence of the Black liberation movements in support of universal human rights led to the removal of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Although apartheid was removed and human rights were entrenched, Black men remained under-educated and unemployed.

Poverty continues to affect Black men, exacerbated by the more recent challenges of the HIV pandemic and the recent worldwide economic recession. Being a breadwinner and being married has become increasingly difficult for Black men to achieve, because of a rise in the unemployment rate and the increasing cost of education. It becomes harder to be married because marriages cost money, and the families that are created in the institution of marriage require money (Hunter 2008).

In contrast with the vast majority of boys living in rural areas, those living in urban areas have an extended period of time to work through the issues and responsibilities that emerge with adolescence (Morrell 2001a). This is shown in *Muvhango*, where Vusi and his friend Sizwe grow up in two different situations. They are both students, and attend the same school, but Vusi has his necessities catered for, and had privileges and responsibilities given to him at an early age, while Sizwe has to work hard for everything he has, because he was not born into a wealthy family.

3.3.4 Circumcision and initiation

Circumcision and initiation are a crucial part of many Black men's lives, particularly Xhosa men, despite the fact that the Eastern Cape Provincial Department of Health in South Africa recorded 2 262 hospital admissions, 115 deaths and 208 genital amputations for circumcisions between 2001 and 2006 (Meissner & Buso 2007, cited in Peltzer et al. 2008). Recently circumcision has been suggested as a means of lowering the risk of HIV infection by 60 % and many men from other ethnic groups are now undergoing it for religious and health reasons (Gray et al. 2007). For the Xhosa male, going to 'the mountain' and experiencing the pain of being cut without anaesthetic is the defining ritual of 'becoming a man', irrespective of one's age. Men who have gone to 'the mountain' are to be respected and accepted by fellow men and community members (Vincent 2008).

Males who have not undergone circumcision to establish their manhood are expected to treat circumcised men with respect. There is also a large amount of pressure placed on the men who do not wish to be circumcised in the traditional manner (Meintjes 1998). Although considerable emphasis is placed on circumcision, this is only one aspect of the purpose of the initiation schools. There is a prolonged stay at 'the mountain' during which young men are subjected to a variety of hardships and receive extensive education on the responsibilities and attitudes of an adult male. It is a comprehensive exploration of what constitutes masculinity in the Xhosa nation.

Black men are aware of the deaths and tragedies that occur in traditional circumcisions, yet they still pursue such a course because they want to be regarded as masculine, unafraid, bold and brave. They are not permitted to share their experiences of 'the

mountain' and their circumcision, and take their vow of silence very seriously. If anything happens in the mountain, like losing one's penis or losing sexual function, a man will remain silent among his fellow siblings and friends who are still going to go to the mountain for traditional circumcision. If a man dies during or after circumcision, or has severe complications during the process, he will still be regarded as a man, and will be respected by all for undergoing such an experience (Tenge 2006).

Despite these negative stories of emasculation, it is clear that the apartheid policies still remain the most significant cause of Black emasculation. Black men were emasculated for so long through so many policies, laws and systems that they have used various methods to attempt to regain their masculine identity and authority that was lost for so many years. Traditional circumcision is one such method, which is highly dangerous unless adequately controlled, but is still pursued as a way of proving the very point of a Black man's power and masculinity.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, much of the literature shows that Black men have been oppressed and that their power or manhood has been stripped away from them in several ways, such as through the apartheid system, the consequences of HIV, poverty, school failure, violence and unemployment. However, it is crucial to recognise that Black men are not all victims under difficult circumstances (Ratele 2008). Although, because of negative factors, Black masculinity in South Africa has been considered to be in crisis, a more holistic understanding of Black South African masculinity can be achieved by also focusing on educated, law-abiding, and healthy, employed Black men (Ratele 2008).

3.4 Masculinity in soap opera

Soap opera has presented a platform on which masculinities can be constructed and analysed. The evolving nature of masculinities in South Africa has received increasing scholarly attention. Several authors (Morrell 2001a; Xaba 2001; Ratele 2008) agree that the 1994 democratic elections had a great impact on gender relations in South Africa. The elections brought radical transformations that challenged men's position of power. These elements assist in understanding constructions of masculinity in South African television.

Masculinity, as observed on television or in the media in general, is represented by a set of constructed actions and discourses of certain groups of men. Certain individuals emerge who are distinguished as holding representations of positions of power and authority (Ratele 2011). The Chief in *Muvhango*, for example, is easily identified, because everyone has to bow down before him before they speak, he has to give them permission to speak, and he has to be respected and honoured by all. This then affirms that certain forms of Black masculinity are strongly connected to notions of tradition and class. This is displayed through stories or productions that depict elements of wealth and tradition, where if a character performs the role of being wealthy, intelligent or educated, then his performance is automatically respected (Buiten & Naidoo 2013). An example of this is a new male character (Dr Zwane) who was introduced in *Muvhango* recently. Presented as a well-spoken doctor, he was automatically trusted by the Chief and the whole community of Thathe, but was ultimately revealed as a deceiver who was seeking the chieftaincy and the Chief's wife. Elements of wealth, status and tradition thus played a role in his performances of masculinity.

Performances of masculinity are also expressed through stories that affirm specific religious constructs of manhood. In *Muvhango*, performances of masculinities are implicated and embedded in the stories of Black South Africans in Venda cultural constructions of manhood.

Figure 1. *Huisgenoot Tempo* **magazine represents several types of masculinities**

Figure 2. *Muvhango* **presents several masculinities within the South African context**

Masculinities are constructed through the process of representation and discourse (Connell 1995) and categories of masculinity have become defined. *Tempo* magazine (Figure 1), which caters largely to Afrikaans communities, depicts several types of masculinities: the boer, the metro man, the sportsman, the retro man, the student, the worker and the rebel (Pretorius 2013). Likewise, *Muvhango* (Figure 2) presents several stereotypical representations of Black masculinities, such as the polygamist, the sangoma, the low working-class man, the violent man, the emotionally inarticulate man, the student intern, and the evil businessman. Many more recent South African television programmes reflect a new genre of male-centred television dramas that display important shifts in conceptions of masculinity (Buiten & Naidoo 2013).

Muvhango presents multiple depictions of masculinity, from metrosexuals to hegemonic patriarchs, as does *Tempo*. However, the specific discourses within Afrikaans culture are different from those of Black culture, although there are similar types of masculinities. Among the most common in Black culture are:

- The metrosexual man

'Metrosexual' is also known as the 'new' masculinity. This term originated in 1994 in Britain and was used to describe the disposition of modern men who embrace self-beautification and enjoy interests that used to be associated only with women and homosexual men, such as shopping and fashion (Viljoen 2008). Evidence of this new masculinity in South Africa has been explored in the form of advertising in men's lifestyle magazines. James in *Muvhango* corresponds to Viljoen's metrosexual man,

because his character embraces self-beautification in terms of fashion trends and his sense of style. Respondents in this study identified James as a metrosexual man, because he wore tight T-shirts and was stylish.

Figure 3. James in *Muvhango* is a typical representation of metrosexual masculinity

- The retro man

The retro man is defined by reminiscence for the past. He is a man who indulges in historicism in clothing and style (Martin & Koda 1989). Unlike the metrosexual man, the retrosexual man is not associated with activities that are usually associated with women, such as shopping and fashion. He is a confident man who is distinguished from the general men of the town. The retro man's attire is influenced by styles from the 1930s to the 1980s and draws inspiration from several sources, which include musicians and actors (Pretorius 2013). *Muvhango* does not have many examples of men in retro style. KK is one of the most notorious businessmen in *Muvhango*; he is intelligent and confident even though most of his business dealings are illegal. He is best known for his shiny suits that were influenced by the styles from the 1930s. KK's hair is always perfectly trimmed and shiny like his suits.

Figure 4. KK is a corporate character in *Muvhango* who always wears excessively shiny suits

- The worker

The worker, according to Martin and Koda (1989), will generally be depicted at leisure, dressed in jeans and a white shirt. The traditional off-duty clothing of the worker is an unbuttoned shirt, tight-fitting clothing and fashionably styled hair. Sizwe in *Muvhango* is an example of the worker.

- The student

The student appears in groups, has a cool hairstyle, and wears branded clothing and accessories. He enjoys life and is intelligent but not geeky.

Figure 5. Vusi in *Muvhango* is a typical representation of the student

All the men in *Muvhango* are central to the women in their lives: the Chief with his five wives, the Mayor with his murderous wife, the sangoma with his supermodel girlfriend, the CEO with his wife who has cancer, the Chief's advisors who do not know how to approach women, or the Chief's servant, who cannot afford *lobola* to marry the girl whom he loves. The men are the central core of the narrative. The women come and go with much less drama than is afforded the moments when the men are feuding.

Figure 6. There are always women or a woman in the stories of each male representation in *Muvhango*

Muvhango presents several categories of contemporary South African masculinities, including the hegemonic man, who allows inequality in his home. This is represented in *Muvhango* in the Chief's household, where his wives bow before him, where he dominates and where there are inequalities in the relationships. There is also evidence of residual masculinities where the man is the head of the household. This is represented in *Muvhango* in the relationship between Meme and KK, where Meme has to listen to exactly what KK requires of her and be obedient to him. Lastly, there are also emergent masculinities, where roles in the home can be negotiated and changed. This is seen in the marriage of Albert and Hangwani, who negotiate roles in their relationship, allowing for past, present and emerging discourses and ideologies to coexist.

Muvhango raises questions about the conventional patriarchal systems in typical South African urban and rural homes. It also portrays certain aspects of Western culture, rather than remaining confined to a specifically African representation of masculinities. This is seen in a situation when the Chief stands up for a widow whose inheritance

would have been taken away from her. His decision empowered the widow and recognised her human rights, which is a situation not always endorsed by African representations of masculinity, particularly those that endorse patriarchy.

Muvhango portrays men who are good listeners and who communicate their feelings, such as Busani (the businessman), Albert (the father figure), Sizwe (the ladies' man) and James (the metrosexual man) (Brown 1994; Van Der Merwe 2012). Men in soap operas tend to be more willing to talk about their feelings than men in real life. Expressing feelings is regarded as a more feminine trait. Fiske (1995: 344) argues that masculine power in soap opera is given a "feminine inflection" through showing men talking about their feelings. This feminine inflection perhaps reflects and supports the idea that contemporary masculinities are continuously changing in response to ongoing societal changes, including increasing global policy commitments to gender equality (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005).

In this section I looked closely at how the roles, contexts and possibilities for identity formation of Black South African men have changed in response to societal changes, including the post-apartheid policies and how these may have emasculated Black men. I have considered how these aspects affect Black men. While apartheid may have affected Black men's masculinities negatively, it is also crucial that we recognise that there are many Black men who, in spite of all the drawbacks and obstacles they have faced, are capable of being breadwinners and carers for their families.

The next chapter focuses on the use of ethnographic methods of data generation and analysis in my study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research methodology

The analysis of the representation of men in media texts is crucial for understanding how the media constructs masculinity as well as for developing theoretical insights (Ndangam 2008) about "the relationship between these sites (the texts) and gender, the gender order, the cultural differences, identity and identification, the subject, experience, and reality in late capitalism" (Hanke 1998: 183). The depictions of masculinity in the media offer insights into the patterns of contemporary projections of men as well as the manner in which such masculinities express themselves (Ndangam 2008).

In previous chapters I have discussed how television depicts masculinity. This chapter will discuss the methods that have been used to acquire information on representations of men on television. Methodological paradigms are traditionally governed by two main approaches: positivist and interpretive (Daly et al. 2007). The positivist paradigm is embedded in rules of logic and measurement, absolute principles and prediction (Andrew & Halcomb 2005; Cole 2006). This paradigm also argues that there is one objective reality instead of several realities, and as a consequence valid research for this paradigm is reflected by the degree of proof that can be related to the phenomena, and this in most instances lends itself to more scientific forensic evidence.

The interpretive paradigm supports many truths and multiple realities, and thus focuses on holistic perspectives of people and environments (Weaver & Olson 2006), which is more congruent with television and audience studies. The interpretive paradigm also provides the opportunity for the voice, concerns and practices of each participant to be captured (Cole 2006). Working in the interpretive paradigm is logically coherent for a study focused on establishing the perceptions of a particular audience of mediated constructions of male characters in a television show.

4.2 Research design

The main goal of this study was to elicit diverse views from isiZulu-speaking respondents on the constructions of masculinity presented in a South African soap opera. Since this study mainly uses interviews, qualitative techniques were used, which included pilot interviews, semi-structured focus group interviews, field notes, observations and conversations.

An interpretive approach was found to be most suitable for this research since the study was expected to elicit multiple truths, perceptions and experiences.

Figure 7. Conceptual framework

4.3 Methodology flow chart

(As sourced from Winter 2000, Patton 2002, Andrew & Halcomb 2005, Cole 2006, Daly et al. 2007)

Table 3. Flow chart for methodology

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Developing Questions ➤ Testing questions for: 1. Validity 2. Reliability	Developing Consent Form ➤ Ensuring that the consent form represents the outlook of the study and does not infringe on the rights of participants	Pilot Interviews ➤ Testing questions on a group of people to ensure that reception is accurate for the actual participants involved	Interviews ➤ Focus group interviews

4.3.1 Sampling

Ethnography is the use of careful observation and interviews to explore the ordinary and unknown in daily life, and to find out how people think about the things they do (Tager 1997, 2002). In the focus groups conducted for this research, my aim was to determine how and why the respondents watch *Muvhango*, how they interpret the various constructions of masculinity the soap opera presents, and on what basis they derive pleasure from viewing it.

A purposive sampling approach was adopted. The purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice by the researcher of a respondent due to the qualities the respondent possesses (Bernard 2002). Purposive sampling is a non-random technique that is not based on underlying theories and does not require a set number of respondents. The researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who are willing and able to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Bernard 2002). This is what I did in this study.

Fellow students who watch the soap opera on a weekly basis (an estimated three episodes a week), and who are all mother-tongue isiZulu speakers, were selected. Both male and female students were interviewed in order to obtain diverse answers as well as to observe how groups would speak when surrounded by the same and the opposite gender. The students selected all attended the same Christian church in Pietermaritzburg, had all grown up and lived in urban areas, and also attended the same academic institution (the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)). Since these participants share the same social groupings and similar associations, they form a community. Creating a sample set from such a community strengthens the ethnographic dimension of this study, as it taps into the opinions and values of a group of people with a degree of shared norms and practices. None of the students were paid to be interviewed, but a lunch was provided.

Tables 4–8 present short summary descriptions of each of the groups interviewed. Each respondent provided a pseudonym to protect his or her identity.

Table 4. Group 1: Mixed group

Pseudonym	Area of study	Gender	Age
(F) Singer 1	Politics	Female	20
(F) Singer 2	Sociology	Female	20
(M) Magic Fingers	Computer Science	Male	22
(M) Phil	Politics	Male	23
(F) Thandi	Psychology	Female	21
(F) Loud Chick	Dietetics	Female	22

Table 5. Group 2: All-female group

Pseudonym	Area of Study	Gender	Age
(F) Ginger	Law	Female	23
(F) Mands	Drama	Female	20
(F) Fire	Theology	Female	22
(F) Phindie	Drama	Female	20

Table 6. Group 3: All-male group

Pseudonym	Area of Study	Gender	Age
(M) Ants	Education	Male	23
(M) Mampintsha	Drama	Male	22
(M) Tsoro	Sociology	Male	22
(M) Lemone	Computer Science	Male	20
(M) Ben	Computer Science	Male	22
(M) Strength	Drama	Male	23

Table 7. Follow-up interview: Mixed group

Pseudonym	Area of Study	Gender	Age
(M) Strength (Initially Group 3)	Drama	Male	24
(M) John (New participant)	Microbiology	Male	24
(F) Nonto (New participant)	Politics	Female	22
(F) Loud Chick (Initially Group 1)	Dietetics	Female	23
(M) Mampintsha (Initially Group 3)	Drama	Male	22

Table 8. Follow-up interview: All-female group

Pseudonym	Area of Study	Gender	Age
Mands (F) (Initially in Group 2)	Drama	Female	24
Ginger (F) (Initially in Group 2)	Law	Female	25
Phindie (F) (Initially in Group 2)	Drama	Female	20

4.4 Why students?

When conducting previous research on soap opera audiences (Gordon 2012), I found that the students I studied watched television primarily to relieve the daily stress of tertiary study. The viewing practices of these students were different from the elderly women who had participated in my previous research, most of whom watched soap operas alone. The students watched television in the student residences and in rented apartments, or sometimes at home with their families, and generally in the company of others.

I became interested in establishing a more detailed understanding of students' viewing practices and interpretive strategies in relation to South African soap opera. I was also interested in whether their relative youthfulness affected the manner in which they perceived masculinity. Would they register the changes in masculinity in the current post-apartheid era as compared with the apartheid era? Or would they interpret masculinity in terms of their youth culture elements of what is 'cool' and what is not, what is socially acceptable or what is not? In essence, as young people it is possible for them to interpret masculinity from a range of different perspectives, which includes the experiences of their parents and their own experiences. Their youthfulness contributes to their understanding across a new spectrum. This study was based on students' perspectives on a local soap opera. The students were located through acquaintance as they all were known to me, as we attended the same university and local church.

4.5 Focus group interviews

A focus group represents a relaxed discussion and dialogue situation among a group of selected individuals around a particular topic (Wilkinson 2004). Focus group interviews usually range from a group of 5–10 (or more) people who are selected because they come from similar social and cultural backgrounds or have had similar experiences or concerns about certain issues. They gather together in comfortable relaxed surroundings to discuss topics and issues set by the moderator. Focus groups do not aim to get a specific answer about a topic raised, but rather several diverse responses are encouraged, which provide a broad understanding of attitudes, behaviours and opinions (Hennink 2007).

I opted for focus group interviews for this research since they give respondents opportunities to talk, debate and develop opinions in a group setting. This is not possible when research is conducted using one-on-one interviews. Focus group interviews encourage interaction and the exchange of ideas amongst respondents, which allows for richer, more diverse discussion than is possible in one-on-one interviews.

In total there were three focus groups for the interviews conducted during this study. One group consisted of men only, one of women only and one of both men and women. All interviews were held in the same building, a meeting room in the church attended by the participants. All interviews were conducted immediately after the church service. To maintain a level of consistency, I conducted all the interviews personally and the same questions were posed to each group. Using the same questions for each group contributes to increasing the reliability of the data collected (Fazzone et al. 2000).

