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Representations of Masculinity in *Skeem Saam*

Alexandra Catherine Maggs

Supervised by Professor Nicky Falkof

A dissertation submitted in full fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts by Research in Media Studies

Department of Media Studies, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand

April 2021

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Abstract

This dissertation unpacks representations of masculinities in the popular SABC 1 series *Skeem Saam.* Using content analysis, discourse analysis, and visual discourse analysis this dissertation illustrates the complex representations of masculinity in *Skeem Saam,* combining historical discourses of responsible manhood, fatherhood, and the idea of the breadwinner. I use Kopano Ratele's idea of Hegemony within Marginality to unpack how the representations of masculinity in Skeem Saam are strongly underpinned by a neoliberal idea of success. In the two distinctive settings of Johannesburg and Turfloop, I focus on two central characters: family man Zamokihle "Kwaito" Seakamela and ruthless businessman Lehasa Maphosa. Ultimately, although these representations deviate from popular tropes in South African media, which associate black men with violence, they still follow similar patterns as historical representations that privilege consumerism, prioritize class mobility and alienate the working class.

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Introduction and Rationale

In 2005, celebrated feminist and scholar Pumla Dineo Gqola spoke to artist and art historian Thembinkosi Goniwe. An extract of this conversation was subsequently published, entitled "*A Neglected Heritage: the aesthetics of complex Black Masculinities".* The conversation is focused on Goniwe's artworks and how black, South African masculinities are fraught with contradictions. Goniwe explores how popular representations in both media and art fail to fully grasp these complexities. The following extract encapsulates the overarching trend in media representations of black, South African men as Goniwe states:

"There are various Black masculinities whose aesthetic and principled qualities are of a healthy, enriching and growing spirit to society and Black communities in particular. They have operated in the shadows of the apartheid regime and others continue to operate on the margins. When we see, hear and learn about the Black world as projected through white-dominated media, positive qualities of Black people and their cultures suffer from distortions and denigrations" (88).

Goniwe's statement speaks to the limited scope of discourses drawn on by the South African media in constructing representations of black men. These are often influenced by negative stereotypes of criminality and violence. Although South African media is not at all homogenous, Goniwe's sentiment seems to ring true for most mediums, from print to television. It is the latter medium, in particular a popular series on the South African National Broadcaster, that this project is concerned with.

The synopsis of the popular daily SABC1 series *Skeem Saam* reads as follows:

"The underlying premise for the series is that real men are made, not born. Teenage boys naturally challenge themselves. They wish to find out what their limits are. Will they survive to see their 21st birthday? Who will grow into a healthy, responsible man? What are the responsibilities of close relations and neighbours towards shaping the next generation of men? The series takes a close look at the lives of three teenage boys and their families. It examines how these boys deal with issues of masculinity, gender relations, relationships; self esteem, etc." (*SABC Television Shows*, 2021)

Skeem Saam has been a hit since it began broadcasting in 2014 and has seen a steady growth in its viewership. With its increasing popularity, the show transitioned from a weekly broadcast to a daily broadcast. In 2019, in the beginning stages of this research project, the series boasted a massive viewership, at one point reaching up to 6 million South Africans daily. A year prior, it had held 57% of the audience share in its prime-time slot (Cupido et al., 2018). At the end of 2020, the series saw its viewership decline massively. Currently the show's future is uncertain due to financial constraints on the national broadcaster (Ferreira, 2021). Nevertheless the series still managed to rank among the top television shows in South Africa and holds a prominent place in South African popular culture, regularly trending on Twitter and generating public debate.[1]

The short synopsis above provides a number of important insights into how this popular media text understands and negotiates the idea of gender, with a particular focus on masculinities. The concept of masculinity is centred with the statement that "real men are made not born". This idea carries the assumption that there is an ideal or "real" state of manhood that is constructed and shaped by one's life experience, ideally culminating in a "healthy, responsible man". The synopsis also juxtaposes this "healthy, responsible man" with an alternative. Although not explicitly stated, the synopsis implies that one of

[1] See:
https://briefly.co.za/98414-skeem-saam-viewers-react-revelations-about-kwaitos-father-latest-episode.html http://www.702.co.za/articles/12345/skeem-saam-voted-most-popular-soap-by-the-public-at-saftas
http://www.marklives.com/2019/03/sa-tv-ratings-sabc-1-primetime-top-20-for-jan-2019/

the alternatives to this responsible ideal of manhood is the risk of death before reaching the age of 21.

The risk of death referred to here is pertinent to the South African context, where in a bid to prove their masculinity, young men engage in risky behavior that often results in death. “Males are disappearing from the population because they are dying – specifically killing and being killed by other males” (Shefer et al., 2007: 4)**.** Here, the synopsis acknowledges the broader social context in which attempts to conform to a certain type of masculinity can be dangerous. Essentially, the series is making a claim to offer an alternative hegemony, one which men should strive towards to avoid an early death and become what the series deems a “a healthy, responsible man”.

The synopsis also implies that social relations among families and communities play a large role in shaping this masculine ideal – making the formulation of an ideal masculinity both a collective and individual process. It asks the question, “What are the responsibilities of close relations and neighbours towards shaping the next generation of men?” Both close family members and neighbours are seen as integral to shaping or constructing masculinities within their communities.

This shaping of masculinity is detailed through the stories of three young, black South African men and their families: Thabo “Tbose” Maputla, Zamokuhle “Kwaito” Seakamela, and Katlego “Kat” Petersen.They undertake what is described by the writers as a “journey to manhood” (*SABC Television Shows*, 2021). This dissertation seeks to unpack the understandings of masculinity underpinning *Skeem Saam* through an analysis of representations of masculinity in the series.

The ideas that masculinities are socially constructed and a masculine ideal is disseminated by the mass media are rooted in the theory of hegemonic masculinity, theorised in the 1980s by Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell. This theory is based in

feminist understandings of gender which seek to make men aware of their own privileged positions within society, and work towards deconstructing hegemonic forms of masculinity and their harmful effects on both men and women (Gardiner, 2005).
Hegemonic masculinity was foundational in the growth of South African research into masculinities. Although the theory in its most basic understanding proves inadequate to account for a multiplicity of masculinities in the South African context, particularly when studying black South African men.The basic tenets of the theory of hegemonic masculinity are integral to my research. However my understanding of masculinity in the South African context is primarily informed by Kopano Ratele's theoretical approach of "hegemony within marginality" (Ratele, 2014), which takes into account oppressive race and class structures and the overall subordination of other races and genders to white men when examining hegemonic masculinities in South Africa. Ratele's approach focuses on how particularly in the South African context one's gender identity is *intertwined with* and *complicated by* other identities, including race and class.

The mass media play an integral role in the construction of identity as "representation as a cultural process establishes individual and collective identities, and symbolic systems provide possible answers to the questions: Who am I? What could I be? Who do I want to be?" (Stadler and O'Shaughnessy, 2002: 209). This definition links the construction of certain identities as they appear in the media, with real-life understandings of certain gender, race and class identities. This understanding of identity and the media is rooted in Stuart Hall's theories of representation. Hall's theory uses the concept of discourse which in this context can be defined as: "Such socially accepted associations among ways of using language, of thinking, valuing, acting, and interacting, in the "right" places and at the "right" times with the "right" objects (associations that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or "social network")" (Gee, 2011: 34). According to Hall, discourses used to inform media representations play a role in disseminating ideals and privileging certain ways of being. Hall's theories of representation and the media also underpin this research.

In South Africa, media images of black South African men have often been negatively associated with violence and criminality[2], which in turn affects the availability of cultural resources from which black South African men may draw on to understand their own gender identities and how they relate to others. This is evident in a study conducted by Malinga and Ratele. They refer to the media as a "symbolic resource for self-making" (2016: 101). Their qualitative study looks at the real impact of current media representations of masculinity, and how they influence gender identity construction among participants. A key finding from this research points to the potential that the South African mass media has in providing examples of positive masculinity, or what Ratele refers to as 'progressive masculinities' that is "non-patriarchal, non-sexist, egalitarian and caring masculinities" (2016: 137). This could counteract negative media images of black South African men, which dominate the South African media landscape.

It is also the association with SABC Education that makes *Skeem Saam* an important media text through which to explore representations of South African masculinities. SABC Education was created to fulfill the public broadcaster's education mandate. According to its policy document: "Through its educational programmes it is well placed to advance national goals of equality, dignity and an inclusive society and works towards these ends" (South African Broadcasting Corporation, 2014). The show's association with SABC Education implies that the masculine ideals it depicts are somewhat in line with those upheld and promoted by the state. It is also important to note that promotional videos and interviews with the show's actors, and creator Winnie Serite, repeatedly emphasise that the storyline is based on real events that actually occur in the lives of young, black South African men (*Skeem Saam now @ 20:00 - Mondays to Fridays on SABC 1*, 2014).

[2] See (Langa, 2020)

Serite's claims to telling the 'real' stories of young, black South African men are important to note, as this allows us to ask the questions: whose reality is being privileged in the series, and whose reality is being excluded or subordinated entirely? Ives states that "television, with its depictions of the dramas of everyday life, provides a compelling medium for influencing a normative national consciousness" (2007: 154). No media text can be said to reflect reality and therefore lay claim to realism, but rather represent a version of reality, claims to realism by the creator of the series in this context has important implications for how television functions in South Africa. As television in South Africa post-1994 is considered integral in reimagining a post-apartheid landscape (Smit, 2016) the representations of masculinities in *Skeem Saam* could be considered masculine ideals which speak to, challenge, and construct a normative national consciousness. *Skeem Saam* draws on a variety of discourses to inform their representations of young, black South African men. This research aims to interrogate these discourses and whether or not they perpetuate harmful ideas about men in the South Africa context that further contribute to a turbulent gendered landscape.

With the above in mind, *Skeem Saam's* strong focus on masculinity, claims to realism and promotion of a masculine ideal through its use of the term "real man" make it an ideal text to interrogate current understandings of masculinity in the South African context – which forms are upheld as sterling examples of masculine behaviour and which forms are seen as undesirable masculine identities. Its extensive viewership, although somewhat diminished by pandemic-induced production difficulties[3] make it an even more valuable text in its enormous reach.

Skeem Saam is set between the fictional township of Turfloop in Limpopo, and Johannesburg. When the series first aired, the three protagonists began their journey at

[3] A brief hiatus on the series led fans to speculate over its cancellation in 2021. This claim was denied by the SABC.

Turfloop High, a fictional township school. Subsequent seasons have seen T'bose, Kwaito and Kat, graduate from high school, attend universities in both Limpopo and Johannesburg and obtain their degrees. Kwaito is now a qualified engineer, Katlego a chef, and T'bose a lawyer. All three of the young men have moved back to Turfloop and live with their families. The series also follows the story of Lehasa Maphosa, a ruthless business mogul living in Johannesburg, with family and business ties to Turfloop. My data set consists of sixteen consecutive episodes of the series which aired in early 2019. Through an in-depth content and discourse analysis of these episodes, this research will explore how masculinity is represented differently between Johannesburg and Turfloop. Both locations provide a contextual lens through which we can better understand the themes of community, ideas of success and family and fatherhood, as they relate to constructions of masculinity in the series.

Literature Review: Masculinities and the Media: Social Factors Influencing Representation

South African literature on the study of masculinities can be traced back to the early 1990s, when sociological theories of gender and hegemonic masculinity espoused by RW Connell began to spread and be critiqued and reworked for Global South contexts. The concept has been applied to studies in various fields in South Africa from psychology to epidemiology and is often used when interrogating high rates of gender-based violence in an attempt to understand how violence results from a constantly evolving gender hierarchy (Morrell et al., 2012). This has led to a rich body of work on the varying understandings of masculinity in the South African context.

This literature review will focus particularly on the work of South African scholars who have interrogated masculinity in the South African media. I will begin by giving a brief overview of representations of masculinity in the South African media. Because *Skeem Saam* predominantly follows the lives of young, black South African men, I will then discuss the factors shaping the representation of black South African men in the South

African media. These studies include analyses of historical representations in magazines, film and television, the latter mediums being the most important to my research. As *Skeem Saam* is a televisual text, I will also discuss literature related to the role of South African television and how this medium has evolved, shaped, and been shaped by South Africa during apartheid and post-1994, when programming shifted to reflect the ideal of a "rainbow nation". Ultimately this literature review aims to discuss how understandings of what it means to be masculine in South Africa have been constructed in the media and the medium through which these ideals were disseminated.

South African Masculinity in the Media: An Overarching White Hegemony

As *Skeem Saam* is a popular television series, televisual representations of masculinity are paramount to my research. However, media representations of masculinity in print long preceded television in South Africa and are important to provide historical context to enrich the understanding of representations common in film and television.

Importantly, studies into the representations of masculinity in the South African media stress the importance of recognising a plurality of masculinities, separated according to race and class by apartheid and colonialism. Luyt (2012) discusses how the inequalities entrenched in the legal and social workings of society by white minority rule, continue to persist today, despite the theoretical shift to a democratic society after the election of the ANC in 1994. Luyt refers predominantly to race-based inequalities, but acknowledges that discussions around race often obscure equally important discussions around gender representation which he aims to unpack through an examination of men in South African advertisements. This study outlines how, in general, South African media cements a gender hierarchy in which cis-gendered heterosexual men are depicted as dominant, while women and other genders are rarely represented and when they are, they are depicted as subordinate to men.

However, this hierarchy is not simply constructed around gender, but further stratified according to race. Luyt ultimately concludes that an urban, white masculinity is privileged in South African advertising. Viljoen (2008), too recognises the plurality of South African masculinities in her study on South African men's glossies, unpacking different representations of masculinity between glossy magazines aimed at different racial and cultural groups of men. The majority of these were aimed at white, English-speaking South African men, with a few targeting "Anglo-Afrikaner and black professionals" (2008: 313) although the latter had a lower circulation and were a response to the lack of representations of masculinity in the media that diverged from white hegemony. As Viljoen states, "ascendancy of certain types of masculinity is sustained through the creation of a masculine ideal" (2008: 312) and various studies point to the "masculine ideal" perpetuated by South African media as that of "white, middle-class males" (Luyt, 2012: 56).

The above points to the domination of white, middle-class masculinities in the South African media landscape cementing a gendered and racial hierarchy in which whiteness is privileged. However, *Skeem Saam* is focused primarily on black South African men. As blackness in South Africa is not a homogenous identity but made up of various identities reflecting differing cultural and class backgrounds, one might assume that these various identities are present in media representations. An exploration of representations of black South African men in print below shows that this is not the case.

Black South African Men in Print: Early Masculine Representations

A key study by Clowes (2005) looks at one of the earliest media constructions of black South African men in the historic 1950s magazine *Drum. Drum* magazine was considered an alternative publication targeting the "urban black working class" which

had replaced the migrant labour workforce in the post-war period. It was considered alternative, as the mainstream media was ideologically positioned in favour of the National Party and segregationist ideologies. *Drum* was written for black South African men and consisted of pieces celebrating art, culture, music and dance. It was also well-known for taking an overt political stance against racial segregation and the oppression of black South Africans during apartheid. To this day, *Drum* is remembered as an iconic publication which documented the lives of black South Africans through a celebratory lens.

In her study, Clowes focuses on how *Drum'*s representations of black South African men shifted from being associated with familial ties and responsibilities in the early 1950s, to men being constructed as "solitary, and autonomous individuals who inhabited a public world away from the home, with vulnerable women and dependent children occupying a private world inside the home" (Clowes, 2005: 100)**.** Clowes argues that these later representations were reflective of a Western discourse of masculinity, which saw men as isolated from emotional connection and solely financial providers. This differed from the caring masculine figure who provided guidance and was deeply involved in the familial structure which characterised early representations. Clowes points out that this shift towards a Western ideal of manhood took place despite the fact that these experiences did not resonate with the urban black man, who was forced to move away from his extended family due to apartheid legislation. This shows that from the earlier days of media representation, even the alternative media privileged a Western ideal of masculinity despite the fact that this did not resonate with the broader population.

Clowes also describes how men in *Drum* were always represented as breadwinners and providers, although the nature of this representation shifted from willing provider and breadwinner in the early 1950s, to depicting the role as burdensome later on. Men as providers whether the assumption of this role is depicted as proudly or reluctantly

fulfilled has been a prominent association in representations of masculinity from the mid-20th century, and is a trend that continues in current media representations. This study also shows the link between constructions of masculinity and socio-economic conditions as representations were strongly influenced by the idea of the male figure as a provider.

Another example of a print publication providing an alternative representation of black South African men was *BL!NK* a lifestyle magazine targeting young, middle class, black South African men post-1994. Like *Drum, BL!NK* took an overtly political stance based on ideologies of black consciousness from an Afrocentric perspective. According to Viljoen, *BL!NK* was created to challenge common media stereotypes that associated black men with violence and framed them as intellectually subordinate due to the perpetuation of these ideas fueled by racism and apartheid propaganda. While BL!NK did provide an alternative representation of masculinity informed by discourses of a heroic struggle masculinity[4], Viljoen argues that the magazine still ultimately associated successful masculinity with material wealth and privilege.

Buiten and Naidoo's research examining constructions of masculinity in the widely-read tabloid newspaper *The Sunday Sun* also provides useful insight into some of the discourses of masculinity circulating within the South African print media in a publication targeting working class, black South Africans. In this more contemporary research, the authors examine how these discourses relate "to the ongoing and contested project of meaning-making with respect to masculinity in South Africa" (Buiten and Naidoo, 2013:195).

