

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU- NATAL

TUMELO BERNARD SEHLABI

The Representation of Homosexual Men in The Soap Opera Generations

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Science (Gender Studies) in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Howard College Campus)

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DECLARATION

I hereby confirm that this dissertation is my own work. Any other work quoted has been duly acknowledged. It has not been submitted elsewhere for any other degree, neither have I ever submitted.

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ABSTRACT

This research examined the representation of homosexual men in soap opera *Generations*. It reveals that while homosexual characters have been incorporated in the locally produced soap opera *Generations*, the representation of such characters is revealed as ‘other’. This dissertation argued that the representation of homosexual men in soap opera *Generations* are categorized negatively often being seen to be morally degenerate consequently; the inclusion of homosexual men in *Generations* is often associated with negative stereotypes. This study argues that homosexual men in *Generations* are often represented as having problems to be solved. This include homosexual men being faced with secrecy, shame, guilt, homosexual violence, rejection and other negative stereotypes as represented in soap opera *Generations*. The research highlights the social constructions and gender stereotypes in mainstream media television which consider homosexuality as abnormal, unnatural and sickness. The secrecy of homosexuality implied by mainstream media television representation makes homosexuality to appear as something concealed and related to shame and regret. In addition, the dissertation also looks in-depth into categories of negative stereotypes where being a gay primarily realizes on the rigid gender schemas exploited by the mainstream media television to represent homosexual men as not men enough which appeared as natural rather than socially constructed. This study’s theoretical frame work brought together the concepts of different area of enquiry such as negative representation of homosexuality, homophobia, secrecy, guilt, shame while using discourse analysis. The major areas addressing the coding includes the representation of homosexuality in the text, soap operas’ (*Generations*) representation of homosexual men and the specific themes and objectives guiding each selected episode of *Generations*.

Key words: soap operas, mainstream media, television, representation, homosexuality

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.0 Background of the study

There has been a growing tendency for mainstream media inclusive of television to misrepresent, ignore, censor and destroy homosexuality and homosexual characters in television shows. Research shows that throughout history, television has either ignored homosexuality or represented it in a highly stereotypical manner (Capsuto, 2000; Gross, 2001; Harrington, 2003; Tropiano, 2002). While homosexual issues are underrepresented in mainstream television programming, they are over-represented in entertainment programmes. Mainstream programming is here referred to for it tends to stick to prominent stories of interest to a general population. According to Porfido (2009) when more explicitly represented, homosexual identities are frequently relegated to marginal, secondary or supporting roles. Studies show that homosexual characters in mainstream media are marked by once-off appearances (Gross 2001; Tropiano 2002; Barwise et al 1988), and as such, are represented as different from their heterosexual counterparts. Subsequently homosexual characters are represented as different from heterosexual characters particularly when it comes to absence of representing gay sexuality (Streitmatter 2009). However, it is quite challenging to discuss gay's sexuality without discussing in detail the concept sexuality itself.

While it is accepted that nowadays gay and lesbian characters occupy mainstream television roles, there is still much to be done in eradicating the existing negative stereotypes related to such characters. Porfido (2009) argues that the representation of homosexuality in mainstream media has been problematic in terms of quality and quantity. According to Porfido (2009) these homosexual characters appear in minor roles such as the gay brother, neighbour, son, friend, or colleague of the straight lead actors. This suggests that the representation of homosexual men in mainstream media television has presented the stereotypes which limit them from being their true self and living their lives fully. An example of this is seen in *Generations* where homosexual characters are scripted as both the son and employee of the main character and as such their homosexual identity is represented in a subtle way. This study explores the limit of representation of homosexuality in *Generations*, a prime-time South African soap opera. Alongside this, this study traces briefly the historical under-representation of homosexuality in prime-time soap operas. This

exploration serves the purpose of engaging how homosexuality is represented currently in *Generations*. The study examined a sample of 15 episodes of *Generations* which were aired between September 2009 until August 2010.

In line with these, this study explores the negative representation of homosexual men in mainstream media television as subordinate. According to Dyer, (2002) the fictional existence of homosexuality serves only to underline and reinforce the heterosexuality of the main characters. This point is further supported by Walters (2003) who adds that the individual existence of homosexual characters is also typically devoid of any emotional or erotic interpersonal relationship or disconnected from the queer¹ community at large. On a qualitative level Porfido (2009) highlights that homosexual men have been characterised in stereotypical ways. Thus, when or if exposed at all to the images of homosexuality, mainstream television viewers are represented with some caricatures of homosexuality. The most prominent includes largely introverted, lonely, criminal, suicidal, alcoholic or terminally ill characters that symbolise the evils associated to such hopelessness of being and loving (Porfido, 2009). As such, this study engages whether the representation of homosexuality in *Generations* challenges recent historical depictions of homosexuality as a deviant identity and practice.

While contemporary American² prime-time gay ‘soapies’ like Channel 4’s *Queer as Folk*, *The L Word* as well as the series *Noah’s ark* have treated homosexual people the same as any other person thereby breaking the negative perception of homosexuality, some negative representations of homosexuality still exist which rely on negative stereotypes and representation of ‘queerness’ in mainstream media. According to Papacharisi et al (2008), gay representations in mainstream media are scarce and introduced through the vehicle of role reversal, so as to serve the purpose of comic relief. Pearce (cited in Barrat, 1986:47) highlights, “Gay men are the unspoken, denied a voice, a chance to express their own needs in the mass media”. However, Pearce (cited in Barrat 1986) argues that mainstream media have adopted negative strategies to handle the question of homosexuality; for the purpose of this study, one of those is simply to ignore the existence of homosexual men. Central to this is the affirmation that homosexuality was out of recognition, an idea that homosexual men

¹The word “queer” means weird or bizarre and was first used as derogatory term for homosexuals in 20th century. The term was reclaimed in a political context and was embraced by gay/lesbian movement and lost out its negative meaning over time. “Queer” refers now to the people who reject to live within hetero-normative forms. In the context of this study, I will use queer as referred to homosexuals.

² The author acknowledges an American bias here, and this is linked to the primary case-study for this dissertation being *Generations*, a South African ‘soapie’ that uses American (and mainstream) formal conventions in its production.

were never intended to be visible on mainstream media. The above is a true reflection on the notion that mainstream television industry has a history of neglecting and ignoring the representation of homosexual men. Researchers have found out that while homosexual themes and characters have been under-represented in mainstream television programs, they are proportionately over-represented in entertainment programmes (Papacharisi et al 2008; Baker 2007; Barrat 1986).

In line with this concerns, Barwise et al (1988) add that, some groups (e.g. homosexuals) argue that not only are they under-represented on television, but they are also negatively represented through the use of 'queer stereotypes' in mainstream television like soap operas. As such, Dyer (1993:1) argues that "representation of oppressed groups has been, and often still is a relentless parade of insults". This being the case, stereotyping and misrepresentation of homosexuality in the mainstream media, particularly television soap operas, warrants attention because, on a social level, "people tend to imitate what is given in the mainstream media without questioning it and this reinforces stereotypes" (Baker, 2007:40). This is an indication that mainstream media plays a major role in shaping social perceptions based on negative stereotypes of homosexuality as they are often represented in the mainstream media. In line with this, this study discusses detailed account of the representation of homosexuality in mainstream media television soap opera *Generations*. It explores issues related to representation and stereotypes around how homosexual masculinity is represented in the mainstream South African (based and produced) soap opera *Generations*.

Thus, this study seeks to engage the 'othering' of homosexuality as it is represented in the hetero-normative thinking in soap opera *Generations*. The indication is that *Generations* as a mainstream soap opera follows the trend and maintains the existing stereotypes of heterosexuality which are socially, politically and culturally viewed as 'normative'. In addition to this, it is indicative of existing attitudes towards homosexuality which are often negatively filtered through mainstream discourse and in particular mainstream media television. These representations have impact on how such perceptions are shaped and how societies come to see and know homosexuality and homosexual men. Representations do not mirror reality, they fabricate it, and they construct it according to hegemonic and hetero-normative regulatory principles (Dyer, 2002). Thus, mainstream media soap operas could be argued to represent a world in which people (viewers) are assumed to be heterosexual. The existence of homosexuality remains tied to the invisibility of the private sphere, as such, when represented, homosexual visibility occurs mostly in a negative manner in mainstream

media. Hence, televisual representations of homosexuality are often seen as indecent and inappropriate for public viewing because the public is implicitly assumed to be the heterosexual majority (Warner, 2002). In all these concerns, Reed (2005) argues that television is the most apt medium for which heterosexual viewers can learn about 'the other' and expand on their notions of 'otherness' in relation to homosexuality. Homosexual characters are often measured against heterosexual and masculine/feminine polarities and are thus often represented as either "butch/femme" or "jock/queen" (Capsuto, 2000; Gross, 2001; Harrington, 2003; Tropiano, 2002).

Although the primary focus of this research is on the representation of homosexual men in the South African soap opera *Generations*, it is useful to discuss briefly some of the popular American soap operas in terms of the way they integrate homosexuality into their storylines other than the ones that have been mentioned previously in this study. According to Lenhart (2001) despite a concentrated introduction of homosexual characters and their increased visibility in the past decades, queerness in the day- time soap operas actually dates back to the 1970s, with a lesbianism being treated (briefly and rather negatively) in *The Young and the Restless*. Lenhart (2001) states that the first "fully realized" homosexual character was conceptualized on NBC's "*Another World*" in 1974 but the story never aired due to nervous executives at Proctor & Gamble, who owned the show. *All My Children* introduced a short-term lesbian character in the early 1980s and *As The world Turns* did the same with a gay male character later that decade. However, these characters appeared for a year at most and were not part of the established families on their respective programs. They were written out once queerness, as a 'social issue', had been explored through reactions by heterosexual characters comprising the regular cast (<http://girlslikegiants.wordpress.com/2012/07/16/gay-days-will-hortons-coming-out-storyline-on-nbcs-days-of-our-lives/>). In line with these concerns, this is an indication that homosexuality was not meant to be visible in any public mainstream media hence the reluctance of producers to depict homosexual characters in a long-term through television media. In the 1990s, *All My Children* continued to introduce other gay characters in romantic storylines. It is fitting then that perhaps the biggest gay themed story in daytime has been at *All My Children* (<http://www.123HelpMe.com/view.asp?id=66826>).

Regardless of the introduction of a lesbian character in *All my Children*, the storylines of that character was quickly written off (Walters, 2003). This was an indication that homosexuals were regarded as secondary citizens hence their non-recognition, negative stereotypic or rare

representations in the American soap operas was continued. It is not a surprise then that the negative perceptions on how homosexuals were regarded in the past are still followed in South African (based) soap opera *Generations*, representing homosexual men negatively and as morally perverted. In a South African context, regardless of its legalization, homosexuality is viewed as cultural taboo and a practice that contributes to the fast spread of HIV (Reddy et al 2009) while in the western homosexual men are considered equally with other members of the society.

Recently, South African television has also introduced homosexual life on locally produced soap operas featuring short and long running gay relationships. Marx (2007) shows that some of South Africa's most popular soap operas including M-Net's *Egoli* and SABC 3's *Isidingo* integrated gay characters into their storylines sometimes challenging existing negative stereotypes related to homosexuality in South African society. In line with this, it is of particular significance in this study to engage how *Generations* as South African Soap opera challenges/reinforces perceptions relating to the representation of homosexual men as homosexuality is often depicted stereotypically in mainstream television including soap operas. According to Marx (2007), same sex relationships are being introduced in soap operas with the intention of challenging the dominant ideas about hetero-normativity and male sexuality. While some homosexual characters have been included in the locally produced soap operas, certain stereotypes still persist in South African soap operas. This can be observed particularly through the often negative representation of homosexuality in local soap operas. The negative representation is particularly observed in the soap opera under study in that homosexual characters are always having an ongoing problem to be solved related to their sexuality. Marx (2007) argues that in the case of *Egoli* and *Isidingo*; the homosexual characters are represented as well-rounded characters in touch with their masculinity, and in this way challenging dominant ideas, not only relating to the representation of homosexuality but also, masculinities. While these two South African soap operas take that approach to homosexuality, it would be interesting to establish how other South African soap operas represent homosexual men. This study therefore, examines the negative representation of homosexual men as part of subordinate masculinities³ in one of those soap operas namely *Generations*.

³ Subordinate masculinities according to Connell (1995) are much more than cultural stigmatization of homosexuality or gay identity by heterosexual men, but gay masculinity is the most conspicuous. Some heterosexual men and boys too are expelled from the circle of legitimacy.

The idea of representing homosexual men in mainstream media is met with the common negative stereotypic depictions of such characters. As such, it compels one to conduct a study to look in-depth into how homosexual characters are negatively represented in the mainstream media television soap operas in South Africa. With lack or very limited literature which specifically addresses representations of homosexual men in mainstream media television soap operas, this study becomes relevant in addressing such kind of issues.

1.1 History of Representation of Homosexuality in Soap Operas

Soap opera had its origins in America in the appearance of daytime radio serials⁴. It was aimed primarily as entertainment for house-wives who could watch the serials while doing their house work during the day. Kilborn (1992) affirms that at least in their first few decades, soap operas were mainly targeted at an audience of women; more particularly “housewives”.

Allen postulates that the term “soap opera” probably originated in the entertainment press of the late 1930’s (Allen, 1985). The term came across from its connection to soap manufactures although there were also other sponsors and adverts including toothpaste, cereals, drugs, food and beverages. Soap was occasionally referred to as “washboard weepers” (Allen, 1985). This implies that soap opera can thus be seen as an essentially feminine form that was originally created because of the need for advertisers to attract the attention of female consumers as cleanliness of the house was/is considered to be women’s job. The fact that female characters are central to the soap operas marks hegemonic move given that women can relate to domestic advertisements during soap operas. Some researchers, however, argue that soap operas are still produced within “male-dominated, multi-national media conglomerates and within discursive practices which constructs that male as the norm” (Gledhill 2003, 365). Allen further adds that the word “opera” acquired meaning through its origins and double inappropriateness “Linked with the adjective ‘soap’, opera, the most elite of all narratives forms [became] a vehicle for selling the most humble of commodities”(1995:9). A clear definition of the word Opera suggests that it is an art form in which singers and musicians perform a dramatic work combining text called a libretto and musical score, usually in a theatrical setting (Concise Oxford English Dictionary 1983) .

⁴ Importantly, since this time, ‘soapies’ have become popular across the globe – featuring prominently in Nigeria’s film industry Nollywood, India’s film industry *Bollywood* and notably too within the Brazilian film industry; However it is not within the scope of this dissertation to engage these further.

Opera incorporates many of the elements of spoken theatre, such as acting, scenery, and costumes and sometimes includes dance. The above definition provides a detailed understanding of the origin of soap operas, suggesting that it may have started as an advertising project, but since the first radio dramas in the 1930s, soap operas have taken their own path away from its advertising beginnings. Initially, much of the advertisements in soap operas were influenced by sex traits stereotyping and hegemonic discourses. Advertisements portrayed women as housewives or sex objects (Clark et al, 2002). Often, when women were shown in a position of power, it was represented as being weak and inadequate because of the dominant ideology that, it was/is men who are the most powerful, and so having a man working for a woman is more an issue of abnormality because it goes against the norm.

Historically, in television soap operas, the depiction of homosexuality included certain minimum conditions of representation: such characters occupied ‘supporting roles’ that were relatively short term and problem-based storylines with little or no on-screen sex or physical intimacy (Fuqua, 1995). Until the late 1960s, homosexuals were in the “non-recognition stage” (Hart, 2000:53), with regards to television, and specifically mainstream representation, where being gay was not mentioned or visible in any way. Shugart (2003; 68) argues, gay characters were initially introduced “as problems to be solved and almost always reflected gendered stereotypes that characterize gay men as effeminate and lesbians as masculine”. While most TV historians focus on the marginalized treatment of homosexuality in primetime, the limited presence of lesbian or gay characters or narratives on daytime soap operas is perhaps even more surprising, given both the enduring legacy of the genre and the fact that “daytime television is known for addressing sensitive, issue-oriented material long before prime time tests the waters” (Pela 1997; 46). Given that soap operas “are predicted on the realm of heterosexual romance, marriage and family life” as highlighted by Harrington (2003:220), the introduction of homosexual characters into soap opera, could be seen as the antithesis of the traditional soap opera narrative.

Thus, soap operas were confined to the representation of hetero-normative gender roles which are considered to be normal and natural. As such, the representation of hetero-normative gender roles in soap operas engaged homosexual men as feminine. Such representations positioned homosexual men as effeminate and thus lacking in ‘masculinity’, therefore positioning ‘gay-ness’ as a negative attribute for men to display. This shows that history of the representation of homosexual men in soap operas was connected to that of women’s position as subordinated minority group in society.

In contrast with other genres of television, soap operas are based on the dream of heterosexual romance, marriage and family. The fact that the basis narrative theme has not been modified since the past decades, soap operas depict a core family that most of the dramas revolve around which include struggles and difficulties of family life. This indicates that the focus of soap operas has not changed for decades and still highlights the romantic heterosexual life. As Fuqua (1995) highlights, “soap operas narrative structure is dependent upon the assumed and taken for granted heterosexuality of a particular community [...] the mere representation of a gay character [...] is enough to cause a type of generic pressure upon most elements of soap opera codes” (1995:201). Even though the homosexual characters were later included in the soap operas, the role they play was not effective due to the unique narrative structure of soap operas being particularly focusing on heterosexual family life. That being the case, homosexual construction (homosexual men) was incorporated in a subtle way, often being subordinated by heterosexual male characters.

As soap opera is arguably the only narrative on television created specifically for women, *Generations* follows this trend and is created specifically for women. The cast in *Generations* consist predominantly of women, as the genre was originally created because of the need for advertisers to attract the attention of female consumers.⁵ The time slot for *Generations* is early evening at 8 o’clock making it possible for housewives, career women and men too to view the show. The advertisements aired during commercial breaks as well as time-specific adverts, for example, for Mother’s Day or Christmas reflect the fact that this soap opera is aimed mainly at a female audience (Marx, 2007). Advertisements that are aired during *Generations*, include cosmetics and healthcare products such as shampoo, washing powder like Omo and Surf, cooking related products such as Tastic rice and royco cook-in sauces and house-hold cleaning products such as Handy Andy to mention a few. These products designate female gender roles as they are designed for household cleaning which are attributed to women’s work⁶. While these products are no longer strictly the case, soap operas in general still are targeted towards a female audience.