4.5.1 Focus groups

The focus group interviews were conducted in accordance with a funnel design system, which consists of opening questions, introductory questions, transition questions, key questions and closing questions. Since it is difficult to predict how respondents will interpret questions or respond to them, pilot testing became important (Hennink 2007). For this study I conducted a pilot study, which enabled me to clarify certain questions and understand how respondents would answer questions. For example, while pilot testing I realised that I had not probed enough to get rich in-depth responses. So for the actual interviews I consciously aimed to probe more, because effective probing leads to enriched data collection (Hennink 2007). Through encouraging participants to speak freely I hoped to stimulate more diverse responses, discussions and arguments, and to avoid the defence effect, which is when participants say what they think that the interviewer wants to hear instead of speaking more openly.

I am aware that the participants know where I stand when it comes to issues of faith and religion, and that this may have had a possible impact on the co-construction of knowledge in these focus groups. I know that Christianity does not encourage the idea of polygamy or of ancestral worship, both of which appear in *Muvhango*. Because I am a

young person, who is well acquainted with the respondents, I sensed that they were striving to be completely honest with me. My shared social and religious circles with the respondents helped increase trust. They did not seem to be reluctant to disagree with me because of fear that they I might judge them and appeared to be comfortable in my company. In fact, some of them admitted that they admired the way that the Chief treated his wives, even though polygamy is not a Christian belief. Some of them showed acceptance and appreciation of the character of the sangoma, even though Christianity does not endorse ancestral worship. The group appeared to be honest in their responses, and generally enjoyed the focus group session; there was laughing, interaction and a few good debates.

4.5.2 Additional research

Once data had been collected from the first focus group interviews, there was also an opportunity to interview respondents in order to explore certain issues further. These interviews served as follow-up interviews, which enabled me to enrich the data.

4.6 Data collection

I planned to conduct three focus groups of thirty minutes to one hour in duration, with 10 participants in each group. Focus groups are an ideal strategy to use when collecting data as they allow space for people to create meanings among themselves rather than individually (Babbie & Mouton 2001). Each participant was an isiZulu-speaking UKZN student. The first group of respondents consisted of a mixed group and the second group only of women, while the third group was all-male. Each group comprised different members. I chose to interview groups in this manner to get a broad sense of how women, men and a mixed group discuss and interpret the constructions of masculinities they view on television. I also chose to have 10 participants in each group in order to obtain a diverse set of responses, and to ensure that there were sufficient people to interview should unforeseen circumstances arise. In each case the numbers were reduced because all the prospective participants were not available at the time for the group meetings. They were occasions when groups were smaller than anticipated. I discuss this in Section 7.3.

Unscripted questions and responses were explored as conversations developed. Initially I had planned for the focus groups to be conducted at my home, but I eventually ended up interviewing all the groups in a meeting room at the church attended by all the participants. Questions were generally posed in English, but in several instances were switched to isiZulu, because some participants preferred it that way. The respondents were allowed to speak in isiZulu at any time during the interviews.

The responses have been transcribed directly in the language in which they were delivered, but responses delivered in isiZulu have been translated into English, with the translation presented in brackets. All the respondents speak a mixture of isiZulu and English on a day-to-day basis; similarly, they engage with isiZulu dialogue and English subtitles when viewing *Muvhango*. When respondents struggled to understand English questions I would translate the questions into isiZulu. The interviews were recorded using a tape recorder, and I also took written notes as a precautionary measure.

4.7 Ethics and informed consent

All the participants knew the purpose of the research, and their potential role in it. I explained to them beforehand that anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. A letter of consent was given to each respondent to sign before the interview. A draft of the letter is attached in Appendix A.

4.7.1 Data analysis

The interview schedule was used to organise the initial analysis of the data. Themes were then extracted from the responses, explored in more detail, and related to each other and to relevant theory. In other words, I utilised a strongly inductive grounded analysis. This means that in reading through my raw data, I organised it into conceptual categories that emerged from the data (Neuman 2011).

Using open coding in the initial coding of the qualitative data enabled me to organise the data by producing preliminary analytic codes. Open coding also assisted in identifying emerging themes. After using open coding, I then moved to axial coding, the second

stage of coding, which enabled me to organise all my codes and link them into key analytical categories (Neuman 2011).

Using these codes, I examined how gender possibly affects the respondents' interpretations of the constructions of masculinity they encounter in the male characters in *Muvhango*. Several issues that affect masculinity, such as clothing, power, arranged marriages, polygamy, weakness and lust were raised during the interviews. These initial ideas link with gender theory in that they affect men and the people around them. I did not select specific episodes of *Muvhango* because my questions were broad, and therefore addressed the respondents' general understanding of aspects of the soap opera, such as the characters' growth. Focusing on specific episodes could potentially have limited the study.

4.8 Validity and reliability

In assessing the credibility of interpretive, qualitative research, it is crucial to consider issues of validity and reliability.

Reliability and reproducibility

A qualitative researcher attempts to break down phenomena into common categories that can be applied to all of the subjects as well as to broader and similar situations (Winter 2000). The researcher's methods involve the "use of standardised measures so that the varying perspectives and experiences of people can be fitted into a limited number of predetermined response categories to which numbers are assigned" (Patton 2002: 14). Joppe defines reliability as "the extent to which results are consistent over time and [are] an accurate representation of the total population under study", and states that a research instrument can be considered to be reliable if the results of a study can be reproduced using a similar methodology (Joppe 2000: 1). However, what needs to be considered in qualitative interpretive research is that participants in another study could never be the same; they will inevitably have different social contexts that would prevent any study from producing similar or identical results. This is why positivist notions cannot be adopted reliably in interpretive studies.

In this study I examined audience interpretations of how men behave on television, and I therefore needed to conduct my focus groups in a manner that promoted rigour and credibility. In other words, my aim was to make sure that each focus group was accessed in the same way, and that the same questions were posed to each group. However, focus groups are made up of different people with different feelings, which meant that each group generated and raised different opinions and thoughts, which opened up more questions for me to ask. Different groups gave varying amounts of attention to certain aspects of the research focus. This makes interpretive research very interesting, but also very difficult to reproduce because of such variants.

To ensure reliability I ensured that there was consistency in my research methods and in the recruiting process (Kirk & Miller 1986). All students interviewed attended the same institution, have a similar religious background, are in their twenties and speak isiZulu as a first language and English as a second language. Shenton (2004) argues that reliability/credibility in qualitative research can be shown in:

a. *the adoption of well-established research methods* — using the correct operational measures for the concepts being measured;

b. *the development of an early familiarity with the culture of participating organisations* — this involved me watching the soap opera and meeting with the producers and directors of the soap opera (which I had already done);

c. *triangulation* — may involve the use of different methods, especially observation and focus groups. For this research, pilot interviews, notes, and observation were some of the methods used;

d. *tactics to help ensure honesty in informants* — I tried to achieve this by interviewing informants who were really keen to participate instead of informants who felt obliged to participate; and

e. *examination of previous research findings* — the ability of the researcher to relate his or her findings to an existing body of knowledge is a key criterion for evaluating works of qualitative inquiry.

4.8.1 Validity

Joppe (2000) provides the following explanation of what validity is in qualitative research:

> Validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. In other words, does the research instrument allow you to hit "the bull's eye" of your research object? Researchers generally determine validity by asking a series of questions, and will often look for the answers in the research of others. (Joppe 2000: 1)

The series of questions were phrased and structured in relation to each other so that inconsistencies in responses would bring validity into question. Validity deals with the issue of whether what one actually ends up researching is the 'thing' one initially claimed to be researching. Validity measures the extent to which the research is accurate and the extent to which truth-claims can be made, based on the research — i.e. that it measures what was intended (Curtis & Lawson 2001). It is therefore important to determine threats to the validity and reliability of one's research.

Guba (1981) proposes a model based on the identification of four aspects of trustworthiness in qualitative research (the items in brackets are alternatives to the interpretive approach associated with positivist research):

a) credibility (as opposed to internal validity);

b) transferability (as opposed to external validity/generalizability);

c) dependability (as opposed to reliability);

d) conformability (in preference to objectivity).

These strategies are important for researchers who are designing ways to increase the rigour of their qualitative studies, and also for readers to use as a means of assessing the value of the findings of qualitative research (Krefting 1990).

4.8.2 Threats to internal validity

There are several threats to validity that can arise in the research process, and one should therefore ideally anticipate such threats in order to ensure that the research is accurate. These threats may arise from the fact that cultural settings are dynamic and change over time, or that participants may lie or manipulate information, or that their responses may be shaped by their judgments of researchers and research agendas. Some population members may be left out of the study, and researchers may report false or premature conclusions.

4.8.3 Ways to reduce threats

While threats may be inevitable, it is possible to come up with ways to minimise them. For this research I created a relationship with respondents and interviewed them in a low-stress environment, which was a room in the church they all attended and where they felt comfortable and familiar. I took note of what participants thought of me as a researcher and worked to build a trusting relationship with them, as well as focusing on the sensitivity level of topics for participants.

4.8.4 Strategies to strengthen internal validity

To strengthen my research further I conducted a number of pilot test interviews to ensure that the participants understood the questions fully. The pilot interviews were conducted in a restaurant, and the respondents for the pilot interviews were not used for the formal interviews. This helped to address any ambiguities in the questions in advance and helped to ensure that the respondents could make sense of the questions within their own frames of reference. This enabled me to reformulate problem questions before the actual interviews. Using ethnographic research methods I observed respondents' expressions (non-verbal) when asking questions. In the process of identifying feelings and discussing emotive events that took place in the soap opera, I made a conscious effort to help the respondents to feel comfortable. I was already known to the respondents, which aided the process of building trust. I endeavoured to be sensitive about introducing delicate or controversial topics in interviews. During

data analysis, I tested my interpretations with participants before sharing them publicly. I believe that these strategies will contribute to producing results that are credible and authentic.

4.8.5 Getting word-for-word statements from respondents

In qualitative research it is important to record accurate field notes, and to note discrepancies between different sets of observations. To achieve this I used multiple data-recording techniques that included coding field notes as well as using voice-recording devices. I also avoided jumping to premature conclusions by asking more probing questions when I was unsure of statements made by respondents.

4.8.6 Confidentiality

All notes and recordings will only be shared between my supervisor, the external examiners and myself. Notes and voice recordings have been kept in a safe and will be burnt a few years after research has been completed. All respondents were given pseudonyms and their real names will not be identified in the research.

This section has described how I used ethnographic research methods in my study design. I have explored the importance of ethnographic methods, such as taking field notes, recording interviews and conducting pilot interviews. I have also explained the importance of reliability and validity in research and indicated how a study has to have appropriate measures in order to validate its significance. The next section will critically break down the transcriptions made from the interviews, and actively relate them to relevant theory.

CHAPTER 5

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents an analysis of the results from the data collected in the focus group interviews as well as the follow-up focus groups interviews. The aim of this chapter is to identify how young isiZulu-speaking adults respond to the constructions of male characters in *Muvhango*. It presents key patterns with respect to both the content and the discursive structure of the informants' responses. The chapter has been broken down into two sections.

1. General responses to *Muvhango*, which will deal mainly with what audiences enjoy about *Muvhango* and why they watch.

2. Responses to male characters, focusing on what respondents said about the men in *Muvhango* and how they behave, and on interpretations of masculinities represented in *Muvhango.*

Discourse is a concept often used by social theorists to explore connections between the use of language and the exercise of power. Discourse is language used in representing a given social practice from a particular point of view (Fairclough 1995). In other words, discourse can refer to any activity that produces meaning. Discourses can arise from spoken or written work, visual images, film or video. These meanings serve the interest of that section of society within which the discourse originates, which works ideologically to naturalise those meanings into common sense (Fiske 1995). This chapter focuses particularly on discourses of masculinity and how isiZulu mother-tongue students interpret masculinity in response to mediated representations of men within the television soap opera genre, through ethnographically generated data. This chapter aims to provide an in-depth analysis of a specific group of Pietermaritzburg individuals' responses to a local media product.

While my questionnaire for the focus groups is included in Appendix 3, I have broken down some of the background questions to provide an overview of the viewers this study engaged with.

5.1 Background information

The background questions were asked to make the respondents more open to answering the focused questions and were essentially there to put the respondents at ease. Not all the respondents answered all the questions asked.

Table 9. Informants' background information

Focus Group	Respondent's Name	Age	Gender	Amount of TV watched	Favourite TV programme	Reasons for watching television
M	Magic Fingers	22	Male	5 hours a day	*Isidingo* & *Isibaya*	Storyline going somewhere
	Singer 2	20	Female	A lot (hours not specified)	Isibaya	Entertainment
	Singer 1	20	Female	10 hours a day	–	–
	Thandi	21	Female	–	*E-Entertainment*	Enjoyment
	Loud Chick	22	Female	–	*Generations, Scandal, Rhythm City*	"Hot" programmes
	Phil	23	Male	–	*Isidingo, Isibaya*	Entertainment & humour
AF	Ginger	23	Female	6:30am–2am	*Isibaya* & *Generations*	Very interesting
	Mands	20	Female	Very early to very late	*Isibaya*	Suspense
	Fire	22	Female	–	*Isibaya*	Suspense
AM	Ants	23	Male	10–20 % a month	Discovery World, SuperSport	Entertainment
	Mampintsha	22	Male	Very little TV	*Teen moms, Muvhango, Scandal, Isidingo*	Background cinematography, how everything is obvious in a creative way.
	Tsoro	22	Male	From 6am–10am	*Generations, Skeem Saam*	Characters never change, no one dies
	Strength	23	Male	12pm–10pm	*Generations*	Amazing storyline
	Lemone	20	Male	More than 5 hours daily	*Muvhango*	"It's hot", drama
	Ben	22	Male	5 hours a week	*So You Think You Can Dance*, soccer	Entertainment

M=Mixed group (male and female), AM=All male, AF= All female

5.1.1 Analysis of the mixed group: background questions

In the first focus group, which consisted of both men and women, three of the six respondents indicated how much television they watched, while the other three (two women and one man) made no comments on the particular questions of viewership times. What was interesting about this group is that the men seemed to enjoy watching soap opera, which, according to Brown (1994) and Brunsdon (1995), is a medium that caters for women. The overall answers to the question of why they enjoyed watching the specific programmes related to entertainment, suspense, and humour.

5.1.2 Analysis of the all-female group: background questions

Half of this group watched television a great deal, from the early hours of the morning through to very late in the evening. Whenever they got an opportunity they would watch television. Half of this group did not respond to this question. The programme most popular with the women respondents was *Isibaya*, which, according to the women, has lots of scenes that create suspense, which they enjoy and find interesting.

5.1.3 Analysis of the all-male group: background questions

In the male group, three out of the six men watched a lot of television while the other three indicated that they watched less television than most people. Two out of the six men enjoyed watching sport-related programmes and factual programmes, such as those on the Discovery Channel. Four of the six men enjoyed watching soap opera, which challenges certain research findings that soap opera caters to women instead of men. While most men watch programmes for pure entertainment, one of the respondents enjoyed watching specific soap operas because the characters never changed, and none of the characters die. This suggests that some men do enjoy storylines that have happy endings, and that not all men enjoy the thrill of death and horror in their television viewing. Another male respondent enjoyed watching soap opera since a lot of mistakes are made within the cinematography, which he picks up on, and this somehow amuses him.

5.1.4 Overall analysis of the whole group (mixed, all-female, all-male)

An equal number of men and women watched a considerable amount of television. A small percentage of the men in the all-male group stated that they watched very little television. In the overall study, these were the only people who acknowledged watching very little television. *Isibaya*, *Isidingo* and *Generations* were the most frequently watched programmes by both men and women.

5.2 Background questions

The background questions in Table 10 were a set of questions asked at the beginning of the interviews to establish some background information on the respondents in relation to their viewing experience.

5.2.1 Analysis of the mixed group: background questions

Only two people in the mixed group did not watch *Muvhango* with their whole family. The rest of the group watched *Muvhango* with the whole family, pointing to a pattern of family viewing. About 75 % of this group agreed that what made *Muvhango* unique was the different languages that were spoken in the programme. 20 % of the respondents in the group felt that what made *Muvhango* unique was that it was 100 % South African in that it showed the city lifestyle as well as the rural lifestyle of South Africans.

Respondents had different reasons for liking *Muvhango*: some liked what they called "the executive feel", others enjoyed the fights and the corruption, and some enjoyed the drama. Only two respondents had similar answers, saying that they enjoyed *Muvhango* because of the cultural diversity within the programme. Some responses revealed that watching the programme had become a regular habit; it was something that they regularly and religiously watched at 9 pm in the evening. Others watched because of the never-ending storylines, and the suspense and sense of excitement that they felt *Muvhango* created for them as viewers. 50 % of this group watched *Muvhango* on weekdays, while the other 50 % watched the repeats of *Muvhango* on weekends, with only one respondent watching on both weekends and weekdays.

Table 10. Background questions from viewing *Muvhango*

Focus group	Name	Male/ Female	When watched	Watched with whom	*Muvhango*: Uniqueness	Most liked aspect	Reasons for watching
M	Singer 1	F	Weekdays	Whole family	Diverse languages	Drama and corruption	Show is 'grabbing'
	Phil	M	Weekdays	Whole family		Dress codes	No missing out, very interesting, never-ending storyline
	Magic Fingers	M	Weekdays	Dad	Rural versus urban	Executive feel	Only drawn to *Muvhango* at that time
	Loud Chick	F	Weekends	—	100 % South African	Cultural diversity	Many new characters
	Singer 2	F	Weekends	Whole family	Diversity in languages	Cultural diversity	Family ritual
	Thandi	F	Weekends & weekdays	Whole family on weekdays	Languages	Fights	—
AF	Ginger	F	Weekdays	Fire & Mands	Very interesting narrative curiosity	Real world escape	Very traditional adult
	Fire	F	Weekdays	Mands & Ginger	—	—	—
	Mands	F	Weekdays	Ginger & Fire	Narrative curiosity	—	Best show in slot
	Phindie	F	Anytime, whenever	My sister	—	—	Traditional, rural and city life
AM	Ants	M	Weekdays	—	Dramatization of characters. Chief – lack of home control	Plots, character interactions, exaggerated tribal traits	Language factor
	Ben		Weekdays	Alone	More thought out, no overdone scenes	How the urban- rural lifestyles link	Dramatic sneak previews of next day's plot
	Strength	M	Saturdays	Whole family	Suspense, narrative curiosity	Edge of your seat plotting	The polygamy
	Lemone	—	Weekdays	Whole family	—	Royal house problems	The polygamy
	Mampintsha	M	Saturday	My siblings	Thorough research	Narrative curiosity	—
	Tsororo	M	Weekdays	My brother	—	—	—

5.2.2 Analysis of the all-female group: introductory questions

In the all-female focus group, all the women watched *Muvhango* during the week. Only one respondent said that she did not limit herself to weekdays or weekends, and that she watched *Muvhango* any time, all the time. The respondents had similar answers to why they thought *Muvhango* was unique; they said that it had an element of suspense, and that you always want to see what will happen next, which is something that was also mentioned by the male respondents in the mixed group. Only one respondent spoke of what she liked most about *Muvhango*. She said that it gave her an element of escape from the world which she did not get from other soap operas like *Generations* and *Isidingo*. For her, entering other people's reality through television created that sense of escape.