The authors highlight a complex relationship between the liberal discourse of masculinity that emerged in the post-apartheid landscape and discourses of sexuality introduced through globalisation that tend to associate sexuality with consumption. The

[4] See (Suttner, 2005)

study also reveals a construction of masculinity which strongly privileges with "heterosexual performance and prowess, and the negation of femininity" (2013: 201). The authors explain that this patriarchal understanding of masculinity, was also linked to wealth and consumerism. They elaborate: "class aspirations post-apartheid have merged with sexual imagery to create an erotic association with consumption in popular culture. Popular magazines targeting the aspirant black elite, and advertising campaigns aimed at black consumers, craft the message that blackness is sexy; consumption is replete with desire" (2013:199). Ultimately, Buiten and Naidoo conclude that representations of masculinity in *The Sunday Sun* "foreground the notion of class "effected through stories invoking working-class identities and aspirational discourses of wealth and consumption" (2013: 201).

From a brief examination of representations of masculinity in the print media, a review of the literature shows that throughout history, print representations of black, South African men have been influenced by a variety of factors producing multiple, sometimes conflicting discourses. Representations have predominantly been associated with wealth, class aspirations, and consumption, and have also been shaped by global masculine ideals. Along with these associations, print representations also reflect globally hegemonic ideals of masculinity as "active, dominant, controlling, and with (hetero)sexual prowess as a key component of the achievement and performance of successful masculinity" (Shefer et al., 2007: 3).

South African Masculinity in Film: Violent Gangsters and the Neoliberal Norm

Research into print representations of black South African men provides important historical background showing a link between representations of masculinity and socio-economic status. Representations in film too focus on the perpetuation of stereotypes of black South African men as gangsters or 'tsotsis' as a way to navigate the hardships of a legacy of apartheid.

In her research into representations of black men in South African films, Jane Stadler (2008) uses 3 films as case studies, namely *Shaft*, *Hijack Stories* and *Tsotsi*. Stadler's selection is based on parallels in these films which raise issues regarding the intersection of gender, race and class in constructions of masculinity among black South African men. The first film, *Shaft* (2000) is an American film directed by John Singleton and is used by Stadler to show the representation of African American men in cinema is strongly associated with "crime, violence, and gangsta rap" (2008: 344). Stadler refers to this representation as "the tough guise stereotype" (2008: 344) and sees it as a commonly used trope in American films depicting the lives of black men.

Stadler then compares and contrasts the representation of black masculinity in *Shaft* with the South African film *Tsotsi* (2005) directed by Gavin Hood and the South African film *Hijack Stories* (2000) directed and written by Oliver Schmitz. Stadler argues that unlike *Shaft*, which makes use of simplistic and stereotypical representations and gangsterism tropes, *Hijack Stories* and *Tsotsi* are more sensitive to the South African historical and socio-political landscape.

Stadler concludes that globalisation and the incorporation of American influences into media representations has led to a hybridisation of identities when it comes to representing black, South African men. Situating these examples within a broader discussion around the influence of globalisation, Stadler sees these terms relating to hybrid identities as alternatives to the "tough guise" stereotypes prevalent in western representations of black men, showing that discourses of masculinity as they intersect with race and class are producing "polysemic metaphors for contested identities" (2008: 359) in South African film. However, despite the ways the negative stereotype has been adapted to suit the South African context, it still perpetuates a limiting and harmful view of black South African men as violent gangsters.

Like Stadler, Haupt (2008) uses both *Tsotsi* and *Hijack Stories* as case studies to examine the representations of black South African men in post-apartheid South African cinema. Haupt argues that the representations in these examples foreground a "version of black masculinity that embodies the heterosexual, streetwise gangster" (2008: 378) influenced by Hollywood representations of black men, also referencing the "tough guise" masculinity trope used in Stadler's research. Offering a possible reasoning for the pervasiveness of the gangster trope with regards to representing black South African men, Haupt quotes Leslie Marx, as she situates the trope within the broader socio-political and economic context. Marx describes how these films "bring to the centre those marginalized, exploited and abused by a capitalist system. They expose inequities and the frustration and violence bred by political, social and economic inequality." However, Marx argues that despite these representations attempting to highlight the failures of the system, they ultimately perpetuate it as "their gangster heroes aspire to the goals set by the system: goals of material wealth, political power and sexual control (Marx in Haupt, 2008: 378).

Haupt's analysis differs slightly from Stadlers, as he describes how the popularity of these representations of a "narrow version of black masculinity" (2008: 391) have led to the only way for black artists and media producers to achieve mainstream commercial success and focuses on commercial influences as they have come to shape and perpetuate these representations. Haupt's study points to the need for my own research to situate representations of masculinity within the broader economic and socio-political structures that they are frequently influenced by.

The most significant finding for my research is Haupt's use of Marx's theory. As Marx explains, the gangster trope has been frequently used in film as a way to show the socio-economic hardships faced by black men post-1994 through stories of violent crime and struggles. While they seemingly intend to highlight the devastating legacies of societal inequality, they simultaneously leave little room for any alternative

representations of black South African men that are not premised on violence and criminality. Marx notes how these tropes are easily used to highlight social ills but fail to challenge neoliberal, capitalist ideals, wealth and class structures. Essentially, these representations are anti-poor and anti-working class, depicting material wealth as aspirational and an important signifier in the achievement of successful masculinity.

The current social landscape in South Africa is even more dire than at the time these studies took place, with black South African men continuing to be “marginalised, subordinated and socially excluded by poverty” (Hearn, 2007: 23). A more recent report for the South Africa Labour and Development Research Unit states the following: “Only one in four South Africans can be considered stably middle class or elite, whereas the other three are either poor or face an elevated risk of falling into poverty”. The report continues: “Africans are still underrepresented in the middle class relative to their share in the overall population, and race remains a strong predictor of poverty in South Africa, with Africans being at the highest risk to (chronic) poverty even after controlling differences in education and employment” (Schotte et al., 2017). With this in mind, these studies pointed to the importance of how the discourses used in representations of masculinity intersect with current broader socio-economic conditions. It is important to note that the socio-economic conditions described by these studies still exist today.

Falkof (2016) examines two examples of more contemporary films to show that recent film depictions have become more nuanced and don’t necessarily rely on tropes that associate black men with violence. In her study, Falkof looks at more contemporary examples of black men in South African cinema in two films *Tell Me Sweet Something* (2015) and *Necktie Youth* (2015). She examines how the representations in these films are situated “within a context of “aspiration, consumption, wealth, and the recognisable signifiers of the global middle class” (2015: 176).

Like Stadler, Falkof highlights an amalgamation of discourses informing these black, male characters. She points to more complex identities[5], particularly in *Necktie Youth* where she refers to a "new black masculinity" in contrast with the representation of an older male character in the film who she describes as "reminiscent of an apartheid-era imaginary – traditional, respectful, hard-working, low status, less proficient in English, a guard at a shop rather than a purchaser of expensive goods", and thus represents an "old black masculinity" (2015:177).

The combination of representations in these two films points to what Falkof refers to as a "a new polysemy in South African popular cultural representations of black masculinity" (2015: 178). Falkof's contrast between a "new" and "old" black masculinity shows how cinematic representations of black South African men continue to privilege a wealthy, upper-middle class masculine ideal, albeit more recently removed from the gangster trope that earlier cinematic representations so heavily relied. Her study reveals the complex ways in which masculine identities are constructed drawing on different racial and class identities, although still privileging consumption.

From my review of the literature thus far, media representations of black South African men seem to be characterised by tensions between globalised discourses of masculinity and how they intersect and influence local discourses. The tensions between these understandings of manhood have led to media representations that either neglect the South African context entirely focusing on what Clowes deems as Western masculine discourses seen in later representations in *Drum*, or blend these varying discourses together to create new masculine identities as studies of films have revealed shifting polysemic identities rooted in consumerism and upper-class aspirations. This association with consumerism and upper-class aspirations is not necessarily unique to representations of black, South African men. Ratele (2016) discusses the effect of commodity capitalism and how it has made people associate

[5] Other more recent research showing complexities in masculine identities are also important to mention, but are beyond the scope of my research. See Ellapen (2018) and Siswana and Kiguwa (2018).

their own worth and the worth of others by what we wear, eat, drink and buy. In this chapter Ratele is referring specifically to clothing, however this argument extends to other signifiers of wealth in a consumerist society. Ratele states that “what is worn by individuals is a critical marker of how cultures are defined by their members, as well as how group identity is manufactured and the self is constituted; of exclusions and inclusions, domination and subordination” (2016:33). Thus, the association between successful masculinity and signifiers of wealth and consumerism is understandable in a society where inequality is prevalent and wealth becomes a key factor in the display of success.

The literature has also emphasised a strong tendency towards the association of black South African men and gangsterism as a means to grapple with inequality and legacies of apartheid. Analysis of literature in the following sections shows that due to the nation-building mandate of the national broadcaster, alternative representations of masculinity premised on kind, family-oriented father figures are more frequently observed on local television.

Television in South Africa: Masculinities in a “Rainbow Nation”

Before studies of local representations of masculinity can be discussed, some contextual background on the role of television in South Africa is necessary. With limited space for a full exploration into the South African National Broadcaster, this section will focus on the SABC’s mandate and give an overview of daily soap operas and television dramas as well as television as a space for “narrating and imagining identity in the emerging nation” (Smit, 2016: 1).

Television was introduced in South Africa in 1976. The medium has undergone a significant transformation from its introduction, to a post-1994 political landscape, to today. At this early stage, entertainment on the South African National Broadcaster (SABC) was dominated by American series and local dramas were “not contextualized

into the realities of South African society and politics" (Teer-Tomaselli, 2005: 560) taking what Teer-Tomaselli describes as a Eurocentric approach to programming.

After significant changes from 1993 onwards, including the installation of a new board, the SABC began its transformation into what Teer-Tomaselli refers to as the "the golden season of public broadcasting in South Africa" (Teer-Tomaselli, 2005: 563). This saw the advent of the SABC's new public service mandate which focused on providing diverse programming and uniting a post-apartheid South Africa. The newly reformed SABC diversified its programming in terms of language and content in an attempt to reflect the ideal of the new democracy and cultural diversity. This involved content that depicted multiple racial and linguistic identities interacting in a "new South Africa", often idealistically free from prejudice, discrimination and injustice, or depicting ways in which these issues are worked through peacefully.

According to Smit, programming after 1994 has since been characterised by the concept of togetherness "embodied in a rainbow nation discourse; "a shift toward the celebration of consumption and neoliberalism; and the imagining of new futures while navigating the past and legacies of apartheid" (2016: 4). Sarah Ives, also emphasises the importance of considering the neo-liberal ideals underpinning programming on the national broadcaster, and how these are in incongruent with South African society. Referencing one of South Africa's most popular soap operas, *Generations,* Ives states: "Each character has overcome his or her humble beginnings to become players in the business world. Their racial and economic backgrounds seem not to have hampered their success. They epitomize (neo)liberal notions that everyone has an equal chance at success if the market operates unhindered" (2007: 167). This shows the continued reliance on neoliberal ideologies in South African programming. It also shows that discourses of consumption and neoliberalism were not only associated with representations of masculinity due to globalised understandings of male figures as providers, but also the public broadcaster's mandate, which further entrenched this link.

Teer-Tomaselli also points to the influence of globalisation as she states that despite the introduction of local channels and a push toward local programming, foreign content was still much cheaper to import than creating local content. She elaborates: “In an age of global media penetration into all markets, in which the great majority of markets are dominated by American products, there is a tension between external ideologies, images and programming and internal attempts to create a rhetoric of nation building.” (2005: 567). Like the representations discussed in print and film above, Teer-Tomaselli shows how televisual representations have also been significantly influenced by, and are in tension with more globalised understandings of masculinity.

Extensive research has been conducted into the nature of entertainment on television post-1994, but for my purposes a focus on dramas and soap operas is important. *Skeem Saam* seems to straddle both genres, described in its synopsis as a drama but airing daily in a prime-time slot. It is also frequently referred to as a soapie in public discourse. Dramas and soap operas make up the most popular of the SABC’s programming, holding the highest viewership figures of all of the content.

Barnard interrogates the important role that South African soaps and sitcoms played in negotiating political and societal shifts becoming “striking political documents in genres usually known for their apolitical insistence” (2006: 42). Barnard refers to this particular genre as political in its subtle way of reimagining and “creating a truly hybridised South African multiculture” (2006: 43). Here, Barnard looks beyond the characteristics of the genre to the ways in which representation on South African television *works ideologically*, constantly and deliberately infusing entertainment with the political, in this case, the push for a harmonious, rainbow nation. Considering this, as well as Smit’s assertion that neoliberalism is at the forefront of programming today, there is a need for my research to constantly consider that representations in *Skeem Saam* do not only seek to present certain versions of masculinity, but act as models of what the state

might consider the masculine ideal as well as the masculine ideals that are not seen as favourable within this neoliberal ideal .

Teer-Tomaselli lists *Generations, Isidingo, 7de Laan and Egoli, Place of Gold* and *Yizo Yizo* as some of the most popular programmes in this genre, with the largest social impact. She also notes that commonalities across the soap operas and dramas "created a specifically South African type of drama characterised by a strong engagement with social issues that is embedded into the narrative, referring to themes such as gang violence, substance addiction, domestic abuse, teenage pregnancy, and the challenges of a fast-developing society in transition" (2005: 570).

Echoing this, Barnett describes how educational broadcasting became integrated into general programming, referring to the idea that "popular programming formats and genres, including documentaries, soap operas, talk shows and drama series, should be used as vehicles for educational broadcasting in order to attract large, general audiences." (2004: 257) According to Barnett, the most popular program from SABC Education was *Yizo Yizo,* an exploration of the lives of young, black South African men in a township which will be further explored below.

Soapies, Edutainment and Reality: Troubled Youths and Father Figures

This section details a few of the limited studies of black South African men in local television. Selected studies show that representations of masculinity in some of the most popular television series on the national broadcaster also tend to represent black, South African men as violent and enmeshed in gang culture. This will be explored through an examination of Mngadi's (2017) research into the popular SABC1 series *Yizo Yizo.* I have selected this research to focus on, as *Yizo Yizo* shares similarities with *Skeem Saam*, explored below. While a discussion of *Yizo Yizo* serves to show that televisual representations have been influenced by those in print and film above, there

is also an alternative presented by Smit (2017) and Prinsloo (2006). This research into representations of black South African men on television points to the existence of another influential discourse, rooted in fatherhood and family.

Yizo Yizo was one of SABC Education's most successful series. The series was broadcast in 1999 on SABC1 and, like *Skeem Saam*, was a product of SABC Education. While the SABC and SABC Education have produced multiple, successful television series, I have chosen to focus on research into Yizo Yizo, as it can be likened to *Skeem Saam* in its production and, to a certain extent, its narrative and setting. Both *Skeem Saam* and *Yizo Yizo* detail the lives of young, black men in a township setting, both were created by SABC Education, implying a didactic element to their narrative, and both have made the same claim to authenticity, that is telling the real lives of black South African youths (Mngadi, 2017: 9006).

Mngadi discusses how *Yizo Yizo* was created to educate and entertain, but also turned out to be "a study in black township youth culture and black male youth subculture in particular" (2017: 9005). Referencing Haupt's studies discussed above, Mngadi recognises the influence of common tropes used to represent black men in American television in *Yizo Yizo* also noting how these tropes have been integrated into South African media representations, again reinforcing the connection between black men and gangsterism (Mngadi, 2017).

Yizo Yizo's popularity in the early 2000s shows the continuing pervasiveness of the gangsterism trope as a way to depict the hardships faced by black, South African youths due to the legacy of apartheid. However, Mngadi's research also points to the effects of the national broadcaster's nation-building mandate which saw black youths as both "rebels and commodities of various commercial interests" (2017:9010) a reference to the national broadcaster's mandate described by Smit above. A common thread throughout research into representations of black South African men across mediums

reinforces associations between black South African men and violence, but also shows how the neoliberal socio-economic landscape post 1994 reinforced a link between successful masculinity and commodification in a socio-political and economic landscape where this ideal remains unattainable.

More recent research into representations of masculinity on South African television does show the emergence of alternative understandings of masculinity such as those referred to by Clowes in earlier issues of *Drum*, and those discussed by Viljoen in alternative men's glossies. Alexia Smit's (2017) study discusses how representations of masculinity on the reality television show *Forgive and Forget* present an alternative representation by presenting black South African men in a more positive light. Although the primary focus of Smit's article is the way *Forgive and Forget* is informed by the discourses of forgiveness and reconciliation stemming from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and how these operate in the private sphere, she also interrogates the representation of older black South African men on the show. Smit unpacks the way that these representations offer "a strikingly emotive counter-example to dominant models of black masculinity by figuring a Black South African man as a caring figure" (2017: 73).

Smit states that the representations on *Forgive and Forget* are in direct opposition to common representations of black South African men as "gangsters", citing Haupt and Stadler's studies. Echoing Marx's point above, she states that these negative tropes are often used in media as they are a way to reflect the detrimental socio-economic effects of apartheid and colonialism on the lives of black South African men and explore these effects. She focuses particularly on the migrant labour system and how this impacted on family structures, and the economic disenfranchisement of black men due to discriminatory laws. Citing Francis Wilson, She elaborates: "One of the key issues defining experiences of men's engagement in the domestic sphere in South Africa 'is the sense to which poverty in South Africa at the beginning of the 21st century goes hand in hand with a dislocated social structure'" (2017: 77). What is significant to my

analysis is the influences of social structures on representation of masculinity in the domestic setting, as *Skeem Saam* has a strong focus on relationships played out between family members in their homes.