⁵ Commercial messages in soap operas were directed almost exclusively for the attraction of female audience the reason being the products which were advertised were targeted for women as assumed to be housebound and engaged with domestic duties and therefore do not miss even a single episode of daytime soaps.

⁶ Such ‘women’s work’ relies on historical, social, cultural and political understandings of the gender division of labour and the separation of designated public and private spaces- it is this latter, private realm- the home, that women are *expected* to occupy.

Thus, the history of the representation of homosexual men in soap operas is connected to that of women's position as a subordinate minority group in society. Gaye (cited in Lindt, 2004) argues that the representation of minorities is actually marked by symbolic annihilation; she explains that the representation in mainstream media television is always symbolic rather than realistic and that the actual act of being represented by mainstream media television is an exhibition of power. Therefore, certain social groups which have minimal power/representation in the mainstream media may be well destined to non-existence/misrepresentation or unimportance, through symbolic annihilation (Gaye, cited in Lindt, 2004). This applies to the sexual minorities (particularly homosexuals) which have been ignored by the mainstream media and treated as if they do not exist. As Wyatt (2002) highlights, before 1970 almost no homosexual character could be found on television, and their relative absence from the screen continued until 1990s. Fejes & Petrich (1993) affirm that even when homosexual characters were represented on television, they were shown as asexual. This being the case, homosexual men as a minority group have conventionally been (and still are being) represented through negative stereotypes in the mainstream media as highlighted earlier in this study.

1.2 History and Politics of homosexuality in soap Opera Generations

The history of homosexuality in soap opera *Generations* can be traced back to post-apartheid South Africa. In a nut shell, in South Africa, homosexuality has a history of repression which began in the era of colonization and was prolonged through the apartheid era under the laws which include the immorality act of 1957 (Ratele, 2009). In that era, “the most extensive powers vested in the police were in their dealings with the crime of sodomy” (Reid et al, 2002:120). The above authors point out further that during the apartheid period, the National party formed under “Christian” ideals perceived same-sex involvement as a “threat to white civilization”. There was therefore nothing much known of the visibility of homosexuality and homosexuals in South African television which resulted from the banning of homosexuality by apartheid laws (Reid et al, 2002).

Today's constitution of South Africa which was effected in 1996 clearly comprises a clause against discrimination based on sexual orientation (Christansen, 2000). However, the visibility of homosexuality in new South African television nowadays is still influenced by the perceptions of the apartheid laws regarding homosexuality. Homosexual men are still

represented negatively in the new South African mainstream media television. It is worth noting at this point that the representation above is negative because it is limited not because it is effeminate. As highlighted by Harrison (2005), some of the South African's most popular soap operas including M-Net's *Egoli* and SABC 3 *Isidingo* introduced homosexuality in their story lines to challenge the existing stereotypes. In 2000, *Generations* also included a bisexual character (Vivian)⁷ but the storyline was turned into gore and was quickly written off (www.rjr.ru.ac.za/rjrpdf/rjr_no24/hanging_washing). This implies that as part of a sexual minority, bisexuals in *Generations* were aired as a once-off, an indication of the negative perception of such characters in South African television. As *Generations* introduced into its plot-line a homosexual (male) couple, the inclusion of these characters was met with widespread public debate, and this was also reflected in negative stereotypic representation of these characters within the soap opera *Generations*. The narrative line regarding the homosexual couple in *Generations* reflects homosexual men as being weak and not worthy to be identified as real men often less masculine. Thus, it goes without saying that some masculinities are more acceptable than others. This indicates that some may be actively unacceptable, and in this case the representation of homosexual masculinities in soap opera *Generations*⁸ follows that trend.

Kimmel (cited in Craig, 1992) notes that not only are women ascribed out of masculine narratives, but homosexual men are too. This is further supported by Devor (1987) who notes that all people are presumed to be either of male or female sex, an affiliation which is permanent, while the physical attributes of a specific sex determine one's gender based on the related attributes of femininity or masculinity. In a discussion of the concept of masculinity, Connell (1995) points out that there is not 'one' masculinity, but multiple masculinities, which can be understood through a social analysis of gender. He further explains that our general understanding of gender, and therefore masculinity, is constituted through discourse and practice (e.g. labour, violence, sexuality). On the contrary, Craig (1992) perceives masculinity as what a specific culture expects of its man. This description suggests that masculinity exists only in a cultural context, as something rooted in tradition and codes. Connell (1995) emphasizes that "Masculinity does not exist except in contrast with femininity" (1995:68).

⁷ Vivian Majozi (Fayer Peters) featured in *Generations* in 2000-2003.

⁸ Within each of South Africa's largest cultural groupings, strong efforts are made to characterize homosexuality as alien or no-existent. Among black South Africans, a prominent discourse has characterized, and continues to characterize homosexuality as a Western colonial import foreign in all respects to indigenous African culture, hence the negative and derogatory words given to homosexual characters in *Generations*.

1.3 Selected Soap Opera

In order to attempt an analytic and logical approach in representation of homosexual men in soap opera *Generations*, more detailed discussion and the background information relating to *Generations* becomes an important part of this study. This led to a more focused engagement with issues relating to stereotypical representation of homosexual men in this specific soap opera. For the purpose of this study, the main cast and supporting cast were briefly introduced in order to provide the context of each character in the serial. (See appendix 1).

Generations is a prime time soap opera aired week nights on SABC 1 at 8 o'clock in the evenings. It began airing in South Africa after the country's first democratic elections in 1994. It is produced by Mfundu Vundla under Morula productions. "With more than 1000 episodes completed, *Generations* enjoys not only one of the highest market shares on SABC 1 but it is the longest lasting commercial success of the Morula pictures in Southern Africa" (www.sabc1.co.za/index.php?/drama/soaps). The back story to *Generations* revolves around a family-owned advertising agency, with a storyline that celebrates the dreams and aspirations of predominantly upper-middle-class black South African men and women. As in all soap operas rivalry, treachery and blackmail between siblings and friends and foes alike make *Generations* one of the most popular dramas South Africa has ever produced. Suspense, intrigue and tension are the order of the day as the plots unfold and romance influences relationships between warring parties (www.sabc1.co.za/index.php?/drama/soaps).

Barker (2011) explains that most soap operas establish a sense of geographical space that the audience can identify with and of which the characters return again and again. Like most soap operas, the geographical setting of *Generations* is an urban city. *Generations* is geographically located in and around the Post-Apartheid city of Johannesburg, in the province of Gauteng (South Africa). This province is considered to be the richest in the country and a vast majority of the people in South Africa migrate from their places of origins and settle in Johannesburg (Ibid).

Every successful soap opera has a core family around which most of the drama revolves (www.theafricachannel.com/programmsphp?genre==soap&gnuse) and *Generations* is no exception. At the heart of *Generations* since the series' first conquered the heart of Africa over a decade ago, is Moroka family. Early episodes of *Generations* were based on the story of the Moroka family in order to set up the back story and also to establish the core values of this soap opera. In terms of genre, *Generations* is characterised as a daily prime time soap

opera without narrative closure. It seeks to combine upper, middle and working class blacks in a fictive community (www.sabc1.co.za/index.ph?/drama/soaps).

The majority of *Generations*' characters' lives revolves around their work places and is portrayed as upper class, holding working positions at high powered advertising agencies. The storyline in 2008-2009 revolved around a media company called *Mashaba media* run by Dineo and *Ezweni communications* under Sibusizo. Dineo takes over after her husband becomes ill. She is faced with the greatest challenge as the company goes through a financial crisis and thus she is forced to ask for the help of her brother in-law.

Moreover, the majority of characters in *Generations* are portrayed as attractive to the audience and sex is used to get what they want either to get into a job like Jason (homosexual character) into the company or get information about a particular person. There are short passionate affairs and reoccurring relations mainly heterosexual. Motsaathebe (2009), documents that the running themes in *Generations* encompass a wide range of issues including feminine values, abortion, homosexuality, prostitution, child abuse and family violence. The underlying factor is that heterosexual issues in *Generations* outnumber homosexual issues. Importantly, for the purpose of this dissertation, the large majority of sexual relationships in *Generations* are represented as heterosexual (in fact this is the considered 'norm' in the world of *Generations*). As such, the inclusion of homosexuality in *Generations* indicates a shift in South African Soap opera narrative and has enabled the storyline to make homosexuality visible. Thus, with the introduction of homosexuality (in the relationship of Senzo and Jason), considered marginal and depicted at least initially as negative. The homosexual storyline in *Generations* is the narrative mostly driven by secrecy, shame, coming out plots, discrimination, gay bashing and derogatory words by heterosexual characters. All those deny homosexual characters having any other narrative to be represented in a positive manner. This representation of homosexuality in *Generations* through the characters of Jason and Senzo will be picked up for the discussion later on in this chapter.

At this juncture, it is of particular importance to discuss the key aspects of 'representation' to enable a clear understanding of representation of homosexual men in soap opera *Generations*. This will be discussed later when the study unfolds and the following section serves to conceptualize the question of 'representation'.

1.3 Representation

There are many controversies with identifying the concrete meaning of representation. Representation refers to the construction in any medium (including ‘the media’) of aspects of ‘reality’ such as people, places, objects, events, cultural identities and other abstract concepts (Chandler, 2006). Such representations do not only limit themselves to the print media, but also include television and film (Chandler, 1994). In broad terms, to represent something or someone, involves a process of description, depiction or symbolization. According to Hall (1997) representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It does involve the use of language, of signs and images that stand for or represent objects, events, ideas and people. He further explains that “it is the link between concepts and language which enables us to *refer* to either the ‘real’ world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events” (1997:17). At its core, this study places emphasis on the representation of homosexual men in television soap operas (specifically relating to *Generations*). In relation to the study of media text, and in this context representation in mainstream television, the concept of representation is understood in relation to “how the media represent[s] people and groups” (Branston and Stafford, 1999:125). In line with this understanding of representation, Hall (1997) offers further useful considerations when he defines representation as “the process by which members of a culture use language to provide meaning” (1997: 61). From this articulation, he argues that representation cannot possibly be a fixed, unchangeable notion. While culture and language evolve and grow with human society, the same must therefore be said of the perceptions of representations that are established within these cultures and languages. Swanson (1991: 123) furthermore provides insights that “there can be no absolute version of how things are but only competing versions”. She continues:

Ideas about what people are like and how they are meant to be understood already prevail in our culture. They give meaning to our sense of self and allow us to position ourselves in relation to others. Such meanings and attitudes are reproduced in representation but the way representations are constructed is as important as the ideas and meanings they project, since they offer positions for us, through which we recognize images as similar, or different from ourselves and those around us. We continually define ourselves in changing relations to those meanings; images change new time and meanings that are legitimated by the social or cultural context change as well (1991:123).

Thus, representations not only change over time, but may also have different interpretations across times and contexts. In relation to these concerns, the representation of homosexual

men has indeed changed in mainstream media across times. Although there has been quite a change from the representation of homosexual men as comic models or as having problems to be solved or even as victims, Russo (1987) argues that homosexual men have been visible in mainstream media but it is how they have been visible that has remained offensive for almost century. In that manner, dominant ideologies have therefore held virtually all control over how homosexual men have been represented in the past, leading to negative stereotypes of homosexual men in mainstream media. This being the case, such negative stereotypes still exists even today as in *Generations*; representation of homosexual men is such that it represents stereotypical ideas which sustain negative social opinions towards homosexual identities. Central to this is the meaning given to the homosexual images as represented in mainstream media and how those meanings are interpreted in different cultures.

According to Hall (1997), there are three approaches to understanding representation: the reflective, the intentional and the constructionist. In the 'reflective approach' to representation, also known as the mimetic approach, "meaning is thought to lie in the object, person, idea or event in the real world, and language functions like a mirror, to 'reflect' the true meaning as it already exists in the world" (1997: 24). Language imitates, reflects, and mirrors nature. Arguing the opposite case, the 'intentional approach' argues that, "it is the speaker, the author, who imposes his or her unique meaning on the world through languages. "Words mean what the author intends they should mean" (1997:25). The 'constructionist approach' is an approach that recognizes the public and social character of language and that "neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning in language" (1997: 25). This is because "things do not mean; we 'construct' meaning, using representational systems, concepts and signs" (1997:25). This implies that *Generations* viewer-ship could consider negative stereotypic representation of homosexual men to be true based on the construction of the meaning as represented in the soap opera. In the same way, viewers also construct meaning from the position of their personal contexts, histories and belief systems. Within this approach, Hall warns that, "we must not confuse the 'material' world, where things and people exist, and the 'symbolic' practices and processes through which representation, meaning and language operate" (1997:25). In this regard, this study has adopted the constructionist approach to representation of meaning. This aligns with Hall's (1997) constructionist theory that suggests that viewers do construct meaning of the representations. However, as a viewer myself and researcher, I am well aware of my own subject position. This being the case, the representation of homosexuality in mainstream

media is constructed (based on what this study interprets) in negative stereotypic depiction in soap opera *Generations*. In this note, it is clear that such kind of representations cannot work separately as it involves some elements of stereotypes which the following section articulates. Importantly, this is because stereotypes as a form of representation give generalized views or assumptions of a particular group and in this case homosexual men.

Dyer (1993: 1) links representation and stereotyping by asserting that “how we are seen determines in part how we are treated, how we treat others is based on how we see us; such view comes from representation”. It is evident then that representation does not work in isolation, but the assumption is: how some members of society see themselves, how they are viewed and even treated by others is determined largely by the mainstream media, and this includes television (Bernstein in Newbold et al. 2002:260). Thus, in line with Hall’s (1997) approach in representation, it is the social actors who use the conceptual system of their culture and other representational systems to construct meaning. This could imply that the representation of homosexual men in mainstream media is given meaning through the construction of different opinions of viewer-ship. Similarly in the case of *Generations*, representation of homosexual men is determined by negative stereotypic interpretations as highlighted in this study. Dyer (1988) has identified four types of ‘representation’. The first sense he calls “re-presenting”, which refers to how television re-presents our world to us.

For the purposes of this study, Dyer’s first type becomes a point of consideration in relation to the representation of homosexuality in *Generations*. Based on the lack of, or rare representation of homosexual men in soap operas,⁹ for instance, it can be assumed that the representation of homosexuality is not an immediate or obvious mainstream choice. Often when homosexual men do find representation in the mainstream television, such representation is limited; offering dimension rather than fully developed characters. This indicates that, in most cases, when homosexual men do find representations in soap operas, the representation is accompanied by, and indeed often displayed through negativity which marks deviancy or ‘otherness’. Hall (1997) elaborates on this concept of deviant behaviour, by making the assertion that the focus lies in the negative labelling of this behaviour, while relating it to what is referred to as ‘social problems’. Such negative representation in

⁹ While *Queer as Folk*, *Noah’s Ark* and *The L Word* have received great mainstream and public attention, all these are designated ‘queer’ and it is the argument of this dissertation that the hetero-normative mainstream marginalizes ‘queerness’ either by providing it with its own ‘designated’ programming, or by under-representing queerness in more ‘conventional’ series and in this case ‘soap operas’.

Generations could be marked by derogatory names like *isitabane*¹⁰ and *inkonkone*¹¹ often used by heterosexual characters to humiliate the homosexual characters in the show. For an example, this could be marked on the storyline where Sara and Khaphela refer to Senzo as *Inkonkoni* in their discussion. It is an indication that homosexual men are nothing but worth to be associated with animal behaviors. This idea according to Hall (1997) is because particular words stands for, symbolizes or represent a concept that it can function as a sign and convey meaning, as such, negative representation of homosexual men in soap opera *Generations* can be offensive to homosexual viewers.

The second type identified by Dyer (1988) is that of being representative of something-being 'typicality'. Importantly, what is defined 'typical' is often dictated via social, political and cultural hegemonic 'norms'. With regards sexuality, heterosexuality is often understood as *the* norm, and in this context understood as 'typical'. Dyer goes on to say; "what harm or good the stereotype does to the group is of interest" (1988: 3). Whilst he does not see all stereotypes as negative, the categories that emerge in relation to homosexual men such as 'faggot' and 'sissy-boy', as common stereotypes, are definitely not ones that work in favor or to the advantage of the homosexual men and how they find representation within the mainstream media. Such are men who do not conform to the dominant masculine norms around sexuality and in particular effeminate men as they are equated to women in society and therefore lack masculinities.

The third type of representation referred to is that of representation as speaking for people. Faced with television images, people do not need to ask "what is this image of?" as much as "who is speaking here?" (Dyer, 1988:3). This applies mostly, according to Dyer, to groups outside the mainstream television. For instance, such groups could refer to sexual minorities, like homosexual men, who are socially marginalized on the basis that they differ from hegemonic norms. In this case, hegemonic norm is referred to as a concept used to describe the existence of dominance of one social group over another, such that the ruling group,

¹⁰ *Isitabane* is a derogatory Zulu word referring to a lesbian woman or a gay man.

¹¹ "*Inkonkoni* literally translates 'blue wildebeest', a wild animal found in Southern Africa. It is an indigenous, colloquial Isizulu term for lesbians and gay men. No informants have been able to offer an explanation as to why the blue wildebeest should be associated with same-sex sexuality, except for the late Rev. Tsietisi Thandekiso, former minister to a Johannesburg-based black gay and lesbian church who explained that the wildebeest is sexually indiscriminate, 'especially in winter'." Source: Culture, Health and Sexuality, Vol.5 No.5 (Sep-Oct 2003) by Ruth Morgan and Graeme Reid
Based on the personal interview that I had with Professor N.N. Mathoosi; UKZN School of IsiZulu, *Inkonkoni* is of course a blue wildebeest. When the male ones get old, they are chased away by the young ones and live in isolation. The isolated blue wildebeests are said to live as an individual or as group of male animals hence the gay men are referred to as *Inkonkoni* as they engage in same-sex relationship.

referred to as a hegemon, acquires some degree of consent from the subordinate, as opposed to dominance purely by force. It is used broadly to mean any kind of dominance, and narrowly to refer to specifically cultural and non-military dominance (Gramsci 1971; Heywood 1994).