Table 10 shows that some respondents watched television for the sake of watching it, instead of watching television with intent. Additionally, one of the female respondents mentioned that there is no other programme that airs at that time that beats *Muvhango*, and that the show had become part of the rhythm of her particular household. Other respondents mentioned watching because of the elements of African tradition showcased in *Muvhango* that they felt other soap operas did not show.

5.2.3 Analysis of the all-male group: introductory questions

All the male respondents watched *Muvhango* on weekdays, with only one respondent watching *Muvhango* on the weekend. All but one of the respondents seemed to watch *Muvhango* with family — either the whole family, or siblings. Only one respondent watched *Muvhango* alone. The majority of the male respondents thought that *Muvhango* was unique because thorough research had been done. They felt that more thought had gone into the storylines, unlike other soap operas like *The Bold and the Beautiful*. A large proportion of the respondents enjoyed watching *Muvhango* because of the suspense that they said kept them on the edge of their seats.

The rest of the respondents had diverse answers: some enjoyed the plots, and how some of the characters were exaggerated, and they also enjoyed how the royal

household always had problems and issues arising. When the respondents were asked what kept them watching, the comments were different. Only two respondents maintained that they enjoyed the stories that came from the Chief's polygamous relationships. The rest of the respondents enjoyed the different languages and the sneak preview that is shown at the end of each episode.

5.2.4 Analysis of the background questions overall

Overall, each of the groups compared *Muvhango* to other soap operas; they seemed to believe that *Muvhango* was by far the most authentic representation of South Africa in terms of language, culture and diversity. Overall the respondents watched with family, pointing to the communal nature of most viewing experiences of *Muvhango* and the inclusion of the whole family, even though one respondent felt that it did not necessarily cater to children.

5.3 Focus groups: first round

Focus groups were used for this study as a means of eliciting several interpretations of male representations in *Muvhango*. The groups were split up into three different categories: a mixed group of men and women, a group of only men and a group of only women. The aim of this was to get diverse answers but also to determine whether the men and women had similar perceptions of masculinities. The area of interest in this study is learning more about young isiZulu-speaking adults' responses to the representations of masculinities presented in *Muvhango*.

Since the first focus group had men and women in it, it also became important to see how women on their own would discuss representations of men and if variations in the gender composition of the groups generated significantly different ways of discussing issues. The second focus group consisted of only women. A third focus group consisting of men only was formed to achieve uniformity.

5.3.1 Positive perceptions of male characters

5.3.1.1 All-male focus group

1.   Positive male characters

Only two male respondents commented on which male characters they liked to watch. Strength's choice was interesting. He liked to watch the character of Sizwe, who makes a lot of financial mistakes by spending too much money on the women he falls in love with, and who sometimes ends up with nowhere to stay. Strength enjoyed "Sizwe's dumbness". Ben, on the other hand, liked Mulimisi because he felt that the representations of Mulimisi were of a "very humble" man. One of the male respondents approved of the Chief standing his ground when it came to his sister and her boyfriend, by placing boundaries on what could happen when and where between them. He felt that it was good manly behaviour. Ants approved of James's behaviour towards women, seeing James as a man who listened to all women, and gave a sense of comfort to women, which he thought was upright and acceptable behaviour.

2.   Male role models

Mampintsha did not consider Busani to be a good role model because he was a humble man who was even able to give credit in front of other men to his stepmother, a woman that he neither liked nor had respect for. Strength, on the other hand, did not think of male role models in relation to emotions. He saw a male role model as someone who starts from nowhere and makes his way to the top. He thought that KK would make a brilliant role model for young men, because while no one believed in his dream to build a business empire, his character was represented as one that was determined enough eventually to make it a reality. Strength thought that Mr Mjalifa's character would provide a good role model for young men, since in one episode he was "teaching his son about how to treat women", which Strength saw as a good quality to model.

3.   Standout stories

Tsoro pointed out Busani's leadership qualities in particular, and noted how Busani leads his family in business as well as in the home.

5.3.1.2 All-female focus group

1. Positive male characters

Two of the four respondents in this group did not have a particular, favourite male character. The other two enjoyed watching specific characters. Ginger enjoyed watching the Chief because of the power he possesses to make decisions and rulings that cannot be overruled. Phindie enjoyed watching KK, finding his rudeness entertaining and humorous.

Three of the women identified three different successful men in the soap opera, and each provided different motivations for their choices. Ginger identified Mulalo on the grounds that he has changed from being greedy into a selfless person. She considered this to be an element of success, as she believed that a man who is in control of his emotions is successful. Phindie considered Busani to be successful, because unlike the other rich characters who have inherited their wealth from family, he has worked his way up the corporate ladder without having inherited anything. Fire admired the character of James, who started out as a waiter and has grown to be someone significant in the corporate world. Two respondents identified behaviours that they thought were good and acceptable to society from the representations of men in *Muvhango*. The first responded felt that Mulalo's change in character in realising his mistakes and assisting the Chief, instead of trying to steal the Chief's position, is an example of good behaviour. The second respondent enjoyed watching the Chief because even if his character makes many mistakes, he also loves his wives and children equally.

2. Male role models

Only one respondent spoke of male role models in *Muvhango*, seeing Ranthumeng as a positive role model for young men, because of his patience with his wife Thandaza, and in staying with her even though she was barren and had no ability to conceive or bear children.

3. Standout stories

This group could not identify any positive standout stories.

5.3.1.3 Mixed focus group

    1.   Positive male characters

Three respondents in the group liked Busani as they felt that his character is a gentleman because he wears a suit and exudes confidence in his home and workplace. One of the respondents in this group believed that Pheko's character is successful because he makes money, dresses well and has his own staff.

    2.   Male role models

Phil (M) thought that James was a good role model because of the way that he loved and looked after his daughter. Singer 2 (F) disagreed with Phil, saying that the character Busani made a better role model than James, but did not specify why.

    3.   Standout stories

Three members of this group were sarcastic about the Chief and called him "a talented man", since he "has issues unlike other male characters", and is always getting himself into trouble. Phil (M) called him "a proper antagonist". Singer 2 (F) said that "KK and his shiny suits" stood out for her.

5.3.2 Negative perceptions of male characters

5.3.2.1 All-male focus group

    1.   Question on *Muvhango* men struggling with their manhood

Two respondents believed that Mongezi, the doctor, dishonours women by obsessing over them and creating shrines to them. Other respondents, like Ants, felt that male characters like James struggled to be assertive, while male characters like the Chief struggled with being over-assertive. Ben felt that characters such as Spha need to "man up", since such characters were still moping over past girlfriends that were stolen from them by other men. Lemone felt that James was struggling because of his broken relationship with his daughter and his failed relationships with women.

2. Question on *Muvhango* men eliciting disapproval from respondents

Two respondents disapproved of KK, since KK had abused and used several women. One other respondent disapproved of how Ranthumeng had stolen his cousin's wife by having an affair with her and ruining the marriage.

3. Standout stories

Mongezi, the doctor, was mentioned by two respondents as a character that stood out. They felt that Mongezi was stupid to think that he could steal a royal wife belonging to the Chief. KK was identified by Ben as being relentless and ruthless in business and in his personal life. Ants felt that Busani reminded him of Shakespeare, and said that he could have stepped right out of a Shakespearean play, because of his plotting behind the scenes.

5.3.2.2 All-female focus group

1. Question on *Muvhango* men struggling with their manhood

Only two male characters were disapproved of by the women in this focus group. One of them felt that the character of Sizwe was struggling with his manhood, because of his issues with women. This respondent felt that this struggle had led to Sizwe's debt problem, since he had spent all his money trying to impress a woman and to make her love him. The second respondent felt that the Chief was struggling with his manhood, because he could never make a decision and stick to it; she felt that the Chief's indecisiveness made him somewhat less of a man.

2. Question on *Muvhango* men eliciting disapproval from respondents

Three different respondents disapproved of three different male characters in *Muvhango*. Ginger disapproved of Njabulo, because he has raped a female character. Mands disliked Dr Zwane and called him "insane", because he has kidnapped and sexually assaulted many women, including the Chief's wife. Phindie disapproved of

Spha, because he compares himself to other men instead of embracing who he is as a man.

> 3.   Standout stories

Two respondents felt that the one thing that stood out for them about the representations of men in *Muvhango* was the power factor. They felt that the men were hungry for power and that "without power you are nothing" (Mands).

5.3.2.3 Mixed focus group

> 1.   Question on *Muvhango* men struggling with their manhood

Four members of the mixed group had several reasons for identifying Mulalo as a character who is struggling with his manhood, including because he is controlled by a woman who does not love him and because his ideas or suggestions are easily dismissed by the other characters. James was also mentioned by the group, but no reasons for why he was a struggling character were expressed.

> 2.   Question on *Muvhango* men eliciting disapproval from respondents

Two respondents in this group disapproved of the Chief having several wives, especially since the Chief keeps falling in love with other women, including the home helper. Phil (M) called the Chief an "uncentred guy" because he has no clear direction for where he is going in life. Another respondent disapproved of how the character of Albert shouts violently at his wife.

> 3.   Standout stories

This group did not identify any negative standout stories.

5.3.3 Perceptions of links between issues related to masculinity represented in Muvhango and issues facing Black South African men

5.3.3.1 All-male focus group

Ants felt that a lot of the representations of the men in *Muvhango* depicted realistic elements of the lives of Black South African men in reality. He identified the character of James, and how he shows signs of emasculation, because he is afraid of appearing to be unkind or abusive to women. Ants felt that Black men in South Africa go through similar situations where they are afraid of being assertive towards women, as women could read it as abusive. Ants felt that the Chief struggles to exert his authority effectively, because he confuses authority with aggression and forces respect from the other characters. This, according to Ants, is a typical scenario in the African home, where men are aggressive for fear of feeling emasculated. Ants also noticed that the male characters were involved in a lot of shady, illegal business transactions, which he felt expressed the current state of South Africa.

Strength also presented an interesting perspective on the representations of male characters in *Muvhango* in relation to society. He spoke of KK, and how KK's abusive behaviour towards Meme, a female character, was related to his past, in that KK's father was not there for him as a young boy. Strength related this to how men in society are influenced by their histories of absent fathers and abuse.

5.3.3.2 All-female focus group

The all-female group offered some interesting perceptions on issues portrayed in *Muvhango* that are faced by Black South African men. One of the women agreed that *Muvhango* does tell the stories of Black men in South Africa, although she did not have a specific example. Ginger spoke of how James has sex with Meiki, a female character, which is a mistake and results in an unplanned pregnancy. Ginger explained that this reflects the real-life behaviour of many Black South African men who have impulsive sexual intercourse with women and unintentionally impregnate them. Mands spoke of how rich kids typically get themselves into trouble, and how their parents always manage to get them out of trouble. In *Muvhango* this South African reality is played out through the character of Vusi, who gets drunk and nearly kills a family. Fire identified Sizwe as a typical Black man who is in love with a woman and would do anything to make this woman love him. She explained that South Africa has "Sizwes, men who completely bankrupt themselves in order to win the heart of a woman who does not necessarily feel the same way about him."

5.3.3.3 Mixed focus group

One respondent in this group commented on how polygamy is not only practised on television, but is also practised in real life by South Africa's very own President, as well as by other Black men. This same respondent, when probed further about what she felt about polygamy, said that she was against it, because she felt that it is another device that men use to overpower women, which points to issues of masculinity and power in South Africa. Magic Fingers (M) referred to a scene where a male character, Njabulo, rapes a female character, Thuli. He linked this to South Africa's current situation where the rape statistics are continuously rising and how rape continues to be a very serious issue in South Africa.

5.3.4 Characters possibly to be deleted or inserted into Muvhango

5.3.4.1 All-male focus group

Two male respondents felt that *Muvhango* lacked a ladies' man character, a man who has many women in his life and who causes havoc with women in the soap opera. One of the male respondents felt that the soap opera was missing a "Judas" character who would betray the very people he loves.

5.3.4.2 All-female focus group

It was interesting that the characters that the female respondents felt should be added were male characters that linked with the gratification of women. Ginger said she would bring Duma back from the dead, because his character made Agnes happy. She also said that she would create another wife for the Chief. Two out of the four group members felt that Gizara's character ought to be removed from the programme, since he "is useless" (Phindie). One of the other respondents felt that Vhangani's character played no significant role in any of the storylines and like Gizara should be removed from the programme. This perhaps implies that viewers accept the representations of masculinities in *Muvhango*, and that they do not question who is included or excluded from these representations in terms of a wide spectrum of possible masculinities.

5.3.4.3 Mixed focus group

When the mixed group was asked which characters should be added to the programme, only one respondent answered. She said that she would give the Chief another wife. This is because the Chief's wives always bring drama to the programme, and more wives would add more drama. Only two respondents spoke of which characters they thought should be removed from *Muvhango*. The first respondent felt that Gizara is a useless character who adds no value to the programme, and therefore ought to be removed. She also felt that Mulimisi the sangoma "is not one hundred percent sane", and felt he should be removed. The second respondent felt that a female character, Agnes, should be removed because she always had relationship problems with the male characters, which he did not like to see because it irritated him. He also felt that Sizwe needed to be removed because of his problems with women.

5.3.5 Key trends and dominant perceptions of each group

5.3.5.1 All-male focus group

The stories shared by the male respondents regarding the representations of men in *Muvhango* were all related to women. Mongezi was perceived negatively for dishonouring women, James for his lack of assertiveness over his daughter, KK for abusing Meme and Tshineo, and Ranthumeng for stealing his cousin's wife. The respondents in the all-male focus group seemed to position male characters negatively if they perceived them to be abusive to women characters.

- Dominant perceptions of male characters

The Chief was seen by this group as having issues with his masculinity which needed attention, because of his aggression. This group perceived KK as a male character who had an abusive past that drove him to be ruthless and abusive himself. This group of men saw James as a male character who was attentive to women, but nevertheless failed in his own relationships with women in his life.

5.3.5.2 All-female focus group

While I had initially thought that the women would provide similar responses and perhaps endorse each other's responses, they in fact presented diverse responses for each of the questions. While Ginger liked the Chief for his dominance and power over men and women, Phindie thought that he makes many mistakes. She said: "Even if Ginger will not agree with me, since she likes the Chief..." and she articulated her thoughts on the Chief's indecisiveness and his weaknesses. This group also reinforced the wish expressed by the mixed focus group to "give the Chief another wife", which suggests that polygamy may not be such a taboo topic or practice for Christian females.

- Dominant perceptions of male characters

This group had diverse perceptions of the Chief: while some felt that he was a good father and husband, others thought that he still struggled with his masculinity, mainly because of his indecisiveness. Characters like James and Busani were praised by this group for showing growth and the ability to elevate themselves without resorting to corruption or relying on an inheritance. Furthermore, while the mixed focus group disapproved of Mulalo, the majority of this all-female group praised him for his desire and efforts to create change in his life as a character.

5.3.4.3 Mixed focus group

Men and women in the mixed focus group seemed to like and approve of the same characters, and to dislike and disapprove of similar characters, but their reasons given for these responses were different. For example, Thandi (F) liked Busani because he is a gentleman, while Magic Fingers (M) liked Busani because he is confident and because he wears a suit, not because he is a gentleman. Magic Fingers (M) disapproved of Mulalo because he thought that Mulalo does not have ideas of his own, and always gets ideas from other people. Loud Chick (F) disapproved of Mulalo because he is in love with a woman who does not like him. Loud Chick (F) did not like the idea of the Chief having so many wives, but Phil (M) on the other hand did not like how the Chief is constantly falling in love with many other women over and above the women that he is currently married to. So while the same characters and names were mentioned in the group for

similar topics, the reasons and explanations given from the male and female respondents were diverse.

- Dominant perceptions of male characters

The Chief, according to the mixed group, is an antagonist, because he creates as well as faces issues, unlike all the other male characters in *Muvhango*. This group did not agree with how the Chief behaved. Yet in the same group, a female respondent wanted the Chief to be given another wife. The group also disapproved of Mulalo, stating that his behaviour showed indecisiveness and weakness. This group liked James and Busani for their sense of responsibility.

5.4 Follow-up interviews

This study aimed to explore the way respondents in focus groups of different gender configurations talk about representations of masculinity in *Muvhango*. The different gender composition of the groups caused certain difficulties because the number of respondents in some groups was small, and potential members sometimes cancelled at the last minute. I also investigated only one group of each type and in addition struggled to get answers from each respondent on every question, which resulted in limited data to work with.

Interviewing the men proved to be an informative step, since the male respondents were emotional viewers of *Muvhango* and they contributed rich data. Overall, I felt that for certain questions I should have probed further and this led to me undertaking further interviews that attempted to explore the questions in greater depth.

These new interviews conducted with follow-up focus groups were not as structured as the previous interviews. There was more probing on certain topics, such as polygamy, humility in men and specific standout stories, in order to get more detailed and more explicit explanations from the respondents.

The first group that was interviewed for the second round was the all-female group. Table 11 explains their particulars.

Table 11. All-female focus group follow-up interview

Pseudonym	Area of Study	Gender	Age
Mands (Initially in Group 2)	Drama	Female	24
Ginger (Initially in Group 2)	Law	Female	25
Phindie (Initially in Group 2	Drama	Female	20

The second group that was interviewed included both men and women, some of whom were in previous groups and others who were being interviewed for the first time. Table 12 explains their particulars.