In contrast to the negative tropes discussed above, Smit looks at how the portrayal of black South African men on *Forgive and Forget* is influenced by prominent political figures in post-apartheid South Africa namely Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, who she describes as the archetypal father figures of the nation. She describes how these symbolic figures fit into the show's use of the TRC forgiveness narrative and how the show applies these discourses to the private sphere and familial relationships, integrating them with common tropes found in the genre of reality television.

Importantly, Smit also recognises the historical and cultural understandings of fatherhood underpinning these representations of black South African men. She cites Lesejane's (2006) discussion of African father figures as responsible, caring and linked to familial duties within the domestic realm, a masculinity reminiscent of the early representations in Clowes' study of *Drum.*

Smit compares these two representations, noting how the gangster trope is more often used in media circulating within a global audience, whilst the representations on Forgive and Forget are aimed at "a local audience, positioned as low- brow and generally targeted at women in low-income domestic environments" (Smit, 2017: 74). Further according to Prinsloo, as cited in Smit, there are more likely to be caring father figures represented "on under-researched South African popular soaps" (Prinsloo, 2006: 139).

Ultimately, Smit's analysis not only shows how discourses of black South African masculinities differ between local and global audiences, but the importance of prominent political figures, significant events in the socio-political landscape, and cultural influences in the constructions of masculinities in narratives and representations

in South African television shows. Smit's research also points to the need to further interrogate representations of black South African masculinities on local television shows. This points to the importance of my own research in determining, from the wide array of discursive influences in circulation, which discourses of masculinity inform representations on *Skeem Saam*.

Theoretical Framework

My literature review explored the differing constructions of masculinity that influence representations of black, South African men in the media. The literature pointed to an overarching white masculinity signified by strength, wealth and middle-class status as dominant within media representations. When it comes to the representation of black South African men, ideals of masculinity drawn on to construct these representations are complex and a result of various socio-economic and political shifts. These include globalised tropes associating black men with violence and gangsterism as well as representations of masculinity predominantly seen on local television. These are influenced by commonalities between South African ideals of fatherhood, which provide an alternative to these harmful tropes. From the findings above, my theoretical framework aims to delineate ways of theorising about masculinities and the discourses that influence them in *Skeem Saam.*

My theoretical framework will begin by outlining the theory of hegemonic masculinity from Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell, explaining how it came to influence the foundations of South African theories on gender and masculinity. However, South African masculinities are complex and shaped by a turbulent past constructed along race, class and gender lines (Morrell et al., 2013). They therefore require theories that probe deeper than Connell's and are more applicable to the Global South context. With this in mind, this chapter will discuss the South African theories that take these complexities into account. In particular, South African scholar Kopano Ratele's theory of hegemony within marginality will be outlined. Ratele's theory best encapsulates the complexities and sensitivities of theorising around black South African men from a feminist perspective. Following this I will focus on the relationship between media and identity. Stuart Hall's theories of representation form the basis of my understanding of this relationship. Finally, this section will address the multimodality of the televisual medium, and how this impacts understandings of representation.

Hegemonic Masculinity: An Introduction

The theory of hegemonic masculinity was developed by sociologist Raewyn Connell. Connell took a social constructionist approach to the study of gender as opposed to understanding masculinity and femininity as possessing fixed traits (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Connell's theory is premised on the idea that there is a hierarchy of masculinities created "through practices that include and exclude, that intimidate, exploit and so on" (2005: 36). Connell used the term hegemonic in the Gramscian sense (Morrell et al., 2013) as this hierarchy is not necessarily achieved through force or violence, but through the subtle promotion of a norm, or ideal that becomes accepted by society, or to which people implicitly consent. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005: 832) elaborate:

"Hegemonic masculinity was distinguished from other masculinities, especially subordinated masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity was not assumed to be normal in the statistical sense; only a minority of men might enact it. But it was certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men."

Travelling Theory

While Connell's initial theories provided a basic social constructionist framework for the development of theories of masculinity, the literature points to a need for more nuanced

theory specific to the South African context. In an essay entitled “Travelling Theory” Edward Said (1983) unpacks how theory moves around the world, taking on a life of its own in multiple contexts, often ignoring the minutiae of the context in which it finds itself. He states: “it is the critic's job to provide resistances to theory, to open it up toward historical reality, toward society, toward human needs and interests, to point up those concrete instances drawn from everyday reality that lie outside or just beyond the interpretive area necessarily designated in advance and thereafter circumscribed by every theory” (Said, 1983: 242).

Said’s thoughts on how theory travels are particularly interesting in the field of masculinities, where the theory of hegemonic masculinity began to spread globally and scholars in different contexts offered numerous critiques. Hegemonic masculinity serves as a foundational understanding when theorising about the gender order and what has shaped understandings of masculinities in South Africa. The original theory, in Said’s words, must be opened up toward historical reality and society. As multiple scholars have offered critiques of Connell’s theory as to its contextual applicability, the following section will briefly outline Connell’s response to these critiques in her reformulation.

Hegemonic Masculinities: Criticisms and Reformulation of Theory

While South African theories are the focus of my research it is important to note that Critiques of Connell’s original theory and the expansion of research into masculinities globally, resulted in the reformulation of Connell’s original ideas. Some of these ideas such as the idea of complicit masculinity and the distinctions between local, global and regional masculinities are useful to my understanding of gender hierarchies in South Africa. In 2005, Connell and Messerschmidt published an article entitled *Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept.* Connell and Messerschmidts' reformulation officially addressed the failure of the original theory to account for a multiplicity of hegemonic masculinities as they state: “Analyses of relations among masculinities now

more clearly recognize the agency of subordinated and marginalized groups — often conditioned by their specific location" (2005: 847).

In the second edition of her integral text *Masculinities* published in 2005, Connell explains how multiple masculinities exist alongside hegemonic masculinity, namely subordinated, complicit and marginalized. She uses homosexual men as an example of subordinated masculinities as "gay men are subordinated to straight men by an array of quite material practices" (2005: 79). Connell refers to complicit masculinity as those men who don't necessarily embody hegemonic masculinity, or even strive to, but still "benefit from the patriarchal dividend, the advantage men gain from the overall subordination of women" (2005: 79). Finally, Connell identifies what she calls marginalised masculinities. Marginalized masculinities are those masculine identities which are complicated by other structures such as race and class. The idea of marginalised masculinities marked an important shift in the theory as it attempted to account for hegemonies that have emerged among groups of men whose power is complicated by race and class.

Most notably, the reformulation emphasized the existence of multiple masculinities by proposing analysis of masculinities on three distinct levels in any given context: local, regional and global. In one of Connell's more recent publications, reflecting on masculinities in a globalised society, she recognises the need for the theory of hegemonic masculinities to take into account both overarching global gender relations and how they integrate with different local hegemonies. She explains: "It seems to me, increasingly, that the strategic questions about change in gender relations involve not only personal relations, identities and intimate life, but also large-scale institutions and the structural conditions of social life. The politics of gender include the politics of corporations, states, and transnational structures of communication, trade and military power" (2012: 15). As my literature review showed, constructions of masculinity in the media draw on both global and regional masculine ideals as the neoliberal agenda of the national broadcaster reflects a global political system, and representations often

combine both local and global understandings of masculinity to create polysemic identities (Falkof, 2016).

Masculinities in South Africa: Research and Advancements

The study of masculinities in South Africa began to flourish in the 1990s and has since spanned areas of research from psychology and education to media and healthcare. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity provided an initial framework for many studies of gender hierarchies in the South African context; this social constructionist approach was merely a springboard for the southern African scholarship explored in this chapter. Scholars in the global south moved to develop more contextually specific research and theories. The first collection of research that specifically focused on masculinities in South Africa was published in 2001. *Changing Men in Southern Africa,* edited by Robert Morrell, consisted of a series of articles specifically focused on theorizing ways of being masculine in South Africa. The collection attempts to address the broad, scattered variations of hegemony present among different groups of men, often according to race and class. Morrell's seminal collection consists of research into a variety of masculine identities such as Afrikaner men post 1994, and more specific masculinities, such as the emergence of a professional surfing masculinity in the late 1970s.

In the introduction to this collection, Morrell also addresses the use of Connell's original theory of hegemonic masculinity in the South African context. Echoing Said's ideas of travelling theory above, Morrell (2001) unpacks how these theories have been formulated predominantly in the UK, USA and Australia; contexts in which black men are the minority . In examining power relations and hierarchies of different hegemonic masculinities, this theory falls short. It fails to account for how hegemonic masculinities are formed in a context where black men make up the majority and have historically been violently subordinated. This produces vastly different gendered power dynamics from the Global North. In 2014, Connell explicitly recognised the contributions of

scholars in the Global South in a paper titled *"Margin becoming centre: for a world-centred rethinking of masculinities".* Referencing scholars from South Africa including Morrell and Ratele, Connell recognised the importance of work in the Global South and emphasised the importance of these theories, not as a peripheral consideration but a central concern to masculinities research. She states that: "In recent years the mainstream economy of knowledge has been increasingly contested by scholars who pay attention, not just to cultural difference, but to world inequalities of wealth and power, to the traumatic histories of colonialism and the neo-liberal globalization, and to their consequences in the realm of knowledge," (2014: 14).

Hegemony and Violence: South Africa's Violent History

As previously discussed, Connell's idea of hegemonic masculinity recognises that hegemony does not necessarily have to be obtained by force but by subtle coercion through perpetuated norms and values. However, in the South African context white masculine hegemony has largely been obtained through violent state instruments. Morrell focuses specifically on how "masculinity and violence have been yoked together in South African history" (2001: 12)**.** What Morrell is referring to is South Africa's history of violent colonial conquest, war, and the racial segregation and oppression during the apartheid regime. The introduction to Morrell's edited works provides a comprehensive background on these historical, economic and political factors which have shaped regional gender hierarchies. According to Morrell in a discussion of masculinities that have emerged among black, South African men, "the major configurations of masculinity which emerged as the twentieth century wore on were shaped by two major experiences and traditions" (2001:13).

The first is pre-colonial ideas of masculinity in rural areas which saw the gendered division of labor and the importance of a respected patriarch. Desmond Lesejane discusses the role of the father as patriarch "the symbol and custodian of ultimate power

and responsibility in the family and community" (2006: 173). This is the ideal referred to by Clowes in discussions of earlier representations of masculinity in *Drum*, as well as the discourse used in Smit's discussion of the benign patriarch. The second experience is how the migrant labor system removed black men from their homes and families and forced them to work in cities, living in hostels and removed from their communities.

Clowes discusses how this disrupted the ideal of the respected patriarch and shifted gendered roles within the family, forcing men into the role of financial provider alone and disrupting communities. According to Connell, who reflects on the research by South African scholars into the societal shifts that have shaped masculinity in South Africa: "With the growth of unions, rising wages, and decline of the rural economy, there was a marked shift towards a breadwinner model and a more essentialist, heterosexually-defined masculinity" (2014: 9). From this we see that the societal shifts discussed by Morrell, which saw the historical oppression and disenfranchisement of black South African men, had a direct effect on representations in the media. This pattern continued, as seen in the various studies discussed in my literature review. Black men were represented as violent criminals and gangsters with little consideration for how these masculinities were formed within an oppressive system.

With the above in mind, Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger note a tendency in South African masculinity studies to focus on violence. They make the point that the field "has produced/reproduced a moralistic binary, which links hegemony with bad men. This has stigmatized certain types of (African) male behavior and attitude as hegemonic." (2013: 25). Siphiwe Dube critiques studies of hegemonic masculinities based on this stigmatisation and points to the "oversignification of black masculinities" (2016: 8) in South African masculinities research. This "oversignification" referred to by Dube points to the continuation of a discourse which decontextualises masculinities from the broader social context, effectively linking black men to violence without any consideration for historical context, or current societal oppression.

According to Claire Decoteau (2013), research into South African masculinities often attributes gender based violence and other social ills to the 'crisis of masculinity' experienced only by black South African men. In light of this, Dube calls for a more complex analysis of African masculinities. He encourages approaches to research which avoid the homogenising of "black masculinities" and recognizing "the violence performed by/through/in the name of 'hegemonic white masculinities" (2016: 87). The following section will discuss a way of theorising about black South African men and violence that focuses on the structural violence of oppression and inequality in South Africa today. It is this theory that underpins my research project.

"Hegemony within Marginality": Ratele on Masculinities in South Africa

Reflecting on the usefulness of the concept of hegemonic masculinity in South Africa, Kopano Ratele (2016) considers a "white heteropatriarchal masculinity" to be the hegemonic form in this context. However, Ratele also points to the existence of multiple forms of "black hegemonic masculinity" that were and still are subordinated to the hegemonic form. Using this idea as a starting point, Ratele argues that Connell's original theory is useful insofar that it allows us to understand that multiple hegemonic masculinities in South Africa exist within a broader, globalised gender order. Like Said and Morrells' arguments above, Ratele emphasises the importance of 'situatedness' in theorising gender in different contexts as he states "the idea of situatedness, of carefully locating the concepts derived outside of the culture of interest, is always imperative if the concepts are not to displace the lived cultural experience of those being studied" (2016: 11).

Taking this into account, Ratele provides the most nuanced theoretical framework through which to approach my research. Ratele develops an understanding of masculinities that takes what he calls a critical, but empathetic approach, situating the development of black South African constructions of masculinity within a global gender

order while showing sensitivity towards historical factors that have shaped this masculinity. Following Connell's theorising of national, local and global hegemonic masculinities Ratele acknowledges that "white heteropatriarchal masculinity" (2016:11) is de facto the global hegemonic masculinity, however he locates various forms of "hegemonic black masculinity" (2016: 11) that are subordinated in the global gender order.

Despite a growing body of research into South African masculinities, Ratele believes that masculinities studies in South Africa has made little tangible advancement in understanding South African men, with the goal of positively transforming gender power relations in South Africa. Ratele argues that current studies are inadequate because "while there are obvious hegemonic ideas about masculinity in the country, these ideas are complicated by the marginality of (South) African society in juxtaposition to powerful multinational capitalist ideologies." (2014: 30). Ratele points to the mass media as a primary source through which ideas of successful masculinity as they relate to consumerism are dispersed, echoing the findings of my literature review which point to the favouring of a consumerist-driven masculine ideal.

A key argument made by Ratele in theorising about South African masculinities is that researchers are "dislocated from the cultural worlds of the subjects of [their] investigations" (2014: 31). Ratele's argument builds on this idea, as well as Connell and Messerschmidts' reformulation of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, by proposing that researchers theorise South African masculinities within a global gender hierarchy as "hegemonies within marginality" (2014: 39). For Ratele, this means taking into account the history of apartheid and colonialism which he views as "conflicts around masculine domination" (2016: 10) and how their legacies continue to oppress black men today. This also means acknowledging tradition, which is often neglected, and at times demonized, when studying the lives of black, African men.

Ratele sees tradition as an important factor to consider when studying masculinities in South Africa and defines it as "a conduit for the transmission of culture" (2014:31).

According to Ratele, one of the stumbling blocks in masculinities research is the concept of traditionalism which can be defined as “the language of tradition and culture to ‘retraditionalise or retribalise African boys, men, girls, and women” (2014: 37). Ratele states that “the resurgence of appeals to traditional/ist masculinities and femininities might be due to the political support the discourses on tradition/alism and culture currently receive” (2014: 37).

Often, discourse around South African masculinities, particularly in research conducted by white scholars, perpetuates this harmful idea by demonising African tradition and seeing it in direct opposition to a progressive South African gender order. To elaborate, Ratele believes that many African men are “grappling with shifts in ruling ideas and dominant practices of manhood” and these shifts are “entwined with other economic, political, legislative and cultural changes - in particular, the advent of the constitutional ideals and policies supportive of gender equality and females’ empowerment” (2016: 5).

Ratele’s discussion of the tensions between discourses of tradition/alism and gender equality highlights an important discursive consideration in the South African gendered landscape. In light of the above, Ratele cautions South African masculinities researchers to consider their situatedness and possible anti-traditionalist stances, encouraging the consideration that tradition is “interwoven with the recognition of masculinities as constructed, fluid and hierarchically structured” (2014: 41). It is important in any research for the researcher to constantly question their everyday taken-for-granted assumptions, lived experiences and positionality when conducting research, however Ratele’s argument outlined above shows that it is particularly imperative to my project, if I am to avoid perpetuating harmful anti-traditional discourses in my analysis “in a context where tradition and culture are foregrounded” (Ratele, 2014: 38).

Ultimately, Ratele calls for “tradition-sensitive, culturally intelligent studies and activism on men in their locatedness in their marginalized worlds” (2014: 31). In order to do this, Ratele encourages an approach to masculinities studies grounded in feminist theories,

in particular utilising the ideas of intersectional feminism to account for the effect of a history of the oppression of black South African men on constructions of masculinity.