The final type of representation identified by Dyer asks the question; what does the image represent to the people who are watching? In this manner, stereotypes do not necessarily entail the same meaning with what is intended by those who produce it. This is typically, what homosexual men could experience. It could be that, for some, when watching the representations of homosexuality on television with all good intentions and being fairly represented, the message conveyed may not be entirely the same as that consciously intended by the producers. As the case in *Generations*, for instance, the narrative line revolving around gay bashing might not be intended by the producers to reinforce the social status-quo and violence against homosexual men, instead, the message that some viewers may interpret is that homosexual men might be at risk of being faced with brutal attacks. In line with Hall's (1997) intentional approach to representation, the author (in this case the producer) imposes their unique meaning on the world, as a result construction of the meaning is based on the interpreter (viewer). This according to Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory emphasizes the importance in which television influences viewers, it provides vicarious experiences on which to model beliefs, attitudes and behavior when real-life experiences are more limited. As such, regular viewers are more likely than less regular viewers to adopt television reality as their own social reality.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Literature Review

The review is an integral part of this research as it documents previous research conducted in this field, and in other fields related to the topic under-study. While the reasons for choosing this study were cited in the above chapters, the review focussed on previous studies on representation of homosexual men in media. In line with Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999), the literature review involves more than merely citing as many sources as possible, but highlights pertinent literature and contributes to the field by providing a novel and focused reading of the literature. However, in the literature studied, a lot has been documented in relation to the current topic but very little attention is given to the representation of homosexual men in the soap opera as a form. While this dissertation focuses specifically on the representation of homosexuality in soap opera as form, an examination of an area of literature that engages homosexuality in the mainstream media television and film is useful in order to understand better how homosexuality in television soap opera is represented.

The representation of homosexuality in mainstream television soap operas is rare and representation of sexuality have been severely restricted and largely confined to the cinema. Tropiano (2002) embarks on a critical study of the history of representation of homosexuality on television. He states that some of the first representations of homosexuality in television can be traced back to 1950s talk shows where the topic was introduced. According to Tropiano (2002), during the mid-50s, the topic of homosexuality was discussed in limited ways: as a social problem or as a target of sensationalism. Tropiano mentions “Homosexuals who stalk and molest Children” and “Introduction to the Problem of Homosexuality” as examples of the complete mood and topics that dominated the discussions (2000:3). He also asserts that lesbian women were often excluded from these discussions (Tropiano, 2002).

Tropiano further highlights that in the comedy genre, the character of the sissy was the prominent recurrent representation of homosexuality up to the 1970s. Furthermore, he explains that during that time, comedy sitcoms incorporated the subject of homosexuality in the plotlines through:

-coming out episodes

-shows of mistaken identity

-programs where the characters pretend to be gay to escape a situation as well as special episodes that addressed some specific social problems like AIDS (Tropiano, 2002).

This means that homosexuality was used in early American television primarily to present deviant characters. Represented in roles from comic models, mistaken identities, mainstream television often discredited homosexuals, playing up bizarre or threatening elements in a response by the dominant mainstream to resist change within the social order. In the similar case of the South African television, *Generations* follows the same trend by representing homosexual men in storylines which discredit such characters often being represented as wrestling with their sexuality.

In his groundbreaking work, "The Celluloid Closet," Russo (1987) explains how the representation of homosexuality in film is directly related to a history of censorship. He explains that in the 1930s, the Motion Picture Production Code was established. The Code represented part of the industry's effort to avoid formal regulation. This self-regulating policy limited, among many other subjects, the representation of sexual images of any kind in film. He enlightens most importantly the three main types of depictions of queer characters that survived the regulations in American film: "the sissy", "the villain", and "the tragic hero". According to Russo, the "sissy" is the effeminate, flamboyant, asexual homosexual man. This illustrates the power dynamics that were and still are present between homosexual men and women as homosexual men found representation while homosexual women were barely considered. This invisibility further marginalizes women as they are considered inferior in South African communities. For him, the sissies became symbols of failed masculinities, weakness and the things men secretly dread (homosexuality). In line with Russo's arguments, homosexual men in *Generations* are represented as weak and such, not conforming to hetero-normative discourse. In representing the dangers of being homosexual, Russo highlights that films used the images of "the villain" and "the tragic hero" to show the boding consequences of their "perversion". These two representations represented homosexual men as killers or as victims of tragic deaths.

Nardi (1997) discusses several strategies for challenging negative and stereotypic characterization of gay men, lesbian women, bisexuals and transgendered individuals in mainstream media. According to Nardi (1997) images of homosexual men and lesbians women throughout history depicted in film or other mainstream media such as television,

characterized homosexual men as effeminate with failed masculinities or neurotic issues. Lesbian women were rarely seen in mainstream media television. In the 1960's and 1970's, homosexual men and women characters in mainstream film and television were represented as lonely and seen as pathological and predacious. The same can be said in the case of *Generations* where the depiction of homosexual men is often represented as lonely and confused in terms of their sexuality which relates to the negative stereotypes which viewership may hold about such characters. The author shows that television talk shows and sitcoms in the 1970's began to take more risk and address homosexual men's issues as specific topics or themes. He highlights that television has never accurately represented the lives of homosexual men and women, as such; their appearances have been limited as absent, disregarded, stereotyped, and treated badly and with social problems (Nardi, 1997). He further argues that the mainstream media television supported the idea that homosexual men are different. Nardi emphasises the element of heterosexism, where he argues that positive homosexual men's images tended to be white middle or upper class men or who are much desexualised. Contrary to this is the constructions based on the representation of the homosexual men as represented in *Generations* where they are black, middle class and are stereotypically represented as lacking sexual life and intimacy, as such, this constitutes double victimisation of black homosexual men.

Researchers show that in the mid-1980s, there was still a vast disparity between reality and representation in relation to homosexuality in soap operas. According to Hawes (1993) homosexual men face loneliness, ostracism and guilt. They also find themselves homeless and/or clinically depressed yet they live within the same political systems, same instincts and the same fears as their heterosexual counterparts. Thus, to a certain degree, this could be the lived-realities of some of homosexual men and mainstream media television takes part in representing homosexuality in such situations where being homosexual one has to suffer the consequences. The above explains also how most homosexual men in real life decide to hide due to stigma influenced by societal and political connotations. On this basis, their sexual diversity remains hidden as well in most of the mainstream media representations. Russo (1987) states that purely mythological gay men/lesbian women proliferate the screen, perpetuating menacing stereotypes that appeared to threaten heterosexual society much more than any reality. In the case of *Generations*, homosexual representation entails such stereotypes of feeling 'guilty' of their sexuality as represented by the two homosexual characters Jason and Senzo. More often than not, they do not wish to be known in public

even to the close relatives and families, as a result, resort to ignorance of their sexuality and pretend to be identified as something they are not. Similarly, the rare representation of adolescent homosexuality on mainstream media television until the mid-1990s fell into a few narrow categories. According to Kielswasser et al (1992) character types were restricted to the 'confused teen,' the 'situational homosexual,' and the 'assimilated gay.' Each of these types was generally developed around a burning desire of the character to be a part of the mainstream media television, reflecting a more desperate than affirmation attitude.

Other than the menacing stereotypes in representations, homosexual characters began to appear more and more on prime-time television programming. According to Walters (2003) not until the 1980s did sexual minorities achieve "quantifiably meaningful" representation on television. She focuses on the paradox of being homosexual man in the new millennium and cautions throughout her work against reading increased visibility of homosexual men "as an unambiguous sign of real and meaningful social integration, celebration or even kind acceptance" (2003; 24). Her focus is more on television than on film. She argues that television has a more pervasive and mainstream influence on culture and offers a more varied collection of representation. She explores the homosexual men's visibility, a phenomenon that includes openly homosexual men, lesbian women, bisexual and transgendered people as television characters. Even as Walters acknowledges evolvement on the representation of sexual minorities, she seeks a more subtle analysis of "conflicting high fives" (2003:10) that examine the quality as well as quantify of homosexual images. Walters notes the change of representation of homosexual men on television which has also generated strong homophobia and violence against homosexual men. The increased visibility of homosexual men has tended toward the "normalizing" of homosexual man and a turn toward "gay chic" that may ultimately deflect attention from the substantive political concerns of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual people; mute diversity within the gay community and between homosexual men and heterosexual men and lead to the commodification of gayness. Following the same line, rather than the representation of homosexual men in mainstream media, by contrast; lesbian characters in the 1980s were the decade in which they began their "fictional coming out" (Moritz, 1994; 126). Capsuto (2000) observes the "bad" homosexual men were the ones with a sex drive, while the "good" homosexual men were asexual. Under this protocol, it was no surprise then that the first passionate same-sex kisses in prime-time were between murderers (Capsuto 2000). While imitating the depictions of lesbians in film, lesbian characters remained a rare sight and when they were seen, they were often violent (Capsuto

2000; 227), or manipulated to conform to men's interests and soften their egos, and their sexuality (Dickey 1987b; 74).

Despite the harmful stereotypes and depictions of representation of homosexuality in the mainstream media, television programming has been considered to be the most powerful and influential medium for discussing sexualities. These programs, however, almost always framed homosexuality and images of homosexuals in a heterosexual manner in order to lessen the threat to the heterosexual community. In their article, "*Invisibility, Homophobia and Heterosexism: Lesbians, Gays and the Media*," Fejes and Petrich (1993) expand on the criticism that heterosexuality is viewed as superior to homosexuality on television. One example of this preference that the authors note is that homosexual characters on television tend to live in heterosexual world. For instance, in as much as American soap opera like *The L Word* has successfully included homosexual characters in the storylines, the question of lesbianism is arguably represented to satisfy hetero-normative values. Contrary to this concern, it is in rare cases, if ever, homosexual men are seen in their comfort zone where they can be who they truly are in a community that accepts them. Furthermore, mainstream media television does not represent images of homosexuals as full characters with sexuality, friends and problems in the same way that heterosexual characters are portrayed. A number of scholars (Amico, 2005; Fouts & Inch, 2005; Meyer, 2003; Walters, 1998) maintain that many homosexual characters are represented and identified only by their sexual orientation, which is nearly never the case for a heterosexual character. Fejes and Petrich (1993) highlight that one reason why these observations matter is that regular television viewers regard representations of homosexual men on television as appropriate representation of homosexual men in the entire world. Regarding what this section hypothesizes, the main reason of choosing this topic is to argue whether the representation of homosexual men in the soap opera *Generations* challenges the general viewer-ship regarding existing stereotypes of homosexuality or if it reinforces these stereotypes. This entails whether homosexual men are ever represented in their comfort zone or if the representation of homosexual men in *Generations* challenges the recent historical depictions of homosexuality as a deviant identity and practice.

Television programmes have an implication of lack of attention to sexual minorities and in particular ignorance of positive behaviors and messages related to homosexual men in soap operas. In their article, "*Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual content on television*"; Fisher et al (2007) conducted a study to assess the presence of sexual behaviors and verbal messages related to

homosexual men, lesbian women, and bisexual content on mainstream television. They show that at its inception, television hardly present sexual themes and throughout the early decades of television, aspects of character's sexuality were considered too sensitive to be portrayed or discussed in television shows. "One theme that has been especially ignored is the representation of sexual issues related to homosexual men/women, and bisexual individuals" (Fisher et al, 2007:168). Homosexual characters on mainstream media television are mostly represented in a manner that they battle with their sexuality and have no sexual feelings. In line with these concerns, homosexual men in *Generations* wrestle with their sexuality, an implication which makes it difficult to associate with other homosexual characters. Even when homosexual characters are represented on television, they are often shown in an asexual context (Fejes & Petrich, 1993). Thus, although *Generations* has a male homosexual couple, it is not represented as intimate as compared with other heterosexual couples which are often shown in a physically affectionate manner in the show. Walters (2003) affirms that all of these representations skirt the realities and implications of homosexuality by desexualizing the characters and never depicting them in romantic or sexual situations. In view of what this section postulates, this adds to the reason why this study is chosen as it argues that the inclusion of homosexual characters in *Generations* marks the soap operas ability to sustain the gender stereotyping among homosexual men.

Benshoff and Griffin (2006) argue that unlike other identity markers, sexuality is not easily recognizable and therefore filmmakers rely on connotative means to suggest that a character is queer. Benshoff et al classified the cinematic resources used to express the queerness of a character: "dialogue (e.g., a male character who likes flowers; delivery, a male character who flips his wrist; name, a woman; and costume makeup and hair, women wearing plain shoes, women with short or pulled back hair)" (Benshoff et al, 2006:15).

Benshoff et al (2006) summarize the salient criticism regarding the representation of queer identity in film;

- (i) Most films are made from a heterosexual perspective and when there is an attempt to tell the story from a queer perspective; effects are made to change the plot in a way that will not "offend" straight sensibilities.
- (ii) There is a conscious effort in Hollywood to minimize queer plotlines and character from the films and scripts.

(iii) Gay intimacy, romance and community are often marginalized. Producers often resort to flamboyant images as a way of avoiding to address issues of sex.

(iv) When gays are represented, producers use straight characters as points of audience identification; thereby making queer characters secondary.

(v) Most representations rely heavily on stereotypes.

(vi) Films that address queer topics minimize gay struggles or the contributions of queer activists.

Interestingly, most of the critics of gay/lesbian representations in film are also marked in the representation of gay characters in television soap operas. Like film, the characters represented in mainstream television media depend on stereotypes, usually play secondary roles in the storylines and are denied any sexual desire.

One of the greatest issues surrounding homosexuality in mainstream media is the question of secrecy and the problem of ‘coming out of the closet’¹². A great deal of homosexual representation in mainstream media is ascribed to secrecy. This is mostly an issue where one has to come to terms with exposing his sexual orientation either to the intimates or even to the public. Not all homosexual characters on mainstream media television ‘come out’ as openly gay. In his article, "*Telepistemology of the Closet; or, the Queer Politics of Six Feet Under*," Chambers (2003) examines the implications of being a closeted homosexual character, as represented on the series *Six Feet Under*¹³. Chambers asserts that hetero-normativity creates a closet from which homosexual men must decide to remain or come out. It is assumed that one is heterosexual unless they come out. This hetero-normativity is invisible, but accepted within culture. There are two options for people inside the closet, they can either suppress their true identity or they can just not contradict what people assume about them. The most obvious issue surrounding this in *Generations* is of course the storyline relating to the character Senzo who wrestles with his sexuality for a long time. He is assumed to be straight in the eyes of his friends, colleagues and family, but feels the need to disclose his sexual orientation but does not have the guts to do so. This makes him suppress his

¹² “Coming out of closet” is becoming aware of one’s sexual orientation or gender identity and beginning to disclose it publicly and freely to others. A person may be selectively “out” in some situation or to certain people without generally disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity. “Coming out” is a process that takes place over time, in some cases many years. (Bochenek & Brown 2001:xiii)

¹³ *Six Feet Under* is an American drama television series created and produced in America. It is aired on the premium cable network in HBO in the United States of America.

feelings, resists falling in love with another character; Jason, thus decides to keep his sexual orientation as a secret. Weinberg et al (1974:12) highlight, fear of exposure may contribute to anonymity in sexual contacts and difficulties in establishing intimate, lasting relationships.

Although homosexuals were appearing with greater frequency in American-made television, representation still remained rare (Holtzman 2000). The representation of homosexual men and lesbian women was restricted to certain formulas which included short-term appearances of homosexual men or lesbian women characters, disconnecting gay characters from other homosexual people, and storylines that preached tolerance, rather than acceptance of homosexuality. According to Capsuto (2000), these representations were employed to irritate “the interest of jaded viewers and appeased gay libbers, but avoided the uproar that an on-going positive role might have attracted,” all strategies that maintained the status quo that “homosexual people were a ‘them’ not part of an ‘us’” (Capsuto, 2000; 72). In addition, homosexuality was positioned as a ‘problem’ to be solved (Gross, 2001) and, as Dow (2001) adds, only ever depicted in terms of the effect it had on heterosexuals. The ‘good’ gay/‘bad’ gay protocol, originating in the 1970s, had now become a common representational strategy in television narratives.

In their article, “*stereotypes or success? Prime-time Television’s portrayal of Gay, Lesbians and Bisexual characters*,” Raley and Lucas (2008) identify the representation of homosexual men, lesbian women and bisexual characters in the mainstream television shows known to have one occurring homosexual character. The author’s intention is to locate and document the status of the homosexual men, lesbian women and bisexual characters’ representation on television. According to the authors, minority social groups such as homosexual men are disproportionately negatively affected by the absence of recognition and respect on television. When soap operas depict homosexual characters or represent them in a negative and/or stereotypical fashion, then that social group is being denied appreciation or respect. Thus, in the case of this study, the representation of homosexual men is largely affected by negative stereotypes which include one homosexual character (as represented by Jason) being dismissed from work because of his sexual orientation. In reality, this marks disrespect and non-recognition of homosexual people at a work place as represented in *Generations*. In this case, because mainstream media television is known as primary source of information, Raley and Lucas (2008) note that without recognition and respect on TV and other forms of mass media, homosexual men are more likely to be devalued by society. More evidently, representation of homosexual characters in *Generations* provokes the heterosexual

characters; hence the derogatory names like *isitabani* and *inkonkoni* were given to the homosexual characters as represented by Jason and Senzo in the show. Moreover, the authors look at the television comedies which allow homosexual men to be funny by mocking them. Homosexual characters are not taken seriously and are clowns whose funny antics make them an ideal target for mockery. Hart highlights that “the Gay-themed jokes on the comedies can be hurtful homophobic jokes that perpetuate negative stereotypes” (2000:28). The authors discuss the propensity of homosexual men to interact with children and have romantic relationship. These two activities are commonly observed on mainstream television by heterosexual characters and disregard the stereotypical roles associated with homosexual men.