Table 12. Mixed focus group follow-up interview

Pseudonym	Area of Study	Gender	Age
Strength (Initially Group 3)	Drama	Male	24
John (New participant)	Microbiology	Male	24
Nonto (New participant)	Politics	Female	22
Loud Chick (Initially Group 1)	Dietetics	Female	23
Mampintsha (Initially Group 3)	Drama	Male	22

5.4.1 Positive perceptions of male characters

5.4.1.1 All-female focus group

1. Positive male characters

When the group was asked what they thought about Mulimisi, especially concerning his character and humility, two out of three of the women felt that Mulimisi "is not humble" and that they did not see in which way he was humble. One of the respondents felt that "he is very humble" and she felt that it was his connection with his "ancestral side of things" that "keeps him humble" (Ginger). Mulimisi seemed to be the one man of whom the women approved.

2. Manly attributes

Two of the women felt that manly attributes were derived from several aspects such as "looks" (Phindie) and "personality" (Ginger). They felt that Albert's character came close to these manly attributes. Ginger said:

> Albert, you know he wasn't perfect, he had his things, ja, there's things I didn't like about him but, he told you what he thought of you, he was straight with you, whether you were a subordinate or whether you were a family member he told you that what you were doing, I don't like what you are doing, he doesn't like it, he told you if you were, if you were being good, he wasn't afraid to voice his opinions of people, um and I think the whole, looking at, the whole, his life, his part in *Muvhango* how he started out a single man and we found out later that he actually had a child with this woman and he stepped up and he married her and they became a family and then we knew him as "Albert, the family man".

Two of the women (Phindie & Ginger) agreed that there is no perfect man in that

> There's bits and pieces that you want to take and put together to create sort of like "the perfect man", like you would take Azwindini's, um, the power, the power I like. There is something about James, I don't like him so I can't pinpoint what it is, but there is something very manly about him, very, very nice about him, so you take that and take a whole lot of Albert.- Ginger

3. Most liked/enjoyed characters

All three of the respondents in this group enjoyed watching Mushasha because "he is funny; remember the time that he lost his money?" (Phindie).

Ginger also appreciated the Chief because of his authority over everyone at Thathe. She said: "I love it. I love a man that can make decisions and doesn't have to consult, he can consult if he has to but the final decision is his, I always appreciate that. The boss!"

5.4.1.2 Mixed focus group

1. Positive male characters

The character of Albert was admired greatly by two members of this group. Strength (M) felt that the character of Albert was someone who "tried" to handle situations perfectly and fought for what was right. Loud Chick (F) also agreed with Strength (M), saying that "even though Albert is not perfect, he tries". Mampintsha (M) also had similar views; he thought that Albert was smart because his character was able to fuse both the "rural and urban side of things".

2. Most enjoyed/like characters

Mampintsha (M) also enjoyed watching a new character, simply because this character displayed a township style in how he dressed and spoke. Mampintsha could relate to this character because he too comes from the township: "It's his personality, I just live his 'township factor' and that he is real. He doesn't fake; he asked the judge the other day, his way of answering you could see that he doesn't even know. He's ghetto you know? So Bobo, I'll go for Bobo."

5.4.2 Negative perceptions of male characters

5.4.2.1 All-female focus group

    1.   Rural vs urban

One of the women believed that the Chief was struggling to cope with the differences between the rural area and the city. She said:

> I think the Chief is stuck in between two worlds, not in the sense of like the rural and the city. But in terms of, again culture, the way things are done in the modern world and the way things are done in the way back when. Um, the decisions he has to make, I would believe it's probably difficult for him when he has to make tough decisions because he has to consider things that were done back then and also take into consideration the fact that those things are no longer done any more.

Mands agreed with Ginger's observation of the Chief, and observed that "he is trying to satisfy the uncles but also at the same time he is trying to do something of his own and like be sensitive and try to understand the situation, in which it is hard."

    2.   Standout stories

The story of the widow and how the men in *Muvhango* wanted to take away her inheritance made the women viewers upset. They resented Borosi's character in particular because he was more forceful than the rest when it came to this widow's inheritance. Ginger depicted him as behaving like a talkative woman:

> I would go buy a doek and give him a dress and I would tell him to go get a transfer, the gender change thing, ja, and should change and become a woman because he so desires to become a woman, he talks too much, number one, he talks too much and men shouldn't talk too much, you shouldn't be in women business really and number two, there's this thing he did when he was telling the Chief about Hangwani, about the guy who is friends with Hangwani, you know when you have known something about someone and you are just dying to let

everybody know that this kind of person, when you have caught them in the act, that kind of thing.

Mands felt the same way: "Leave Hangwani alone with her money and her shares and all of that, just leave it alone — you have your own shares — you have actually the whole company ... what more does he want?"

5.4.2.2 Mixed focus group

1.   Polygamy

The character of the Chief in *Muvhango* practises polygamy in his household, expressing traditional African marital norms. Some of the respondents, like John (M), were against polygamy and had strong feelings about it, such as that "it was violating women's rights". Other respondents, like Nonto (F), went on to say that "a person may seem happy in a polygamous relationship but it does not change the fact that it is abuse." Loud Chick (F) expressed similar feelings: "I feel it is an abuse of power for men, because women could never do that because they would either get stoned or killed."

2.   Struggling male characters

Struggling male characters were associated with a lack of care in establishing relationships with one's loved ones. Loud Chick (F) felt as if the character of Ndalamo was failing as a man because he "failed to protect his family... and all he wanted was the inheritance." Strength (M) said that KK is failing as a man because of "his failed relationships" with his father and his girlfriend and in business too. John (M) said that Tumelo was struggling with his manhood because he was not supportive of his brother who had a dying wife and that Tumelo was "after power". This once again reinforces the fact that the group did not like the male characters who made self-centred choices in the soap opera.

3.   Standout stories

The standout story for this group was the story of the widow and her inheritance. This group agreed on various points and disagreed on others. Two men and two women agreed that "Hangwani should not be forced to marry" a man that she does not love.

Mampintsha (M) went on to say that he would not allow this in his life, he said "I don't want my brother to marry my wife" after his death. Others in the group like Strength (M) felt that the forced marriage was a preservation of culture.

5.5 Conclusions

5.5.1 Background questions

The background questions in this study provided information on each of the respondents, on what their favourite television programmes were, why they watched these programmes, and who they watched them with. This information showed that the male respondents enjoyed soap opera, in contradiction with certain studies that maintain that soap opera is predominantly a women's genre (Brown 1994; Brunsdon 1995). The participants generally watched television for entertainment.

The viewers particularly enjoyed *Muvhango* because of the shifts between the rural and urban contexts, and because of the African practices of the programme. Since it is a Tshivenda programme, the show portrays a lot of cultural issues that the viewers find very interesting. A substantial number of the participants seemed to watch *Muvhango* communally with family members, and many of them stated "that is what is watched at 9 pm" every night in their homes. It remains unclear whether collective watching of *Muvhango* is a product of active choice or of circumstance, since it could very well be a cultural norm of those homes to view the programme daily. This is something worth exploring in the future.

5.5.2 Positive perceptions of male characters

The all-male, all-female, and mixed groups identified hegemonic masculine behaviours in the different male characters of *Muvhango*. The specific areas and examples were different in each group. The men by and large highlighted more conventionally hegemonic masculine behaviours of various types exhibited by the male characters in relation to women, from the Chief's patriarchal assertiveness in controlling his female relatives' behaviour, to James's protectiveness in caring for and comforting women.

Characters like Sizwe received less approval from the respondents across the different groups because of his lack of skill in handling women and his finances, which were affected directly by women.

The all-female group focused on issues of power and justice in both the public and personal spheres in relation to the Chief as well as to the character of Busani. They enjoyed how the character of the Chief could make decisions that could not be changed, and how Busani made his way to the top of the corporate ladder without having inherited such a position. The Chief, in particular, was seen as a man who loved his family members, which was appreciated by the respondents. Many of the respondents approved of the success of the male characters in *Muvhango* where this was achieved through the characters' own efforts and internal growth, rather than with inherited status and wealth. Men like Mulalo, who were shown to have grown from initially being selfish to later acting selflessly, were identified as exhibiting good behaviour. In addition, men who had increasing self-control over situations were seen to be good.

The mixed group responded positively to those male characters who were in control of their lives, and had therefore attained wealth and a successful social position, reflected in a stylish manner of dress. A large number of the mixed group approved greatly of the character of Busani, because he wears suits. They loved his gentle masculine behaviour and how he maintains relationships with his staff. Some members liked Pheko, because he is ambitious, makes lots of money, wears suits and maintains a sense of dominance in the workplace. Other members did not value dominance based on money and wealth, but instead appreciated characters like James, who they felt was a good father to his daughter.

5.5.3 Negative perceptions of male characters

Overall, each of the groups highlighted that the negative behavioural patterns of these men were either influenced by women, or that women were the cause or the victims of such behaviour. The all-male group mentioned Mongezi and how he dishonoured women by treating them violently and abusing them sexually, and they emphasised how sternly they disapproved of such behaviour. They also disapproved of KK for his violence against women and felt that the character of the Chief displayed an over-

assertiveness that often resulted in violence. They also had a negative perception of Sizwe because of his financial and romantic problems with women.

Unlike the all-male group, the all-female group felt that the Chief lacked assertiveness and was depicted as an indecisive individual. The all-female group also felt that the behaviour of Dr Zwane and Njabulo, the lawyer who dispensed sexual assault and violence towards women, was inexcusable and unacceptable. This group also felt that Sizwe had many issues with women which his character needed to resolve. The all-female group were of the opinion that the male characters in *Muvhango* were hungry for power and that if these characters did not have power "they were nothing".

While the all-male group and all-female group picked up on similar responses, the mixed group had completely different responses. This group spoke about the character of Mulalo and how he is constantly controlled by the women in his life. This group also disapproved of Albert's behaviour on occasion towards his wife, when he was snappy and harsh. In relation to the Chief, whose over-assertiveness and lack of decisiveness was highlighted by the all-male and all-female groups, the mixed group only seemed to disapprove of how the Chief constantly falls for other women.

This chapter has presented the positive and negative perceptions of *Muvhango's* male characters mentioned by each group of respondents. This chapter's findings point to several key themes within the data, such as male characters struggling with their masculinity, how a successful man is defined in the respondents' perceptions of the soap opera, and how the experiences of the male characters in *Muvhango* reflect certain real-life experiences of Black South African men. These themes will be elaborated on Chapter 6, in light of the theoretical framework of multiple masculinities.

CHAPTER 6

THEMATIC AND THEORETICAL ACCOUNT OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter will reflect on the nature of the answers this study has provided to the questions posed in Chapter 1. It will look at the themes that emerged in the previous chapter and elaborate on them in light of existing theory and research. The extent to which the three objectives of this study have been achieved will also be considered.

6.1 Outstanding features of *Muvhango*

There are a few outstanding features that the respondents believed make *Muvhango* unique. The respondents' intense emotional connection to the soap opera is explored, as well as the elements of fantasy and realism that they identified. The characters' manner of dress is also a significant feature in the respondents' connection to the show, and is also discussed in this section.

6.1.1 Emotional connection

Soap opera specifically plays into the emotions of its viewers (Corner & Harvey 1996), and this was clearly evident in the interview process. Respondents became very angry and upset about how certain storylines have played out on the soap opera. Some respondents even said that they would hit *Muvhango's* actors if they saw them in real life, even though they acknowledged the fact that it is just a show. This implies a very strong emotional immersion on the part of the respondents in the fictional world and the fictional characters constructed by the narrative of *Muvhango*, and a strong sense of emotional identification with this narrative, if they cannot emotionally distinguish the actor from the character. This resonates with the experience of a male *Muvhango* actor's negative treatment from members of the public because of how his *Muvhango* character abused women. Soap opera is known for playing to its viewers' very strong emotions (Corner & Harvey 1996).

Viewers watched *Muvhango* mainly because they saw it as depicting aspects of real life in both urban and rural South African contexts. The respondents found this interesting because they are usually shown only one of these contexts. Loud Chick (F) enjoyed "the diversity of cultures", while Magic Fingers (M) liked to watch "the whole Venda and Joburg kind of dynamic, it's a lot of things happening there like weddings and funerals and you get to see the way that different cultures do different things".

Respondents like Singer 1 (F) appreciated the fact that *Muvhango* depicts more traditional aspects of South African culture: "It's almost hundred percent South African compared to *Isidingo* and *Generations*". *Isidingo* and *Generations,* for example, show very little of traditional African life, focusing on businesses in the city and associated relationships. The female respondents all agreed that *Muvhango* is "very traditional" and that its traditional nature has a specific audience which "doesn't necessarily cater for little children" (Ginger F). That is, the female respondents saw *Muvhango* as more adult than soap operas like *Isidingo* and *Generations*.

It could be said that *Muvhango* presents the complexities of the co-existence of premodern and modern societies. The Chief, in particular, is shown dealing simultaneously with the residues of premodern social practices and the impacts of modernity. Ginger (F) picked up on some of these insights:

> I think the Chief is stuck in-between two worlds, not in the sense of like the rural and the city. But in terms of, again culture, the way things are done in the modern world and the way things are done in the way back when. Um, the decisions he has to make I would believe it's probably difficult for him when he has to make tough decisions because he has to consider things that were done back then and also take into consideration the fact that those things are no longer done anymore.

Ginger (F) was referring to how the Chief had to make a decision about forcing his uncle's widowed wife to marry another man in order to preserve traditional culture. The traditional social practices of Venda, which are still upheld, dictate that a widow be forced to marry her brother-in-law should her husband pass away. Certain modern values suggest that other aspects should be privileged, such as the law and constitutional human rights pertaining to women's rights to determine their life course,

including the right to say "no". In this storyline the widow did not want to marry her brother-in-law and stood her ground, although her fate lay in the hands of the Chief, a man who was strongly socialised to maintain traditional values instead of promoting modernised values. The community members of Venda, the Chief's trusted sangoma, and the Chief's advisors are shown to continuously remind him of traditional practices and the need to uphold them. In the end, the Chief had to face the tricky situation of balancing traditional and contemporary values, and chose contemporary values over traditional laws. In other words "masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting" (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 836). In this particular instance the Chief had to configure his decisions with regards to the widow's human rights instead of listening to his advisors, who follow hegemonic patriarchal traditionalist ways. The Chief was expected to follow these traditionalist masculinities as a person of authority, though he chose to differ according to the particular setting he was in, baring the discourse of gender inequality for the widow.

Respondents reported watching *Muvhango* for many additional reasons, including drama and intrigue. If specific actors did not add to the drama and intrigue of the storylines, they were considered to be a waste of airtime. This notion is discussed further later in this chapter.

6.1.2 Fantasising and projecting

Part of the experience of viewing soap opera for some viewers is that it allows viewers to enter into a fantasy realm where they can experience vicariously the situations of the characters they see, and emotionally connect to them. There were respondents who enjoyed many elements of the male characters, even if the storyline was not about their favourite character. They commented on how they liked to make fun of the silly quirks of certain characters, for instance the way that the Chief behaves and KK's shiny suits. Ginger (F) commented on "the stupid things that he does — like when he picks up the phone [she performed the actions]". Magic Fingers (M) focused on KK's humorous role: "He makes me laugh, like the weird things like when he goes 'boom' yho." Singer 2 (F) also commented on elements of fantasy that KK's character brings to the soap opera:

"Imagine having a wardrobe of shiny suits." Singer 2 (F) here is projecting herself into materialist discourses of success, as implied by her wishful tone about being someone who has a wardrobe of expensive suits.

Muvhango also allows the viewers to fantasise about elements of life that they would love to experience, even though the experiences may be unrealistic or scary. For example, Ginger (F) commented:

> It's a nice twist, like when Albert died, it was nice to watch, the whole him disappearing ("him" being the sangoma, Mulimisi, declaring the death of Albert), him acting up, him showing up at places he wasn't actually at, I think it was interesting to see, it was creepy, but it was very interesting. It made me feel like, I wish that's how it happened, you know in real life, I'd love for when I die and I'm not home, I'd like for someone to be able to go home and say "Ginger is in trouble somewhere" or "Ginger has just passed away somewhere", I think it's nice.

Ginger (F) has a strong sense that the phenomenon depicted is not part of a modernist, rationalist world view. This element of the magical is often included in soap opera because some viewers believe that such phenomena do in fact happen in reality. Although watching soap operas can be compared to experiencing a fantasy that one would like to be true, it does permit people to make links between the imaginary world of the show and their real-world experiences, and enables viewers to draw moral conclusions and to formulate opinions relating to the real world (Spence 1995).

In essence, "the soap world thrives on a lack of reality. What we see, however, seems to be closer to our 'real world' than we might imagine, [and] the content of the soap opera world approaches our 'real' world also" (Tager 2002: 41). Tager further argues that "stories are almost exclusively confined to a consideration of human problems" (Tager 2002: 41). This is because reality has been condensed into dramatic episodes which are emphasised with little regard for the usual temporal and spatial limits. One of the characteristics of media is that dramatisation and condensation have to occur. Audiences relate "not so much to their physical appearance as to their emotional experiences, situations in which we may have found ourselves or people we know", who suffer the trials and tribulations of love and life, and moments of failure, which is what draws us to them and allows us to identify with them (Tager 2002: 42).

The regularity with which soap opera viewers engage with these characters makes them view the characters as a part of their lives. Tager comments that "in a sense the characters become like friends or acquaintances in our lives" (Tager 2002: 42), and calls this "commitment" to a soap opera. This deep identification is often because of the viewers' past experiences with similar characters in their own lives. Viewers often judge the behaviour of characters on the basis of their own notions of family dynamics, and there are often stereotypes involved (Tager 2002). Some viewers go so far as to "recognize aspects of a character as similar to a significant person in their own lives; this is called the concept of 'parasocial' relationships" (Tager 2002: 90–94). In terms of links to real life, the respondents identified a range of issues in relation to male behaviour, including the masculine capacity/incapacity to share feelings, male complexities, aggression and authority, infidelity, stealing women, pleasing women, rape, unplanned or illegitimate pregnancy, and polygamy.

These respondents found numerous links between the events and characters portrayed in *Muvhango*, and their own lived experiences. Ginger (F) thought that Black South African men could "relate to" many of the experiences that the male characters portrayed in *Muvhango*. She also commented on how Black South African men act similarly to the men in *Muvhango.* This can be seen, for example, in men shown pleasing women to get their attention, "like Sizwe and Nonny, and how men cheat on their wives like Thandaza and Ranthumeng, and men who go through a crisis, and while in crisis other men 'come along to steal his girlfriend'". These behavioural patterns of men "are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting" (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 836).