Intersectional Feminist Underpinnings

Desiree Lewis, in an article entitled *African Feminisms*, points to the importance of masculinities studies in African feminism, with reference to Kopano Ratele's writings. She states: "Contesting the assumption that it is women who need to interrogate and transform their gendered experiences and subjectivity, Ratele demonstrates the urgency of men's interrogation of masculinity" (2001: 8). Indeed, Ratele highlights the importance of intersectional feminist ideas, which detail the multiple axes of oppression that black women face, in the development of progressive masculinities and states that: "(re)engaging with specifically black feminist ideas could be what is needed to liberate black South African masculinities from apartheid racist patriarchal traumatisation and towards new black masculinities" (2016: 139). The 'black feminist ideas' to which Ratele refers will be further unpacked below with reference to the original concept of intersectionality, as theorised by American scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1994.

Gardiner (2005) outlines the history of masculinities studies within the framework of feminist theory. She states that the social constructionist approach to gender "that is the idea that masculinity and femininity are loosely defined, historically variable, and interrelated social ascriptions to persons with certain kinds of bodies" (2005:35) is one of the most significant contributions to contemporary feminism. Based on this, contemporary feminism according to Gardiner seeks to transform ideologies and institutions that uphold gender inequality. There are varying theories within the feminist movement that share this goal, but the theory that is most important to my research is intersectional feminism.

Intersectionality is a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw to explain how oppression based on race and gender intersect. It was originally used to explain the unique

oppression faced by black women due to racism and patriarchy, but has evolved within social justice discourse to incorporate other forms of oppression. In a recent interview Crenshaw described the concept as “a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects” (*Columbia Law School*, 2017).

Collins viewed gender as “a constellation of ideas and social practices that are historically situated within, and mutually construct multiple systems of oppression” (1999: 263). The theory as it relates to masculinities aims to understand masculinities from a relatively sympathetic approach, and examine the different forms of oppression black men faced in their attempts to achieve masculinity. In her book *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center*, bell hooks discussed the role of men in the feminist struggle in a chapter entitled Men: Comrades in the Struggle. As the title suggests, the chapter stresses that separatism should not be the ultimate goal of feminism as this alienates many working class men and women of colour from the feminist movement. The author does not deny that the oppression of women exists, but sees a solution in men understanding oppression and working to end it. She states that “Until men share equal responsibility for struggling to end sexism, the feminist movement will reflect the very sexist contradictions we wish to eradicate” (2005: 82).

With this in mind, Gardiner ties the intersectional feminist approach to the studies of masculinities by stating that African American men could join in the dismantling of “larger structures of oppression and social representations” (2005: 44). This links to the importance of studying masculinities, as understanding hegemonic masculinities is the first step to challenging and dismantling them for the above goal. This is emphasised by Connell and Messerschmidt when they state:

the conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity should explicitly acknowledge the possibility of democratizing gender relations, of abolishing power differentials, not just of reproducing hierarchy. A transitional move in this direction requires an attempt to establish as hegemonic among men a version of masculinity open to equality with

women. In this sense, it is possible to define a hegemonic masculinity that is thoroughly 'positive' (2005: 853).

The above shows the reasons for adopting an intersectional feminist approach to my research, as intersectionality is particularly important when examining the gendered landscape in the South African context, where historical and sociopolitical factors cause the inextricable intersection of gender, class, and race.

Stuart Hall's Theories of Representation

In his approach, Ratele points to the importance of media representations and how they shape understandings of masculinity. He views the print and broadcast media in South Africa as "a part of the large terrain of social structures that shape how men become men" emphasizing "the significance of active feminist and progressive voices entering the media space to challenge stereotypical stories about men, women and other genders, as well as to create media images and narratives that install new models of masculinity and femininity" (2016: 3). This highlights the importance of masculinities research into media representations and how they contribute to shaping our understandings of ourselves and society. As Christine Gledhill states "all social practices – whether reading newspapers and magazines, visiting museums, shopping for clothes – take place within representation and are saturated with meanings and values which contribute to our sense of who we are – our culturally constructed identities" (Gledhill, 1997: 339).

Encoding/decoding

Cultural theorist Stuart Hall's theories are integral to my theoretical approach in understanding how representation in the media is constituted by and constitutive of reality. Hall theorised media messages within the framework of a "circuit of culture" with scholar Paul du Gay, tracing how a message encoded, circulated within the media, and

decoded by recipients who are ideologically influenced in some way by the message (whether it be entirely accepting, questioning or rejecting). Within this circuit of culture a hegemonic understanding of the message is what in turn influences the production of media texts. And so the cycle of perpetuating dominant understandings of identity continues (Hall, 1973).

As my study looks at a very specific media text, my focus is on the message in its encoding stage, or how a dominant understanding of masculinity is encoded through discourse in the television series *Skeem Saam*. Hall's Circuit of Culture provides a broader theoretical framework in which to situate my research into media representations and their role in disseminating ideals of hegemony. However, the element of this circuit of culture which requires the most attention is the idea of representation at the encoding stage and its real effects. According to Hall: "Representation is conceived as entering into the very constitution of things and culture is conceptualised as a primary or constitutive process as important as the economic or material base in shaping social subjects and historical events – not merely a reflection of the world after the event (1997: 5)"

Hall takes a constructionist approach to representation. The constructionist approach to language does not see meaning as simply reflected in language but as produced, or constructed within language itself. Thus "meaning is produced by the practice, the 'work' of representation" (Hall, 1997: 28). The theories of representation discussed by Hall are based on semiotics, the study of signs, and draw from theorists such as Ferdinand de Saussure and Claude Lévi-Strauss to explain how representation relies on meaning conveyed through language systems, and how these language systems come to wield power within different societies.

However, Hall's approach did not just aim to make the way in which societal understandings are shaped through language apparent. Hall also crucially linked the

idea of media representations with power, by drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, who applied the theories of the constructionist approach to language to “broader issues of knowledge and power” (1997: 42). Hall draws heavily on Foucault’s philosophies in his own understanding of representation. Foucault examined “how human beings understand themselves in our culture’ and how our knowledge about the ‘social, the embodied individual and shared meanings’ comes to be produced in different periods” (Hall, 1997: 43).

According to Hall (1997), Foucault focused on the analysis of larger units of meaning which he called discourse. Foucault did not view discourse as a neutral concept but saw it as a particular way of talking about and constructing knowledge about a particular topic in a particular period. Foucault describes discourses as “composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this more that renders them irreducible to the language (langue) and to speech. It is this 'more' that we must reveal and describe.” (1972: 49). The “more” referred to here by Foucault is the underlying assumptions of language that hold power. This concept of power is used to explain how representations circulate in media texts, but still have very real societal effects.

Explaining these effects through a Foucauldian lens, Boschoff and Prinsloo state that “this productive notion of power shifts attention from central actors (who might be considered powerful) to systems of ideas that regulate, normalise and construct the rules of what can be thought and done within a discursive regime” (2017: 125).

Representation and Gender: Disseminating Hegemony Through Media Representations

Gledhill (1997), with reference to the constructionist approach to representation outlined above, provides a useful link between representation and gender when she states: “the constructionist view of representation outlined by Stuart Hall implies that even the terms

‘man’ and ‘woman’ – whether word or image – which touch on what appears most personal to us – our sex and gender – are in fact cultural signifiers which construct rather than reflect gender definitions, meanings and identities.” (1997: 346). Linking the above to hegemonic masculinities, Connell and Messerschmidt explain that: “hegemonic masculinities can be constructed that do not correspond closely to the lives of any actual men...Yet these models do, in various ways, express widespread ideals, fantasies, and desires” (2005: 838).

It is these “models” of hegemonic masculinity referred to by Connell and Messerschmidt that the mass media perpetuate as an acceptable way of being masculine. Thus, representation as part of the circuit of culture plays a large part in the construction of our ideas of gender and gendered behaviours. This can be linked to Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity, as the concept of hegemony dictates that certain social practices are naturalised and privileged, and thus given power, by institutions like the media. This is particularly true for South African television, as my literature review pointed to this medium as a key site for the reimagining of identity post-1994 and therefore a primary space through which masculine ideals on a national and global level might be reconceptualised and shaped (Hadland, 2008).

It is also important to note how a fictional television series, which is referred to in public discourse as a soap opera, fits into these theories. My literature review pointed to the importance of fictional television series in South Africa as a space for constructions of new identities in a post-1994 socio-political landscape. Gledhill states that “the term fiction suggests a separation from real life” (1997: 340) and notes that researchers often dismiss these media texts as ineffectual and banal. However, referencing the pervasiveness of soap opera, Gledhill refers to the centrality of imagination and how fictional constructions of reality are central to how we perceive our world. This, coupled with the importance of television in negotiating identities in South Africa shows the significance of fictional televisual representations within the South African circuit of culture. As Ives notes, the majority of South Africans prefer television to other media

forms and “television permeates the daily lives of most South Africans, helping to construct a hegemonic culture” (2007: 167)**.** With this in mind, looking at the representation of masculinities in a series which specifically positions itself as focused on masculinities and reaches millions of South African viewers a night, could therefore provide useful insight into what masculine social behaviours and identities are privileged in the South African context.

Representation on Television: Factors to Consider in Analysis

Hall theorised the relationship between language, media and society showing how this process is linked through a circuit of culture. Since this seminal theory numerous scholars have expanded on representation and the media, offering new ways of conceptualising discourse and representation, particularly with regards to differing mediums. John Fiske is one such scholar whose theories focus on representation on television. Fiske and Hartley note the importance of television in how we perceive our daily lives as they explain: “the television discourse presents us daily with a constantly up-dated version of social relations and cultural perceptions. Its own messages respond to changes in these relations and perceptions, so that its audience is made aware of the multiple and contradictory choices available from day to day which have the potential to be selected for future ways of seeing” (Fiske and Hartley, 2003: 5).

Fiske and Hartley’s explanation echoes Hall’s circuit of culture, with a focus on the visual aspect of television, allowing for multiple ways of seeing. While Hall’s theory, which draws on Foucault’s ideas of language and power, focus on the underlying meanings of language itself, Fiske and Hartley note the ways in which visual signifiers on television can also convey meaning, and be read like a language. They explain that “television does not represent the manifest actuality of our society, but rather reflects, symbolically, the structure of values and relationships beneath the surface” (2003: 11).

While a focus on the linguistic elements of any media text is paramount, the multimodality of television must be considered in its entirety to grasp the underlying

meaning of the text as a whole. Multimodality in this sense refers to the multiple ways in which meaning is conveyed through television, including its visual and auditory elements. Fiske and Hartley elaborate: “Television uses much the same methods as film to connote meaning: camera angle, lighting and background music, frequency of cutting are examples. Music in particular is used to clarify and sometimes create the connotative meaning of a shot” (2003: 29).

Masculinities in South Africa can be seen to fit under a global, white patriarchal hegemonic masculinity. However, a complex history and mesh of cultural, historical, political discourses and influences make theorising about hegemony a complex task. This chapter has outlined Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity, its history and subsequent reformulation. I have attempted to locate this theory within the South African context, to show how it has been adapted and expanded on by South African scholars. Ultimately hegemonic masculinity is a useful starting point in understanding how a patriarchal gender order is maintained. However, for the sake of my research, Kopano Ratele’s theorisation of “hegemony within marginality” provides sound approach to understanding how *Skeem Saam* represents masculinities, and how these representations intersect with current discourses of masculinity circulating in the South African context, particularly as the show portrays the everyday lives of black South African men. Stuart Hall’s theories of representation in the media have also been addressed, to understand and unpack the real effects of privileged discourses perpetuated by the media. Fiske and Hartley’s ideas are also key in determining the meaning of the televisual text as a whole. The multimodality of the televisual medium was considered key in my methodological approach which will be unpacked in the following section.

Methodology

My theoretical framework discussed how the mass media play a large role in constructing social identities and perpetuating hegemonic ideals. This understanding is based on Stuart Hall's writings on representation which draw on the Foucauldian concept of discourse. From this understanding, discourses in the media naturalise certain ways of being and exclude others, implicitly privileging certain identities, and therefore, holding social power by creating what is deemed acceptable or normal. When examining this in relation to the idea of hegemonic masculinity, Connell's expanded theory pinpoints the mass media as a source of hegemonic understandings of masculinity on a global and regional level (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005)..

As *Skeem Saam* is a media text with a vast reach in South Africa, and specifically purports to detail the stories of young men and masculinity, the masculinities that the show privileges and excludes are made apparent through my research. This required a methodology through which the discourses, both verbal and visual might be analysed. These discourses are found in the linguistic elements of the text, but are also constructed through the televisual medium and enacted upon by the multimodality of television and the generic characteristics of the text itself. This chapter will detail my methodological approaches which include a qualitative content analysis, discourse analysis and visual discourse analysis. These approaches were used to separate the complex mesh of visual and verbal signs used to privilege and exclude masculine ideals in *Skeem Saam.*

Textual Approach and Initial Content Analysis: The Long Soak

My methodological approach began with the selection of my data set. My data set consisted of a small sample of consecutive episodes, namely episode 167 to episode 182. These episodes were chosen as they were the most recent episodes broadcast at

the time when I began my research project in 2019. They were also selected as they were the first episodes to appear on VIU, a new streaming website with a vast selection of South African television offerings. It must be noted that the size of my sample set presents limitations when it comes to my findings. As the simple size is small, the findings are not necessarily applicable to the entirety of the series. A data set that size is beyond the scope of my research, and I consider a small sample set better to really delve into and capture the minutiae and nuances in the construction of masculinities on the series.

These episodes were then transcribed using ELAN[6]. *Skeem Saam* is broadcast in multiple languages and was named South Africa's 'most multilingual soapie' for 2017 and 2018 (*Times Live*, 2017). Sepedi, isiXhosa, Zulu and English are spoken most frequently on the series accompanied by English subtitles.

According to translation scholar Jan Emil Tveit, "the spoken word contains dialectal and sociolectal features that are extremely difficult to account for in writing. This represents another constraining factor of subtitling" (2005: 29). This was a concern for the reliability of my analysis. However, due to the variety of languages spoken across the series and resource constraints in this regard, I relied on the analysis of the subtitles in conjunction with supporting visuals, tonality, expression and other elements of the text to support my findings.

Once I had selected my data set, I began research with an exploration of intertexts related to the series. These included the *Skeem Saam* web page detailing the synopsis and providing character sketches, news articles related to the series and social media pages. This approach was used in order to gain a better understanding of the established characters, histories and storylines of the series. After transcribing and re-watching my data set, I traced two interesting themes which appeared across both

[6] A transcription software that allows for ease of transcription, time-stamping and organisation of data.

settings, and which the series strongly associated with ideals of masculinity. These themes were family and community, and ideas of success. These themes were selected as they could be easily observed in multiple aspects of the series. The plotlines in these episodes centred on conflicts within familial structures. The dialogue was rich with references to both financial struggles and successes and how the characters negotiated and related to these concepts. Even the setting of the series, divided between the bustling business hub of Johannesburg, and a quiet family home in Limpopo, reflected the themes chosen above.

These themes are not necessarily distinct, but intertwine with one another to form the ideological framework through which a hegemonic ideal of masculinity is constructed on the series. While there were many other possible themes to interrogate, the scope of this research required that I pick the most significant themes among my data set for in-depth analysis, analysing specific scenes and plotlines which I saw as representative of the overall trends observed. My initial content analysis served to familiarise myself with my data set. I then paid attention to significant scenes which seemed to require further investigation. The process of content analysis, and my reasoning for this choice of methodology will be described in more detail below.

Content Analysis

Communication Scholar Jim Macnamara refers to media content analysis as the primary message-focused methodology in media research. Methodological approaches to studying media texts may include quantitative or qualitative methods, depending on the aim of the study and the medium through which the message is conveyed. General content analysis draws broad themes and often employs a quantitative approach as well as a qualitative approach in order to study every aspect of the text within the circuit of culture, from production to reception.

According to Macnamara, “quantitative content analysis collects data about media content such as topics or issues, volume of mentions, ‘messages’ determined by key words in context (KWIC), circulation of the media (audience reach) and frequency” (2005: 4). However, television Scholars John Fiske and John Hartley state that“content analysis does not help us to respond to the individual programme, nor, more importantly, the viewing session; it does not help us with matters of interpretation nor with how we respond to the complex significance and subtleties of the television text” (2003: 21). To understand and contextualise the various signifiers of masculinity in my chosen text would require a closer look at how these signifiers work to depict masculine ideals. With this in mind, although both quantitative and qualitative methods are useful in media studies research, my study required a more in-depth understanding of my data set and I found it more useful for my purposes to focus entirely on in-depth, qualitative methods as opposed to a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.

My initial qualitative content analysis can be described as what Stuart Hall famously refers to as a “long preliminary soak” in the dataset. Hall distinguishes this type of content analysis with the explanation that this approach “uses the preliminary reading to select representative examples which can be more intensively analysed” (Hall et al., 1975: 15). This echoes my approach, which saw the identification of initial themes and then a more specific selection of scenes exemplifying these themes. Unpacking this concept, and how it relates to discourse analysis, Steiner states: “...discourse analysts need to “hear” (must learn to hear) recurring appeals in different contexts, to recognize repetition. Placement, treatment, tone, stylistic intensification, striking imagery are all ways of registering emphasis (2016: 3)”. Although these ideas referred to the analysis of print media, I still found them applicable to my study when applied to the characteristics of television such as camera angles, expression and music.