Gross (1991) addresses the general questions of minority perspective in the study of mass media content effects. More specifically, he pays attention to the situation of lesbian women and homosexual men as members of the mass media audience. Gross (1991) emphasizes that such groups share a common fate of relative invisibility and demeaning stereotypes in mass media and mainstream television. Gross argues that the homosexual men and lesbian women also constitute, by their existence, a presumed threat to the “natural” order of things, and thus they are inherently problematic and controversial for mass media (Gross, 1991). Hetero-normative thinking is supported by the mass media treatment of homosexual men and lesbian women. According to Gross, mostly, homosexual men are ignored or denied symbolically annihilated. “When they do appear, they do so in order to play a supportive role for the natural order and are thus narrowly and stereotyped” (1991:26). Thus, visibility of homosexual men in television is a threat to the public viewer-ship, hence the rare depiction often associated with negative stereotypical images of those who play homosexual characters in television.

Homosexual men however, are usually vulnerable to mass media power. Gross (1991) discusses some of the issues homosexual men and lesbian women are concerned with regarding mainstream media. He points out that homosexual men and lesbian women are concerned of the presumptions made by the mass media that they are obviously effeminate or masculine women and are treated as such. As such, homosexual men are “labelled publicly as faggots” (Gross1991:27).

In as much as the representation of homosexuality can be represented in television media even in these present days, MacKinnon (2003) affirms that not coincidentally, thousands of

letters were posted to NBC in condemnation of the openness of the representation of homosexuality in soap operas.¹⁴ Fisher et al (2007) confirm that sexual minorities are often ignored by mainstream media and treated as if they do not exist. This exclusion has been further complicated by keeping sexual minorities invisible and without power, a process which Gross (1991:14) refers to as “symbolic annihilation”. In most homosexual men’s representation on mainstream media, characterization appears in order to play a supporting role for the natural order and is thus narrowly and negatively stereotyped (Gross, 1991).

Kielwasser and Wolf (1992) further utilize the concept of symbolic annihilation to explain how representations of marginalized groups (homosexuals) are embedded within dominant ideological narratives, so as to symbolically destroy cultural expressions of these groups. They further incorporate the spiral of silence perspective to explain how the mainstream media contribute in such symbolic annihilation efforts, by broadcasting opinions perceived as dominant and silencing depictions deviant from the cultural norm. Strong efforts have been made to characterize homosexuality as alien or non-existent; such characterisation in *Generations* leads to the homosexual characters being gay bashed; the perception which the viewer-ship may hold. As a result, homosexual activity is either excluded from the mainstream media, or when included, it is identified as the consequence of violence, dysfunctional social background, or mental disturbance, creating the cultural misconception that homosexual identity is created by and associated with these conditions (Kielwasser & Wolf, 1992). Although oppositional readings of these media texts, by both homosexual and heterosexual audiences, can potentially serve to reassert the interpretive independence of the viewer (McKee, 2000), they may also promote an illusion of empowerment, creating an internalized framework of resistance that does not frequently attain social significance. As a result, mainstream media tends to compromise the semiotic expression of marginalized subcultures, reinforcing the silencing of subcultures that are already sensitive to silence (Kielwasser & Wolf, 1992).

The history of under-representation and, indeed too, misrepresentation in mainstream media television, and the lack of visibility of homosexual characters gives rise in narrow and stereotyped depictions to some extent. Researchers generally claim that stereotypes are tools that allow those in the majority to keep those in the minority in positions of limited or

¹⁴ NBC stands for National Broadcasting Company. It is the National Television Network and a former radio network in the New York City.

subordinate power, particularly through messages to the other members of the minority group facilitated by the mainstream media. According to Gross (1991), marginalized groups are underrepresented or “symbolically annihilated” from the rest of the society, and “the mass media provides the chief common ground among the different groups that make up a heterogeneous national and international community” (1991: 20).

Gross (2001) stresses that although there has been an increase in access to homosexual characters visibility, these images in mainstream media continue to reinforce to a large extent, stereotypical representations of homosexual men and lesbian women as inferior or hyper-visible tokens who are reduced to their homosexuality. Gross writes, “The rules of the mass media game have had a double impact on homosexual people: not only have they mostly shown them as weak, silly, evil and corrupt, but they continue for the most part, to exclude and deny the existence of normal, unexceptional as well as exceptional homosexual men and women” (2001: 16). Similarly, Walters (2003) contends that there were two dominant patterns of homosexual visibility in the 1990s. She argues that either homosexual men were assimilated into the narrative and viewed as being just like heterosexuals, or they were just commodified ciphers without depth, who are “inserted into the media in order to exhibit a certain hipness but who are insignificant as anything other than signs of hipness, and further, signs of hipness of the lead character” (2003: 154).

2.1.1 Representation of Homosexual men in Mainstream Television

Several authors/scholars have chronicled the rare inclusion of homosexuality in conventional soap operas. In most cases where such inclusions do occur, the representation of homosexuality is often negative and also reductionist (reducing homosexuality and homosexual characters to ‘deviants’ or ‘pathological perverts’). According to Griffin (2005), soap operas have historically dealt with variety of social issues like rape, abortion, alcoholism and domestic violence, but homosexuality has been largely disregarded by daytime melodramas. Modleski (cited in Griffin, 2005) that only those issues that can be tolerated and ultimately pardoned were introduced in soap operas [...], an issue like homosexuality, which could explode the family structure rather than temporarily disrupt it was simply ignored. Griffin (2005) highlights that because this programming deals so overwhelmingly with romance in general, and heterosexual romance specifically, it is difficult to integrate gay characters into a soap opera landscape when all of the other characters are foreclosed as

romantic possibilities. Fuqua (1995) adds “since ‘soaps’ narrative structure is dependent upon the assumed and taken-for-granted heterosexuality of the particular community [...] the sheer pressure of a homosexual character [...] is enough to cause a type of generic pressure upon the most elemental of the soap opera codes” (1995:201).

Given the format of soap operas, Griffin (2005) maintains that historically, male homosexual representation had been relegated to the margins on soap operas when it had been dealt with. Soap operas generally use marginal characters to introduce taboo social issues like homosexuality so that they can be “embodied” by a single character (2005). Fuqua (cited in Griffin, 2005) states that the character can either be written out of the program with little disruption to the main storylines or the problematic issues can be “detached” from the marginal character after which he/she can be made a permanent part of the soap community (through regular appearances/or even through being made a permanent character in the soap opera).

Fuqua (cited in Griffin, 2005) indicates that it is the representation of the ‘everyday’ in relation to homosexual characters which causes the difficulty for soap operas. Homosexual characters can be represented, but only in terms of the sexuality as a problem paradigm. The problem of including (lesbian and gay characters) in soaps is not of working them into plot lines but of dealing with the paradigmatic consequences of their entry into the community of the soap opera world (Allen, 1985). Griffin points out that “this belongs to a larger question regarding the pleasure of these texts for homosexual characters audience if their representations on soap operas read like overly earnest, completely asexual public service announcement” (2005:26).

As researchers affirm, the questions of representation of homosexuality existed since television earliest days, although of course in a limited number. Dow (2001) highlights that in the 1950s, dramas in which homosexual male characters were cast, represented them negatively where they were represented primarily as ‘the villain’. In this context, Dow adds that homosexuality was used primarily to establish additional level of deviance for such characters. The link of homosexuality with criminality was a dramatic convention that continued for decades surfacing in many dramas (Fejes & Petrch, 1993). In the case of *Generations* as an example, Senzo’s father (Sibusizo) denies his son’s homosexuality and blames Senzo’s partner (Jason) for imposing the bad behavior on his son.

Dow (2001) further highlights that with the growth of the gay rights movement in the 1970s, and resultant pressure for more positive representations of homosexuality, television networks began to view homosexuality as an appropriate topic for “socially relevant programming; that is designed to sensitively treat the ‘problem’ of homosexuality” (2001: 129). Thus, this study just as gay rights movements raises concern relating to how homosexuality is framed and represented in the soap opera under-study. Even though the representation of homosexuality in media television took another shift (relating to the positive representation of homosexuality) the idea of treating homosexuality as a ‘problem’ leaves room for discussion. It is arguable that the idea behind treating the ‘problem’ of homosexuality still has negative connotations. Homosexuality was (and still is) largely considered as a problem that can be solved or changed. This could be articulated in that; the narrative line in *Generations* suggests that a homosexual character as represented by Senzo can change from being homosexual to heterosexual or else. Dow (2001) shows that, the treatment of homosexuality as a problem was included in many television series that rely on the general rules for representing homosexuality in the sympathetic representations of gay and lesbian characters. In accordance with Ferges & Petrich (1993) these rules include the following:

- (i) Representation of homosexual men and lesbian women were incorporated as “one time” appearance rather than as integral elements or regular character in a series narrative.
- (ii) Characters were never “incidentally” gay; they appeared in episodes or movies in which their sexuality was “the problem” to be solved.
- (iii) The problems they represent were depicted largely in terms of its effects on heterosexuals. Homosexual characters were rarely shown in their own communities, homes or same-sex romantic relationship but were depicted in terms of their place in the lives of heterosexuals.
- (iv) Representations of homosexual men or lesbian women’s sex, or even desire were absent.

Thus, the representations of homosexual characters were marginal and hardly show any signs of positive message that could allow people to understand better what homosexuality was all about.

Scholars interested in representation observe that representations of homosexuality in mainstream media are problematic in their depiction of men. For instance, in *Generations*, Jason becomes shocked when he discovers that the secret of being in a relationship with Senzo is well known. In this context, the story-line of the homosexual characters (Senzo and Jason) represents a serious problem in the sense that the characters are depicted having a serious discussion over the *problem* of their homosexuality other than being happy and showing any romantic lifestyle. Accordingly, male homosexual characters, whether regular cast members or minor characters featured in a few episodes, tend to be represented as asexual (they are rarely represented in intimate relationships or situations). Also on personal rights, they are treated as undesirable and avoided by other characters, and are often afraid of being publicly exposed based on their sexuality (Moritz, 1994).

In this case for example, storylines relating to homosexuality and homosexual relationships revolve around characters being subject to jokes and are not considered seriously, often being associated and related to what is commonly known as their immoral relationship. In some of the storylines, homosexual characters in *Generations* are mostly depicted having a problem of hiding their sexual identity and are forced to live double standards which put them under a lot of pressure and stress. In other words, they are represented as having a problem to be solved. Each of these in turn is a social construction itself, and it is shaped by mainstream media television. Above all things, homosexuality is linked to social problems and deviant behavior such as pedophilia, drug addiction, sexual promiscuity and alcoholism. Holstein (2009) supports these, based on the constructionist approach that states that both homosexuality and social problems are socially constructed. This being the case, one cannot turn a blind eye on the fact that homosexuality is represented in a traditional heterosexual context the reason being that homosexual men are ignored also attached with stigma because they do not fit pervasive hetero-normative constructions of masculinity. These representations are the examples of what could be experienced in reality where homosexual men are mocked and scorned in some of the communities they live in. Even though homosexual men in *Generations* come to terms with their sexuality, it is never intended to come out in public, something which Dyer (1993) argues, provides a narrative tension to the image. In other words, despite the gains made for invisibility for homosexual characters in mainstream media, they are still, more often than not, represented in a hetero-normative narrative and tailored almost exclusively for a heterosexual audience (Dyer 1993).

Researchers criticize the ways media representations promote homophobia by presenting negative representations of homosexuality. Gross (1989) argues that corporate media culture defines and frames sexuality in ways that marginalize gay and lesbians, and "symbolically annihilate" their lives. Stereotypic depictions of homosexual men as "abnormal and the suppression of positive or even 'unexceptional' representations serve to maintain hetero-normative ideas" (1989: 136). He postulates for alternative representations, a call that has to a certain degree, been heard and answered by homosexual men and lesbian women's media producers coming to the importance of the contemporary era, with even U.S. network television eventually accommodating homosexuals.

While homosexual representation in mainstream media is not mostly without scrutiny, Streitmatter (2009) points out that homosexual characters are still represented as different from heterosexual characters mostly when it comes to the absence of representing homosexual activity. Avila-Saaverda (2009) argues that what is lacking in mainstream media homosexual representation is the notion of *queer*. The author reveals that there is nothing resistant or "queer" about homosexual television when homosexual men, lesbian women and bisexuals' individuals are represented as subordinate to the hegemonic supremacy of hetero-normativity. He further argues that homosexuals are represented simply reiterating and consolidating patriarchal and traditional notions of gender and sexuality.

At this juncture, the following section will discuss the concept of gender and sexuality. Each of the concepts will be explored in detail in order to make sense in the context of representation of homosexual men in soap opera *Generations*.

2.1.2 Gender

There are various approaches and interpretations of gender as a construction. Gender is a social and cultural construct based on society's identification of categories that have been defined as masculine/ feminine rather than a biological given. The physical characteristics of particular sex determine one's gender based on the related, innate, attributes of femininity and masculinity. This implies that if someone is not masculine therefore is feminine and to some extends mainstream media uses this kind of perceptions to describe representation of homosexual men and lesbian women. Hart (2003:599) mentions the use of 'stereotypically effeminate' characters to represent gay men in the media. Lorber (2007:7) argues that gender is not innate but is socially constructed. In other words it is "constantly created and recreated

out of human interaction” (2007:7). Gender is learned and solidified by tradition, observation and imitation.

Butler (1990) has collapsed the sex/gender distinction in order to argue that there is no sex that is not always already gendered. All bodies are gendered from the beginning of their social existence and there is no existence that is not social, which means that there is no “natural body” that pre-exists its cultural inscription. In all these, we learn that when a person is assigned a specific biological sex at birth, they are not only given a certain gender role but they are also prescribed a particular sexual script. This seems to point towards the conclusion that gender is not something one *is*; rather, it is something one *does*, an act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts, a verb rather than a noun, a “doing” rather than a “being” (Butler, 1990: 25). As such we learn that gender is not about man/maleness or woman/femaleness but it goes as far as masculinity/maleness against femininity/femaleness. This draws attention to the significance of context that is (situational and personal) aspects and makes clear that gendered behaviors are variable according to situation. This means in the context of this study, masculinity depends on gendered behaviors given to men and as such how other men on a personal aspect define themselves against the norm.

Thus, it is quite difficult for other men to perform to the standards set by the norm and mainstream media represent such kind of men as abnormal. In this case, homosexual men express themselves in a different way which is considered to be against the (hetero) norm. That being the case, the fact that homosexual characters as represented by Senzo and Jason in *Generations* act differently (sexually attracted to each other) from what is socially prescribed as man’s characteristics, place them under scrutiny. As such, society through different cultures which involve the different aspects such as religion, politics, education and in this case mainstream media television define and socializes such kind of people in accordance to hetero-norm. This means that homosexual men in *Generations* are indeed considered against the gendered behaviors based on the characteristics of heterosexual men; hence the negative stereotypes towards such men are reinforced. Butler (1990) claims that gender should be understood as performative, “always a doing”, a set of acts repeated over time to give it a natural, substantive appearance. Butler (1990: 8) uses Simone de Beauvoir’s (1953) contention that “one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one” to show that this ‘becoming’ is always under a cultural, as opposed to a biological, compulsion to do so. From this perspective, therefore, Butler (1990) emphasizes that if sex and gender are understood as

radically distinct then it does not follow that a given sex is to become a given gender, man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body.

Rubin (1975) in her theory of the sex-gender system lends importance to the thought of gender as being shaped within ideological frameworks by socialization through family, church, media, education and other agencies. She highlights that the basic sex-gender system assigns 'femininity' to biological women and masculinity to 'biological' men. This denotes that gender becomes a superficially 'natural' or preordained part of our identity. For example, masculine identified traits such as being strong and in control are valued and feminine identified traits such as being weak and out of control are devalued. As such mainstream media reinforce such kind of perceptions. This perspective views gender along the lines of the nature/nurture debate, which is referred to as 'biologism', where for an example men are assumed to be strong and are expected to dominate over women. In this perspective, it goes without saying that homosexual men in *Generations* are excluded in all the domain of male dominance as they are considered to be less 'manly'; the idea which heterosexual characters in *Generations* and society at large holds and maintains through the reliance of social constructs of masculinities often represented in mainstream media. Karan (2008) affirms that one way of doing this is through the use of the media. In this regard, it follows the logic why gay men and lesbian women' representations are always seen through a traditional perspective (Fejes& Petrich, 1993). Thus, mainstream media plays a major part in socializing also shaping the society on matters pertaining to gender. The idea of gender roles in relation to one's biological role becomes a site of contention and debate which continues to rage on. Socialization into these gender roles is a life-long practice with reinforcement and modification of the gender scripts occurring throughout the life-span (Lorber, 1994).

Taking media as point of reference in explaining the gendered behaviors, mainstream media becomes an ever more powerful force in socializing individuals. This entails the social/cultural/political division made between men and women (femininity/masculinity) as represented in mainstream media. Karan (2008) emphasized the various aspects of media which concurrently defined and reflected what is considered as normal and natural; amongst them, heterosexuality is considered natural while homosexuality is not. This indicates that, it is socially accepted in male dominance that anybody who enacts or embodies sexual characteristics that do not align with their gender category is stigmatized as problematic, in this case homosexual men are not immune to this. As such heterosexuality is considered natural while homosexuality is not. This implication points that dominant group

(heterosexuals) use mainstream media to reinforce their definition of normality and reality. These being the case, homosexual men are ascribed out of hetero-normative thinking in the mainstream media. Hart (2003:599) mentions the use of 'stereotypically effeminate' characters to represent gay men in the media. Thus, homosexual characters in *Generations* suffer the consequences of being subject to all negative stereotypic representations; taking an example, Sibusizos idea which undermines the ability of homosexual men to stand a fight on the basis that homosexual men are not men enough to fight and therefore are effeminate. As Shugart (2003) argues, gay characters are introduced "as problems to be solved and always reflect gendered stereotypes that characterize gay men as effeminate and lesbians as masculine" (2003:68). On the other hand, Ferguson (1998) refers to earlier representations of homosexuals in the film industry and how they were portrayed as deviants, perverts, and comic figures. This argument supports the notion that in most depictions, representation of homosexual men as minority group has focused on negative attributes mostly on television media.