Ginger (F) also mentioned an interesting element of reality portrayed in *Muvhango*. A strange doctor entered the storyline, who pretended to be a good, trustworthy man who was there to do good, but he actually planned to steal the Chief's wife and chieftaincy. Ginger (F) said that everyone in life is like that — they enter your life with good intentions and then change their behaviour later, when you trust them. She said:

> I think, unless you are family, because you are just there, but I think everyone that comes into your life that you meet, it's not so much that they come into your

life and pretends to be this innocent person it's because you don't know them. And as you get to know them you find out who they really are.

Ginger (F) is expressing the shift that occurs from the initial surface stage of getting to know people to an in-depth understanding of them. She is interpreting the storyline in an individualistic manner, in that she is taking what is being presented to her on television and reworking it personally for herself. She does not only respond simply to the narrative of the character but instead she metaphorically communicates illusion versus reality. In other words, she is expressing the inevitable gaps that lie between our inner and outer selves, and how people choose which aspects of their selves that they wish to portray to certain people. She is suggesting that there is an invisible mask worn by each person, and that they have the power to show you what they want you to see about them.

Ants (M) made a valid point about how sometimes men confuse authority with aggression:

> This whole thing of boys will be boys you know. Let the boys run around, get dirty, that, sort of thing whereas for him it gotten to aggression as opposed to authority…. That where that's a serious issue that South African men battle with where instead of responding with authority to situations they will respond with aggression…. That's what they battle with.

Ants (M) here is referring to hegemonic masculinity which focuses on the way that men may behave aggressively and exhibit traits that construct and reinforce patriarchy. Ants (M) starts by saying that "Boys will be boys", which is a phrase that is used to express mischievous behaviour by men, that should not cause surprise when it occurs. This phrase is linked to hegemonic masculinity. Ants (M) contrasts male aggression with male authority here, his argument being that aggressive masculinity is not acceptable but authoritative masculinity is acceptable. This could be because Ants's (M) decisive construction is through Christian discourses, as the Christian Bible states that men should be the head of their homes, promoting the view that men ought to take authority over their homes, but not be abusive to their wives and others. Men in the context that Ants (M) is speaking of experience social pressures to exhibit a less extreme form of hegemonic masculinity. Thus men such as Ants can be seen as constructing their

identities through complying with aspects of socially prescribed hegemonic masculine ideals (Connell 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005) as well as renegotiating meanings in the circumstances of existing power relations (Lindsay & Miescher 2003)

Respondents saw several connections between the content of *Muvhango* and aspects of their lives, as well as those of public figures. Loud Girl (F) said, "Our very own President Zuma has several wives in reality." Another interesting aspect shared by Loud Girl (F) was that men in reality don't like sharing their feelings, while men in soap opera do share their real feelings. She said: "It's interesting to see men who share their feelings, because in reality men don't share their feelings". This is an example of what Brown (1994) speaks of when she says that soap opera validates women, in that what they do not experience in their daily realities they experience vicariously in soap opera. Magic Fingers (M) tapped into the issue of violence against women that is so prevalent in South Africa in speaking about a situation in which a female character in *Muvhango* was raped by a male character, and concluded how it made him uncomfortable to watch because sex should be consensual, both partners should be willing and it should not be forced on anyone. He did not like the fact that "rape in our country is a serious issue". Magic Fingers (M) is discursively positioning himself in relation to human rights discourses, and gender equality in sexual reactions. For Magic Fingers (M) masculinity is not crudely hegemonic, and what he is implying is that men do not have the right to have their way sexually with women and no matter how hegemonically they construct their masculinity.

Respondents thus highlighted issues of men who abuse women, irresponsible men, polygamous men, and men who strive to reach the standards of women. On the issues of polygamy and inheritance, some informants feel that it is a form of abuse, and discursively position themselves in relation to women's rights, and how women have the right to a marriage with one man without being subjected to other wives. The issues that have been described involve taking on and negotiating hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). These issues move beyond the fantasy elements of soap opera, linking the fictional world to reality*.*

It is clear that respondents watched the soap opera for different reasons. While some watched it for the opportunity to fantasise and to escape the real world, others watched

it because of its diversity, and some because of the entertainment value of the humorous quirks of certain characters. Some respondents watched it because it represents the stories of South African culture.

6.1.3 Dress code of men

The second feature that the viewers of *Muvhango* recognised was the way that the men dressed. Men in soap opera and television wear clothing chosen to express the character that they play. *Muvhango* is no different, and the male characters' wardrobes represent fairly typical representations of Black South African men. As in the real-world experiences of Black South African men, clothing helps to signal and construct the different social domains of Western culture, the business world and traditional Venda society. Mulimisi, the sangoma, wears traditional clothes; the Chief wears formal suits for meetings and fancy formal traditional wear on a daily basis; and Mulalo, the mayor, and all the other men in business, wear formal suits. Only the student characters dress informally, but highly fashionably. In essence, gender is a performance (Butler 1990), and it is embedded in how the men act, talk and dress.

While all the businessmen wear Westernised business suits whenever they are working, some dress traditionally in their Venda households. Respondents also spoke about how unrealistic KK's suits were and how certain dress codes can automatically assign a man into a category of sexuality, such as with James's dress code. Respondents saw his tight shirts as feminine and automatically labelled James a metrosexual man. This implies that informants discursively position themselves as stereotyping men who dress in a certain way. Informants discursively negatively categorise the men who embrace self-beautification with femininity (Viljoen 2008). In the instance of James they spoke of him as one who appears to be metrosexual. The male students in particular aligned James' style of non-hegemonic dressing with femininity. This may be because of Christian discourses that locate authority within men, which James' style of dress did not support. Strength (M) in particular spoke of how most men do not wear "tight shirts" and laughed while making comments about James's tight shirts. The students seemed to have sets of social practices associated with certain gender roles, which the character of James could did not fit into. The respondents also spoke about how KK wore shiny suits

because of his insecurities. With KK, the students did not feel as if his dress code was associated with being non-hegemonic, but rather that he dressed according to his emotional needs. KK's character can be described as constructed with hegemonically masculine traits. KK's character was seen to be violent and dominant, yet his dress code revealed weakness, which implies that hegemonic masculinity can be negotiated according to certain contexts (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). This will be discussed further in Section 6.3, which deals with the overall perceptions of male characters.

6.2 Masculinity dynamics in *Muvhango*

6.2.1 Women who control masculinity

While this study's focus is on masculinity, it cannot be ignored that *Muvhango* has some very powerful women. Constructions of masculinity have an innate underlying connection to femininity — that is, if there was no femininity it would be very difficult to have a concept of masculinity. Thus, focusing on what respondents say about female characters may implicitly reveal their views on constructions of masculinity. Women on television were usually depicted as being subordinate to men, and men have been depicted as powerful in the home environment (Modleski 1982). However, over the years women have been shown more often as powerful people, and at times even more powerful than the male characters. This was discussed in Chapter 2, in relation to Tager's study of *The Bold and the Beautiful* and how in that specific soap opera the women are powerful key players.

The respondents suggested that while *Muvhango* does show men as being powerful in the household and on the business front, there are women in the soap opera who are more powerful than the men, and while there are women who appear to be weak, in general women hold a significant amount of power over the men. This is a true observation because not all forms of masculinity have equal power and legitimacy in society. While certain forms of masculinity are culturally elevated, different types of masculinities exist in contestation with each other (Connell 1995). The respondents highlighted this when describing the weaknesses in how some of the male characters behaved. For example, they dismissed James for not being strict with his daughter, and

Mulalo for letting his wife rule his every move. This suggests that the respondents are implying that for certain contexts hegemonic masculinities are required and for other instances they are not required.

Characters like Thandaza (the CEO of a leading company), Hangwani (the widow) and the Chief's wives, play important roles in *Muvhango's* narrative. These women are also constructed as having a large degree of influence on the men. Respondents' views on women relate to their views on men, directly and indirectly.

Mulalo, the mayor, was perceived by the respondents to be controlled by his wife, who Ginger (F) described as "manipulative, crafty, and wicked, she is everything a woman is not supposed to be and he is blinded by love and she makes him do things that she wants even when he doesn't like them and does them without even knowing that he is doing them". Ginger's (F) comment implies that men are not meant to be controlled by women; and that men are meant to be assertive, and dominant. She is suggesting that men should have the attributes of hegemonic masculinity.

James is shown as loving his daughter and struggling to exert authority over her. Mands (F) described him as weak in relation to his daughter and as a man who is meant to "stand up" for the truth but who struggles for fear of hurting his daughter. Mands's judgement of James suggests the idea that men should have dominance over their children, and that they should not be controlled by their children. She is also suggesting that men do have fear and insecurities, but is indirectly suggesting that they should not show these in their interactions, particularly with subordinates. She is also implying that men should embody dominant and hegemonic masculinities.

While *Muvhango* contains some representations of very powerful men, there are also women who appear to be "more powerful than the men" (Ginger (F). Ginger here was referring to the fact that in *Muvhango* there are many dominant male characters, while at the same time there are dominant women, who are seen as having the ability to persuade and change the minds of some of the most powerful men in the soap opera. Other South African soap operas like *Isidingo* and *Generations* have shown a similar range of strong male and female characters.

6.2.2 Polygamy

"Courting behaviour among traditional men is a very important part of their education; for a young man must achieve the distinction of being an *isoka*, i.e. a Don Juan or a Casanova" (Vilakazi 1962: 42). In the late nineteenth century, non-penetrative sexual relations were permitted and there was a degree of acceptance by communities that women as well as men could have sexual relations with several partners, so long as these were non-penetrative. These sexual relations were not just reserved for *isoka* (the man who had promised to marry you, or was courting you).

In about the 1950s the roles of *isoka* masculinity began to change, in favour of men. This meant that men could have several wives, as well as concubines. These traditional laws did not favour women at all, which meant that women could not have sexual relations with multiple men, and had to be faithful to one man (Hunter 2008). This kind of traditional man is portrayed in *Muvhango,* particularly in the polygamous relationship that the Chief has with his several wives. Some of the female respondents were not unhappy with the fact that the Chief had many wives, but they were unhappy with how the Chief's character behaved on a day-to-day basis, such as how he would constantly fall for more women even when he had many wives already whom he was struggling to handle.

The women respondents felt that polygamy was an act of a man displaying his power over women, as well as a form of abuse. This may be because masculinity is construed as being powerful because its definition is based largely on how men seek to control women (Fouten 2006). Male respondents thought differently — they felt that no women were forced into these types of marriages and that it was their choice, and that it had nothing to do with men wanting power, because men may construct masculine identities in relation to women, specifically those concerning the ownership and control of women (Mac an Ghaill 1996; Morrell 1998; Kimmel & Messner 2001). This could be seen as the male respondents wanting to deny the reality and exercise of male power, and finding it uncomfortable to even acknowledge its presence.

It is no secret that polygamy is practised by the Chief in *Muvhango*. Many of the storylines derive from the Chief's interesting marriage choices and his quarrelling wives. Some of the Chief's marriages were arranged for him, as he had to marry into

royalty since he was royal. Only one of his wives, Susan, is a commoner. This is the wife he is constructed as truly loving and whom he had to court to win her heart.

The only respondent who overtly claimed that women "are abused" in polygamous relationships was Nonto (F). The other informants did feel as if polygamy was an act of a man subjecting his power over women, but Nonto (F) was the only informant who felt that this act was abusive. While respondents "have gotten used to [polygamy]", personally "they would never cross that bridge in reality" (Ginger (F). According to Phindie (F), "it's not the ideal situation", because of the conflicts that take place in polygamous relationships.

In contrast, Mampintsha (M) said that the men in *Muvhango* "don't hold you at gunpoint to get married to the person" and that it's the choice of the women to marry in this type of situation. Mampintsha (M) is construing the issue of masculinity and polygamy through individualising women's circumstances purely as personal choices, thus denying the systemic, patriarchal discourses that may be positioning women who enter into polygamous relationships. Strength (M) agreed with Mampintsha (M), saying, "I don't think it is abuse of women because when people walk into [it] they know what they are walking into... Cause apparently in the culture the wife agrees with the husband for them to get married... I'm for it, I think its okay." Mampintsha (M) was the second male respondent to allude to the alleged power of an existing wife to veto her husband's taking on a new wife. Mampintsha's comments are an endorsement of polygamy, since he sees all parties involved in the act as consenting. The respondents did not elaborate much on the topic of polygamy, which suggests a very narrow view of these concepts, especially on the issue of whether polygamy is a choice or is something 'forced' on women. Some of the Chief's wives, for example, are presented as content with polygamy because it gives them economic security; some other female characters are encouraged to be in polygamous marriages for the same reason. This implies discourses that accept to a certain extent notions of gender relations that are inherently patriarchal, since no comment exploring why women cannot have multiple husbands was discussed by the informants. Culturally, in *Muvhango*, if everyone around specific female characters is accepting of polygamy, it is very rare for the female characters to refuse to marry a polygamous man.

6.2.3 Christianity and masculinity

All the respondents attend the same church in KwaZulu-Natal, which endorses scripture that is against polygamy. The Christian faith suggests in several New Testament scriptures that God does not favour polygamy. What was interesting is that in spite of being members of this church, none of my respondents expressed views that overtly condemned the practice. However, many of the participants had opinions about the Chief and his treatment of his wives. The norms of Christianity, particularly with respect to monogamous marriage, were imported into African society, where polygamy was part of the accepted social structure, so while monogamy is the 'new' structure, polygamy is the old. The respondents' responses present a dualism in relation to the representation of polygamy in *Muvhango*. On the one hand, the Chief's relationship with his wives is acceptable to the respondents, and it is generally acceptable to them that the characters practise polygamy, but on the other hand, polygamy is not deemed acceptable to the respondents in their own lives. It is also significant that no one commends the Chief for being more of a man for having multiple relationships. The respondents did not make comments about how it was not acceptable to marry many wives. Instead, they made comments about the Chief's character and ways of relating to the women in his life. This may be because polygamy traditionally is an accepted norm in South Africa.

Many Black South Africans have a complex relationship to Christianity as a form of organised religion closely associated with colonialism, apartheid and White dominance. "Liberation" may be associated not just with political freedom, but with the shrugging off of colonial and White norms, and a resurgence of allegiance to certain traditional practices. Many Black Zulu people converted to Christianity under colonialism, and the written form of isiZulu was established by missionaries who taught the language, using illustrations of God and Christian material (Mngadi 2000; South African History Online n.d. *b*). Those who are not in polygamous relationships are often interested in how those roles play out in marriages. Lemone (F) said: "That's the one thing that appetites me about *Muvhango*…. The royal house".

This section will compare the responses of male and female respondents. There were not many areas of response clearly divided along gender lines. The issue that most divided male and female respondents was that of the proposed remarriage of the widow to her brother-in-law. The male respondents tended to value the upholding of tradition, while the female respondents tended to focus on women's rights and constructed the male characters as self-interested and manipulative. One male respondent in particular thought that forcing the widow to make a choice was simply culture maintaining itself. The male respondents aligned themselves with the prevailing hegemony in the narrative constructed of the family involved. The female respondents thought that it was a manipulation of culture and women in order to obtain money.

While Strength (M) argued that "the men in *Muvhango* are fussing about the family business and traditions", Strength's (M) use of the word "fuss" implies a minor negative evaluation of the constructions of male characters in *Muvhango*, since "fussing" is generally associated with female behaviour. Loud Chick (F) disagreed, asserting that the men "are trying to keep the inheritance for themselves". Mands (F) strongly suggested that women should be entitled to everything that men are entitled to, and that the men should leave the women "alone with their money and shares". Mands (F) here is invoking discourses of gender equality. Loud Chick (F) felt that "*Muvhango* shows us how people manipulate culture because Albert wanted his family (women) to get part of his inheritance, otherwise he would not have written it in his will". This spectrum of comments reveals ongoing tensions within contemporary Black South African communities in navigating conflicts arising from the co-existence of traditional, communally oriented values and practices, and more individualistic beliefs.

It is clear that the female respondents have internalised aspects of contemporary values of gender equality and rights, and thus some of them express resistance to the use of 'traditional' cultural practices by men to keep economic control of women, and to retain the advantage for themselves. Soap opera today is not just used as a tool for entertainment, talking and gossip, but can lead to an increase of awareness, knowledge and education. The producers of soap opera are often aware of the social responsibility that they have to society to not avoid important current issues, such as gender violence,

and political events, or xenophobic attacks, and instead creatively write them into the storylines (Van der Merwe 2005). These may be linked with tensions over women's rights and roles, because television actively depicts various truths to society that can be empowering or upsetting.

Loud Girl's (F) statement concludes this section best. She said that the men in *Muvhango* have control over how culture is defined and used, in order to suit their needs. She was referring to the particular example where the widow was given a chance to either give up the money she had inherited from her husband, or to marry her brother-in-law so that the inheritance would remain on his side of the family. The female respondents were more critical of some of the traditional values that affect women than the male respondents. This ties in with Ratele's (2008) argument that the concept of hegemonic masculinity refers to those elements that promote patriarchal systems that maintain a hierarchy of superiority and subordination of most women and men, and in this particular instance women. The male respondents' suggestions about polygamy seemed to minimise the effects of an abusive dimension of culture upon women. The male respondents thus resorted to discursive constructions of personal choice to avoid acknowledging or commenting on the imbalances of systematic power relations in this situation, essentially leaving the patriarchal relations that reinforce hegemonic masculinity uncontested.

6.2.5 Complex masculinities

Respondents identified complex masculinities in the character of the Chief, and he seemed to be the only male character whom respondents identified in this way. In certain instances he is portrayed as a modern man who listens to his wives and is loving, whilst at other times he is very aggressive and traditional. Ants (M) presents a very interesting response to these representations of hegemonic masculinity. He points out that hegemonic masculinity is being replaced with fear in the real lives of Black men in South Africa, since some men struggle to assert themselves for fear of being aggressive and hurtful to women, and that hegemonic masculinity is now difficult for men to practise, since they are uncertain about whether some elements of dominance that they display will be construed as abuse. Ants (M) here is suggesting that the

discursive positioning of men through discourses of gender equality is disadvantageous to men in that men experience difficulties in construing discourses of assertiveness as distinct from discourses of aggression and hurtfulness.