From the themes that emerged in my literature review, such as fatherhood, economic standing, family, community, consumerism and success, and how these themes have

been complexly negotiated and intertwined in the South African media, a quantitative analysis seemed lacking in its inability to fully grasp these complexities. Merely counting the number of times these themes and related words appeared would not have provided an adequate understanding of how they were dealt with by the text. Feeding the transcriptions through a software which would quantify the data would not have allowed the "deep soak" necessary to fully understand the text and its ways of constructing meaning. This "deep soak" required the watching, transcribing, reading, re-watching and analysing the series with social and historical concepts and prior representations in mind.

A key finding from my initial content analysis led to the delineation of my analysis across two different locations: Turfloop, a fictional township in Limpopo, and Johannesburg. Fiske and Hartley, referring to televisual representation, use the idea of metonym, to describe how settings work to connote a certain meaning. A shot of a street on television connotes a city, or as Fiske and Hartley state: "a metonym of the whole city or of 'city-ness', for the realism of much television drama results from the metonymy of its setting at the level of manifest content" (2003: 33).

As each scene opens with a shot of the location, urban Johannesburg, or the more rural Turfloop, these settings become important signifiers in how we understand each scene and the overarching context of each scene. As these locations seem to portray distinctly different embodiments of masculinity, I divided my analysis of this metaphorical journey to manhood between the urban location of Johannesburg and the more rural setting of Turfloop in Limpopo. The storyline in Johannesburg focuses on the series' antagonist Lehasa Maphosa, while the storyline in Turfloop details the lives of the three original protagonists, Katlego, Kwaito and Tbose and their families.

Discourse Analysis

The second qualitative method I used in my research was a discourse analysis. My primary discourse analysis focused solely on the linguistic elements of the text, that is the detailed transcriptions I made of each episode and formed the main focus of my research methodology. Cultural Studies theorist Alan Mckee uses Hartley's metaphor of the researcher as a forensic scientist and media texts as "the material traces that are left of the practice of sense-making" (2003: 15) to explain the relationship between discourse and power. Hartley elaborates: "we can never see nor recover the actual practice of sense-making: "The material reality of texts allows for the recovery and critical interrogation of discursive politics in an empirical form. Texts are neither scientific data nor historical documents but are literally forensic evidence" (2003: 15).

This methodological metaphor provided a useful way to approach my research question, helping me to understand how my data set is made up of discourses, both visual and verbal which privilege certain ways of being, and approach my research so as to uncover the "discursive politics" contained within its verbal discourses. Gee referring specifically to discourse analysis, emphasises the importance of a critical approach in any textual analysis, as language itself is inherently political. By 'political' Gee is referring to the distribution of social goods in any society. He states:

> " ... language is a key way we humans make and break our world, our institutions, and our relationships through how we deal with social goods. Thus, discourse analysis can illuminate problems and controversies in the world. It can illuminate issues about the distribution of social goods, who gets helped, and who gets harmed (2011: 10)."

My literature review has explored the multiplicity of masculinities in the South African context and how representations of these masculinities may reinforce certain damaging ideals of manhood or present a limited and stereotypical portrayal of a complex gender hierarchy. Gee's explanation above points to discourse analysis as a key methodological approach which might make these discursive politics, and their distribution of social goods, more apparent. That is, what underlying assumptions does the discourse make that dictate a South African masculine ideal? And what underlying assumptions does the text make that implicitly exclude certain expressions of masculinity?

As I chose to divide my analysis across two different settings, I further narrowed my focus down to the plotlines following two different characters. This was due to the prominence of these characters' storylines within my chosen data set. Within the Johannesburg setting, I chose to focus on Lehasa Maphosa as a character and the plotline which details his tumultuous relationship with his partner Nompumelelo Mthiyane as they face the possibility of starting a family. In Turfloop, I chose to focus on the character of Kwaito Seakamela and the Seakamela family, as Kwaito grapples with the role of provider and the financial expectations placed on him as a newly qualified engineer.

Both Lehasa and Kwaito's plotlines illustrate how employment, socio-economic status and familial relationships are integrated into how the series depicts a masculine ideal. This is seen primarily in how the characters address one another, the issues that arise in each plotline, and how other characters construct the male protagonists within different settings, Kwaito's primarily in the domestic space, and Lehasa's in his place of work. I chose to focus on two characters due to the sheer volume of data within my dataset. These characters are good examples of the overarching themes in my research, however this can be considered a limitation to the findings in my study. Once the data had been narrowed down to specific scenes depicting Kwaito and Lehasa's

masculinity as it relates to family and community and ideas of success, these scenes were analysed using a discourse analysis, focused on the dialogue between the characters. This allowed me to focus on the linguistic aspects of the text, and how masculine ideals were constructed through verbal address, topics of discussion, and expectations of manhood placed on the men both internally, and externally. The hypotheses of these scenes were then cross-checked against the multimodal aspects of the text and situated within the generic conventions of South African daily dramas to enrich my understanding of context and support my findings.

Visual Discourse Analysis

Much of this methodological section has focused on the notion of language as constitutive of hegemonic identity formation and ascertaining the underlying linguistic discourses used in constructions of masculinity. However, television is multimodal and its meaning extends beyond the linguistic characteristics of the text. According to Fiske and Hartley “Television uses much the same methods as film to connote meaning: camera angle, lighting and background music, frequency of cutting are examples. Music in particular is used to clarify and sometimes create the connotative meaning of a shot” (Fiske and Hartley, 2003: 29).

The final element to my methodology, conducted against the findings of my primary discourse analysis was a visual discourse analysis. This secondary analysis looked at other signs specific to the televisual medium used to convey meaning in the text. This included other audio elements such as music and tonality, but was focused on visual signs, such as camera angles, expressions, body language and physical settings, which work in conjunction with the linguistic elements of the text to convey meaning. These elements of the text are essential when analysing a televisual text, as Ives states “paired with words, images seem to reinforce and authenticate verbal claims.” (2009: 247). She elaborates: “Visual methodologies, therefore, focus on unpacking the ways in which the visual operates – not as a mirror of ‘reality’ but rather as an ideological and cultural object that produces and contests ‘imagined’ notions of identity, place and society” (2009: 247).

This highlights the importance of a visual discourse analysis in revealing the ideological constructions supporting the imagery on screen, which on the surface appear to be realistic portrayals of everyday life, but will always privilege certain identities and ways of being in their ‘imagined notions of identity’. An analysis of the visual aspects of the

text was also useful in supporting and interrogating the findings of my discourse analysis, to determine whether or not these findings supported one another.

Generic Conventions

Skeem Saam is a daily drama and is structured around similar conventions to soap opera. According to Christine Gledhill, different televisual genres, such as soap opera, have generic conventions through which we can understand the construction of meaning. Gledhill states that “these conventions represent a body of rules or codes, signifiers, and signs and the potential combinations of, and relations between signs which together constitute a genre” (1997: 351). Although *Skeem Saam* is defined as a daily drama, it shares many conventions with the genre of soap opera such as a focus on the ups and downs of relationships, limited settings, music as a particularly significant signifier of emotion, and intertwined storylines.

Gledhill describes how “any given genre provides a system of underlying rules and codes by which films or TV programmes are produced and understood” (1997:356). With this in mind, I relied strongly on these generic televisual codes to guide my analysis situating the initial hypotheses from my discourse analysis within these codes to further grasp their meanings. To elaborate: if a short scene was devoted to a single character performing an action, with no dialogue and an ominous soundtrack, I saw this as an important generic signifier which guided my understanding of the discourse played out in other scenes. Although daily dramas make use of limited signifiers in their representations, these limited signifiers still provide adequate context within which more detailed discourses may be analysed.

Positionality and Methodological Considerations

Of central concern to the process of any media studies analysis is the idea of positionality and how one's own personal biases may affect their interpretation of a text. This is particularly important as a white scholar conducting research into representations of black South African men in the global South. As Fairclough states "There is no such thing as an 'objective' analysis of a text, if by that we mean an analysis which simply describes what is 'there' in the text without being 'biased' by the 'subjectivity' of the analyst" (2003: 14). With this in mind my research has been conducted with every attempt to situate my understanding of the text within the South African context and to corroborate any findings with existing studies, bearing in mind that no analysis I produce can be entirely objective.

As an attempt to mitigate my positionality, my methodological approach was strongly influenced by Ratele's idea of hegemony within marginality. This approach emphasises that black, South African men are subordinated within a broader gendered landscape shaped primarily by race and class, and these factors are particularly important to consider when theorising gender in this context.

My research combines differing quantitative methodologies, which interrogate how the verbal and visual discourses of the series conduct certain masculine ideals. Initial analyses and a "long soak" in my data set allowed for an overview of the most prominent themes in my data. A discourse analysis, focusing on notable scenes involving Kwaito Seakamela in Turfloop and Lehasa Maphosa in Johannesburg, looked at how these broader themes around family and community and ideas of success were discursively constructed in the text. A final visual discourse analysis, taking into account the multimodality of television and more specifically the signifiers specific to soap opera, allowed for further insight into how these representations constructed masculinities as well as a way in which to cross-check my initial hypotheses made in my first two

approaches. My findings from these analyses are discussed in the following two chapters.

Analysis: Linking Family, Fatherhood and Finances in Turfloop

Introducing the Turfloop Context

Scenes situated in Limpopo follow the lives of the three original protagonists of the series Kwaito, T'bose and Katlego, their families and extended members of their community. These scenes do not always take place in the fictional township of Turfloop, but occasionally the more urban cityscape of Polokwane appears to introduce a scene. For the most part, however, the audience is located in the action with scenes of cattle crossing dirt roads, chickens in a fenced off yard and modest brick-walled houses, signifiers of a more rural landscape and smaller homes which foreground the importance of the domestic sphere within this location. This chapter will show how, drawing on discourses of the ideal father figure and the constitutional ideal of the "new man", *Skeem Saam* constructs manhood around caring, kindness and familial responsibility. However, representations of masculinity in Turfloop are also complicated by financial status and the male role of provider which the series links to family pride and progress within the broader community.

Skeem Saam links an inability for young men to not only provide for their families, but financially reach a trajectory to middle class status, to a personal failure and lack of progress within the broader community. To show this, the character of Zamokuhle 'Kwaito' Seakamela, one of the three original male protagonists on the show, will be discussed as an exemplar of masculinity within the Seakamela family. Ultimately, by examining how masculinity is constructed through the family and community in Turfloop it can be argued that *Skeem Saam* puts forward a masculinity fraught with tension between the roles of good son and brother, and provider, while simultaneously reinforcing neo-liberal ideas of masculine success based on middle-class aspirations.

Kwaito The Family Man; Fatherhood as a Masculine Ideal

Morrell describes the way in which "constructions of masculinity are bound up with location in the family" (2007: 78). In a study on the understandings of masculinities among South African youths, Morrell articulates the importance of the family structure in the construction of masculinities particularly in a socio-economic context where the state has failed to redress the inequalities of apartheid. He suggests that in a hierarchy of masculinities where black men have been and still are oppressed, "family can provide a male with a profound sense of belonging" (2007: 79). Ratele also emphasises the importance of families in the construction of masculinities explaining that "it is in families, most times, that the processes of turning babies into boys and boys into men is usually begun; families which, with the help of available knowledge and power, saturate the bodies, psyches, desires, and daily practices of youngsters with images of and ideas about masculinity" (2008: 520).

In *Skeem Saam,* 22-year-old Kwaito Seakamela serves as an exemplar of masculinity within his family structure. Upon completing his engineering degree in Johannesburg, Kwaito has moved back to Limpopo to begin his career as an engineer. He lives in a small house in Turfloop with his mother MaNtuli, his younger sister Pretty, his brother-in-law Dennis and his teenage nephew Clement. Kwaito is a soft-spoken and gentle character who is celebrated within the Seakamela family for his career as an engineer and as a beloved son and brother. He is somewhat coddled by MaNtuli who always serves him breakfast before he leaves for his job. Most of the interactions between Kwaito and his family take place in their small kitchen, sitting together at meal times at the kitchen table.

The often-crowded kitchen in the Seakamela's household is a signifier which links the ideal of masculinity in this setting to the domestic sphere. Kwaito's engineering career is mentioned by his family and community members as a symbol of pride and status throughout the series. However, we never actually see Kwaito in his place of work. It is always in the domestic setting, surrounded by family members, that the expectations of manhood are shaped and articulated. In the discussion of representations in this chapter, it becomes clear that the kitchen table in particular, is an important signifier for the domestic sphere and a site for the negotiation, dissection and discussion of familial expectations of masculinity in the Seakamela household.

I argue that Kwaito's representation of masculinity can be likened to representations discussed by television scholar Alexia Smit in her analysis of representations of black South African men on local television. According to Smit, local, less prevalent representations of black South African men, such as those seen in soap operas aired on the South African national broadcaster, are more likely to portray men as caring figures, deviating from the frequently-used construction of black South African men in the global media as gangsters or 'tsotsis' (Smit, 2017).

Smit refers to the model of familial and caring masculinity as the "benign patriarch" representation, which draws on cross-cultural Southern African ideas of responsible manhood[7]. This discourse privileges a masculinity that is based on the father figure as "a symbol and custodian of ultimate power and responsibility in the family and community" as well as "a responsible leader, provider, protector, and role model" (Lesejane, 2006: 174). In this discourse, the characteristics possessed by the ideal father figure extend to all male figures within the familial structure through their practice of ideal masculinity. According to Lesejane "fatherhood was an ascribed status rather than an achieved one. In a crude sense, one did not become a father only by virtue of having biologically fathered a child" (2006: 174). In this discourse influencing masculine

[7] Lesejane states that "African culture is not homogeneous, but there are sufficient commonalities to enable us to draw a common picture of what fatherhood meant within this broad value system over a given time." (2006:173)

representations, the concept of fatherhood becomes the primary signifier of successful masculinity. Kwaito Seakamela is not a biological father, but his representation within the Seakamela family structure draws from Smit's ideas above.

The depiction of Kwaito's embodiment of ideal masculinity based on the idea of the "father figure" becomes more evident when comparing him to another older male character in the Seakamela family, his brother-in-law Dennis. Dennis is older than Kwaito, which according to Ratele (2008), is an important factor through which gendered hierarchies in South Africa are structured. Despite his seniority in age, Dennis is subordinated within the Seakamela family structure after just having been released from prison for domestic violence. Within the discourse of masculinity constructed around the father figure, Lesejane argues that "a man who was abusive, irresponsible, a drunkard and a general social misfit, would be regarded as a bad father and would, over time, be stripped of his responsibilities and stature" (2006: 176). Although Dennis is senior to Kwaito in age, his position within the Seakamela family dynamic is vastly different.

Dennis's position within the gendered family hierarchy is made apparent in episode 168 when he comes to Pretty's defense over an argument between her and MaNtuli across the kitchen table. His voice is level and cuts across MaNtuli's shouts, he interjects with "Please! Don't be so hard on her. She's seen her mistakes". With a fierce expression and wagging finger MaNtuli responds "Hey! Hey! You'd better shut up unless you want me to change my mind about you having breakfast with us". There is a silence around the table. Dennis says nothing in response but backs down by raising his hands above his head and sighs. As she berates Dennis for his involvement in the argument, MaNtuli's expression of disdain and threat to exile Dennis from the family table is the antithesis of her loving attitude towards her beloved son Kwaito. Dennis does not attempt to defend his position, but allows MaNtuli's threat of exile to pass by raising his hands, a gesture of defeat and acceptance.

Through this, we see that Dennis knows his place and the unspoken rule that a masculinity that runs counter to the caring father figure is unacceptable in the family. This representation of a perpetrator of domestic violence is somewhat idealistic, but the series makes it clear that Dennis is on a path to redemption, as his character begins to lean more to that of Kwaito's responsible manhood ideal.

This shift towards Kwaito's masculine ideal is seen in episode 178 when Dennis sits his son Clement down at the kitchen table to speak to him about his involvement in the drug scandal at school. Again, the kitchen table is a significant space around which masculine ideals which prioritise family values are articulated. In this scene we see Dennis step into a representation of masculinity based on the father figure as he puts the potatoes and tomatoes that he is dicing on a wooden chopping board aside, takes a deep breath and folds his hands, ready to address Clement. Clement sits across the table from him and is lectured on the consequences of his actions, however, Dennis is not aggressive or angry, but speaks to his son firmly and gently. Dennis relates his own experiences to Clement warning: "As we speak I have a dark cloud hovering over me since I was arrested because of my bad choices. Do you want to follow in my footsteps and go to jail?".

Again, the use of the term "bad choices" sets up a dichotomy of successful manhood between Dennis and Kwaito. Dennis is unemployed and attempting to work as a "freelancer" although the nature of his work is never discussed. He is barely welcome in the familial structure and this is made clear, particularly by MaNtuli whose disdain towards Dennis is palpable in every interaction. This treatment is due to his past actions and it can be argued that the "dark cloud" referred to by Dennis is his position within the family as a man fallen from grace. Thus, *Skeem Saam* depicts "bad choices" as those that deviate from the representation of masculinity which draws on the characteristics of

Smit's benign patriarch, and "the right choices" are those that lead one on a path to successful masculinity, embodied by Kwaito.

This is also made clear in Kwaito's relationship with his young nephew, Clement. Lesejane states that one of the most important qualities of the father figure is to be a role model, to young men in particular (Lesejane, 2006). When Clement becomes involved in a marijuana scandal at school, Kwaito offers him guidance and reassurance based on his own experiences as a young man, in contrast with MaNtuli who furiously berates Clement for his bad decisions. A primary example of this is seen in episode 179 as the Seakamelas sit down around the kitchen table for breakfast. As they discuss Clement's possible involvement in selling space cookies[8] at a school bake sale, the camera focuses on Kwaito, who looks sympathetically at his nephew, his tone caring but authoritative as he states "I know you don't expect this coming from me...but it happens to the best of us." MaNtuli, eyeing Kwaito angrily, warns "Don't encourage him". Kwaito, ever-gentle and level in his tone replies "I'm not. What I meant is it's not too late to change his ways. I mean, I also got into trouble but I changed my ways before it was too late and look where I am today."