It is thus worth mentioning that homosexual men are classified under femininity and as such their sexuality is a subject of scrutiny. The basic assumption is that the femininity is constructed in opposition to masculinity which ultimately perpetuates patriarchy. However, it is worth considering the role of patriarchy in this context. According to Haywood et al (2003:8), patriarchy is defined as a societal system that is "situated within a structure of gendered hierarchies, in which particular social practices are used to reproduce social divisions and inequality". Because the heterosexual (white, rich) man represents the dominant masculinity in society, power and influence is always assigned to the heterosexual men at the expense of homosexual men. This power and influence assigned to heterosexual men is evidently illustrated in mainstream media through subordination of homosexual men. As such, representation of homosexual men in mainstream media television is largely categorized outside masculinities. Hence in the case of *Generations*, the representation of homosexual character (Senzo) is labeled identified as unmanly and cannot be included in matters pertaining to family rituals as emphasized by his father and this is typical within Zulu culture. Thus, while the characters are not 'real', they are situated within a macrocosm of what is considered 'normal' cultural practices (hegemonic, one might argue), which do not occur in reality. Thus, the viewers 'suspend their disbelief', understanding that the reality of the soap opera while not 'real', does reflect 'reality' in many aspects.

However, going back to the point of masculinity/femininity, not only women are ascribed out of masculine narratives but also homosexual men. Connell (1987) calls that restricted masculinity and its basis is the historical subordination of women and other forms of masculinities particularly gay masculinities. Connell writes “hegemony does not mean cultural dominance [...] other patterns or groups are subscribed rather than eliminated” (1987:184). From these explanations, it is evident that gender is concerned with masculinity and femininity rather than male-ness and female-ness. In this case, homosexual men fall generically under what is commonly referred to as feminine attributes for instance, being ‘unmanly’, ‘softness’, not powerful, being emotional in expression and many other elements which demean homosexual men in relation to social, political and cultural value systems. As the case in *Generations*, for an example, West et al (1987) indicates that when labeled as a member of a specific sex category, a person takes on a “moral responsibility” for behaving within the role script of that classification. This moral component raises gender compliance to a whole new level. Failure to comply places oneself in the category of deviant, and deviance is answered with sanctions in all societies. Homosexual men (as assumed) in mainstream media representation fail to live within the boundaries of normatively identified gender roles and are often seen as deviant by the dominant majority in the culture. This is of particular significance in this study as the ways in which the representations of homosexuality through the characters of Jason and Senzo are considered as deviant in the soap opera *Generations* and comes under investigation. Connell (1987) affirms that, gay masculinities, for example, are subordinated to the hegemonic model because their object of sexual desire undermines the institution of heterosexuality, which is of primary importance for the reproduction of patriarchy. These gender boundary transgressors are often treated as outsiders, and, as Butler (1990) has said, “people regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right” (1990: 140).

Furthermore, masculinity has become a learned behavior through exposure to society, media and other cultural forms that encourages the adaptation of gender-specific roles. What we see in the mainstream media television is sometimes encountered in real life. Homosexual characters in movies and television programs or who deliberately break with the traditional images of gender, are often represented stereotypically or suffer terribly.¹⁵

¹⁵ In most cases, such representations often focus on the negative stereotypes usually associated with homosexuals and therefore adding impact on the negative views among homosexual people. Mainly, movies and television shows do not go deeper on the personal sides of homosexual characters instead; the focus is on the physical aspect such as how homosexuals look, act and talk. In most cases such messages are one dimensional. Thus, there is no safe and conclusive way in portraying someone as gay without showing them in gay bashing, leading a life like heterosexuals, having sex or displaying romantic affection. Taking an example, movies and television shows represent lesbian women as men trapped in women’s bodies and

The point is that in mainstream media, particularly on television, one finds many examples of characters that are sanctioned, often severely, for breaking through the normative gender boundaries and attempting to live some form of distinctive and stereotypically gendered life. According to Connell (1987), hegemonic masculinity creates contradictions for many men who are unsatisfied with a confined definition of masculinity, but who still want to be a 'man'. This is particularly the case for homosexual men, where hegemonic masculinity exists largely in opposition to gay masculinity, yet homosexual men are more immune to this culturally idealized masculinity than heterosexual (Connell, 1987). Furthermore, masculinities are subordinated not because they lack a particular trans-historical quality or because they are naturally inferior to others but because the configuration of practice they embody is inconsistent with the currently accepted strategy for the subordination of the norm (Connell 1987). Particular masculinities are subordinated by hegemonic practice and their situations are related in different ways to the overall logic of the subordination of women to men. In this way, Connell states that hegemonic masculinity, which is always constructed in relation to various subordinate masculinities as well as in relation to women, generates dominance not only over women but also over subordinate masculinities and thus links the relations within genders and between genders together (Connell, 1987).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

In line with the above mentioned concerns, this study is grounded by Butler (1990) queer theory which challenges the taken-for granted constructed categories to which people are assigned more especially in sexuality and gender. The analysis of this study is largely informed by stereotyping theory. Soap operas continue to represent certain depictions of stereotyped groups such as gay men in its content. Such representations often show stereotyped groups as having less favorable characteristics than those members of the dominant majority, such as heterosexuals. This further aids the public, especially majority groups, in subscribing to stereotypic beliefs if they exist across all mainstream media.

so acting and dressing –up like men, in the same way men trapped in women's bodies and acting like women. This goes to the extent of representation of homosexuals as being troubled by sexual identity, being disowned by their families and resulting to suicide or deserving death and all these are common representations in movies and television programs.

2.2.1 Stereotyping

The term stereotype was firstly used in 1922 by a social scientist (Walter Lippman 1965) to refer to image that individuals hold in their heads about a specific topic. Lippmann (1965) explains that the way things are in the real world are often not the same as the images that exist in the minds of individuals within a given society, yet the dominant group perpetuates the inaccurate images. After Lippmann coined the term stereotype, many other social science theorists used the concept with a range of descriptions; however, they all seem to emphasize around the similar idea of cultural and superficial beliefs or generalizations about an explicit group or subgroup within a given society (Kanahara, 2006).

Hall (1997) describes stereotyping as a power/knowledge game. He states that stereotyping tends to happen where there are gross inequalities of power according to a norm and constructs the excluded as the 'other'. According to Hall (1997), stereotyping reduces people to a few simple, essential characteristics that are represented as fixed by nature. It also sets up a symbolic frontier between the *normal* and *deviant*, *acceptable* and *unacceptable* (Hall, 1997). Stereotyping theory operates in the service of control. It discusses people's beliefs about an individual based group membership. The basic act of stereotyping theory serves to marginalize the powerless, strengthening the position of being the 'other'. This drawback could be linked with the particular social viewpoints that consider homosexuality in *Generations* and elsewhere as something of an abomination, un-natural and as sickness. On this point, while both heterosexuality and homosexuality are represented in some soap operas, the representation of homosexuality in *Generations* is revealed as "other". The basis of this is the inclusion of, and negative representation of homosexual male characters into the soap operas storyline, that solidifies and reinforce the existing negative social stereotypes relating to homosexuality.

According to Pickering (2001) stereotyping theory is specifically related to the naming of social groups and to questions of inclusion and exclusion, discrimination, power and domination. Relevant to this is the representation of homosexual men in soap opera as being discriminated against their sexual orientation by the heterosexual characters which is considered to be a norm in *Generations*. Stereotyping is therefore a form of representation but a stereotypical representation will often be negative, inaccurate, limited and partial. Stereotyping creates the illusion of precision in defining the evaluation to other people and they are then fixed into marginal positions or subordinate status and judged accordingly (Pickering, 2001).

2.2.2 Social representation theory

In contrast with representations which include forms of stereotyping that operates in services of power inequalities, in social representation theory, Moscovici (2000) argues, individuals contribute to the formation of social representation in the interplay between social structure and individual. According to Hoyer (2011) social representations theory stipulates how collective thoughts are created and changed through communication with a focus on social-cognitive processes or mechanisms involved. On the other hand individuals and groups create social representations through social collaborations and communication. This implies that society with the impact of mainstream media television stigmatizes homosexuality through the social interaction which considers homosexual individuals as bad and morally perverted. This idea relates to the manner in which *Generations* and other mainstream media shows represent homosexual characters, as such, public viewer-ship produce social representations of homosexual groups. Representation theory interrogates the social order because it explains the dominant behavior in the status quo. According to Ullman (1995) social representation theory facilitates communication and fuses new ideas into social thought and confirms the total concept because personal and groups identities are represented of the self.

This theory is criticized as it does not address the practices and activities of people or groups of people when they are producing social representations (Potter & Edward, 1999). One of the major problems of social representations is that it cannot explain why a particular social representation takes the form which it does.

2.2.3 Social role theory

In addition to the social representation theory, the social-role theory of gender stereotypes is of great importance and contributes positively to the construction of this study. This theory maintains that “stereotypes arise from the different social roles typically held by women and men” (Basow, 1992:9). This theory argues that it is because men and women do different things that people make assumptions about men and women’s innate traits and abilities (Basow 1992). The approach incorporating this theory emanates from the fact that in the mainstream media television, the representations of hetero-normative gender roles require women doing certain things ascribed specifically for female persons and men doing certain things ascribed for male persons and are considered to be normal and natural. Failure to abide by the regular norm, it becomes a serious threat to some extent. In a research conducted by Kite & Deaux (1987) to illustrate stereotypes of homosexual men, the results show that compared to heterosexual men, homosexual men are seen as less likely to have traditionally

masculine physical characteristics, roles, traits and occupations. Often the case in *Generations*, homosexual men are represented as lacking masculinities and not men enough to perform certain activities because of their sexuality. Social role theory suggests that stereotypes of social groups such as women and men are derived in a large part from the roles or jobs that typical group members occupy or have historically occupied. Thus women are seen as feminine and communal because they traditionally occupied the roles of the home maker and primary caregivers. From this perspective, homosexual men might be seen as effeminate because they have been over represented in feminine way. As such, homosexual men for example are strongly considered (as represented in soap opera *Generations*) as weak and not abiding by regular norms of hetero-normative discourse. This is important for the sake of this study in that if our systems of differences or oppositions are seriously questioned or challenged, Gripsrud (2002) argues that this may cause anxiety and even aggression since it may appear to threaten our identities.

2.2.4 Queer Theory

Queer theorists like Judith Butler (1990) seek to challenge and destabilize the taken-for-granted constructed categories to which people are assigned, particularly concerning sexuality and gender. Unlike social role theory which identifies a person according to their gender roles, queer theory rejects any suggestion of an ‘essential’, stable, sexual or gender identity but sees these as constructs constituted and sustained through discursive and other social practices (Stein & Plummer, 1995). The constructionist thought assumes “identity is fluid, the effect of social conditioning and available cultural models for understanding oneself” Jagose (1996:9). In this regard, sexuality is shaped by culture and the information available in people’s surroundings. Thus, in the case of *Generations*, one’s sexuality (homosexuality) is determined by the choice of a homosexual characters parent following the idea that homosexuality does not exist in Zulu culture. Queer theory draws from the work of Foucault (1978) which theorizes of power not as a thing which is possessed but rather as fluid-like and enacted through being exercised. Further, some theorists agree that we see sexuality according to our shared cultural and historical meanings and not as biological instincts; therefore, sexuality in general is a product of power relations (Foucault 1990, Butler 1999, Kates 1999).

For the sake of this study, representation is a significant issue in identity politics. The right to be visible, acknowledged, and in this way legitimated, is indispensable for social change. Therefore, media representations of identities of homosexual men in mainstream television

are crucial. However, being represented as a subculture is as important as how they are represented. This concern relates to the idea that homosexual men in soap opera *Generations* are represented as deferent and as 'other'. Hence, the politics of representation in analogy with identity politics calls attention to the constant reproductions of the existing power structures that dominate and to subordinate identities in representations (Durham & Kellner, 2006). It is further argued by Hall (2003) that to represent someone or something in a certain way within a certain regime of representation holds enormous symbolic power. Stereotyping as a hegemonic representation practice is the most obvious example of the use of this power, which excludes and naturalizes everything that does not belong to the dominant cultural practices. Because homosexual men in *Generations* do not conform to the hegemonic discourse and their sexuality is represented as different from their cultural practises, such characters fall under a serious threat because they act against the norm. Based on the above-mentioned, I therefore adopt both Foucault's and Butler's concept of queer theory for the fact that they engage sexuality as a product of power relations. This is because queer theory is informed by Foucault's ideas filtered through the works of Butler (1990), who conceptualizes sexuality/gender not as the biological essence of a person, but as a product of socio-cultural and historical influences inextricably woven in a web of unequal social relations. That is, in queer theory, sexuality is conceptualized as a product of power relations that open up diversity of possibilities (Halperin, 1995). This is particularly important in this study in the stance that homosexual identities struggle against heterosexual dominance especially in soap opera *Generations* and where representation of homosexual men falls under a serious scrutiny. As such, Queer theory is helpful in focusing attention upon how sexuality affects social relations and it has been important in developing critiques of normative assumptions about gender and sexualities.

Additionally, queer theory is about offering resistance which aims to deconstruct all normative axioms about gender and sexual identity. Defining queer theory is particularly difficult because there is little consensus. Halperin (1995: 62) attempts to define queer theory as follows; "Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. [...] It is an identity without an essence (1995:62). "Queer" then, demarcates not positivity, but a positioning vis-à-vis the normative, a positioning that is not restricted to homosexual men and lesbians (but also include all other the sexual minorities). Furthermore, the action that queer theory subscribes to is the "queering" of culture, ranging from the reinterpretation of characters in novels and cinema, to the deconstruction of historical

analysis' (Kirsch, 2000: 33). Since the focus here on this research is particularly interested in the representation of homosexual men in mainstream television particularly in soap operas, queer theory is fitting because homosexuality in *Generations* is shaped by cultural and social dichotomy influenced by power. As such, since gay and lesbian identities have long been symbolically annihilated (Hart, 2000; Westerfelhaus & Lacroix, 2006), the claim for participation and representation in popular media, such as television, is clearly an empowerment strategy enacted at the institutional level. This being the case, media critique does not only underscore the importance of being represented, it also denounces the long-lasting and highly stereotyped representation of gay and lesbian identities (Dyer, 2002; Hart, 2000; Streitmatter, 2009).

Queer theory is beneficial for understanding the construction of notions of sexuality that go beyond ideas of "the natural" ideas of a genetic and fixed set of sexual groupings in opposition and for understanding and actively opposing notions of sexuality. This includes sexual classification that are simplistically and broadly reduced so as to ignore the role in sexuality-based description and identity construction that are played by notions of time, space, need, material condition, and class differentiations, which means, desire not grounded in gender-object-of-choice. The particular importance in this regard is that, representation of homosexual men in *Generations* implies that being homosexual depends on someone's choice and as such one can change their sexuality through prayer. Cover (2000) highlights the anti-foundationalist, essentialism questioning position of this strand of queer theory is well placed to make a valuable influence to a re-reading of the understanding of mainstream media 'invisibility' and 'partial visibility' of non-heterosexual sexualities that developed from within homosexual culture. This theory is particularly relevant to this study in the instance that homosexual men in mainstream media television are simply labeled as different and reduced in terms of their sexuality.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1 Research Strategy

Prior to beginning work on this dissertation the researcher examined at length the various research models that had been adopted by other researchers in the field of media and representation study. That being the case, this study provides a qualitative research methodology within which the discourse analysis method is positioned. In this matter, this study provides a qualitative analysis of selected particular episodes that included issues related specifically to homosexual men's representation. As a researcher, I was familiar with the methodological approach, and it was also a convenient and efficient approach as the soap analysed is one of the most commonly watched in South Africa and of which I have become very familiar with the characters within.

3.2 Research Design

This is critical discourse analysis and follows D'Acci's (2002) method that incorporates different areas of inquiry. This study follows her methodology as she is specifically interested in an approach that brings together and explores the interrelation between gender and television. This study employed a research approach propagated by Fairclough (2000) known as discourse analytic procedure. Importantly, it employs discourse analysis in order to identify the recurring themes, images and dominating discourses that guide the construction of identities of homosexual men. Thus, in order to understand the themes on representation of homosexuality in soap opera *Generations* it must be noted that discourses are realized in the form of texts.

The primary focus of this discourse analysis is the relation among several themes within the text of each episode, discourse of transformation between homosexual men and heterosexuals and visual sensibility as power. A specific advantage of discourse analysis is that it is able to look at "the structures of media messages" while also locating them within a "socio-cultural context" (Van Dijk, 1991:108). That being the case, critical discourse analysis is the most relevant and specific to this study on the basis that it examines pervasive and power relations between homosexuality and heterosexuality that are reinforced, constructed and formulated by mainstream media television more especially soap operas.

The context of the study brings together concepts of different areas of inquiry such as the negative stereotypic representation of homosexuality, homophobia, shame, coming out of the closet, rejection and secrecy, while using a critical discourse analysis for the examination of soap opera *Generations*. The study analyzed selected *Generation's* episodes using discourse analysis as methodology. This is important because in television media, issues surrounding homosexuality are described and represented in a subtle ways. D'Acci (2002) explains that there are four areas of the study of gender and television: production, reception, programming, and social historical context. While the four elements explained by D'Acci (2002) are equally important and valuable, production and social historical context stands as the most valuable. This is based on the idea that social historical context locates events with the history of representation and in the context of this study, how homosexual men have been represented throughout history which influences the present situations or events. This area is beneficial in order to understand gender and identify the manner in which it contributes in the society as represented in mainstream media. Having employed a research approach propagated by Fairclough (2000) known as discourse analytic procedure, this discourse analysis imparts an empirical basis to visual observations about the social nature and function of language offered by critical social theory.

As potential sites for symbolic participation in discourses about homosexuality, *Generations'* episodes function to reveal stereotypical narratives of homosexual men. In the case of this study, discourse includes words articulated by both heterosexual and homosexual characters in the soap opera *Generations*. This is important in using discourse analysis as it implies that the particular analytic frame work employed here concerns homosexual men as represented in *Generations*. Following Fairclough (1995), this involves analysis of representation process, including speech and nonverbal remarks. Importantly, normative positions of representation are illustrated through this discursive process shown in each episode. This analysis considers the ideologies of gender roles, archetypes of masculinities, relegated representation and dominant hetero-normative narratives that have characterized depictions of homosexual men in the mainstream television. Discourse analysis is appropriate to investigate those various aspects of stereotypes and power relations as used in representation of homosexual men in soap opera *Generations*.