Mands (F) described the Chief as a person who is trying to "satisfy the uncles", but also at the same time is trying to do something of his own. She sees him as trying to be sensitive and understanding of situations, "in which it is hard". This implies that a man displaying hegemonic masculinity could also display other behaviours that are not necessarily hegemonic, which could be perceived as selfless, which is what the Chief's character displayed on those specific occasions. Mands implied that being sensitive as a man is negative, and that men should be assertive and dominant. Ginger (F) agreed with the perception that "he is in a difficult position, when he makes decisions he needs to consider both parties, both sides, then make a decision from that"; "Making sure his decision pleases each and every person" (Mands (F). The Chief's character in *Muvhango* is able to display a hegemonic form of masculinity because his character occupies a position of high status, as he holds powerful roles in business and in his community. Mands (F) and Ginger (F) suggest that from time to time in the characterisation of the male characters in *Muvhango*, hegemonic masculinity becomes contested and seems to be in the process of being renegotiated. They see the Chief's character as seemingly contradictory because it is adapted according to circumstances; the Chief sometimes undermines the patriarchal system, and these situations are likely in tension with his displays of more hegemonic masculinities. The Chief in this instance is negotiating hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005), which draws attention to the fact that the formation of gendered identities is reliant on the relations between men as well as the relations between men and women (Wetherell & Edley 1999).

Strength (M) also testifies to the fact that "the Chief's character is complicated because sometimes he listens to the advice of his advisors and sometimes he pushes it out of the way". Loud Chick (F) reinforces this point in stating that the Chief at times "only listens to his advisors". There are times when he does listen to them, but there are times when he overrules their decisions. Generally, when the character of the Chief overrules his advisors, he is making an informed decision that may not necessarily conform to the traditional standards, but rather conforms to the modern way of doing things. Usually

these decisions are for the benefit of the people involved, since his advisors are portrayed as sexist, selfish, and hungry for power and money. Overall the respondents consider the Chief to be someone who displays predominantly hegemonic masculinity, but who can display wisdom by listening to a variety of views before ruling and making a decision. The respondents were also able to identify that the Chief's complex and sometimes contradictory behaviours were not only a result of being pulled between different constructions of masculinity, but were also an indicator of his acceptance of certain radical changes in society that have given rise to new norms and values, such as whether the needs of the community should dominate over the desires and needs of individuals. A typical example of this is the story of the widow and her inheritance.

The character of Albert was seen as being a very dominant man who, according to the respondents, is very hands-on in the family's multi-million-rand corporation. He is currently married to one woman, with whom he has one child, and has another child from another relationship. The respondents identified complex behaviour in Albert since they maintained that, as with the character of the Chief, he can be a very sensitive man, in spite of his aggression. The respondents perceived Albert to be very devoted to his wife and loving towards his children. They also identified him as a man who upholds most cultural beliefs, is trusted by the Chief and is very wealthy. The Chief's willingness sometimes to learn and listen, and Albert's sensitivity, can be related to Van der Merwe's (2005: 47) observation that "soap opera attempts to make a contribution towards social change and nation building by employing positive role models to transmit prosocial messages to its viewers. These prosocial messages can influence audience members' knowledge, attitudes, and overt behaviour regarding an educational or social issue". Prosocial messages to men and women regarding the acceptability of shifts towards more egalitarian gender relations, may involve representations of men as able to be both strong and gentle, and both decisive and empathetic listeners.

6.3 The overall perceptions of male characters in *Muvhango*

The extent of the power that the male characters are shown to have over the women characters in *Muvhango* was clearly noticed and discussed by the respondents. This power was understood in terms of the social power men have over women (Ratele

2008), and how the women often allow themselves to be defined by the processes of subordination. But in certain instances the male characters are shown to lack control over some of the women in their lives. The respondents found this to be irregular and abnormal. In other words, the respondents had conflicting opinions when it came to the representation of men. In certain situations they had negative opinions on how certain male characters treat and control women, while in other instances they had negative perceptions on how men are controlled by the women in their lives. This duality may reflect areas of social flux, where roles and expectations are in contestation and are in the process of renegotiation (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005).

There are many male characters in *Muvhango*, but it became apparent that there were five main characters that were mentioned more frequently than the rest, because of their distinctive characteristics. These characters were the Chief (the indecisive man), Albert (the family man with aggression issues), James (the softie), KK (the man with the shiny suits) and Borosi (the inheritance thief).

The Chief was perceived to be a complex character, and his polygamous marriages and indecisiveness drew the attention of the respondents. While to some he appeared gentle and sweet, to others he seemed very aggressive at times, particularly when he spoke to his wives. Albert, one of the Chief's advisors, was admired by all the respondents and was perceived as a man who loved and cared for his family because he looked after them financially, was emotionally available to his children and wife, paid attention to their everyday activities, and contributed to his family as a father. However, Magic Fingers (M) did not like it when Albert "shouted" at his wife and spoke "harshly" to her. This suggests that Magic Fingers (M) is more comfortable with a benevolent form of patriarchy, since he respected Albert for looking after his family, but rejected his violent acts.

James was perceived as a metrosexual man, because of his kind spirit, his dress code, his style of dress and association with women. KK was perceived as complicated as well, in that his behaviour was determined by his absent father, and in the way that he was abusive to women but was also very kind to young men. Borosi, a fairly new character, made some respondents fume with anger because of how he treated women, particularly his attempts to take away a widow's inheritance.

6.4 Positive perceptions of male characters

Some positive perceptions of male characters in *Muvhango* were expressed by participants. Ginger (F) stated: "I've finally figured out for myself what a real man is, for me, what that term is for me, it means that a person who does what he says he is going to do, be it good, be it bad if you say I'm going to do this and go ahead and do it, that's being a real man". Ginger's understanding of real men is of men who are consistent agents, who speak and act in accordance with their utterances, men who are declarers and doers of what they have declared.

Other respondents thought that a good man was characterised by humility, mental and physical strength, and protectiveness of his family. There were only two *Muvhango* men who were unambiguously identified as being "acceptable". These men were Albert and Busani, because according to Mampintsha (M) they are able to "admit their mistakes". Ginger (F) and Loud Chick (F) describe them as "men who are not perfect but aspire to be perfect". Some men in both the rural and traditional contexts are perceived to be contesting dominant masculinity through persistently working with their partners in negotiating equal relationships. This group of men makes an effort to be different from other men in their communities where gender violence is a very common practice (Sideris 2005; Lynch 2010). Sideris's and Lynch's arguments are echoed in the representation of men in *Muvhango*, where certain men possess the power to rule and to practise gender violence, but choose to be different from other men. This is seen in the representation of Mulalo's growth as a man and the Chief's choice to side with the widow instead of fighting against her.

6.4.1 Successful and developing men

The respondents termed those men who grew over time "developing men" — men who changed their behaviours and adopted a new approach to life. Even if the respondents did not like the specific characters, they acknowledged their personal growth and development, as well as their growing success in business. Ginger's (F) comment sums up the explanations that other respondents gave: "I really don't like him, but I think Mulalo is developing slowly... he has changed himself... to a kind person". Fire (F)

agreed with Ginger: "I am not sure where he started off but he is now in business and he seems to be successful".

The respondents defined the male characters' success by their assets, which were seen as either financial assets, their families' social standing, or their position in business. Magic Fingers (M) described a successful man as follows: "Literally, it's the fact that you are in an office and you're making money and you're running staff… he was successful". Phindie's (F) comment was also in line with Magic Fingers' view that success is determined by the position one has in life, which was a general perspective shared by most of the respondents. Phindie (F) said that Busani "is also successful *ngoba uyi CEO* [because he is CEO]". The respondents associated a man's power and dominance with his physical qualities, social position, economic wealth and control over people. This implies success through one's own efforts of hard work and determination to get to the top, which are attributes of hegemonic masculinity.

The respondents also identified the characters of Lerumo and Ranthumeng as typical husbands in *Muvhango*. Lerumo was described as an honourable husband, who took a second wife to safeguard his late brother's legacy. He was seen as standing for the truth and being a good listener. Ranthumeng is described as a hardworking businessman.

Other respondents identified a different form of power that a man does not work for but is conferred on him through inherited wealth, position or success. Ginger (F) said, "I think most of the successful people are the ones who are the Mukwevho, because the whole lot… are a royal family".

The female respondents agreed that there was no perfect man, and that each man had his flaws. They agreed that it would take a bit of each male character's characteristics to make "the perfect man". Ginger (F) elaborated as follows:

> From taking all the men in *Muvhango* there's bits and pieces that you want to take and put together to create sort of like "the perfect man", like you would take Azwindini's, um, the power, the power I like. There is something about James, I don't like him so I can't pinpoint what it is, but there is something very manly about him, very, very nice about him, so you take that and take a whole lot of Albert and, um, [chuckles] looks, I would have taken the old Ranthumeng's looks,

I think he was well built. And there's also a bit of KK that you gonna take to perfect, they all have these bits and pieces of perfection in them, but as humans we are not all perfect.

Ginger here unconsciously points out traits of hegemonic masculinity — in her ideal man she says she likes power, manliness, good looks, a fit masculine physique, and a bit of ruthlessness, such as in KK's character.

Respondents expressed the opinion that each man, whether he is a character on television, or a man in reality, is a work in progress. Those male characters on television, like men in reality, make lots of mistakes and will learn from them.

6.4.2 Gentlemanliness

Gentlemanliness is the polite and refined gentleman represented in hegemonic masculinity (Cohen 2005). Polite and refined masculinity is characterised by beliefs of moral behaviour, and is shaped by educational ideals and practices. Respondents seemed to interpret gentlemanliness in similar ways to Cohen, although their interpretation of gentlemanliness did include extra traits such as dress code and positions of power. A gentleman's characteristics are those of kindness, the ability to make others feel at ease, manners and being civil (Cohen 2005). In other words, a man can exhibit manly attributes like authority, aggression, athleticism and bravery, but at the same time be able to be kind and polite.

"Gentlemen" were identified by the respondents as being the opposite of violent men. They were also identified as gentlemanly by their dress code, position of employment, success, and levels of confidence and assertiveness. In particular, a recently introduced character, Busani, was described as a gentleman, the "it man". The female respondents associated his confidence and the fact that he knows his own mind with 'gentlemanliness'. Thandi (F) described him as "kind of a gentleman", while Singer 2 (F) felt he is "better" than other characters. Phindie (F) perceived him to be "successful" due to his CEO status. Loud Girl (F) valued his fidelity to his wife and his keeping his private life private. She spoke approvingly of the "way he lived his life with meekness". The female respondents thus implied a construction of 'gentlemanliness' that encompasses

strength of character and quiet decisiveness, along with inner strength, integrity and principle. It is, however, also associated with professional and financial success. The male respondents highlighted personality traits that emphasised Busani's self-knowledge and his contained, controlled power, calling him "cool", "confident" and "doing what he thinks needs to be done" and getting it done, along with exuding appeal through his stylish suits. Ants (M) went beyond descriptive approval to evaluating the construction of Busani as a non-stereotypical depiction of an African man:

> Generally a Zulu man is usually portrayed as being larger than life, aggressive, confident, you know, that sort of thing, yet he is the one that portrays that softer character so I like, for me, I like that dramatisation of the different cultures but they show traits that are normally not explored — not everyone usually goes with the stereotype. If you look at most other soapies, like *Generations*, the ones that I have seen, the Zulu guys are generally aggressive.

This respondent is aware of certain stereotypes of hegemonic African masculinity and welcomes representations that move beyond them.

The overall responses point to interesting intersections between social class and gentlemanly traits. There is a suggestion that the manner of dress and profession act as a veneer, making male characters appear smart and attentive, which is somehow equated to being gentle and sweet. This concurs with other soap operas like *Generations* and *Isidingo*. What the respondents' responses might point to, in the contemporary South African context, in relation to characters in a soap opera conceived and created by a Black, male South African, will be explored further later on in this chapter.

In soap opera (locally and in certain international ones), where the characters are mostly White, the roles are reversed. Power and elegant clothes usually mean that the man is ruthless and is power hungry, or is the villain, whereas in Black soap operas it usually means that a specific character has gone through a lot to have achieved his profession, which is why he is respected and judged to be humble and unthreatening. I would argue that this is exactly the case in *Muvhango*.

6.4.3 Humility

Only one character, Mulimisi, the second sangoma, was described by the respondents as humble. Respondents often laughed at this specific character. Whenever his name was brought up there was much laughter because he is not seen as the most attractive man, or as having the greatest career. However, alongside this humility he was appreciated for being genuinely caring of others, and someone who minds his own business. Hunt (2008) calls this a "new man" who represents less aggression and more gentle and feminine ways of behaving.

In *Muvhango*, Mulimisi often appeared in people's dreams and followed his calling intensely. While the male respondents like Ben say that Mulimisi "is humble", the female respondents, like Mands, Ginger and Loud Girl, felt that Mulimisi is "humble because he has to be, he is the healer".[2] The female respondents felt that Mulimisi does not choose to be humble, but rather that his career demands it. Loud Girl (F) indirectly questioned the sincerity of Mulimisi's humility.

Mulimisi is constructed as a humble sangoma, for many reasons. Firstly, his character as a man is depicted as very honest, gentle and humble, even though he may be loud and rather 'crazy' in some instances under the control of his ancestors (when he is in a trance). Secondly, Mulimisi is the sangoma chosen by the Chief of Thathe to be the ordained sangoma of the royal household, which means that he has to behave in an honourable way, particularly in relation to royalty. Over and above his practices in his workplace, Mulimisi is represented as remaining humble and gentle. Respondents laughed at what they considered the creepiness of his character and did not expand on their view of him, apart from the element of humility and his caring and reticent nature.

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[2] When sangomas are trained they are taught, amongst many rules, two primary rules. These two rules are respect and humility in the service that they perform. This is not to say that that some sangomas do not adhere to this. Traditional healers or sangomas are evaluated by the communities they reside in, in accordance with the harmony that they bring. Clients of sangomas have great belief in their expertise and rectitude (Gumede 1990). Clients can choose to use certain sangomas over others because of a spiritual connection that they may have with one sangoma.

6.4.4 Humour

What was interesting and unexpected for me was how when respondents were asked which characters they enjoyed watching the most, and which characters they would not mind encountering in real life, they chose some of the more minor characters who are seldom given their own storylines. Perhaps not being regular characters somehow makes them memorable. Characters such as Mushasha and Bobo were perceived as memorable and humorous, and somehow had a significant impact on the respondents, even though the storyline was rarely about them. This suggests that support characters are important and can register significantly in the perceptions of respondents. Mushasha is the eldest sangoma, who mentors Mulimisi. Bobo is an uneducated taxi driver, who frequently finds himself in financial trouble.

Some respondents expressed their enjoyment of the humour in *Muvhango* and how different characters' storylines made the soap opera more exciting. Phindie (F) said she liked "Mushasha because he is funny, I remember the time he lost his money"; Ginger (F) agreed: "He is funny". The respondents also enjoyed romantic humour such as "when [Mushasha] plays with [his wife] and says things like 'Kondi Kondi' [his nickname for her] and he is shorter than her" (Ginger (F)). Mampintsha (M) enjoyed Bobo, saying "It's his personality, I just love his 'township factor' and that he is real. He doesn't fake; he asked the judge the other day, his way of answering you could see that he doesn't even know. He's ghetto you know? So Bobo, I'll go for Bobo."

This could point to a tension for some male respondents between aspirational business or career identities that demand the internalisation of a number of Western norms, and more strongly urban African identities.

6.4.5 Summation: acceptable masculine traits

It is clear that the respondents seemed to like men who are constructed as civil, who exude humility, honour, gentleness and kindness, as well as men who are true to their word. The respondents also accepted male characters that had more stereotypical hegemonic traits, such as men who were business minded, men who were strong, men who could lead their families, and men who were accountable and stood for what was

right. Respondents also perceived the complexities and nuances of other male characters, for example Mulimisi's character. Respondents argued that it was his position, being a sangoma that caused him to act in a certain way, and not anything else. Respondents also distinguished between authority and aggression, and identified good behavioural patterns in men, even if they did not necessarily like these specific characters.

6.5 Negative perceptions of male characters

Unacceptable characteristics were identified in *Muvhango* male characters who failed to be supportive of their families, and those with failed relationships in their work and family situations. This also included men who forced women into marriages that they did not want.

Strength (M) suggested that KK "doesn't work as a man" because of "his failed relationships" with his brother, father and girlfriends. In other words, if a man fails in his relationships (at work, at home, and in his family), he is considered less of a man. This attitude also applies to a man who "is not supportive" towards important people in his life (John (M)). The respondents also perceived KK to be a sexual predator because he is shown assaulting woman sexually and shows several stalker tendencies such as watching women and stealing the clothing of those he stalks, and is generally seen as a very dangerous and unreliable person.

Of all the characters mentioned, Gizara was the one who respondents thought does not contribute much to the soap opera, since his life has no elements of drama and intrigue. Female respondents, particularly, found him to be very rude, especially in relation to the women characters, as he is constructed as seeing women to be less than men in society, even when they are royalty. He also permits forced and arranged marriages. Male respondents did not have much to say on how Gizara behaves.

The respondents also focused on student characters such as Sizwe, who was perceived as an immature young man who constantly seeks the approval of women.

While the male respondents shared some interesting points, some of the female respondents shared very intense thoughts about certain male characters. In particular,

Borosi made them so angry that they said that if they saw the actor himself in the real world they would spit at him, simply because of the way his character treats women. Respondents were so angry with Borosi that they wished him dead, even in the real world. Ginger (F) said that she would:

> buy a doek and give him a dress and I would tell him to go get a transfer, the gender change thing and should change and become a woman because he so desires to become a woman. He talks too much, number one — he talks too much and men shouldn't talk too much, you shouldn't be in women business, really and number two, there's this thing he did when he was telling the Chief about Hangwani, about the guy who is friends with Hangwani. You know when you have known something about someone and you are just dying to let everybody know that he is kind of a person, when you have caught them in the act, that kind of thing. He did that, he had that, he had that face, he did something with his face and it was like "*ngimubambile*" ("I caught her") you know, and that, that moment, I was like "Oh my gosh I so wish I could bump into this man somewhere and hit him". I hate him, I really hate him, I really hate that guy, even if he moved from *Muvhango* to somewhere else I think I will always hate him... I would say two things, I would give him two separate pieces of advice, and the first one would be "you know what — the situation is too much for you; you cannot handle this — go commit suicide".