The moments when Kwaito imparts wisdom to Clement shows a privileging of this discourse in *Skeem Saam's* representation of Kwaito's masculinity. As *Skeem Saam* is primarily concerned with "the journey to manhood" as stated on the SABC Education website, the advice given to Clement by Kwaito can be seen as a small example of what this journey entails if one is to be regarded as a "successful" man within the discourse of the 'benign patriarch'. Kwaito's wisdom is imparted primarily by relating his young nephew's experiences to his own, as a boy growing up in Turfloop. He recognises that boyhood in Turfloop comes with challenges and links Clement's experiences to his own when he says "it happens to the best of us".

[8] Cookies containing marijuana.

In saying “us” and also stating that he himself “got into trouble” at Clement’s age, he implies a collective understanding of what it means to grow up young and male in this context. His comparison to his own journey also implies that the path to successful manhood is achievable if Clement makes the “right decisions" and “changes his ways”. Kwaito does not explicitly state that the “right choices” or “changing his ways” are following the decisions that Kwaito himself has made, but when he says “look where I am today” he confirms that the right choices will lead to Kwaito’s current embodiment of masculinity: a dedicated, family-oriented man with a stable career path. As further exploration throughout this chapter will show that the “right choices” that Kwaito refers to are based on a neoliberal understanding of individualism.

Clement’s involvement in a marijuana scandal at school also serves as a way to counteract the popular “tsotsi” or troubled youth stereotype that has been so pervasive in representations of black South African men, and, furthermore, to emphasise the hegemonic form of responsible manhood embodied by Kwaito. As Marx, referenced by Haupt theorised, gangster tropes became popular in media representations as a way to represent the hardships that young, black men had to negotiate post-1994 as the legacies of apartheid continued to deepen inequality. Representations were therefore frequently characterised by drug use and delinquent behavior, as was the case with *Yizo Yizo.*

In *Skeem Saam,* however, when Clement and his adolescent friends become involved in illicit dealings at school, this is depicted as a natural stage of boyhood that one must overcome in order to be a successful man like Kwaito. This is made clear in episode 176 When Clement’s best friend Koloi is found to be selling weed brownies at school, the police captain in Turfloop describes Koloi’s actions as normal for his age, using the saying “boys will be boys". The synopsis of the series, as well as a few references in my data set also recognise that Kwaito and his friends were considered badly behaved in school. Thus, the series links the gangster stereotype with a natural stage of growth

towards becoming a responsible man. In doing so, *Skeem Saam* constructs these representations as simple choices, disregarding Marx's view that these representations are the result of a society in which black men are constantly stigmatised, struggle to find employment and live in poverty. The father figure and ideal of the new man is seen to be an embodiment that one can only achieve if one makes the right choices, that is to do what Kwaito has done which is get a degree and become gainfully employed. This is further complicated by Kwaito's role as provider within the family and community setting.

Constitutional Ideals of Manhood

This masculine ideal of the benign patriarch is the foundation on which Kwaito's masculinity is built and echoes early representations of black South African men. An example of this is discussed by Clowes in her study on representations of black men in early issues of *Drum* magazine which saw men as "portrayed through the strong social and emotional ties they had with the home, through their intimate involvement in domestic matters, household chores and child raising, as males inside nuclear and non-nuclear households where members relied on each other through a fluid gender division of labor" (Clowes, 2005: 98).

However, Kwaito's construction of masculinity also draws on the discourse of the "new man" which can be linked to the South African constitutional ideals of manhood and has been amalgamated into the identity of the father figure in the series. Liz Walker discussed how the introduction of the new, liberal constitution post-1994 emphasised that "the ideal South African man in this frame is one who is non-violent, a good father and husband, employed and able to provide for his family" (2005: 224) although I disagree with Walker's overall argument, that the new constitutional ideal led to a "crisis

in masculinities"[9]This constitutional discourse of manhood, that promotes non-violence, and non-sexism strongly underpins Kwaito's masculinity.

One of the ways that this is emphasised is through Kwaito's close relationship with his mother MaNtuli and his younger sister Pretty, a student at the local university. Pretty and Kwaito's loving relationship can be seen in particular in episode 170, When Kwaito returns from a grocery shop laden with bags. Pretty, examining the contents of the bags lovingly exclaims "Oh big brother, are these cosmetics for me?" When Kwaito confirms this with a smile, she embraces him, saying "Oh thank you big brother, especially for the sanitary pads. Thank you!". Not only does this interaction serve to portray Kwaito as a loving and caring male figure within his family, but this act of care is gendered. The reference to "cosmetics" and "sanitary pads" distances Kwaito from a representation of masculinity that seeks to distance itself from menstruation which, in a global hegemonic discourse is a topic rarely linked to the masculine, but often any reference to menstruation is vehemently rejected as unmasculine. His masculinity does not distance him from the feminine, as a globalised hegemony does, but shows a young man capable of understanding the needs of his female family members. Pretty's appreciation for Kwaito is clear in her lovingly expressive tone and the endearing way in which she repeatedly thanks her "big brother". Thus, from these interactions the discursive construction of Kwaito's masculinity draws on the discourse of the ideal father figure, aligning with a constitutional ideal of manhood rooted in the family structure.

Linking the New Man to the Neoliberal Man: Kwaito as Financial Provider

While the hierarchy of masculinity depicted in the Sealamela family structure can be likened to Smit's discussion of masculinity on the benign patriarch, Kwaito's masculinity

[9] Buiten and Naidoo problematise this argument which seeks to account for high levels of violence in South Africa as it implies that masculinities were not in crisis prior to 1994 and it is a clash between "traditional" masculinities and "modern masculinities that has caused this crisis".

also draws on, and is complicated by the responsibility he faces as financial provider in the Seakamela family. My literature review pointed to how representations of masculinity were frequently influenced and disrupted by socio-economic conditions often gendering the role of financial provider as masculine.

Lesejane describes a shift in representations privileging the role of financial provider. He attributes this to the social landscape during apartheid, when due to the mining economy, black men were forced to work away from their families, and financial provision became the primary means through which the role of ideal father was filled as opposed to the father figure as a source of wisdom and a role model. Prinsloo, too discusses how a representation of fathers in the media has come to "constitute a 'good' father as the responsible breadwinner/provider and the protector" and that "within this discourse, the primary role of fatherhood is constrained to bringing home the bacon (but not cooking it)"(2006: 134). In *Skeem Saam,* masculinity and provision are once again linked, though the series grapples with financial difficulties in a different way to prior representations, as Kwaito struggles to integrate the ideas of responsible manhood with the role of provider in both his family and the broader community.

Neoliberalism

If socio-economic conditions have always been tied to the representations of black South African men, it is important at this point to situate Kwaito's representation of masculinity within the current socio-economic climate. My literature review pointed to the SABC's neoliberal agenda as a framework in which content was created for the national broadcaster. Examining constructions of masculinity in Turfloop has shown that ideals of neoliberalism still strongly underpin representations. Prominent South African feminist Desiree Lewis describes the considerable expansion of neoliberalism in South Africa after adopting the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme.

Although Lewis focuses on how neoliberalism has predominantly affected South African women, her research still provides an overview of how neoliberalism has affected the broader gendered landscape. According to Lewis this led to “open markets, unregulated foreign capital flows, and citizens facing a tide of global capitalism” accompanied by “increasingly little state protection from the exploitative and homogenizing effects of global capitalism” (2019: 10). Lewis points to how neoliberalism normalises ideals of “individual competitiveness as keys to success, empowerment and freedom”. Lewis continues, “as a system of governmentality, neoliberalism presents itself as being ‘above’ ideology. It institutes the law of the market as a rational and inevitable route for personal, political and social growth, as well as everyday behaviour” (2019: 11).

Decoteau, citing Bond and Marais, argues that “the entrenched inequalities of apartheid have only been exacerbated by the adoption of neoliberalism” (2013: 143). Kwaito’s masculinity embodies both the discourses of the ‘benign patriarch’ and the ‘new man’ which simultaneously privilege these neoliberal ideals as integral to successful manhood despite the fact that these ideals are impossible to achieve in the socio-political and gendered landscape post-1994. This becomes particularly prevalent in how his family and community see him as a provider, and how the failure to do so is equated with personal failure.

Because he is now earning a salary as a qualified engineer, Kwaito begins to take on a more prominent role in the family regarding delegation of duties and decision-making. In episode 169 as the Seakamela family are sitting around the kitchen table having breakfast, Kwaito receives a series of text messages. When MaNtuli asks who would message Kwaito so early in the morning, Clement smirks and says “The banks. It’s the 28th today. The engineers have been paid”. This comment sees Pretty overjoyed, and a single shot frames an expression of relief on MaNtuli’s face. While Pretty celebrates her brother’s paycheck, with a comment on being able to afford “English breakfasts and takeaways”, the camera is focused on Kwaito, his expression furrowed and anxious. He

responds with “What are you going on about Pretty? First things first. I need to install a new geyser”.

Sitting in a symbolically relevant position at the head of the kitchen table, Kwaito begins to delegate household tasks to the family, with a tense expression. Kwaito’s immediate assumption of delegating household duties indicates that his income has not only designated him as the provider within the Seakamela family, but has also extended his duties to include a more prominent role in decision-making and within the household. Provider, in this sense, is not merely financial, but embedded in the structure of the family and accompanied by certain responsibilities. As MaNtuli is supposed to retire, Pretty is still a student, and Dennis is unemployed, Kwaito becomes the family’s only source of income.

This follows Lesejane’s description of how shifting socio-economic conditions foregrounded the burden of financial provision and can also be likened to Clowes’ description of shifting representations of masculinity from family man, to viewing the responsibility of financial provision as burdensome. From this, we see that the “benign patriarch” discourse has not been usurped by the role of provider in *Skeem Saam*, but these roles have merged. The following section will detail the representation of tensions between these roles, brought on by the expectations placed on Kwaito by his family and the broader community.

Financial Provision within the Familial Structure

In order to understand Kwaito’s anxieties, the ideas around what it means to be a financial provider in the Seakamela family must be unpacked. In Turfloop, financial provision is strongly tied to obligation to one’s family and family pride and the failure to fulfill this role causes Kwaito visible distress. The link between successful masculinity and provision is complicated as the series equates a failure to provide with not only

personal failure, but shame on the entire family. This is observed in episode 167, Pretty makes a Facebook post about how difficult it is having to worry about school fees and other costs prompted by her having to use the Seakamela living room as a study.

The series devotes a short scene to Pretty sitting on the couch, writing the social media post in the empty living room that adjoins the Seakamela's kitchen. The sombre soundtrack accompanying Pretty's voiceover sets a foreboding tone implying the consequences to come as the social media post is narrated by Pretty's voiceover. Pretty writes about the frustration of having to use her living room as a study, and not having a steady source of income like some of the students she attends university with. The post ends with: "How does one go back and fix the poor choices of the past generation to give a black child a fair chance at life? #povertyisreal".

The next day Kwaito's girlfriend Glenda alerts him to the post. He begins to read it on his cellphone, his eyes widening in shock as he reaches the end and erupts angrily "What the hell is this?". The usually bustling but calm Seakamelas' kitchen goes eerily silent for a moment before Mantuli demands to know what Kwaito is speaking about. When he tells MaNtuli about the post, they both turn on Pretty, furious. Kwaito and Mantuli berate Pretty for being stupid and irresponsible. Kwaito, referring to the "poverty is real" hashtag angrily exclaims: "This makes us look like failures" and then asks 'so you're implying our parents made poor choices?" prompting MaNtuli to furiously address Pretty saying, "So wena you're telling the whole world that I'm a failure?". Shaking her head angrily, Pretty says "I never said anyone was a failure, I just wish my life was normal like everyone else's" to which MaNtuli responds: "so what I've given you is abnormal?".

The palpable tension and anger depicted in this scene reveals how MaNtuli Kwaito views the idea of poverty being associated with the Seakamela name, particularly when it comes to the public nature of Pretty's post. The association made by MaNtuli and

Kwaito indicate the belief that inability to provide financially for one's family is the result of personal failure and is also a source of shame within the community. Pretty's post did not directly mention Kwaito or MaNtuli but referred to the "choices of past generations". These choices are not explained or interrogated but, for MaNtuli and Kwaito this phrase carries the implication that the Seakamela's financial standing is the personal failure of both Kwaito and MaNtuli to provide.

The frequent use of the word "choice" links the socio-economic standing of the Seakamela family to the personal choices of its members. Once again, the path to becoming a successful provider is linked to making the right choices. It is depicted as entirely within one's own control with no acknowledgment of broader societal structures of discrimination which have historically acted on black South African families and still to do this day. The public nature of Pretty's post is also significant as much of MaNtuli's anger stems from the idea that Pretty shared these thoughts to "the whole world" and that she will be seen as a failure within the broader community. Thus, Pretty's Facebook post points to MaNtuli and Kwaito's understanding that financial difficulty is deeply personal and deeply shameful within their community.

This can be seen again in episode 168, when Pretty attempts to rectify the perceived public shaming of the Seakamela family on Facebook. Entering the kitchen, where MaNtuli and Dennis are sitting around the table, Pretty says "I'd like to apologise, I was disrespectful. And that Facebook post...I made a general statement but I suspect that people who know me assumed I was talking about Kwaito". Implicit in Pretty's apology is the recognition that publicly associating one's family with poverty or an inability to provide is disrespectful. However, the latter part of her statement indicates that this disrespect is not only directed at the Seakamela family, but specifically to Kwaito himself, as those who read the status would automatically assume she was referring to him. Pretty's statement therefore links the ideas of family shame with poverty, as well as attributing these links to a personal failure on Kwaito's part to fulfill the role of provider.

As Morrell states, “Manhood is a station that requires responsibility and obliges respect.” (2007: 89). This observation can be used to interrogate Pretty’s use of the word “disrespectful” with specific reference to Kwaito and show that a public statement about Kwaito’s inability to provide equates to disrespecting Kwaito’s de facto masculine role as provider.

Familial Conflict over Masculine Expectation

Kwaito’s anxiety around his responsibilities as financial provider is further exacerbated in episode 169 when there is a conflict between him and MaNtuli over who will do the grocery shopping. When Kwaito says that he will do the grocery shopping to “avoid overspending”, tense music builds as the camera focuses on MaNtuli showing her affronted expression at Kwaito’s announcement. Later in the same episode, MaNtuli sits at the head of the table, her brow furrowed, and says to Pretty ”I was thinking about how rude Zamo[10] was to me this morning”. Pretty, looking confused, says “he was rude to you this morning?”

In MaNtuli’s explanation that it was rude of Kwaito to assume the rule of grocery shopping as it implies that she is a “useless parent” and a “loafer”, the series seems to point different understandings between MaNtuli and Pretty about the role of financial provider and the respect that it demands. Notably, MaNtuli wags her finger at Pretty and says “I hope when you start working you won’t become like him” to which Pretty responds “You better pray I do Mama. How many parents have children who look after them?” She sits next to MaNtuli and reassuringly adds “he appreciates all of your efforts putting him through school and I don’t think he minds taking care of you.” MaNtuli raises her voice and exasperated, says “then why does he want to buy the groceries himself?”. Pretty shrugs and nonchalantly says “he probably wants to feel like the man of the house”. Here, Pretty links Kwaito’s masculinity not only with the role of financial

[10] A shortening of Kwaito’s real name Zamokuhle

provider, but with the role of the head of the household, mixing the discursive constructions of masculinity which draw on “the father figure” and that of the financial provider as well as linking manhood to holding natural power and control in the domestic sphere.

From Kwaito’s and MaNtuli’s reaction to Pretty’s post, as well as MaNtuli and Pretty’s conversation above, different understandings of what it means to be a financial provider within the family emerge and we see a destabilizing of traditional gender roles within the family. MaNtuli strongly associates the inability to provide with shame and this is emphasised when she articulates her thoughts about Kwaito thinking she is a “useless parent and a loafer”.

In her discussion of discourses influencing representations of fathers in the media, Prinsloo (2006) describes how traditional gendered discourses see women relegated to the private space, and associated with domestic chores and duties, while men are seen to be rational and located in the public work space. However, when examining the unequal effects of globalisation, Morrell describes how a discourse of fatherhood has been used to construct a masculine ideal for black South African men. He states: “The fear of poverty is powerful and produces responses that both enforce the gendered role of ‘provider’ and challenge the household division of labour by spreading domestic jobs to boys” (2007: 88).

The scene is illustrative of the gendered expectations placed on Kwaito in the familial setting as that of provider and foreshadows the tensions that will emerge for Kwaito, in trying to fulfill these expectations. The mesh of these discourses within the series indicates a difference in the representation of black South African men in the media as it implicitly recognises the anxiety that young black men face when attempting to meet societal and familial expectations. This provides a more nuanced dissection of how gender is constructed in the familial space, as it overtly addresses the role that young,

black men are expected to play in their families. However, as the plotline progresses, it becomes clear that the series continues to attribute these anxieties entirely to what they depict as unreasonable familial demands and personal failure, while disregarding structural issues. The Seakamela family becomes the cause of Kwaito's anxieties, serving to remove the concept of poverty from broader societal causes.