3.3 Methods of data collection

The study examined a sample of 15 episodes of *Generations* which were aired from September 2009 until August 2010 following the discourse analytic procedure described by

Fairlough (2000). The 15 episodes which hinted homosexuality were selected following various themes on homosexual storyline so as to adequately monitor the progression of the show and have a clear understanding on how homosexual men are represented on the soap opera *Generations* as a whole. Because of the scope of this study, after watching the 15 episodes, the researcher subsequently focused on 6 episodes that were selected as representative of homosexuality as to reflect on the areas of stereotypes, shame, secrecy, homophobic violence, coming out of the closet, rejection and guilt of homosexual characters in the show. These 6 episodes were viewed repeatedly with the purpose of looking closely to the relevant dialogue, images and non-verbal remarks related to homosexuality and homosexual men on the soap opera *Generations*. The three major areas addressing the coding include the representation of homosexuality in the text, the soap opera (*Generations*) representation of gay men, and the specific themes and objectives guiding each episode. Research questions were treated during the process of data collection in order to establish connections between these texts (the 6 episodes). The selected soap opera (*Generations*) was discussed to give the background information and explanation then discussions with analysis followed.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF HOMOSEXUAL CHARACTERS AND EPISODES

4.1 Analysis of Homosexual characters

Senzo

Senzo is represented as a confused soft character who does not know where he belongs in terms of his sexuality. Before the inclusion of a homosexual storyline, his character is represented as asexual, and represses his sexuality by denying his homosexual identity. Even after coming to terms with his sexuality, Senzo's character is represented as being on denial for accepting his homosexual identity (see appendix 2, #2975). This confirms the idea that mainstream media skirt homosexual realities by desexualising the character and never depicting them in romantic and sexual situations as highlighted by Walters (2003). However, Meyer et al (1998) affirms that for some homosexual men, even after accepting their homosexual orientation, residual negative attitudes towards one's own homosexuality may persist. In other words, Senzo's character is represented as having a questionable sexual preference. The element of internal homophobia associated with being in denial about his sexual identity is marked by a failure to express his sexual preference to none of the other neither people, both of the same and/opposite sex.

The storyline of this character includes not being interested in having a relationship with a woman. As Meyer et al (1998) indicates, greater levels of internalised homophobia in homosexual men relates to less relationship commitment and greater anxiety surrounding intimacy. As such, Senzo's character over the fear of homosexual identity is realised when against his will, he sends a text message to Linda¹⁶ expressing how beautiful she is. These clashing feelings of Senzo support Amico's (2005) idea that homosexual characters are represented and identified only by their sexual orientation which is never the case for heterosexual characters. In order to deal with the fears that he has towards people of the opposite sex, Senzo's character is represented against his will flirting with Linda. The storyline includes Senzo paying a visit at Linda's place perhaps with the intention of starting a relationship with her. As researchers indicate, gay men may come to harbor negative feelings toward their own homosexuality because of the negative social attitudes toward homosexuality. This can lead to avoidance techniques, such as denial of their own sexual

¹⁶ Linda is a supporting character in *Generations*. She featured in few episodes and her character was quickly phased out from the show.

orientation (Cass, 1984; Schneider & Tremble, 1986), endorsing negative attitudes toward homosexuality, or even adopting a heterosexual identity (Troiden, 1989). The character's anxiety not to be identified as homosexual could also be read through admitting that he likes women.

Although Senzo against his will admitted to love women, this marks his inability to stand on his own and admit that he has no sexual feelings for people of the opposite sex. This supports essentialist perspective which holds that a man is bound to be involved with a woman. On this point, McLeod (1999) elaborates "to claim one a real man, one is defining himself not just in terms of gender, but also sexuality, that is not a 'pussy' or 'faggot' (1999:142). Hence, masculinity cannot be associated with femininity in any way. In this matter, we learn that homosexuality is framed in relationship with heterosexuality. As Gross (2001) argues, when previously groups or perspectives do gain visibility, the manner in which they are represented reflect the biasness and interest of the powerful, and they are [...] overwhelmingly heterosexual (2001:4). This being the case, the element of 'shame' is highlighted based on Senzo's inability to disclose his sexual orientation but rather disguise to fall for the woman.

Senzo's character also reflects secrecy in the sense that the narratives represent Senzo not willing to share his feelings openly to anyone. In episode #2931 Senzo goes to the gay club and his display of homosexuality is reinforced by his interest to dance with men and ignore women. This could be interpreted in the sense that Senzo's character finds comfort to enjoy himself, dance and flirt with gays as long as he remains anonymous and unidentifiable. As such, Barrett et al (2005) maintains the historic lack of acceptance of gay life-styles by the broader culture creates a situation where many find it necessary to find an environment where one can meet others and can feel relatively safe in expressing one's sexuality. This is the case of representation of homosexuality through the character Senzo who does not find freedom of expressing his sexuality to other heterosexual people but rather find comfort in the homosexual environment. Barret et al (2005) reiterate; "that provide more freedom to be gay" (2005:438). Unidentifiable as a homosexual man, this character, is used to display 'secrecy' which does not last long. The storyline is used to represent his character as faced with confrontation by his friend when he comes back from the club. This relates to Chambers (2003) idea that, it is assumed that one is heterosexual unless they come out. In this case, the narrative include Jason's character confronting him about where he was on the previous night, and Senzo's character is represented as having reluctance to disclose where he was in

case he could be identified as gay. Viewers are made to believe that the presence of purportedly queer behaviours such as dramatic outbursts must necessarily correspond to a homosexual identity, even where the man in question has not made such an identity claim for himself. This is linked to the social norm which suggests that homosexual men have insecure attachment behaviours which prevent them from disclosing their sexuality easily. As Brown et al (2010) highlights, high levels of shame and internalised homophobia as well as experiences of insecure attachment are arguably more likely to postpone coming out or avoid coming out at all. As such, Senzo's character is represented as anxious about his sexuality being known and questioned especially after Jason confronted him about his whereabouts on the previous night episode #2932. This plot line seems to suggest that homosexual men can not completely disclose their sexual identity and therefore should be ashamed and make it 'secret' that they are homosexual. Kimmel (2000) emphasises the nearly constant threat to men that they may be revealed as insufficiency masculine. He refers to homophobia as the fear of other men detecting one's insufficiently masculinity. The storyline depicts Senzo's character feeling embarrassed with the fact that he did not intend anyone as yet to know that he goes to the gay clubs and identify as homosexual. Thus, instead of accepting his homosexual identity, most homosexuals delay the process and many attempt to deny the emerging homosexual reality in favor of passing as heterosexual (Martin, 1982).

Jason

Jason's character is introduced into *Generations* as an intern for Capitac Bank. In the earlier episodes which are not part of this study, he was represented dating Cleo (supporting character in *Generations*) and things did not turn out for him as it was alleged that he raped her. Jason's character, in similarity with Senzo's character is represented as confused in terms of his sexuality. Although he features as the focus of homosexuality in the recent episodes, Jason's character is not represented as a free gay who accepts his sexuality, an element which has been represented with gay characters in mainstream films and prime-time dramas for decades. As Bronski (2000) highlights, prior to the late 1960s films with gay and lesbian content typically presented homosexuality as some form of social, personal or psychological tragedy. The fear of homophobia is very prominent more especially on how he starts a relationship with Senzo. This is because the traditional issue of homosexuality in what Allen (1995) argues is not assumed but it is itself the secret that produces the narrative complication, an issue that emphasises the process of 'coming out' as the critical problem or issue for homosexual characters. Thus, Jason's character is represented through as having an

interest in the character Senzo, but the question of 'shame' remains an obstacle for some time. Indeed as Cohen and Savi-Williams (1996) indicate, many lesbians, gays and bisexuals believe that they have no options other than to hide their same-sex attraction from others and live in an atmosphere of secrecy. As such, Jason's character in *Generations* is no exception to this 'rule'. The storyline revolves around Jason's jealousy accusing Senzo for not telling him about his whereabouts and this ended up with unexpected on-screen kiss. This element marks the problem of freely 'coming out' which Jason was faced with and could not deal with it. As Allen et al (1999) highlight, the problematic elements of coping with a homosexual identity includes the pain of the dissonance between one's ego ideal and one's ego reality and the fear of being seen or exposed as undesirable. However, the on-screen kiss of the two homosexual characters is the beginning of their homosexual relationship and was displayed due to fear, shame and secrecy as represented in *Generations*.

4.2 Analysis of Episodes with Different Themes

This section provides a summary of different themes emerged during the analysis of the episodes and the homosexual characters. They have been identified accordingly and most of them reflect its specific identification. The total number of all the themes stands at 7 and they are all classified in the following paragraphs:

4.2.1 Theme of coming out of the Closet

The theme of "coming out of the closet" is directly linked to Senzo. His reaction when he unintentionally revealed to Neli about their relationship with Jason automatically marks lack of intention to 'come out of the closet'. Of course, the act of "coming out" is not always desired or intended by the individual concerned; sometimes coming out is forced. While the coming out narrative can have an educative value for heterosexual characters (and audience members), it is also conservative in the sense that heterosexual presumption requires same-sex desire "remains something to be 'explained' and 'accepted'" (Walters, 2003:200). Neli's intention is to truly confirm to others that Jason and Senzo are a couple. The following conversation illustrates:

NELI: Hmm! Hello a man who plays hard to get.

SENZO: I said I'm not interested, ok!

NELI: Did Jason ever tell you what he and I got up to?

SENZO: Nothing happened.

NELI: Oh! Is that what he said? ...Such a liar. He is quite a stud that one, between you and me he kept me busy for hours. Almost couldn't keep up...he even taught a few new tricks.

SENZO: Jason will never cheat on me, ok!

NELI: Ah! [*Clapping hands*] I knew it! [*Laughing*]

SENZO: No! no! look, look,

NELI: Your boyfriend almost made me fool, he should get an Oscar. [*Looking at Senzo from head to toe*] what a waste! (See Appendix 2, Episode: 2987) (See fig. 1 below).



Fig. 1: Illustrates the conversation between Senzo and Neli when Senzo accidentally reveals to Neli that he and Jason are a couple.

Senzo's statement which says that "Jason will never cheat on him" makes it clear that they indeed are in a relationship. Senzo's reaction after saying that evidently indicates that he was not ready to let other people to know about his sexual identity. In other words, someone can be 'outed,' which, in effect, is the performative naming of someone as lesbian or gay, described by Butler as "the divine power of naming" "where to utter is to create the effect uttered" (Butler, 1997: 32). Not only does Neli investigate about the truth of the homosexual couple, she intends to tell others about it as to expose them and follow her lead. She goes to their place to trick Senzo who unintentionally reveals their secret out. Neli's discovery of the truth about the relationship between Senzo and Jason makes Senzo to regret and admit he has made a mistake and so informs Jason about this matter. This idea marks stigma that when homosexual characters in mainstream media define their identities, they are usually ascribed with guilt. According to Paul (1982), homosexual men are often described in the media with the adjective "admitted or self-confessed" (1982:52).

4.2.2 Theme of Guilt

The theme which illustrates the 'guilt' of homosexual characters is closely linked to the fear that is these characters are faced with after the leaked information about their relationship. Jason and Senzo become frustrated and anticipate on how to confess and admit to the whole issue. The most fear they have is to hide their relationship to Senzo's father not to discover their relationship. This according to Gross's (2001) idea implies that homosexuality is positioned as a problem to be solved. This implication denotes being homosexual as feeling guilty and as such one has to confess before they can freely identify with their sexuality. The idea of having to confess constructs homosexuality as abnormal hence warranting a confession, rather than being allowed as a natural progression. Paul (1982) argues, "linking 'admitted' or confessed with 'gay' implies guilt or shame, and it is insinuated in a way that makes this guilt or shame appear self-evident" (1982:52). This conversation shows us how the two homosexual men feel guilty:

SENZO: Neli knows.

JASON: What?

SENZO: She knows... what are we gonna do?

[*Jason stands up looking very worried*] (See Appendix 2, Episode: 2987)

This brings into focus the negative verbal cues on the argument made by the two homosexual characters. Here, the theme of ‘guilt’ is reflected when Jason and Senzo feel guilty for the leaked out information and that their identity is going to be known to the public. Thus, when homosexuality is transformed into feelings of guilt during social interactions, the homosexual will suppress his sensual tendencies out of “fear of parental punishment” and “the dread of losing the love of fellow men” (Butler, 1997:109).

The problem of guilt that the two characters have forces them to find a solution on how to stop Neli not to spread the news about their relationship.

SENZO: She won’t keep quiet about this.

JASON: So what? May be its time people found out... then we can deal with it and move on.

SENZO: No! not like this... She wants revenge. What if she goes to the newspapers or something? Try again please!

JASON: Senzo listen!

SENZO: Do you really like working here? Because if my dad hears about it... from her, you are back on the street again (See Appendix 2, Episode: 2987)

Senzo’s concern is that his father and friends will come to know about their sexual identity and as a result the father will punish Jason who works in his company. The paranoia of losing that love, whether from family or society, induces this nervousness to dislike homosexuality. As a result, the fear of rejection is what controls the homosexual and causes him to deny this sexual identity. As Hurley (2005) argues, hetero-normative media often presents the coming out narrative as the way homosexual men and women find self-acceptance, and in doing so frames same-sex sexual activity with guilt. Senzo’s reaction reflects the struggles one endures when forced to suppress an internal sexual identity for the sake of conforming to hegemonic norms.

4.2.3 Theme of Secrecy

An impression is created in this particular theme that homosexuality is a scorn. Much more than this, is the element that one is not a real father if their child is homosexual. The conflict between Ajax and Sibusiso leads to the discovery of something which was meant to be kept as

a 'secret' forever.¹⁷ While the quarrel between Sibusiso and Ajax goes on, Ajax undermines Sibusiso's fatherhood due to his son's sexuality, thus indicating that homosexuality is an insult. This is reflected in the following exchange:

SIBUSISO: If I were your father...

AJAX: [*interrupted*] a father! You? A father?...

SIBUSISO: I would have smacked that smart mouth straight years ago.

AJAX: what do you know about being a father? [*on top of sibusiso's voice*] your son is freaking gay! (See Appendix 2, Episode: 3015)

Ajax directly informs Sibusiso that he cannot be his father because his "son is freaking gay". The idea is that if someone is homosexual, their parents are not valued and are less considered. The tension created by Ajax for telling Sibusiso that he is nothing worth to be a father worries Sibusiso and compels him to have a great concern on why his son is gay. Sibusiso does not tolerate his son's homosexuality and this becomes a personal problem that he cannot deal with it. Geraghty (1991) notes that it is not the gay relationship itself which is disruptive but the intolerant response to it expressed by characters whose opinions on a range of subjects are already suspect and whose views are themselves seen as deviant from the generally tolerant response which is presented as the norm.

Sibusiso confronts Ajax about what he just told him about his son. The 'secrecy' which has been revealed seems to worry Ajax and he wishes to reverse his statement but it is too late.

SIBUSISO: What did you say?

AJAX: Um, no, nothing... forget it. I don't know why I said it.

SIBUSISO: [*pushing Ajax outside*] you filthy. (See Appendix 2, Episode: 3016)

The element of homosexual 'secrecy' is maintained in this episode for the fact that Ajax regrets telling Sibusiso about Senzo's sexuality. This shows that homosexuality in *Generations* is represented as a taboo denoting 'secrecy' for it is not supposed to be spoken about and should remain a secret. The discovery of a hidden secret causes a great deal of strain to Sibusiso. His worries are confirmed by his failure to do his day-to-day activities after

¹⁷ Alex had a clash with Sibusiso on business related issues. During confrontation, this led to Ajax informing Sibusiso about Senzo's sexuality.

being told about his son's homosexuality. His wife (Ntombi) is not taking the issue of Senzo's sexual identity seriously and seems to be at ease with it. Sibusiso is not at peace with what he has been told. Ntombi is unable to convince Sibusiso about Senzo's gay identity.

NTOMBI: You will be late.

SIBUSISO: It is not possible... it can't be, can't it?

NTOMBI: Nothing is impossible Sibusizo.

SIBUSISO: No son of mine could ever be gay. It's just not possible. No way.

NTOMBI: Ajax did take it back.

SIBUSISO: Why did he say it if it weren't true?

NTOMBI: To get reaction. He knows you don't like him. Maybe he thought...

SIBUSISO: Bastard! I didn't think I could hate him more than I already do. How do I ask my only son if he's gay? How? (See Appendix 2, Episode: 3016)

The conversation clearly shows that Sibusizo cannot accept his son's sexuality if he finds out that he is truly gay. However, the implication is that the representation of homosexuality in *Generations* and in societies bears negative connotations of being kept as a secret. In this scene, Sibusiso's mindset cannot be adjusted to admit that his only son could be gay. Of particular attention here, is the fact that representation of homosexuality is depicted as secret that is immoral or unacceptable behavior and very bad to be accepted as represented in the soap opera *Generations*.

4.2.4 Theme of Shame

Sibusizo decides to confront Senzo about the rumor. He does not have any idea that his son is in a relationship with Jason whom is considered as a close friend of Senzo and shares a flat with him. Sibusizo's idea is that Senzo could not be possibly gay. The following conversation illustrates:

SIBUSIZO: Jason, leave us alone.

[Jason goes out and tells them he will be in their friends house next door]

SENZO: what's up?

SIBUSIZO: I heard rumors, disturbing ugly rumors. It's been eating at me the whole day.

SENZO: What kind of rumors?

SIBUSIZO: About you, I know this can't be true but I wanted to hear from the horse's mouth... a...a.. are you gay?