Through these comments Ginger (F) identified certain unacceptable traits for men — a man who talks too much and discusses women's business. I would argue that she has internalised certain values that assign strong negativity to behaviours deemed female, when they are performed by a man. At the same time, Mands (F) said that if she saw Borosi she would say to him, "Go jump! (Kill yourself) Go fly a kite". It became clear that the female respondents were incredibly upset by the behaviour of Borosi because he wanted to steal the inheritance of a widow, by forcing her to marry him. Borosi's character on *Muvhango* even insisted that if she refused his proposal that she ought to sign off all her inheritance to him.

This behaviour involving pressuring the vulnerable widow to do his will, and controlling which men could befriend her, made the female respondents very angry and

they also felt that in general men should be more reserved and not talk as much as women do. They felt as if Borosi's behaviour could be attributed to feminine behaviour, because rather than simple force, he used verbal and emotional manipulation and persuasion in a way that some would argue women tend to do. While this is a valid argument, it cannot be ignored that Borosi's character showed traits of hegemonic masculinity as well, since his actions were forceful and dominant, which is not at all stereotypically feminine. To them he acted as a stereotypical woman, which they found to be distasteful, since they believed that male characters should rather have the attributes of hegemonic masculinity.

6.5.1 Aggressive men

Respondents also identified aggressive men as those who are violent against women in particular. Magic Fingers (M) highlighted Albert, who had been aggressive to his wife. Albert shouted at his wife when his wife wanted to spend time with him. Magic Fingers (M) felt that "it was not right" to treat women like that. Strength (M) did not like it when KK "abused Meme" and physically assaulted her, and he confessed that those episodes made him "sad".

The female respondents did not have much to say on the issue of aggression in men. This was surprising and is worthy of more research consideration in future studies. One male respondent and a few female respondents spoke about how polygamy was abusive to women. This was also flagged earlier in this chapter.

6.5.2 Emasculated men

The Merriam-Webster Encyclopaedia Britannica Company (2015) defines 'emasculate' as "to deprive of strength, vigour or spirit, to deprive of virility or procreative power". There are men in *Muvhango* whom the respondents identified as so controlled by the women in their lives that they were deprived of the ability to lead; at times these characters' "spirits" would be crushed by the women in their lives' opinions and expectations of them. While emasculation may seem a rather strong definition of these men's positions in their homes, it is a relevant way of defining their situations, since

Muvhango as a whole strongly upholds certain ideas about masculine identity: that men should be leaders, and that men should be able to discipline their wives while exercising self-discipline. So it becomes very embarrassing, according to some of the respondents, when a man does not have that authority over the woman in his life, because of how dominant she is.

Most of the male respondents seemed to openly favour the attributes of hegemonic masculinity, although they did not validate aggression towards women. For example, Magic Fingers (M) spoke of how Albert screamed at his wife, which he saw as negative; however, he also approved of male characters like Busani, who he thought was powerful and dominant in his role as CEO, as well as in his role in the home as well. The female respondents seemed to resent certain expressions of hegemonic masculinity, although during the course of their discussions they unconsciously and indirectly mentioned elements of hegemonic masculinity as the ideal, especially when they made mention of female characters.

Loud Girl (F), referring to Mulalo, said that "he is forever trying to impress a woman who does not love him, they have only been married for a month and it's clear she is using him". She was indirectly saying that a man should not work too hard to impress a woman who does not want him, and that he should move on to the next woman who wants him. Loud Girl supported male aloofness in relation to women in relationships because she disapproves of a man trying too hard to impress a woman. She sees Mulalo's pursuit of this woman as expressing a lack of control in the face of the female character's lack of reciprocal appreciation. Loud Girl validates aloofness and control as elements of hegemonic masculinity.

Ants (M) makes a bold claim about the state of our country and how men have to walk on eggshells for fear of hurting women:

> We laugh but there are a lot of South African men that feel powerless to assert themselves... because perhaps of the environment they are in. They are surrounded by women and if you said all the women are like "you can't speak like that you know? It's hurtful, it's aggressive". So the guy even whispered because they are always trying to make sure they won't hurt people's feelings.

Ants (M) is expressing how men feel that they have to behave carefully in order not to offend women. Although this may seem to be an unreasonable demand of men, no male respondents made any comments about this when Ants (M) spoke during the interview. Ants's (M) comments raise critical issues concerning South African masculinity, in relation to how men should act to avoid hurting the women around them. Ants (M) mentions that men often struggle to communicate because their actions may be construed as aggressive. He describes this as a process of "walking on eggshells", which suggests the impossible, implying that no man should continually be confined to a set way of behaving. Ants's statement can be challenged on the grounds that men are uncritically endorsing a well-established patriarchal culture as a perfectly acceptable norm. Here men are reacting to cultural change that gives women more power, which they imply is, in some sense, forced on them — their behaviour being reshaped in a way akin to making them "walk on eggshells".

However, Ants's (M) response also suggests that he sees men as struggling with such change, with knowing what kind of behaviour is acceptable in relation to women, and he does not necessarily reject the shifts. This could point to an interesting area to be explored further, and in a more complex and nuanced way, in soap opera, since soap opera intentionally and unintentionally is a site for learning (Armstrong 2000). Van der Merwe (2012) discovered that soap opera assisted viewers with dealing with social issues as well as with general problems. In Ants's situation, soap opera has enabled him to critically express opinions and concerns troubling him in relation to shifts in his society (Livingstone 1988). Understanding the effects of such opportunities, more widely and deeply, would be beneficial for the study of gender and masculinities in South Africa

6.5.3 Immature men

Respondents also expressed frustration with male characters who would not grow — men who were at a mature age, but were seen to continue to make rash and stupid decisions. The respondents called these men "stupid men". Phindie's (F) articulation of Spha's character is that he is "the stupidest character ever, that time when he was in a relationship with Albert's daughter, he was immature, he wanted everything that Sizwe

had, he would compare himself to Sizwe. There was this one time where he had a ring tone of someone burping as a ring tone, he is immature".

Fire's (F) comment on Spha added to what Phindie (F) had mentioned: "The fact that he wants to impress girls and shows off … ends up causing problems because you take women out to expensive places and end up in debt". While the women showed great disapproval of Spha, the male respondents enjoyed his behaviour. Strength (M) said, "That's why he is my favourite guy now; because of how dumb he is, I like how dumb he is". Strength thought that Spha was dumb, because he used all his money to please a woman, and he even changed his manner of dress to please a woman. Strength enjoyed how Spha's character never gave up, and somehow found humour and enjoyment in the stupidity of Spha's character.

6.5.4 Insecurities of Black men

While only a few men in *Muvhango* are shown to visibly exhibit insecurities, there were two male characters who always sought the approval of others. Mulalo's character was described by respondents as having insecurities, because he was the second-born son, which meant that he would not inherit the throne. He was constructed as perceiving that when his elder brother, the Chief, made mistakes as a ruler, those were never challenged because the family and community felt that it was his birth right. This has, according to respondents, made Mulalo's character hungry for affection, which he tries to get from his wife, who does not really love him and is only there to enjoy his wealth.

Then there is KK's character. KK is shown wearing extremely shiny suits, which draws attention to him within the narrative of the soap opera, as well as from the viewers at home. KK is constructed as an intelligent businessman, who is very much aware of the fashion trends that take place in society, but still chooses to wear shiny suits. Strength (M) mentions that KK wears his shiny suits to stand out, and be noticed because "there was an instance where he wanted to be accepted by his father — it came out that actually that's why he wears his shiny suits". Mands (F) asserted that it was clear that he wears the suits because "he wants to be different from everyone and the only way he can be different is to be shiny". Clearly respondents saw KK to be seeking the attention that he did not receive from his father as a child through wearing these suits, which they

see as somehow helping him to feel manlier. KK was construed by the respondents as a character who overcompensates when it comes to dress code, because of his insecurities. It is interesting that viewers use psychological reasoning to explain KK's situation.

The effect of fathers, present and absent, in reality and in soap opera, can be argued to play a significant socialising role for young men (UNICEF 2007). Pleck (2010) asserts that fathering is essential to positive child development, indexing the role of fathers in shaping and directing young men's development (Connell 1995; Wetherell & Edley 1999; Lindsay & Miescher 2003). It is especially pertinent in South Africa, given the historical effects of racist politics, poverty, disease and emasculation on Black South African men. This has resulted in thousands of fragmented families and many Black men abandoning their paternal roles under these multiple pressures. In *Muvhango* this history is reflected in the weakness of the character of KK, which respondents picked up on. Men may reveal the effects of paternal absence, neglect or abuse by wanting to be the complete opposite of what their fathers were, or alternatively, perhaps, a mirror image of their father's behaviour and seeking the attention that they never received from their fathers.

6.5.5 Summation: unacceptable masculine traits

It is clear that the respondents disliked men who were abusive to women, and that respondents distinguished disciplining a woman from abusing a woman. Strength (M) thought that forcing the widow to marry her brother-in-law was not a form of abuse, but rather a way to keep a woman disciplined and ensure that the inheritance stays within a family. Female respondents differed radically from Strength's (M) view; they felt that this type of male construction was abusive, and did not see it as a way of keeping the inheritance in the family, but rather as a way of oppressing women.

In another instance, Strength (M) agreed that when the male character KK physically assaults a female character (Meme), it was abuse. Magic Fingers (M) also pointed out that when Albert spoke harshly to his wife, it was a form of emotional abuse, which was not right. Respondents were clear in what they thought was abuse and what they did not think was abuse, but rather a manifestation of cultural practice. In other instances,

some respondents thought that polygamy constituted abuse, while some male respondents thought it was part of the culture and that no one was forced to accept it. On the issue of forced marriage, some respondents saw this as the preservation of culture and some saw it as abuse. Respondents also expressed their dislike of men who could not exert authority over their lives and marriages. In my 2012 study on masculinity in *7de Laan*, female respondents liked and approved of men who took care of their families and resented the male characters who failed to do this. This suggests that respondents generally resent passive characters and enjoy characters with a purpose.

6.6 Conclusion

The insights of this chapter indicate that the respondents responded to the representations of male characters predominantly from the perspective of the norms of hegemonic masculinity within a communal orientation. However, they also revealed some tensions and contradictions within their responses, with female respondents, particularly, showing some internalisation of more individualised norms and of women's rights to self-determination. They also showed findings consistent with aspects of similarly focused research into soap opera elsewhere. It was clear that viewers enjoyed the soap opera because it was different to other South African soap operas in showing traditional as well as urban stories. The viewers were also drawn to the diversity, for example the polygamous marriages that they were aware of in reality. They were curious as to what happens in those types of situations, and saw *Muvhango* as presenting a window onto such scenarios on their screens every day. The form of the storylines, the culture shifts within the storylines and in the behaviours of the characters in the soap opera facilitated cultural links with the viewers, which enabled them to engage with the soap opera (Gerbner et al. 1980).

The viewers identified several types of male characters in *Muvhango*: struggling, successful, polygamous, emasculated, aggressive and stupid men. Viewers seemed to have an emotional connection to these characters and therefore could construct realities from their behaviours. The respondents "actively and creatively made their

own meanings and created their own culture of understanding, rather than passively absorb pre-given meanings imposed upon them" (Ang 1996: 136).

The respondents identified, and mostly positively endorsed, the male characters who fitted the profile of the "new man" (mentioned in Chapter 2), presenting a different "traditional" model of masculinity which is a gentler version of the male self. The new man is seen as less aggressive, more gentle and feminine (Hunt 2008). The respondents also identified male characters who exhibited mixed attributes, who combined elements of the new man and the conventional man, and who they perceived as exhibiting complex masculinity. Some of the respondents expressed an "analytic preference" for male characters who clearly exhibited either hegemonic or non-hegemonic masculinity.

Respondents both admired and mocked particular male characters. In their admiration of certain male characters, some respondents found useful characteristics in their portrayals. At other times respondents made fun of some of the male characters in *Muvhango*, in terms of how they dressed and presented themselves, because it somehow did not conform to their standards of living. This makes the viewing experience interesting since part of the experience of viewing soap opera is either to hate or mock what you view (Ang 1985), while at the same time possibly finding pleasure, enjoyment and even a sense of learning something new.

Certain elements of reality versus fantasy formed a further strong pattern in how respondents perceived the constructions of masculinity in *Muvhango*. Respondents readily identified links between what men do in real life and how the men in *Muvhango* were shown to behave. However, they also expressed enjoyment at being given access to aspects of life usually closed to them, such as the inner life of the royal house and elements of spectacle, such as expensive, flashy clothing. These responses resonate with Spence's (1995) view that soap opera can be compared to experiencing a fantasy which one believes to be true, in ways that facilitate audience members' forming opinions about right behaviour in relation to the real world.

These viewers saw the characters as very close to real life, and that is how they interpreted them. Respondents spoke freely about which characters they liked and disliked, and stated their reasons. Their interpretations were authentic and heartfelt. Respondents were against women abuse, and against men who could not stand up for

themselves. They were in favour of men who were assertive yet gentle and humble. They saw the characters as human and did not judge them according to their religious beliefs but according to their actions and way of life, which was very interesting.

In relation to masculinity dynamics, the respondents drew attention to issues of femininity, Christianity, masculinity and polygamy. While there was a clear divide between male and female respondents on the issues of polygamy and traditional inheritance practices, it was noticeable that consensus on other issues was much higher than research has reflected in other soap operas (Brown 1994; Tager 2002; Geraghty 2005).

The male characters who were seen as successful, as having the capacity for self-development, as gentlemen, and as displaying humility and humour were strongly validated by the respondents. The male characters who were perceived as aggressive, emasculated and abusive were strongly criticised. The respondents also shared diverse views on polygamy, on the insecurities of men, and on the effects of absent fathers on their sons' lives.

Chapter 7 will consider the implications arising from this research and the limitations of this research, and will offer recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This chapter will focus on significant findings from this research, and reveal some of its limitations and challenges. It will also suggest recommendations for future research.

In Chapter 1, I defined the following three objectives of this study:

- To understand why a Tshivenda-dominant soap opera rooted in Venda culture is enjoyed by selected isiZulu-speaking audiences.

- To explore the nature of selected isiZulu-speaking audiences' responses to the representation of male characters in *Muvhango.*

- To explore the variety of ways in which selected isiZulu-speakers interpret constructions of masculinity in relation to male characters in *Muvhango.*

From these objectives I derived two key questions that would enable me to direct my research within certain limits. These questions were:

- What perceptions do selected isiZulu audiences have of male characters in the soap opera *Muvhango*?

- How do selected isiZulu-speaking audiences interpret the constructions of masculinity in *Muvhango*?

This chapter comprises five sections. In the first section I discuss the objectives of this study, and in the following two sections I will provide answers to the key questions. The fourth section presents the limitations of this research and the positive contribution of this study, while the fifth section provides recommendations for further research related to this study.

7.1 Addressing the main objectives of the study

In relation to the first objective — understanding why isiZulu-speaking people would watch *Muvhango,* a Tshivenda-dominant soap opera — the data obtained enabled me to conclude that this soap opera deals with issues common to all ethnic groups in South Africa and, in particular, many of the problems related to masculinity. The characters are not all Venda, but belong to other groups as well, particularly in those scenes set in the city, where there is always a mixture of groups. Furthermore, my particular isiZulu respondents were able to identify closely with the characters, most of whom are educated, middle-class, upwardly mobile people who, while still adhering to elements of customary life such as patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity, are also adapting to modern, Western ways.

Muvhango differs from most other South African soap operas in its approach to languages. Whereas it is common practice in most South African soap operas to use subtitles to accommodate deaf people, in *Muvhango* a number of languages are used throughout. These are mainly English, isiZulu, Tshivenda and Sesotho. In addition, there are comprehensive subtitles.

One should not forget that people watch soap opera primarily for entertainment (Geraghty 2005), and this is a well-produced series that provides entertainment in full measure. The respondents frequently mentioned that there are elements of fantasy, but also elements that can be related to the real-life situations that the viewers themselves experience. There is also an element of humour that is rare in soap opera.

Muvhango is also broadcast at a time when both male and female viewers are at home with family or in other places where groups congregate, thus enabling it to be watched communally. This creates opportunities for discussion and interaction, and has implications for changes in reception; because viewers watch in groups, they are able to change each other's interpretations since viewers tend to talk about the constructions viewed on television.

In relation to the second objective of exploring the nature of isiZulu-speaking audiences' responses to the representation of male characters in *Muvhango*, respondents expressed a wide range of responses to the way that male characters in *Muvhango* were

portrayed, and these responses centred around issues of masculinity, femininity, Christianity, patriarchy and gender inequality. Respondents also spoke frequently about how the male characters in *Muvhango* in certain instances reflect elements of the reality of Black South African men. The respondents also expressed how they enjoyed watching different scenarios from outside of their usual experience, such as the life of the royal household playing out, even though they had no wish to be a part of it. This corresponds with Spence's (1995) argument that soap opera can be compared to experiencing a fantasy that one believes to be true, to permit drawing conclusions of morality and forming opinions, as well as what we know of the real world (Spence 1995).

In relation to the third objective of exploring the variety of ways in which isiZulu-speakers interpret constructions of masculinity in relation to male characters in *Muvhango*, the respondents classified the male characters in *Muvhango* according to several categories, such as struggling men, successful men, men in polygamous relationships, men who had been emasculated by the women in their lives, aggressive men, stupid men, immature men and gentlemen. Complex masculinities, as well as humility and humour, were also identified in some of the male characters.

The respondents seemed to develop an emotional connection to the characters presented to them. The respondents "actively and creatively made their own meanings and created their own culture of understanding, rather than passively absorb pre-given meanings imposed upon them" (Ang 1996: 136). This is shown in how the respondents received and interpreted constructions of masculinity in *Muvhango*. The respondents in this study were very active in their interpretations, rather than being passive recipients.

Over the years, soap opera has evolved in three ways: firstly, in terms of the time slots that it occupies; secondly, in terms of the audience that it attracts; and thirdly, in terms of the storylines that it presents, where many new scenarios have emerged. Soap opera is therefore a dynamic phenomenon that requires new research, particularly to challenge some of the work that has been produced by previous theorists.