Double Storey Demands and Class Aspirations

In episode 170, MaNtuli accidentally eats one of Clement's space cookies. When Pretty enters the kitchen, MaNtuli is giggling at the set of building plans laid out before her. Pretty looks on, anxious as MaNtuli tells Pretty that the plans are for a double storey house. She then says "Zamokuhle must build me that mansion. The one he promised me, remember?!" Pretty looks concerned and tentatively, sitting down at the table she asks "um has he brought it up again?". MaNtuli dismisses Pretty with a wave of her hand and says "Yes, he works now. He must keep the promise he made". Still unconvinced and looking more concerned, Pretty asks her mother "don't you think he's under a lot of pressure?". Shaking her head and frowning, MaNtuli says to her daughter "hey wena don't you know the size of Zamokuhle's pockets? Stay out of this if you know what's good for you and again don't start with your nonsense".

In episode 171, as Pretty, MaNtuli and Kwaito are gathered in the kitchen for breakfast, MaNtuli receives a call on her cell phone. As MaNtuli leaves the kitchen to answer the call, ominous music starts up. When MaNtuli returns, she happily announces to the room that they will start building soon. At the same time the ominous backing track reaches its crescendo, the camera focuses on Kwaito's wide-eyed and anxious expression as he exclaims "Whoa wait. Build with what money? I've just started working. Where will the money come from?" Later in the episode MaNtuli says to Kwaito "Zamokuhle how's your day looking today"? Kwaito, frowning, responds with "Why Mma? So that you can make more demands on my salary?". MaNtuli indignantly mumbles "Zamokuhle you must reconsider. I want a double storey house". His eyes

widening in anxiety, Kwaito responds “with what money?” From this interaction and Kwaito’s use of the word “demands” as well as Pretty’s recognition that Kwaito is under a lot of pressure, the double-storey house is depicted as a burden placed on Kwaito by what he sees as MaNtuli’s unreasonable demands which causes him great anxiety. MaNtuli’s reference to the double-storey house as a “mansion” is also significant.

The double-storey house is referred to as a mansion numerous times throughout my data set and connotes the idea of grandiosity and wealth that comes with a double-storey house as opposed to the modest Seakamela home. It becomes a symbol of class status, as other members of the community comment on MaNtuli’s mansion, speculating as to how well Kwaito must be doing in his career to be able to afford it. MaNtuli alone is depicted as the source of the pressure of financial provision that is causing Kwaito anxiety. Kwaito’s anxiety to fulfill the expected role of provider for his family as well as the means through which his family will achieve a higher level of class status within the community becomes the focus of this storyline. Through the emphasis placed on Kwaito’s fear of disappointing his family in his failure to meet MaNtuli’s expectations we are made to sympathise with him and the unreasonable demands of provider enforced on him by his mother.

A further example of the series foregrounding Kwaito’s anxiety can be seen by the attention devoted to it in episode 172. A short scene sees Kwaito sitting alone at the kitchen table, his cell phone in his hand. His face once again filled with wide-eyed anxiety accompanied by a solemn piano soundtrack immediately set a solemn tone for the scene. The camera focuses on his cellphone, as he searches “Polokwane building loans”. Sighing, he phones a number under the search results, and the scene cuts just after Kwaito says “hello, I’d like to ask about your loans”. This short scene is notable in its foregrounding of Kwaito’s anxiety as well as his acceptance of MaNtuli’s demands. As Kwaito is the ideal masculine figure within the family structure, this scene shows a

tension between the roles of a dutiful son, and reconciling this with the financial provider within the family.

“All of Our Problems Started When Dad Left”: Reinforcing the Link Between Fatherhood and Provision

Later in my data set we see the link between ideal father figure, and financial provider reinforced when Kwaito attributes his anxieties around provision to when his father left their family. A scene devoted to a deep reflection and emotional denouement in which Kwaito and Pretty speak about the pressures he faces within the Seakamela family to provide sees the series further the understanding that financial difficulties within the family are the result of personal failings, missing an opportunity to interrogate a societal context in which poverty is not the result of personal failing but the neoliberal agenda of the state.

The scene takes place in episode 174, as Pretty enters the kitchen to speak to Kwaito. He wears a weary expression, dressed in a work shirt and tie, hunched over some documentation with a calculator in his hand. A close shot frames Pretty and Kwaito as she sits next to him at the table and apologises again for her social media post. Emotional piano music swells in the background as Pretty explains to her brother “it’s just that it hurts you know? I’m only 19. I shouldn’t be worrying about where my school fees will come from or how much money I have”. Kwaito’s expression softens, and the shot is just wide enough so that we see him reach over and place his hand on Pretty’s in an understanding gesture. He begins to speak softly “Look Pretty. I’ve been thinking a lot and I’ve realised that all our problems started after Papa left. Not having a father made life tough. He was a coward. But I hope one day I’ll understand why he left us.” Pretty, tears welling up in her eyes, responds with “I guess all we have is each other then”. Again, Kwaito turns to face Pretty, takes both of her hands, and says “You and I are the two people who can build the Seakamela family. That’s why I need you to focus. Pretty, if we work hard we can build a legacy that might be inherited by many

generations to come." Kwaito ends off his emotional speech by saying that he is scared, but ready for the challenge.

This scene sees an emotional culmination of Kwaito's difficulty in fulfilling the roles of responsible manhood, role model and provider. It also reinforces the link between this hegemonic masculine ideal and the role of the father figure and provider. Kwaito attributes the financial difficulties and tensions faced by his family to when their father left them and the lack of a responsible father figure in the household, a role that can only be filled by a responsible man and a role that he feels too young to step into. He also tells Pretty that if they work hard, they will overcome these difficulties, again perpetuating the neoliberal ideal that poverty is a result of poor choices and the inability to work hard enough to succeed.

There are instances in the text of the role of provider not necessarily being gendered, such as Kwaito's conversation with Pretty above. In episode 171 MaNtuli begins to work night shifts at the Maphosa nut factory as she proudly announces that she will do anything to get her dream house. However, the culmination of Kwaito's anxiety in his emotional conversation with Pretty shows that the conflict between Kwaito and MaNtuli, and the disruption of the role of provider brought on by MaNtuli's demands is ultimately seen by Kwaito as a result of his father leaving the family. The conversation above carries the implication that if Kwaito's father had not left, tensions around the masculine role of provider would not exist. Thus, Kwaito and Pretty's conversation implicitly reinforces the link between the role of father figure and financial provider.

Good Qualifications, Financial Expectations and Masculinity in the Broader Community

In Lesejane's descriptions of the ideal father figure, there is also reference to this construction extending not just to a man's family, but to the broader community. Although the focus of this chapter is on Kwaito Seakamela, it's important to note that the

linking of fatherhood with financial provision is also explored in other instances in the Turfloop setting indicating its pervasiveness in shaping masculine representations. There are numerous examples scattered throughout my data set which confirm broader community understandings of masculinity as associated with the ideal father figure as financial provider only achievable through neoliberal ideals of success.

The first example can be seen in episode 167, when an older male character Alfred Magongwa quits his job as a teacher due to conflict at Turf High and his furious wife Celia berates him for losing his income, saying “So you want me to wear the pants in this house. You want me to feed your kids?”. The use of the phrase “wearing the pants" within their family home associates financial provision with control and respect within the gendered family hierarchy. Celia also associates his inability to provide financially with a failure to fulfill cultural expectations of manhood, when she relates his unemployment to lack of counselling with the elders.

Another instance where the discourses that associate caring fatherly figures with financial provision subtly become conflated can be seen in episode 183. Thabo T’bose’ Maputla, Kwaito’s best friend and contemporary, having fathered a son when he was a teenager, drops off bags of goods and supplies for his son with his son’s mother Mapitsi. He asks Mapitsi to give their son a hug when she sees them and she responds with “he’ll be so happy with all the toys and clothes you bought him”. Smiling, T’bose says “that’s what dads do”.

More specifically the broader community also reinforces ideals of masculinity as they relate to Kwaito and the Seakamela family as they discuss Kwaito’s career and his plans to build his mother a mansion. In episode 175 Kats’ Koko, after hearing about Kwaito’s building plans from Kat, visits the local spaza shop run by Charles Kunutu. This plotline serves as another example of how middle-class aspirations become linked to masculine success. Charles is described by other characters as an unpleasant and grumpy man and his trying to keep his small business afloat as it is competing with the

Maputla's larger supermarket. While talking about the happenings in Turfloop, Koko tells Charles that "Katlego is managing his restaurant very well and Zamokuhle wants to build his mother a mansion". Again, the use of the term mansion for the double storey house signifies great and impressive wealth and is seen to be a status symbol in the community linked to Kwaito's success.

Later in the same episode, Charles confides in his nephew Nimza about the status of the spaza shop. Nimza criticise his uncle's business strategy saying "all you do is sell bread" and adds "that approach won't build the Kunutu empire you so badly want". A serious soundtrack accompanies a shot of Charles as he bites his lip and tells Nimza that he cannot afford to advertise the business as well as the wealthier Maputlas advertise their supermarket. Looking wearily into the distance, Charles says "I'm anxious about the future of this place. And Zamokuhle is building his mother a big house". When Nimza responds with "that's good for them" Charles angrily snaps at him, his hand slamming into the counter in front of him as if to emphasise the importance of the issue that Nimza seems to be misunderstanding: "No man! That means we'll be the only family in Turfloop that's not progressing!".

This exchange shows the public nature of expectations of masculine success in the broader community. Charles links the concept of progress in Turfloop to the success of his business, which he sees as inseparable from the success of his family as he is failing to build a "family empire". His mention of Kwaito further links perceptions of ideal masculinity to the perceived financial status of one's family represented through the signifier of the "mansion" that Kwaito aims to build his mother.

The series does make an attempt to recognise the pressures that Kwaito is under. His anxious emotional state is foregrounded and he is able to share his feelings openly with his girlfriend and peers, a different representation to the autonomous and reluctant provider described by Clowes. However, these anxieties are still all attributed to

MaNtuli and the broader community who equate the lack of a “mansion” with a lack of progress. As the following section will explore, Kwaito describes his anxieties, relating them to the concept of “black tax” simplifying this complex idea and further obfuscating the role that broader structural inequalities play.

Black Tax: Negotiating the Role of Provider and Kwaito’s Personal Ideal of Successful Masculinity

The previous sections have explored how masculinity is constructed within the domestic and familiar space, drawing on discourses of the benign patriarch and the constitutional ideal of the “new man” while exploring how the series ties these issues to family and socio-economic standing in the community. However, when Kwaito discusses his role of provider with his best friend Katlego, a different understanding of Kwaito’s own masculine identity emerges.

None of the other members of the Seakamela family are depicted as understanding the anxieties faced by Kwaito in fulfilling MaNtuli’s request to build her dream house. It is made clear that Kwaito is frustrated as his mother “makes demands” on his salary, and will not reconsider the cost of the house. Episode 173 gives us more insight into how the ideal of successful masculinity is constructed between Kwaito and his peers. The scene takes place in Katlego’s restaurant as Kwaito and Kat go for lunch and Kwaito confides in his friend. Kwaito is sitting alone, this time at a restaurant table, his brow furrowed when Kat approaches the table behind him. This public setting, at a restaurant table as opposed to the kitchen table at the Seakamela’s seems to mirror the table as a site for different negotiations around the construction of masculinity. This time, the table is not a family space, but a trendy restaurant, and the men sit opposite each other the impersonal public setting reflecting the ideal of masculinity that the two men share.

Kat, brandishing a piece of paper, struts to Kwaito, and with a confident tone and chuckle greets Kwaito with “my friend!” and flourishes the document in front of him, with a “voila!”. Kwaito, taking the piece of paper, grins and says “congrats”. He follows this statement with “this means I’m behind”. Kat looks at him, shocked and says “you’re an engineer now. You must sort yourself out.” Kwaito’s response clarifies that the piece of paper that Kat is holding is his brand-new driver’s license when he says with a hint of annoyance “Kat what will I do with a driver’s license? Drive a donkey cart?” Kat quips back jokingly about Kwaito taking Glenda for a drive and explains to Kwaito that getting his license was “inspired by business”. It’s hard to run a business without a car.” with an expression of disgust Kat adds “and I can’t be a passenger in Candice’s car anymore.” Kwaito, looking at the table sulkily says to his friend “well lucky you. It looks like I’ll be catching a lift with Leeto for the rest of my life.” When Kat asks why Kwaito won’t buy a car and inquires about Kwaito’s defeated expression, Kwaito explains his predicament.

With a solemn expression, Kwaito asks “Hey man, ever heard of black tax?”. Kat says nothing but looks concerned and shakes his head slightly. Kwaito continues: “my mom’s supposed to retire and I must make everything happen and also build her the house of her dreams.” Kat shakes his head and says “sorry boy.” Kwaito shrugs and defeatedly proclaims “it is what it is”. That’s the black child’s cross to bear. Making life easier for everyone else”. Nodding, Kat says “I feel you bro, I feel you” attempting to commiserate with his friend. As Kat leaves to check on their food, the camera focuses on Kwaito’s expression of distress as dramatic music culminates in the end of the scene.

As Kwaito describes the pressures he is facing as black tax, it is necessary to determine the different discourses which construct this idea in the South African context. In a collection of essays entitled ‘Black Tax: Burden or Ubuntu” Niq Mhlongo discusses the different perspectives on the idea of black tax, ranging from a familial financial obligation to the perspective that “black tax is an undeniable part of black culture and the African way of living according to the philosophy of ubuntu” (Mhlongo, 2019: 9).

Mhlongo interrogates how the concept of black tax has been viewed by some as an obligation that they are happy to fulfill, while others see it as burdensome and critique the notion of obligation, seeing it as a failure of the state to redress the inequalities of apartheid. Indeed, Mhlongo believes that “We need to investigate and politicise the historical roots of black tax by viewing it in the context of racialised, apartheid South Africa” (Mhlongo, 2019: 9).

Kwaito’s expression of bitterness and his reference to black tax as “the black child’s cross to bear” shows his resentment towards the concept as he frames it as solely based on his mother’s demands and decontextualises it from the failure of the state by saying “it is what it is”. The use of the phrase “cross to bear” points to Kwaito’s understanding of a failure to meet his mother’s demands with a heavy punishment, and a burden that he must carry with him for the rest of his life. While I do not argue against the difficulties faced by young black men and women in South Africa in caring and providing for their families, *Skeem Saam* implies that this burden stems from unreasonable demands and personal failures, and not from the failures of the state and legacy of apartheid, which have left rampant inequality that falls on the shoulders of younger black, working generations.

This scene also shows how the series depicts the idea of black tax as in tension with achieving masculinity for Kwaito and his peers. In this scene Kwaito enviously compares his situation to that of Kat’s and indicates that because of his obligation to his family, he has been “left behind”. The idea of being “left behind” on the journey from boyhood to manhood that the protagonists share, can be interrogated using Ratele’s discussion of South African masculinities through the lens of achieving masculinity through certain milestones with age. Ratele states: “While masculinity provokes males to do certain things in order to be a man, that is, a male cannot do much but wait until he reaches the age where society permits him to vote, attend initiation school, gain

employment, drive or marry. Here then a productive avenue of analyzing and mobilising African males opens up. The avenue appears from the combination of passive and active elements in masculinity. This combination indicates how males are both positioned and position themselves in becoming boys and men" (2008: 525).

Ratele points to the existence of a discourse which sees masculinity as defined through certain milestones. In this scene, Kwaito explains that his mother's demands for a double-storey house which he refers to as "black tax", are standing in the way of him getting a driver's license and keeping up with Kat. Again, *Skeem Saam* takes the concept of "black tax" a complex social phenomenon often seen as a result of the failure of the state towards rectifying inequality, and attributes this to what Kwaito deems as selfish demands from MaNtuli. While the series seemingly tries to interrogate the pressures faced by Kwaito, these pressures are once again seen as personal failure, and not in the context of the failure of the state, a consequence of the neoliberal agenda which underpins the national broadcaster's programming.

Discourses of masculinity that inform the representations of black South African men have historically been associated with socio-economic status, and in differing ways attempt to show the tensions and struggles within these discourses. *Skeem Saam's* protagonists draw heavily on the discourse described by Smit as the "benign patriarch" a caring and responsible father figure within the family. However, as this role has become increasingly associated with provision, *Skeem Saam* attempts to grapple with the legacy of apartheid and colonialism and shows how the anxieties that young men face in reconciling these roles. However, despite a nuanced show of anxiety and emotion in the masculine characters it puts forward that is often unseen in representations of young, black South African men, *Skeem Saam* simultaneously reinforces these masculine expectations by exemplifying a model of masculinity that follows a neo-liberal construct of hegemony.

Interactions within the broader Turfloop community also reinforce the relationship between successful masculinity, family status, and middle-class aspirations. In Turfloop seemingly the only way to be a successful man is to obtain a stable career, degree, and strive towards middle-class status. While Kwaito refers to this as a “burden” and “black tax” he also decontextualises his struggles from the socio-economic and political climate, and attributes this to demands from community and family. Ultimately, *Skeem Saam* reinforces the association between the masculine and financial provision, while depicting an inability to fulfill this role as the ultimate failure of manhood. Black Tax, then is also decontextualised and depicted as a burden enforced on men by the community, and not as a failure of the state to redress racial and class inequality.