[Senzo looks so uneasy and does not know what to say to his father. Shamefully and shy, he cannot even face his father]

SENZO: Yes dad I am. I am gay. (See Appendix 2, Episode: 3016)

Senzo is represented as being worried and anxious about his sexuality, an inner torture which dwells with him all the time. Freedom to express one's sexual identity is not afforded. Senzo's character is denied the freedom of expression in terms of his sexuality as it is represented as abnormal; instead he shows a shameful expression about his sexuality. This suggests that it is not socially accepted to be homosexual. As Gross (1989) indicates, Stereotypical depictions of gay men as "abnormal, and the suppression of positive or even 'unexceptional' portrayals, serve to maintain and police the boundaries of the moral order" (1989: 136). Senzo's confrontation by his father is represented in a way that depicts him as reluctant and shameful to tell his father about his sexuality. Even though Senzo takes courage to let his father know that he is gay, the narrative clearly shows that homosexuality is bad, depicted as the 'other' and it is something one should not freely and publicly disclose to the family members. The theme of 'shame' is particularly reflected by the tone of his voice and other non-verbal cues which are portrayed in this narrative. D'Augelli (1989) affirms that these negative attitudes are often acted on in the form of verbal and physical aggression.

4.2.5 Theme of Homophobic Violence

While homosexual characters in *Generations* bear the consequences of being rejected and disowned by the families, the element of homophobic violence is illustrated. According to Ben-Ari (1995), in most of the societies where heterosexuality is extensively valued and homosexuality utterly abhorred, the discovery of one's homosexuality often becomes a crisis situation for most families. Following episode #3040, Sibusizo accidentally finds Senzo and Jason in his house kissing in the bedroom. The reaction of Sibusizo when he walks out of the room after finding Senzo and Jason suggest that something awful has happened. This is explained by the following scene:

SIBUSIZO: What the hell is going on here?

[they jump off the bed and Senzo follows his father as he goes out]

SENZO: Dad, dad, dad!

[Sibusizo goes to the kitchen fuming and gets a sjambok and comes back to the bedroom where Senzo and Jason are]

SENZO: What are you doing... dad wait... you weren't supposed to find out this way.

SIBUSIZO: So this is how Zondo raised you?

SENZO: I can explain.

SIBUSIZO: No son of mine is gay!

[Beating Senzo with the sjambok... Ntombi interfering holding Sibusizo to protect Senzo]

NTOMBI: No... you will kill him!

SIBUSIZO: I treat you like my son and this is how you repay me?

[Sibusizo referring to Jason] You are corrupting my son? *[Knocks Jason down with a punch]*

SIBUSIZO: *[talking to Senzo]* You don't deserve the Dlomo name! (See Appendix 2, Episode: 3040)

The elements of the stereotypic representation of homosexuality in the above dialogue marks homosexuality as deviant behavior which manifests homophobic violence. The narrative that is represented through the two homosexual characters (Jason and Senzo) being beaten up by Sibusizo when he finds out that they are homosexuals could be one example that signifies the negative stereotype perpetuated in soap opera *Generations*. The theme of homophobia is reflected in this episode when Sibusizo cannot control his anger when he finds out that his son is homosexual. This leads to violence which defines 'non-conformist' group of 'other' thereby marginalizing such group as different. The denial of Sibusizo that his son is homosexual reveals the limitations of representations of homosexuality in a positive manner in *Generations*. Thus, parental acceptance of child's homosexuality is the most critical element for homosexual individuals who watch the show, and one would expect that the plot line of *Generations* would represent it in positive way. The manner of representation here in hetero-normative thinking, is illustrated by the blame that Sibusizo puts on Zondo's family.¹⁸ According to Sibusizo's understanding, Senzo's homosexuality is influenced by his upbringing. This idea could be socially and politically reinforced in a sense of guilt that parents feel that their child is homosexual because of the way they are parented as

¹⁸ Zondo's family is adoptive parents of Senzo.

represented in the soap opera *Generations*. Thus, homosexuality is represented in terms of one's failure to get a proper upbringing. In this matter, Sibusizo feels he could have done better for his son if he is the one who raised him.

Following the narrative of homosexuality in episode #3045, Senzo faces an embarrassing moment of being humiliated by his father in the presence of many people. Despite Sibusiso's disapproval and vehement denial that his son is gay, Ntombi and Senzo continue with the ceremony of the unveiling of the tomb stone. This leads to the greatest challenge faced by Senzo whereby he is humiliated and verbally abused by his father in the presence of many people who came for the ceremony. Sibusiso drinks himself to death after his wife (Ntombi) and Senzo against his will continue with the celebration of unveiling of the tomb stone of his sister. The following conversation illustrates the rage between a father and a son.

SIBUSISO: What the hell is this? This is a disgrace! At my sister's grave!

NTOMBI: [*trying to intervene...*] Sibusiso!

[*Sibusiso shakes under the influence of alcohol.*]

SIBUSISO: [*confronting Senzo*] Who gave you the right to speak over the incense?

RUBI: [*trying to intervene*] Sibusiso!

SIBUSISO: [*on top of everyone's voice...*] Shut up! I'm not talking to you! [*back on Senzo...*] Who gave you the right to burn the incense and speak to my ancestors? You're not even a man! You're a half man! *Isitabane!* *Moffie!*... [*Pushing Senzo away...*] Faggot!

KHAPHELA: [*trying to intervene...*] Dlomo! You need to stop this...

SIBUSISO: Get away from me! Stop what? Stop what? [*Pointing the finger to Senzo*] You! You did this!

[*Everyone screams*]...hold him! Hold him!... Sebusiso breaks everything around him including the decorations. He fails to listen to everyone...The people continue screaming... you will hurt yourself!] (See appendix 2, Episode: 3045)

The question of homophobia continues to be the most outstanding in *Generations*. At this point, homosexual character as represented by Senzo is subject to verbal harassment and discrimination by his own parent; an element which most homosexual people experience when their parents could not accept their sexuality as usually represented in mainstream media. As Mays and Cochran (2001) indicate, gay individuals are more likely to experience day-to-day discrimination such as being harassed or insulted; being treated as inferior; and

being regarded with mistrust, fear and disrespect. Hopkins (1998) theorizes that such homophobia is explained away through political responses that assert gay men pose a significant political threat because they seek to do away with heterosexual privilege.

Sibusiso's homophobia not only represent his fear that his son is homosexual but expose him to other people that he is not man enough to handle matters pertaining to family rituals or ceremonies because he fails to abide by the regular norm. As such he calls his son with derogatory names, an indication that homosexuality is irrational and intolerable, above all, lacks masculinity. Kimmel (2000) emphasizes the nearly constant threat to men that they may be revealed as insufficiently masculine. Kimmel (2000) refers to "homophobia" as the fear of other men detecting one's insufficient masculinity. In the same manner the representation of homosexuality in *Generations* implies the discriminatory element of homosexual men as 'unmanly' and therefore incapable of doing anything which heterosexual men can do as they lack traditionally masculine physical characteristics and roles. According to Connell (2005), homosexual men experience a wide variety of discrimination owing to their subordinated masculinity, ranging from political and cultural exclusions, cultural abuse, legal violence (such as imprisonment under sodomy statutes), street violence (ranging from intimidation to murder), economic discrimination and personal boycotts (2005). That being the case the mystery surrounding the chaos that Sibusiso caused at the ceremony clearly illustrates the stereotypic representation of homosexual men as not being 'men' enough and as weak and not abiding by regular norms of hetero-normative discourse which challenge our 'systems'.

4.2.6 Theme of Rejection

Moreover, the harsh treatment of the father to his son for identifying as gay manifests homosexuality in terms of 'rejection'. Senzo tries making peace with his father and takes an initiative to go to his father's house to settle the dispute. The following dialogue ensues.

SENZO: Dad, can I talk to you please... I'm sure we can sort this out[t]...

[Sibusiso comes from the room quietly without any response.]

SENZO: Can I just talk to you?

[Sibusiso fumes, no response...]

SENZO: Dad please,

[Sibusiso picks up Senzo's luggage down and throws them over to Senzo]

SIBUSISO: Take your junk and get out of my house.

SENZO: Dad please!...

SIBUSISO: No! Don't ever call me that, you are not my son... you are dead to me... You hear me? [*Throwing more bags on Senzo*] You are... dead... to me. (See Appendix 2, Episode: 3040)

It becomes difficult for Senzo to deal with rejection after being disowned by his father as a result of his homosexual identity. Rejection here is manifested as a means of disowning someone who is depicted in a stereotypical manner and these maintains and police the boundaries of homosexuality. For an example, Sibusiso notes “you are not my son” and “you are dead to me”. This kind of rejection is likely to be taken into consideration by the public viewership that to be homosexual, one has to be rejected and disowned by their family. The point here is that this reflects the social ‘norm’ which considers homosexual people as second class citizens, as such deserving to be rejected and disclaimed. One could argue that this kind of representation maintains the status quo instead of challenging it. Thus, homosexual representations have been part of history in television for decades, as such, negative stereotypes of homosexuality and lack of mainstream media culture on the particular matter have hardly created acceptance on it. This also finds meaning in *Generations* as it follows the trend in representing homosexual men negatively; often as being desperate, frustrated and shameful of their sexuality. After Senzo's rejection and being disowned by his father, he becomes worried and feels as if he has no sense of belonging. His father's denial to talk to him makes him look more desperate to re-gain the love and be re-integrated as part of the Dlomo family. Showing desperation, Senzo yells saying “dad please!” and his father takes no notice of him. As Shidlo (1994) indicates, homosexual individuals may see themselves and other homosexual men as inferior, morally unacceptable or shameful and may perceive that their sexual orientation has a negative impact on others. This likely contributes to his feeling of invalidated, marginalised and isolated.

4.2.7 Theme of Negative Stereotypic Representation

The narratives of the soap opera *Generations* continue to reinforce the negative stereotypic representation of homosexual men in different perspective. One of the stereotypes associated with homosexuality is the idea that being homosexual is influenced by associating with certain kind of people. Ben- Ari (1985) notes that, at times parents perceive that homosexuality is similar to a contagious disease that a child must have contracted from

someone. For an example, this is evident in *Generations*, where Sibusiso continues to emphasize that Jason is the one corrupting his son. This implies that homosexuality in *Generations* is associated with corruption. It could also further imply that in African communities, homosexuals are viewed as incapable of choosing their sexualities and that they have no control over its destiny. This is expressed in the following scene.

NTOMBI: You could have done them a serious damage. What happened to your...

SIBUSISO: I just found out that my own son is pervert... that's what happened, he is gay, a *moffie*¹⁹, faggot.

NTOMBI: Stop it!

SIBUSISO: What kind of a man sleeps with another man? What kind of a man does that in his father's house?

NTOMBI: It doesn't make him any less of a man.

SIBUSISO: It's sick, damn it! It's wrong! They are worse than two dogs. Senzo is better off dead. It's Malinga's influence. It has to be...

NTOMBI: Oh come on!

SIBUSISO: I know he was bisexual... and still I trusted him, and still respected him. How could I be so stupid?

NTOMBI: I'm just as shocked as you are...

But I am not ...[sigh...] Senzo is not influenced by anyone... who he sleeps with or falls in love with doesn't...

SIBUSISO: Love?

NTOMBI: Sibusiso, no!

SIBUSISO: Enough!

NTOMBI: It doesn't change who he is. He is still your son. And he is okay! They both are, in case you were wondering.

SIBUSISO: I wasn't... and just so we are clear...I don't have a son anymore.

NTOMBI: Ah... (See Appendix 2, Episode: 3040)

Typically, being a homosexual calls for all sorts of derogatory names. The negative stereotypic representation of homosexual men in the above mentioned episode bears the consequences of being called with all derogatory names, stereotype that deliberately mislead

¹⁹ Moffie is a South African slang word for a guy who dresses like a girl or acting or is gay.

and creates negative attitude. This idea as Herek (1989) highlights, leads to hostile verbal and physical acts against homosexual individuals with little apparent motivation except a strong dislike. Sibusiso has the guts to call his own son ‘a pervert’, ‘*moffie*’ and ‘faggot’ an idea which reflects unequal characteristics of power. This could be interpreted that, because of patriarchal influences, and hetero-normative thinking, the homosexual man could be labelled and called with whichever derogatory name because they are not fully accepted in communities. This marks the negative stereotypic representation which Hall (1997) argues that it reduces people to a simple essential characteristics that are represented as fixed by nature. However, what is mostly articulated in the narrative is the deviancy of homosexuality, the perception which considers it as abnormal, unnatural and sickness. This according to Dyer (1980) idea is demeaning and offensive. As such, viewers are urged to believe that the presence of purportedly queer behaviours such as dramatic outbursts, effeminate mannerisms, must necessarily correspond to a gay identity, even where the man in question has not made such an identity claim for himself. As emphasized in the narrative of the soap opera *Generations*, Sibusiso questions “what kind of man sleeps with another man”, and he demeans them as being “worse than two dogs”. As such, throughout the narrative of homosexual men in the show, Senzo has been called with derogatory names such as ‘*isitabane*’ and ‘*inkonkone*’.

Apart from that, homosexual discrimination is explicitly revealed in the soap opera *Generations*. Often in the show, heterosexual characters are judgemental towards the homosexual characters which marks it unequal and unfair treatment of a human person. For example, episode #3041, offers an account where Jason is being dismissed from work for being homosexual. This causes a serious embarrassment for Jason in front of other staff members.

JASON: Sibusiso

SIBUSISO: Queen, call security, this man is not welcomed here. Pack your things and get out.

JASON: You can’t just fire me because you found me...

SIBUSISO: Don’t you dare talk about your filthy lifestyle in front of my staff. You have 15 minutes to pack up... and get out.

[Everyone in the reception looks amazed. One staff member tries to intervene but Sibusiso orders them to leave as he will handle it on his own]

SIBUSISO: To think I defended your bisexuality...

JASON: Until you found out I was sleeping with your son?

SIBUSISO: It's sick and unnatural.

JASON: All of a sudden... anyway... who the hell are you to judge?

SIBUSISO: You went and filled Senzo's head... you changed him... Senzo was fine until you showed up. Jason Malinga... I want you out of here.

JASON: I won't go without a fight. I'll drag you to court if I have to.

SIBUSISO: Do your worst... you probably hit like a girl anyway.

JASON: [*leaving out the place*] You are going to be sorry. (See Appendix 2, Episode: 3041)

In relation to rejection of the father to the son for discovering that his son is gay, Jason's homosexuality tends to be a subject to workplace rejection. After being badly beaten by the father of his boyfriend, who is also his employer, Jason is dismissed from work for being homosexual. The narrative of homosexual men in this episode is represented as living a dirty life style; also homosexuality is represented as sick and unnatural. This relates to the African discourses that consider homosexuality as unnatural and sick, an idea which leads to some communities taking the homosexual person to the traditional healers to be cured. Consistent with the narrative in episode #3041, Jason is leading a filthy life as implied by Sibusiso. This kind of life is not even worth being discussed in front of other people in as far as the homosexual characters as depicted by Jason and Senzo are represented in the storyline of *Generations*.

Once again, the stereotypic representation of homosexuality in *Generations* comes up based on heterosexual characters; this time on their negative attitude towards homosexual characters as represented by Senzo and Jason. At this point homosexuality is considered as 'unchristian', immoral and reflecting unnatural behaviour which the homosexual character has to be prayed for. Much more important to highlight in this point is the case where political leaders around Africa have circulated and entrenched the notion that homosexuality is "alien to African culture and an import from the depraved West" (Morgan & Wieringa, 2005; 17). As such, the media agencies in particular mainstream television takes a major role in reinforcing such kind of thinking. According to Horn (2006) this discourse of homosexuality as 'unchristian' is justified through laws which criminalise 'unnatural' sex and the Bible which were both colonial and imports. Thus, homosexuality in *Generations* is represented as a bad sexuality, one which is seriously awful and has to be exorcised from

someone who identify as homosexual. With regard to homosexuality as bad or awful, this could be related to the social perceptions which lead to issues of corrective rape and murder in the case of lesbian women, while homosexual men are given names and discriminated. Following episode #3045, we learn the reaction on how heterosexual characters in *Generations* criticise homosexuality often associating it with being possessed with evil works.

SARA: Morning, you have not dressed up... we don't have enough time.

KHAPHELA: I'm not sure... we should not even go.

SARA: Why not?

KHAPHELA: I saw Dlomo (Sibusiso) last night, he told Ntombi to cancel the ceremony. She ignored his wishes... and went ahead with everything without telling him.

SARA: Why would he want to cancel?

KHAPHELA: You haven't heard about Sibusiso and Senzo?

SARA: No, is there a problem?

Khaphela: [*tries to dismiss the conversation so to avoid telling Sara the truth of the matter*] would you like some tea?

SARA: If there is a problem, please tell me.

KHAPHELA: [*has courage to tell her*] Sibusiso found out 'something' about Senzo. The boy's (*inkonkone*) homosexual. He is involved with Jason Malinga.

SARA:[*breath taking...*] What? No! Are you sure?

KHAPHELA: [*nodding*] Dlomo is not taking it very well.

SARA: I can't believe this... the young people of today! [*Silent and thinking deeply*] Someone needs to do something.

KHAPHELA: Like what?

SARA: Nonononono! Pray for the boy... fasting is all that will work. [*Raising her voice up*] This is the devil's work!.... I never liked that Jason boy. I could feel something's not right with him.

KHAPHELA: I'm more worried about Dlomo... He's really upset... Finding out about his son...then his wife against his wishes behind his back. (See Appendix 2,Episode: 3045)

Evidently, the negative perception of homosexuality as explicitly illustrated in the above conversation marks the 'evilness' of homosexual men. As Reddy (2002) explains, same-sex practices have been recurrently spoken about as immoral, anti-Christian, and satanic in the

African context. This being the case, the representation of homosexuality in *Generations* suggests that homosexuality can change through prayer and this is influenced by the idea that sexuality is shaped by culture. Sara's perception with regard to homosexuality implies that one chooses or is influenced to be a homosexual. Research regarding the origins of sexual desire whether innate, learned or some combination remains decidedly inconclusive. It is known however that most of the people do not perceive sexuality as a choice. Instead, research reveals that most people perceive their sexual desire as emerging naturally, an inherent part of self (Whisman 1996, Wolkomir 2006). In terms of queer theory, one is not born a woman but becomes one (Butler 2004). This challenges the sexual norm that gender is not something that a person is born with but something that one is acculturated into. Thus, the negative stereotypic representation of homosexuality in *Generations* as someone's choice often being associated with devil's work is solidified based on the narrative which highlights that homosexual people can change their sexuality through prayer.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the findings that the researcher has come up with during this research. In most cases, many findings were previously indicated in the preceding chapters. Therefore, this comes as findings but also as discussion out of the already presented findings above. The following section will give an analysis on how homosexuality is represented in *Generations* in the selected episodes. This will give the discussions on different episodes on how homosexual characters are represented in the show in terms of the specific themes.