While soap opera can be used as a tool for identifying masculinities that are presented by the media, it still shows a somewhat limited perspective of masculinity. The comments made by the respondents suggest that they understood the range of masculinities depicted in *Muvhango*, and that they were also able to relate these to their

own understanding and experiences. The respondents also showed to what extent they embraced or rejected the forms of masculinity presented. However, *Muvhango* does not fully reflect all aspects of masculinity; for example, it shows very little of fatherhood and gay masculinities, which are part of day-to-day reality. The comments made by respondents suggested that *Muvhango* was, however, able to show a clash between certain aspects of Westernised patriarchy and traditional African patriarchy. *Muvhango* was also able to show that these patriarchal masculinities could be modulated by ideas that challenge patriarchal norms, particularly in light of the social changes that are faced in reality, such as South Africa's shift towards a constitutional democracy that values and protects gender equality, women's rights, and so on.

7.2 Addressing the main questions of the study

It was clear that the respondents enjoyed the characterisation of, and identified strongly with, certain male characters, who they found to be interesting, appealing, and humorous. At the same time, they often violently rejected certain other male characters, who they considered to be completely distasteful, particularly in their particular manifestations of masculinity and how they foregrounded issues of patriarchy and gender. In some cases this extended to a strong dislike of the actors performing the parts. While the respondents disliked violence, they also disliked "weak" behaviour in men.

A noteworthy factor was that although there was an expectation on my part that male and female respondents would differ radically in their reactions to issues of gender and masculinity, there was unexpectedly a great deal of consensus. This represents a move away from findings in earlier research on soap opera (Geraghty 2005). From the responses of my respondents I was able to build up a loose classification of the masculinities which are presented in *Muvhango*. Although the respondents appeared to be more comfortable when analysing masculinity of a well-defined type, such as hegemonic or non-hegemonic masculinity, they were able to draw out certain complexities and nuances of the male characters in *Muvhango*. They recognised the attributes of "the new man", and were able to a lesser extent to identify that several of

the male characters possessed mixed attributes that combined elements of both "the new man" and the conventional man, and thus represented a more complex masculinity.

A specific element of masculinity that was only portrayed infrequently and superficially in *Muvhango* was fatherhood, the absence of which presents serious shortcomings and problems in this country because of the meltdown in family cohesion due to previous and present political and economic conditions (Morrell 2001a; Xaba 2001; Ratele 2008; Gennrich 2013). Fatherhood constitutes a considerable dimension of masculinity, and the absence of a father can play a crucial role in how children develop. Respondents suggested that the absence of fathers in certain characters' lives had affected those characters' behaviour radically. The absence of fathers has been extremely common in South African history since fathers were forced to leave their families to work on the mines, often because of circumstances beyond their control, which has had destructive effects on the lives of their children. It is therefore crucial for men to 'deconstruct' or 'dismantle' destructive behaviour or ways of life in order that they may reconstruct something good and something new (Gennrich 2013: 22).

The comments from the respondents about fatherhood or fathers seem to suggest two ideas: firstly, that men need to be present in the lives of their children, and secondly, that men need to be assertive fathers who lead their families well. Apart from this, respondents did not say much about fatherhood, which suggests that for them *Muvhango* did not represent that much about fatherhood. Some scenes would show fathers being present in the lives of their children, but these were never a prominent topic.

The male respondents expressed views that suggested their support for a fairly 'benevolently' hegemonic construction of masculinity. They endorsed qualities of determination, persistence and resilience in the male characters. Their comments also suggested that their ideal of masculinity is for strong men, in terms of character and leadership, in business and at home. Men still need to be 'in charge' of women, but not abusively so. For them, becoming a man involves learning how to treat women appropriately and developing the strength of character to manage women well. Their responses to the representations of successful men in the show reflect strongly aspirational values, perhaps connected to their hopes for themselves. In demonstrating

their appreciation of male characters who are shown moving from humble origins to corporate success, they are tapping into perceived and real opportunities for bright, educated young Black South Africans to effect social mobility and join the growing ranks of 'Black Diamonds' (Ndletyana 2014).

Ndletyana's (2014) insights into the Black Diamond can be linked to an Afrocentric understanding of patriarchy, since the Afrocentric paradigm encompasses a holistic approach to life and living, by means of which Africans are able to generate a more humanistic society than that of the Western patriarchal society. Afrocentricity aims to examine continental African cultures within the areas of family associations, matriarchal social organisations, and human relations to recover a global revolutionary idea or way of life for female–male relationships for the 21st century (Monteiro-Ferreira 2011). These "Black Diamonds" are made up of competent, learned professionals, and managers, who are not only distinguished by position, but also by behaviour and lifestyle (Southall 2004; Seekings & Nattrass 2008).

The next section accounts for the inevitable limitations of my study.

7.3 Limitations of the study

Challenge of people not coming to interviews

In all the interview sessions there was at least one person who did not arrive as arranged. I anticipated this challenge, since students are committed to their studies and tend to be forgetful about other matters. Ten students were invited to participate in the focus group interviews, so that if one or more cancelled, I would still have a relatively large group of people with possibly diverse answers. At times less than half the number would not attend, but I continued with the interviews given that my interactions with potential members indicated that I would not be able to get the remaining informants again into one group.

Time

Some students would arrive later than others, which was a challenge. I overcame this by asking them when they would be available and allocating them time slots according to their availability.

Knowing me

I was known to all of the students, which may have had an effect on how they answered the questions. I felt that because the students knew me this made them more comfortable in sharing intimate thoughts. On the other hand, a strong drawback may have been that they gave answers which they thought I might expect from them.

Insufficient probing

After interviewing and transcribing all the interviews I came to the conclusion that I did not have enough data, and needed to probe further on certain issues. This was a big challenge for me, because trying to access the same students proved to be a difficult task. Some of the students were very accommodating and were willing to assist me, and while this was a challenge, it was overcome to a certain extent.

Knowing too much

I watch *Muvhango*, which became a disadvantage because when respondents answered my questions vaguely, I would interpret what they were talking about. This meant that I did not probe enough, because their short sentences and vague answers made complete sense to me. I unconsciously made assumptions that all readers of my text had prior understanding of the soap opera, which they did not.

7.4 Positives of the study

Interviewing students I knew

Selecting respondents whom I knew, rather than simply selecting random students to interview, was very helpful in this study, as I had the particulars of all the respondents and it was easy to change dates and times to see them.

Conducting a study on a programme that I watched

I felt privileged to do research on a soap opera that is not only loved by many South African viewers, but also by me as an individual. I still watch *Muvhango* and enjoy it for non-research purposes. Because *Muvhango* is a programme that I watch often, I could identify all the characters mentioned by the respondents and could understand and remember elements of the narrative from months or years ago, not only recent storylines, which was very helpful in my analysis.

Small sample

The findings of this study were drawn from a very small group of people, which means that the results cannot be generalised to the broader South African population. However, this study can contribute a modest theoretical generalisation, which can be tested in further by larger-scale studies.

7.5 Recommendations for future research

This study was limited to an analysis of the responses of a small, very specific group of single, male and female university students belonging to the same Christian church, who were upwardly mobile and who were all well known to me. Their perceptions of masculinity presented in *Muvhango*, and of the various issues related to patriarchy and gender equality that are portrayed, may be unique to them and to other similar sections of the population. The responses of other people, such as those from rural communities, or those who are uneducated or poverty stricken, or alternatively those who are powerful, have established positions and professions, or who are older, may differ radically. This could become a productive area for future research, both with individual groups or on a comparative basis, using both short-term and longitudinal studies.

Future research could examine a larger or more diverse sample of how *Muvhango* audiences respond to constructions of masculinity, since my sample was quite small. Prospective research could also consider how rural audiences compare to urban audiences in viewing *Muvhango*, and perhaps how viewers of *Muvhango,* as well as other soap operas, view the constructions of masculinity in different soap operas. Future research could also look at what has caused the dramatic increase in male soap

opera audiences in the 21st century and what has influenced this specific viewership of soap opera.

7.6 Conclusion

While the portrayal of masculinity in the media is an issue that has been explored deeply and over a long period of time in other countries, there has been very little exploration of the issue in the South African media. This is a rich field for research since South African men, and in particular Black men, have been subjected to a number of radical changes and traumatic situations that have greatly affected their practice and understanding of masculinity (Morrell 2001a; Xaba 2001; Ratele 2008; Gennrich 2013). In my opinion *Muvhango* has a most dynamic and diverse representation of elements of masculinity. This enabled the respondents in my study to enter into discourse on the topic of masculinity and to recognise and identify types of masculinity that exist in this country. They identified the emergence of the "new man" who represented a different model from the hegemonic type usually associated with South African men, although not all of the respondents accepted this as a desirable type. This "new man" presents a version of masculinity that is less aggressive and more gentle and feminine (Hunt 2008). Post-colonial masculinities cannot be categorised as either traditional or modern, since masculinities are diverse and cannot be bound only to such polarities. Masculinities are continuously transforming as the post-colonial society transforms. As society, the economy and social movements evolve, so does masculinity in South Africa (Connell, 2007).

In the process of my research it became apparent that masculinity cannot be studied in isolation (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005), but needs to be studied with proper attention to gender relations as a whole, and thus in relation to issues of femininity and an understanding of the patriarchal structuring of South African society. The effects of masculinity and, conversely, the reactions and roles of both women and men in the ongoing constructions and negotiations of femininity too, is highly significant.

With the social and political shift to a democratic dispensation, gender rights have become embedded in the new constitution and there has been a consequent rise in organisations that support their implementation. *Muvhango* has been quick to

incorporate these new dynamics into its storylines and several of its female characters are modern, successful and dominant women who are considered by some men to be a threat to the more hegemonic forms of masculinities. The character of Thandaza in *Muvhango* is one typical example of this.

Future research in this field will need to take strong female characters into account, and other soap operas in this country will need to follow in the footsteps of *Muvhango* in terms of how *Muvhango* uses language, represents gender equality, and portrays a wide range of masculinities, if they wish to maintain and increase their viewer population.

The influence of soap opera as a genre has increased as a result of changes in storylines, time slots for viewing, the gender of viewers, and the use of mixed languages and subtitles. Of all the South African soap operas, *Muvhango* has utilised these adaptations the most successfully. My research, although limited in extent, confirmed my belief in the value of the media in interpreting current trends and issues in society. These issues include the tensions, intricacies and contradictions in male roles in society, and young Black South African men and women's responses to constructions of masculinity in Black South African society.

This research also showed that while men and women students are different, they may have similar views and concerns about issues. It needs to be considered that it is possible that student life permits a less rigid definition of gender roles and opinions than may be held at a later stage in life, such as when people are married, have children and are working. Interviewing an older group may have elicited a wider diversity of opinions and observations. This may be an interesting avenue for future research. This study revealed that there are gaps in the theorisation of why male viewers watch soap opera, and why they are still perceived to be non-viewers of such, and it also revealed that many factors contribute to the constructions of masculinities in South Africa.

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APPENDIX 1: INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

<div align="right">

School of Arts
Pietermaritzburg
Scottville
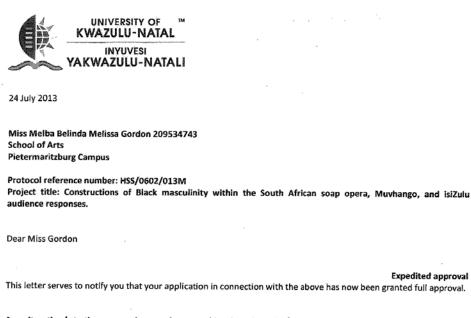
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INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Thank you for agreeing to assist in this project. This assignment is to investigate the following topic: An ethnographic audience study of isiZulu-speaking UKZN students' responses to constructions of male characters in *Muvhango*.

The purpose of the interview is purely to seek how South African audiences respond to aspects of masculinity in the soap opera *Muvhango*. Please note that your personal details will not be shared with anyone other than my supervisor. None of your opinions will be used against you. You have the right to withdraw from the research.

If you need more information pertaining to this research please contact Ms Fiona Jackson. Thank you for giving up your time to participate towards this research.

Regards,

Melba Gordon

Melba.gordon@ymail.com

Ms Fiona Jackson

FJackson@ukzn.ac.za

I_____ consent to participate in this interview.

I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the study. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I desire.

Signature _____

Date_____

APPENDIX 2: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL ™
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

24 July 2013

Miss Melba Belinda Melissa Gordon 209534743
School of Arts
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0602/013M
Project title: Constructions of Black masculinity within the South African soap opera, Muvhango, and isiZulu audience responses.

Dear Miss Gordon

Expedited approval

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above has now been granted full approval.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation.   In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

....
Professor U Bob (Chair) and Dr S Singh (Deputy Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Ms Fiona Jackson
cc Ethics coordinator: Dr Shamila Naidoo
cc School Administrator: Ms Jennifer Van Blerk

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Questions asked in the focus groups 2013: *Muvhango*

General

1.   How much television do you watch?

2.   What is your favourite programme at the moment?

3.   What keeps you watching this programme?

Background

1.   What do you like most about *Muvhango*?

2.   What, for you, makes *Muvhango* different from other soap operas?

3.   When do you watch *Muvhango*? In the evenings or on Saturdays? Why in the evenings/Saturdays?

4.   *Muvhango*'s time slot competes with late prime. What makes you pick *Muvhango* over other programmes in this time slot?

Audience

5.   Who do you watch *Muvhango* with? Tell me how you come to watch with this person/these persons in particular?

6.   *Muvhango* characters primarily speak Venda. How does this affect your viewing experience?

7.   What things do you really enjoy about *Muvhango*?

8.   How do you find the Venda culture of *Muvhango*? Tell me a story about something in the soapy to do with Venda culture that really stood out for you.

9.   While watching *Muvhango* do you feel more conscious of being Zulu? If yes, can you give me an example? If no, explain a bit more.

10.   What is your experience with the subtitles?

11.   Would you change anything about the subtitling? If yes, what would you change?

12.   How do the subtitles improve or undermine your viewing experience?

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Masculinity

13.   Tell me some stories that stand out for you about the men in *Muvhango*.

14.   Who is your favourite male character in *Muvhango*? What makes you enjoy them?

15.   Can you identify a character in *Muvhango* you feel struggles with finding his manhood?

16.   Can you identify a male character you feel is successful in every way? Why this character?

17.   Can you think of a time in *Muvhango* where a male character behaved in a bad way, or a way you did not agree with? What did this character do? And what made it unappealing to you?

18.   Can you think of a time in *Muvhango* where you did like the way that a male character behaved? What made you like this?

19.   Are there any male characters in *Muvhango* who you would point out to young boys in your family/ community as good role models for them? Please tell me more about what makes them a good/poor role model for them.

20.   Imagine you were the script writer for *Muvhango*. Are there any male characters you would remove from the program? Is there any male character you'd like to introduce? If yes, tell me what kind of character they'd be? What would they add to the soapy? Is there anything you would really like to make happen to an existing character? What would that be? What would be the point of that?

21.   What are some issues you think that black South African men struggle with? Can you tell me a story from your (or someone in your circle of family/friends) that shows an issue/some issues black South African men have to struggle with?

Interview Schedule

DATE	TIME	GROUP
10 August 2013	2PM	Mixed group
17 August 2013	2PM	All-female group
24 August 2013	2PM	All-male group

Group1: Mixed group

Pseudonym	Area of study	Gender	Age
Singer 1	Politics	Female	20
Singer 2	Sociology	Female	20
Magic Fingers	Computer Science	Male	22
Phil	Politics	Male	23
Thandi	Psychology	Female	21
Loud Chick	Dietetics	Female	22

Group 2: All-female group

Pseudonym	Area of Study	Gender	Age
Ginger	Law	Female	23
Mands	Drama	Female	20
Fire	Theology	Female	22
Phindie	Drama	Female	20

Group 3: All-male group

Pseudonym	Area of Study	Gender	Age
Ants	Education	Male	23
Mampintsha	Drama	Male	22
Tsoro	Sociology	Male	22
Lemone	Computer Science	Male	20
Ben	Computer Science	Male	22
Strength	Drama	Male	23

Follow-up interview schedule

DATE	TIME	GROUP
5 October	2PM	All-female group
12 October	2PM	Mixed group

All-female group

Pseudonym	Area of Study	Gender	Age
Mands (Initially in Group 2)	Drama	Female	24
Ginger (Initially in Group 2)	Law	Female	25
Phindie (Initially in Group 2)	Drama	Female	20

Mixed group

Pseudonym	Area of Study	Gender	Age
(M) Strength (Initially Group 3)	Drama	Male	24
(M) John (New participant)	Microbiology	Male	24
(F) Nonto (New participant)	Politics	Female	22
(F) Loud Chick (Initially Group 1)	Dietetics	Female	23
(M) Mampintsha (Initially Group 3)	Drama	Male	22

Follow up interview questions

1.   Many people said that they enjoy watching *Muvhango* because of diversity that the soapy brings, as well as the fact that it shows a rural and city element. What stands out to you about these two shifts?

2.   Do you enjoy watching the fuse of the different cultures? Why? Why not?

3.   What do you think of the storyline that involved Borosi and Hangwani. Do you agree or disagree with the fact that Hangwani should get married to Borosi or do you think that Hangwani should not get married to Borosi?

4.   Last time, someone mentioned that the rules are made by the men to control women in *Muvhango*. Do you think that this is true, or do you think that the men make these rules to sustain culture?

5.   Some participants felt that Mulalo struggles to make up his own decisions and that he is controlled by his wife, does anyone have a different view of Mulalo?

6.   Very few people actually made reference about that the Chief has multiple wives. What do you think of the Chief's polygamous marriage?

7.   In the communities that you come from, is there a culture that rejects or supports polygamy?

8.   Some respondents thought that Mulumisi was a very humble man. Do you agree? Or do you disagree?

9.   What do you think makes a real man

10.   Can you think of a character in *Muvhango* possess characteristics of a real man

11.   Can you think of a male character in *Muvhango* does not possess the characteristics of a real man.

12.   The character of Dr Zwane was mentioned as being a conniving character. Is there anyone in your personal life that has acted in that way?

13.   Which Male character in *Muvhango* do you enjoy the most?

14.   What do you think about the way that the male characters in *Muvhango* dress?

15.   Some of you think that James comes across as metrosexual. Do you agree with this or do you disagree?

16.   Some of you mentioned that you struggled to understand the Chief, because he is sometimes aggressive and he is at other times sensitive. How do you understand the Chiefs behaviour, do you think that he is predominately aggressive or do you think that he is sensitive?