5.2 Discussion of the Findings

As mentioned previously in the above section, *Generations* has included in its storylines the two homosexual characters who have been represented negatively often being seen to be morally perverted. The homosexual characters as represented by Senzo and Jason first saw each other in a bar and in their first meeting was obvious that something was going on between the two of them. The role they play in the show is continuous although along the way it remained silent for a while and they continue to show interest in one another in a subtle way. The representation of homosexuality in *Generations*, through these characters (Jason and Senzo) is quite secretive. It takes an amount of time for these characters to accept their sexuality in the show. The first encounter which marks confirmation that the two characters are homosexual is their first kiss on screen. Their on-screen kiss causes an uproar amongst the viewers after the remark made by the producers of the show²⁰. This indicates that homosexuality is bad, as a results, the kiss between homosexual (male) couple is not even worth to be displayed on television in accordance with hetero-normative thinking. Mbadlanyama (2011) affirms, “when *Generations* first introduced a gay character, viewers made their opinions known and controversial kiss between two gay male characters caused an outcry among traditionalists and community leaders” (2011:9).

In television narrative, heterosexual kissing occurs constantly. It is a ‘socially’ normal, familiar, and accepted image/occurrence. This being the case, the heterosexual kissing becomes repetitive and thus normalized. As such, repetitive representations of such images

²⁰ This is due to the forewarned message on the screen that explained the particular episode would not be favourable for some viewers, as a result of explicit representation of homosexuality in that particular episode.

are hegemonic structures as they are represented in heterosexual point of view and as such considered to be a norm. Soap operas as popular by their very nature embrace mainstream social values and so depict these as valued norms. By contrast, men kissing men has been problematised enough to ensure that it does not get screened, routine or ordinary. In an African context, as in *Generations*, this could be related to the cultural myth held by many black African communities that being homosexual is ‘un-African’, often associated with the white Europeans and colonialism. As such, homosexual characters in soap opera bear the negative stereotype of denying intimacy. Even when a partner or lover is present, their interaction is limited to a passionless embrace, a hug, or a consoling touch (Moritz, 1999). That being the case, in *Generations* the kiss between the homosexual couple has never been explicit like those of heterosexual couples and this leaves a room for discussion on how homosexual men are represented in this soap opera which marks it an equal to heterosexual characters. This is because the camera angle that shows us the two characters kissing is not explicit and the kiss is rather quick leading to the end of the episode. The picture below demonstrates the controversial first kiss. (see Fig. 2 below).



Fig.1: The controversial first kiss between Jason and Senzo in SABC1 *Generations*. Source: www.mambaonline.com

In this picture, the camera angle does not show the explicit depiction of two people kissing. One could argue that this kind of depiction only applies to homosexual characters as it not the case in heterosexual couples as the kiss is always explicit because it is considered to be normal. This relates to Fuqua (1995) idea that representations of homosexual characters in soap operas encompass only certain minimum condition. This being the case, kissing of homosexual characters on television is totally abhorred.

In most cases, the communication of homosexuality is necessarily represented in a performed way. The kiss is one way in which such information can be announced, perhaps the most immediate and the most potent. As Straayer (1992) states, kissing can be the metaphor and medium for sex and sexuality. In the case of *Generations*, kissing of the homosexual characters is rarely seen and more often than not, when they mimic kissing, it is not explicit like those of heterosexual characters. Homosexuality in *Generations* is rather communicated in other ways, through other combinations of visual or aural cues which are mostly negative. Indeed, as Fuqua (1995) suggests, much of the theoretical work which has addressed the question of homosexual representation in and by specifically mainstream media has been framed by a discussion of negative imagery and the damning effects of figures.

Researchers have generally indicated that homosexual male characters are unable to express their sexuality on screen through romantic relationships because their sexual images are threatening to heterosexual audiences that consider displays of affection “flaunting” sexual orientation (Bruni, 1999). Many Gay rights activists note that allowing respectable homosexual male television characters the opportunity to express their romantic feelings in the same manner as heterosexual characters (i.e. kissing) is an important step on the road to a more complete acceptance of homosexual men not only on television, but in the general public as well (Bruni, 1999). Thus, mainstream television put more focus on engaging heterosexuals in displays of affection including kissing and sexual behavior (Fejes & Petrich, 1993). On the contrary, homosexual characters are often not allowed any connection to the homosexual community, much less the intimate relationship of a partner. Even when a partner or lover is present, their interaction is limited to a passionless embrace, a hug, or a consoling touch (Moritz, 1999).

Findings from this study are consistent with existing literature and various studies conducted in the field of media and representation. A certain number of authors have documented similar issues on soap opera, hegemonic norms and representation. Gross (2001) for example notes that if people consume only heterosexual versions of sexuality and have no access to alternative sources of information (e.g. in their social environment) they may have little choice but to accept the mainstream media stereotypes they imagine must be typical of all lesbians women and gay men (Gross, 2001:16). According to Harrington (2003), unlike other genres on television, soap operas are centrally based on character development

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This last chapter provides a summary of the findings that emerged from the analysis and discussion of the selected episodes. The conclusion takes into consideration the issues discovered by previous researchers and already documented in previous literature. Some conclusive recommendations are made following the results of the study, and are all summarized in the following paragraphs.

6.2 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study applied a lens of scrutiny on the representation of homosexual men in soap opera *Generations*. The rare representations of homosexuality in mainstream media bear the consequences which are mostly negative. In most cases when such representations appear in soap operas, indeed one cannot turn a blind eye on the negative stereotypic representations through the homosexual characters. This implies that majority of representation of homosexuality in soap operas are not the ones that work to the advantage of homosexual men as viewers. This is also evident in *Generations* that homosexual characters are mostly depicted with those negative demeaning offensive elements of homophobia and negative stereotypes. Such depictions in *Generations* reflect homosexual characters being represented as unnatural and against the moral order. The above implies that even though homosexuality is represented in the soap opera *Generations*, the motive behind is to depict homosexuality as problematic. For instance, with regard to character development, almost all the narrative homosexual plots in *Generations* are associated with problems to be solved which indicate that homosexuality is represented in a traditional heterosexual fashion and in that case it is not considered to fit into the hetero-normative construction of masculinity. Including a homosexual character requires more than viewers simply seeing them on-screen once a week. It entails seeing that character's sexuality along with other aspects of identity acquisitions negotiation and performativity develop and mature on daily basis. This does not find context in *Generations* as the limitations of explosion of homosexuality on television on mainstream television illustrates that the boundaries of acceptable behaviour for homosexual characters are still rather strictly drawn. Rarely if ever does viewer-ship see homosexual men engaged in positive or loving relationship and certainly homosexual men are frequently shown in intimate settings. As such, heterosexuality is still maintained as homosexual intimacy is

unacceptable. There are real people in gay and lesbian communities whose apparent characteristics suggest the stereotypes, but one cannot forget that stereotypes by definition can never fully capture the complexity of these real individuals. The dilemma arises because usually these shorthand caricatures are the only characters seen on television, representing the gay community as a whole, so members of the viewing public who have yet to have any meaningful connections with gays and lesbians (including gay and lesbian adolescents) receive a dangerously incomplete view of gay and lesbian communities.

Just as homosexual characters as represented by Jason and Senzo are considered as failure in confirming to hetero-normative roles, it follows that all homosexual men are also failure to challenge misconceptions, resulting in either confirming overt prejudice of masculinities or manhood. Thus representation of homosexual men in *Generations* is reflexive of larger South African society's association of homosexuality with black gay men being ridicule to immorality. The shift to visibility has nothing important than being a gendered one, with homosexual men being associated with unworthiness to perform certain activities because of their sexual identity. The representation of homosexual men created by *Generations* producers as deviant behaviour is but one example that has been explored to show the negative perception of homosexuality in the show. Homosexuality as represented in Jason and Senzo in *Generations* has hardly demonstrated the acceptance of homosexual men/women which have been advocated by the constitution of South Africa. Instead, much of the depictions of such characters have been represented in a situation that one would hardly accept the homosexual people. These representations may inflict social, emotional and physical damage upon homosexuals, both in within and outside television shows.

As a way forward, on the social aspect, representation of homosexuality in the mainstream media soap operas must be representing sexual politics or issues not just the idea that homosexual people are present on television. History tells us that homosexuals had been represented based on how their lives affect the heterosexual characters. This implies that homosexuality had been represented mostly with problems in mainstream media television. Issues which concern every member of the society such as HIV and AIDS had been/still are considered to be gay disease. Although there are lots of negative stereotypes of representation of homosexual men in *Generations*, at least the controversial issues like HIV/AIDS related disease with gays has never been the case in this soap opera.

From the social aspect point of view, mainstream media soap operas should focus on representing homosexual couples in a way that shows that they can live normal lives like any other heterosexual couple. This can be done by perhaps depicting them in roles dealing with everyday matters such as raising and adopting children. This will help people to understand that homosexual individuals are not second class citizens who are often represented as living a deviant behaviour and acting against the moral order of hetero-normative discourses.

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7.2 Appendix 1
The list of *Generation*'s characters

Character	Actor
Ajax Khoza	Sipho Ngwenya
Dineo Mashaba	Katlego Danke
Dumisani Shabane	Dumisani-Sizwe Mbebe
Jason Malinga	Zolisa Xaluva
Jabulani Dlomo	Kunene Nyembezi
Kenneth Mashaba	Seputla Sebogodi
Khaphela Ngcobo	Mike Mvelase
Khethiwe Buthelezi	Winnie Modise
Ntombi Khumalo	Sonia Sedibe
Paul Mashaba	Siyabonga Twala
Queen Moroka	Sophie Ndaba
Ruby Dikobe	Slindile Nodangala
Samuel Khumalo	Thabiso Mokhethi
Sara Ngcobo	Delisile Malinga
Senzo Zondo	Thami Mngqolo
Sibusiso Dlomo	Menzi Ngubane
Sharon Khumalo	Kagiso Rakosa
Zamani Khoza	Siphiwe Mtshali

1.Ajax

Ajax is Zamani's brother. He is presented as irritating, often very loud, arrogant and without manners. Ajax has no support for homosexuality. He spreads numerous rumours about the homosexual characters in the show.

2.Dineo

Dineo is represented as a housewife married to Kenneth Mashaba. She entered into the media industry and successfully become a magazine editor. As her role progresses in the show, she falls in love with her step son and even went as far as falling pregnant with his son.

3.Dumisani

Dumisani features in *Generations* as an abusive man in his relationship. He works in an advertising company called *Ezweni*. He is presented as a heterosexual man who engages in sexual relationships with different women. He is arrogant and does not handle matters pertaining to love affairs seriously. He abuses his girlfriend and at the same time makes an apology for his mistakes which are often repeated. Dumisani who is a colleague of Jason, does not have any problem with any one's sexuality and support the idea that one cannot be fired from work based on sexual orientation.

4.Jason

Jason initially featured in *Generations* as an intern for Capitec Bank. His character was terminated and later reintroduced as an intern for *Ezweni* communications. He is presented as a confused man with a questionable sexual preference. His interest for both men and women puts him in a position of being uncomfortable with his sexuality.

5. Jabulani

Jabulani is the uncle of Sibusiso Dlomo. He is portrayed as an elder to the Dlomo family. His character is represented as a typical conservative Zulu man who does not understand how two men can be said to be in love.

6.Kenneth

Kenneth is presented as a rich man who owns a media company called *Mashaba Media*. He is portrayed as a male chauvinist who does not want his wife to work but stay at home as a

housewife and provide for her. He is an ideal homophobic man who always makes funny statements and jokes about homosexual men.

7.Khaphela

Khaphela is depicted as a man who has never been married before but looking forward to start a family at his middle age. He is a strong character that everyone trusts and gets advice from him in times of distress. He is portrayed as an elderly figure who is well informed about Zulu traditions and culture. He is a very silent man and happens to fall in love with a woman whom he did not even get to know her background very well. As a result thereof, their marriage does not work out very well. Khaphela on the other hand does not seem to have a stand with regard to homosexuality.

8.Khethiwe

Khethiwe initially featured in *Generations* as a child-minder. Her character changed through various stages including becoming a millionaire by owning block of flats. She is represented as a woman who falls for abusive men.

9.Ntombi

Ntombi is presented as a respectful mother who has a family and a daughter. She is happily married and respects her husband. Although Ntombi is married to a homophobic man, she does seem to be supportive and accepting homosexuality as normal, as any other sexuality. She struggles to calm down the situation in her family when her homophobic husband disowns his son.

10.Paul

Paul is the brother of Kenneth Mashaba who works for his brother's company. He is portrayed as a down to earth gentleman who cares for the women he is involved with.

11.Queen

Queen is a receptionist who usually tries her best to help other people. She is presented as a woman who cannot keep a secret. She admires every good looking man but by the same token does not find it easy to find her own one. Based on her character, Queen is open minded and very understanding in matters pertaining to sexuality.

12.Ruby

Ruby is a strong single mother. She is a hard working business woman who owns the bar. She is portrayed as the mother who helps everyone in the show in each and every problem they encounter. Her support for homosexual men is shown when she accommodates Senzo at her house after being gay bashed.

13.Samuel

Samuel is presented as a bar man. He is married to Sharon and is portrayed as a happily married man. In as far as homosexuality is concerned in the show; Samuel was in a dilemma and not convinced that his friends (Senzo and Jason) are a homosexual couple. He dealt with the whole issue on his own and ultimately accepted and convinced his other friends that sexualities diverge.

14.Sara

Sara is presented as middle aged woman and a baby-sitter of Ntombi and Sibusizo's child. She is the wife of Khapela. He character is portrayed as very conservative and homophobic woman

15. Senzo

Senzo is presented as Sibusiso's son. He is a homosexual character who is portrayed as confused in terms of his sexual identity.

16.Sibusiso

Sibusiso is presented as Senzo's father, co-worker with Jason (Senzo's boyfriend). He is married to Ntombi and is portrayed as a father who cannot handle his son's homosexuality. This is evident on the basis that Sibusiso disowns his son after discovering that he is gay.

17.Sharon

Sharon is presented as a chief magazine editor. Her storyline is depicted as being faced with a challenge and the difficulty of making a choice between motherhood and following her career. She despised homosexuality but ultimately came to terms and accepts her friends being a homosexual couple.

18. Zamani

Zamani is an elder brother of Ajax. Although he does not play a major role in *Generations*, Zamani is presented as a brother who is concerned about his irresponsible brother (Ajax). The extent of his concern about homosexuality is established when he chides Ajax for leaking the hidden secret to Sibusiso about his son's homosexuality

7.3 Appendix 2

Description of episodes

1. Episode 2931

Senso goes to the club in his own. This club is where he becomes comfortable to express who he is in terms of his sexuality. He dances and has a great time with other men of the same calibre.

2. Episode 2932

Jason asks Senso about his whereabouts. Senso does not want to tell anyone where he was on the previous night but the stamp on Senso's arm reveals what he thought is a secret. Jason is aware where Senso was and this is revealed by the mark of the stamp on Senso's arm which he acquired at the entrance of a gay club.

3. Episode 2975

Jason and Senso are at the club where there are people of same/opposite –sex. The two men have no interest to socialise with girls in the club; instead they stick to each other and spend the entire night dancing together.

4. Episode 2987

Neli goes to Senzo's place to investigate on whether Jason and Senzo are in a relationship. Her intention is to confirm to her friends that indeed the two men are a homosexual couple. She tricks and flirts with Senzo but Senzo shows no interest and becomes irritated by Neli's behaviour. Senzo accidentally reveals to Neli that they are a couple with Jason. He is worried about his dad knowing about his sexual orientation. Jason confronts him by telling him not to be worried even if people or society may scorn them as they will always be together.

5. Episode 3015

Ajax goes to Sibusiso's house to apologise to him about all that has happened between the two of them. Ajax wanted Sibusiso to terminate his contract. The apology session gets bad as Sibusiso rejects the idea of releasing Ajax from contract. Ajax

gets angry that he tells Sibusiso he cannot be his father because his son is freaking gay.

6. Episode 3016

Ntombi and Sibusiso speculate on the matter of Senzo's sexual orientation and most importantly, Sibusiso does not want to admit the possibility of his son being gay. Sibusiso goes to Senzo's place and asks Jason to leave them alone to discuss a private matter on their own. Sibusiso confronts Senzo about the rumours on his son's sexuality. Senzo becomes reluctant to tell the truth but eventually comes out with the truth that he is gay.

7. Episode 3040

Sibusiso finds Jason and Senzo in his bedroom intimate. This disappoints Sibusiso and becomes furious that he walks out of the room fuming in order to get his *shambok*. Jason and Ntombi try to intervene but Sibusiso does not take any kind of advice. This went to the extent that Sibusiso beats Jason and he is taken and admitted to the hospital. In the very same episode, Senzo confronts his dad about the matter but Sibusiso does not take any notice on whatever his son is trying to talk about. This leads to Sibusiso virtually shouting and disowning his son for being gay.

8. Episode 3041

Sibusiso goes to New Horizon where he meets with Jason at the reception. This happens few days after Sibusiso found Jason and Senzo in his bedroom. Sibusiso tells Jason to leave the building with an immediate effect as he is dismissed from work. The incident happens in front of other staff members who are not aware of the reasons which cause Jason's dismissal from work. Dumisani is not happy that Jason is being dismissed from work. Sibusiso does not take any notice of what might be the consequences of such dismissal to the company.

9. Episode 3045

Senzo and Ntombi decide to go ahead with the ceremony of unveiling the tomb against Sibusiso's approval. Sibusiso had said he is not going to attend the ceremony but suddenly pitches up heavily drunk. He causes a scene by verbally abusing Senzo

and everyone else attending the ceremony. Sibusiso further disrespects the solemn ceremony by destroying everything that is around the grave.