Skeem Saam presents an ideal of the new man, stemming from the ideals of fatherhood and rooted in a human rights discourse of equality. In doing so, it provides a more positive model of manhood in its surface level signifiers. However, as Ratele states “young black men in urban South Africa have much to fear – from the violence of the state to the violence of other men, and the structural violence of poverty and exclusion (2016: 44)” A media representation of masculinity constructed around the idea that personal failure to provide for one’s family due to the inability to become a responsible man because of bad choices neglects the structural violence of poverty an exclusion that Ratele refers to. It completely decontextualises how masculinity is affected by historical inequalities. It provides a hegemonic masculinity that is mostly unattainable, privileging a manhood based on neoliberal success which *Skeem Saam* in turn links to successful masculinity within the family and the community.

Analysis: Transnational Business Masculinity and Complicit Hegemonies

Introducing the Johannesburg Context

While the representations of masculinity in Turfloop explored in the previous chapter situate masculinity within the domestic and familial space, the representations of manhood in Johannesburg differ almost entirely. The series foregrounds the urban location within the storyline with brief shots of the Sandton skyline. Sandton is an area in Johannesburg known for its "top-range hotels and restaurants as well as expensive and refined shopping malls" as well as being the location of several offices of major companies operating in South Africa (Bagnol et al., 2010). This strong visual signifier of an "upper-class district mainly visited by white and affluent black African people" (Bagnol et al., 2010: 286), locates Lehasa Maphosa as a wealthy, powerful upper-class businessman in one of South Africa's most important business hubs.

Lehasa Maphosa is a formidable business mogul who runs the trendy and popular Cafe Rovuwa in Sandton, Johannesburg. With Lehasa at the centre of the urban plotline, the action focuses on interactions between Maphosa and the employees of Cafe Rovuwa as well as the romantic relationship between Lehasa and the show's long-running villainess Nompumelelo, 'Lelo' Mthiyane. The subplot within my data set examines a conflict that arises between Lelo and Lehasa, and the subsequent gossip about their relationship among Lehasa's employees at Cafe Rovuwa.

Lelo tells Lehasa that she has fallen pregnant but he does not believe he is the father of her child. Instead, Lehasa thinks that Emkay, Lelo's good friend and a frequent patron of the Cafe is the father of Lelo's baby, and they have been having an affair. Lehasa approaches Fanie, a waiter at the cafe and computer savvy young man, to find proof of Lelo and Emkay's indiscretions online. Fanie and Emkay are good friends, but Fanie

helps Lehasa by tracking Emkay's cellphone to determine whether or not Emkay and Lelo have been spending time together.

While the masculinities in Turfloop are molded and discussed by family members and a tight-knit community with an underlying rivalry, the characters in Johannesburg are brought together only within the workplace. The employees at the cafe frequently engage in gossip about the status of Lelo and Lehasa's relationship as Lelo often visits the cafe and Lehasa often takes out his anger and frustration with Lelo on his employees. Lehasa is already known as a ruthless businessman at Cafe Rovuwa, but his frustration around his relationship difficulties sees him becoming more aggressive in his interactions. As gossip surrounding Lehasa and Lelo's relationship spreads, Lehasa begins to worry about how these rumours may affect his bottom line and complains that the gossip at the cafe is bad for business.

Further complications arise for Lelo and Lehasa when Nomalanga, Lelo's aunt, arrives in Johannesburg, summoned by Mfundo, Lelo's cousin and a waiter at the cafe. Nomalanga's arrival and her request that Lehasa take responsibility for Lelo's pregnancy and pay reparations to Lelo's family, are seen by Lehasa as an unwelcome nuisance. When Nomalanga finds out that Lelo is pregnant out of wedlock for the second time, she demands that Lehasa make reparations to the family as is culturally required. Lelo is anxious that her grandmother, the matriarch of the family, will find out about her pregnancy and that Nomalanga will have to raise another baby, as she is already raising Lelo's first daughter Nosi. Towards the end of this story arc, Lehasa overhears Lelo speaking to her aunt over the phone, crying about Lehasa's denial of her pregnancy. This scene sees Lehasa take pity on Lelo and they rekindle their relationship, as Lehasa embraces the role of fatherhood with enthusiasm albeit seeing the role of father as entirely based on material provision.

The following chapter seeks to unpack representations of masculinity in the urban Johannesburg setting with a focus on Lehasa Maphosa. My analysis will show how the themes of family, community and ideas of success as they relate to masculinity are played out in this context. Ultimately, although the representations between Turfloop and Johannesburg are different, the neoliberal capitalist ideologies that underpin them – and the notion of the father figure as the masculine ideal – are conflated, and one and the same.

Transnational Business Masculinity in the SA Media

As seen in Clowes' study of South African men in Drum, and the various studies that looked at cinematic representations of black South African men representations of black, South African men have long been shaped and influenced by globalised understandings and Western ideals of hegemonic masculinity. Clowes explains how historically, media representations often veered towards more Western understandings of masculinity. According to Clowes:

"Within a decade, urban black men were (like urban white men) constructed as autonomous and isolated individuals, having little or no emotional or physical legacies from—or attachments to—parents, grandparents, siblings, children, or even wives. Instead of parents, children, and wives, significant others for men were narrowly constructed as (male) bosses, colleagues, and opponents" (2005:100).

Thus, the more "modern" man of the 1960s was constructed as largely self-made in the pages of *Drum* and removed any familial structure. Clowes attributes this to writers in *Drum* embracing a more "modern" narrative of writing that treated men as "isolated, autonomous, and independent of women and children" (2005:100). Accordingly, the globalised, individualistic, male figure appeared in South African representations as early as the 1960s, with this representation being associated with Western values and ideals. Clowes's description refers to images of men in *Drum* in the 1960s, however this

description still holds true for Lehasa's masculinity on Skeem Saam contrasted with the more caring, young male figures in Turfloop. As seen in the character of Lehasa Maphosa, this autonomous, business-savvy masculinity – instead of the Western discourses that Clowes refers to as usurping ideals of fatherhood – has echoed the transformation described by Clowes above.

Lehasa's Neoliberal Transnational Business Masculinity

In the introduction to *Liberating Masculinities,* Ratele explains that a white heteropatriarchal masculinity can be considered *the* hegemonic form of masculinity in the South African context. Accordingly, this hegemony is that of "rich, white men living in the centre of the Western world" (2016:12). To expand on this, Connell's writings on masculinities and globalisation also describe a global hegemonic masculinity that transcends local hegemonies. According to Connell, "the hegemonic form of masculinity in the current world gender order is associated with those who control its dominant institutions: the business executives who operate in global markets and the political executives who interact (and in many contexts) merge with them." (1998: 16).

Connell refers to this overarching hegemonic masculinity as transnational business masculinity. Connell describes this masculinity as being characterised by "increasing egocentrism, very conditional loyalties (even to the corporation) and a declining sense of responsibility for others (except for purposes of image making)" (1998: 16). While Kwaito's masculinity is strongly rooted in familial relationships and ideals, Lehasa's is centred on his dedication to his business dealings, his individualism and his egocentrism. His masculinity is strongly informed by Connell's transnational business masculinity described above. Although he is a black, South African man from Limpopo, his masculinity is more akin to Ratele's description of overarching hegemony. Such a masculinity does not seem to share any of the caring masculine traits outlined in the previous chapter.

SABC Education's website describes Lehasa's character as "a sly businessman the fans love to hate" and "the type of character who isn't scared to go after what he wants". His handsome face is either emotionless or wearing a deep frown. He is most often seen at Cafe Rovuwa seated behind his laptop where he conducts business meetings but rarely makes friendly or polite conversation with his colleagues and those in his surrounds. When we do see him in his apartment, his well-dressed well-built physique clutches a leather briefcase and he is always on his way out. He has a reputation as a slightly dubious, formidable figure in both Johannesburg and Polokwane where he frequently makes trips to conduct business. His expensive suits and the briefcase constantly in his grasp serve as visual signifiers of Lehasa's wealthy, professional persona.

While the men in Turfloop show caring displays of emotion towards their families and romantic partners, Leahsa's partnership with Lelo stands in stark contrast. At the beginning of my chosen data set, in episode 167, Lehasa kicks Lelo out of their shared apartment because of her suspected indiscretions. An imposing figure, Lehasa stands over Lelo, dressed in an expensive-looking, well-tailored suit. With one hand on Lelo's packed suitcase, Lehasa, brings his hand to his chin pensively and says in a flat tone, "Lelo, letting you go isn't easy, but it's for the best". Lehasa's figure, towering over Lelo shows no indication of any intimacy and his body language, nonchalant and impersonal, is indicative of his general approach towards displays of emotion or intimacy.

There is no care or show of emotion for Lelo, his romantic partner, but he addresses her as if he is addressing an employee: Lelo sits, symbolically looking up at him from the couch, and mirroring the dynamics of their unequal relationship. He is stone-cold and his use of the phrase "letting you go" as if he is terminating her employment, is embedded in his character in both private and public spaces, reminiscent of the individualistic masculinity discussed above. The scene, which takes place in the

domestic setting, does not contain any of the signifiers of domesticity seen in Turfloop: a homely kitchen and extended family. Lehasa's positioning over and physical separation from Lelo in the shot is far from the intimate and cosy setting in which Kwaito and his family discuss their problems, equally seated around the table.

Lehasa's trendy Sandton apartment can also be seen to mirror his detached and impersonal persona. The space is always impeccably neat, decorated with ornate decor but with an air of rigidity that makes the apartment seem like a hotel room. There are no personal items or homely touches to Lehasa's apartment, but monochrome expensive-looking finishings. The kitchenware is neatly displayed, and hardly used as if stylised for an interior decor spread. This home, in contrast to the more cosy, lived-in spaces in Turfloop, appears to be more of a symbol of wealth and status, than a living space.

"Schwarzenegger, Hyena, Abuser": The Masculine Hierarchy in Johannesburg

While exemplars of masculinity upheld in the Turfloop community are based on the constitutional ideal of manhood and influenced by discourses of the father figure, there is no sense of community in Johannesburg. This structure is replaced by a clear hierarchy of masculinities. This sees Lehasa at the top with the other male characters in the setting subordinated to his transnational business masculinity, but still complicit in how they condone Lehasa's aggressive patriarchal behavior.

Lehasa's business-focused persona is accompanied by an aggression that earns him a formidable reputation among his employees. This can be observed closely in his interactions with employees at Cafe Rovuwa, particularly the young, black men who work as wait staff and their contemporaries, such as Emkay, who visit the cafe. He treats the young men at the cafe unkindly, addressing them as "boy" and speaks to them in harsh tones with little patience, often leaving their responses unacknowledged.

The use of the term “boy” with reference to his employees is an important signifier in the South African context. Throughout apartheid, black South African men were called “boys” as a symbolic means to “justify political domination by designating Africans as a race of children” (Suttner, 2007: 197). The use of the term boy does not only imply that Lehasa sees his employees’ masculinity as subordinated to his own. It links Lehasa’s masculinity with a historical understanding of the masculine hierarchy associated with whiteness at a time when black men were subordinated. Lehasa’s aggression and treatment of his employees sees him distance himself entirely from the men in his surrounds. While signifiers of his wealth, such as his expensive suits serve to visually separate him from the other men around him, his aggressive tone and body language set up a dynamic in which Lehasa sees himself as vastly superior to the other men at Cafe Rovuwa. This points to a separation of the globalised transnational business masculinity from so called “unskilled labour” such as that of the wait staff and managers at the cafe.

Although he is respected by his employees to his face, the young, black men who interact with Lehasa call out his aggression and intimidating masculinity behind his back. This is notable as Lehasa still remains feared and respected, showing the value placed on his wealth and business acumen by the other male characters. These elements of his masculinity alone are integral to maintaining his hegemony within the space. While the other characters reject Lehasa’s violence and aggression behind his back, this aggression is forgiven or simply glossed over as other male characters do not object to it or confront it.

There are multiple scenes in which the other male characters in Johannesburg show that they are aware of Lehasa’s aggression. In episode 168 Mfundo says to Lelo: “Why are you staying with this abuser?”. In episode 178, Mfundo calls Lehasa a hyena when he is trying to convince Lelo to leave him. In episode 174, Emkay refers to Lehasa as “terminator” in a conversation with Lelo about her partner. In a conversation over the

bar, Fanie tries to earn back Emkay's trust and says: "for the record I know you're not the father. I knew you'd prove Schwarzenegger wrong" later adding "Emkay, I don't have all the details but I don't blame Schwarzenegger for wanting to ditch Mthiyane."

References to Lehasa as "terminator" and "Schwarzenegger" are important signifiers in how the other men perceive Lehasa's masculinity. Messner discusses how this popular masculine figure embodies the archetypal traits including authority, control, independence, competitive individualism, aggressiveness, and the capacity for violence,"(Messner, 2007: 465) of the ideal Western man at the time. Calling Lehasa "Terminator" and "Schwarzenegger" in a mocking way also serves to distance the other men from this more aggressive, globalized masculinity.

Messner argues that "What makes this masculinity hegemonic is not simply powerful men's displays of power but also, crucially, less powerful men's (and many women's) consent and complicity with the institutions, social practices, and symbols that ensure some men's privileges (2004:463)." This can be seen as the young men working at the cafe seemingly mock Lehasa's Schwarzenegger-esque persona among one another and when speaking to Lelo, however these critiques do not reflect their behaviour and Lehasa's aggressive hegemony remains unchallenged and accepted.

A more apparent example of the complicit masculinity displayed by the other male characters can be seen in episode 176. Lelo and Emkay walk into the cafe, and sit down at Lehasa's table accompanied by a tense soundtrack, which increases in pace as the two approach the table. Lelo folds her arms, glaring at Lehasa, and tells him that her and Emkay have had a lengthy discussion and decided to meet with Lehasa. After a discussion in which Emkay clarifies that he is not the father of Lelo's baby, an interaction between the two men shows that while Emkay acknowledges and mocks Lehasa's overt masculinity with other men, he still displays complicit masculinity. With his arms folded across his chest, Lehasa addresses Emkay in isiZulu saying "Listen, boy I'm sorry I put

you in such a difficult position. I just haven't been myself lately". Emkay acknowledges him and says "understood". Lehasa continues, "Just do me a favour and stop coming to my apartment." The camera focuses on Lelo, whose eyes narrow at this request. She objects, saying "Lehasa, I live there too." Despite Lelo's protests the two men do not acknowledge her. Emkay reaches across the table, says "it's a deal", and shakes Lehasa's hand.

According to Connell and Messerschmidt, complicit masculinity is displayed by men who "received the benefits of patriarchy without enacting a strong version of masculine dominance" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 832). Connell and Messerschmidt argue that the concept of hegemony was most powerful in relation to this group of men and heterosexual women. Although Lelo is Emkay's friend, Emkay chooses to acquiesce to Lehasa's patriarchal claim of ownership over Lelo's choices. Once again, the scene is set up like one of Lehasa's business meetings, as him and Emkay grasp hands over the table. Emkay's acknowledgement of Lehasa's abusive behaviour behind Lehasa's back while giving Lehasa his full show of support and respect in person perfectly encapsulates a complicit hegemony. It also serves to show how the other men position their own masculinity as subordinate to Lehasa's, while still remaining complicit.

This complicity is also notable in the relationship between Fanie and Lehasa. In episode 173 Lehasa employs Fanie secretly to hack into Lelo's Facebook account and impersonate her to set up a date with Emkay as a trap. Fanie's interactions with Lehasa show Fanie's fear of Lehasa in tension with his desire to gain Lehasa's approval. When Fanie manages to crack Lelo's passwords and shares them with Lehasa, Fanie says to his boss "Her password is the same for all of her social media accounts". Lehasa snorts and asks "who does that?" to which Fanie, smirking, responds "Lazy people" and muses that Lelo must use the same password for her online banking. When Lehasa laughs and snidely mentions that any hackers would be wasting their time as Lelo is broke, Fanie laughs and says "so much shade boss". Fanie sits across the table from Lehasa and his

eyes light up at this exchange. He is seemingly ecstatic that he is sharing a personal joke with Lehasa, and smugly grinning at the momentary bond that it implies.

Nevertheless, the series depicts a tension between Fanie's friendship with Emkay and his relationship with Lehasa. Fanie anxiously appeases Lehasa's wishes by hacking into Lelo's accounts and tracing Emkay's cellphone, and updates him nervously as if seeking his approval. Yet in episode 174, Fanie seemingly has a change of heart. Tense, fast-paced music starts to build as, turning away from his laptop and Lehasa's task, Fanie calls Emkay. There is a tight shot of Fanie as Emkay answers his phone with a friendly "Hey Slender!" Fanie smiles and responds "Hey Spear! How are you?" before telling Emkay that he needs to meet with him and Lelo as soon as possible. While Fanie speaks to Emkay the camera shifts focus between him and Lehasa, who is standing at the bar talking to Sifiso. This scene highlights Fanie's dilemma as he is torn between his loyalty to his close friend, and his duty to Lehasa.

Later, Fanie is sitting opposite Lelo and Emkay in Lelo and Lehasa's apartment. He confronts them with the evidence that they were together for a night when Lehasa went to Polokwane, and he asks Emkay if he is the father of Lelo's child. Lelo angrily confronts Fanie, saying "What the hell? Are you spying on us? You're a piece of trash." She continues "you think that doing Lehasa's dirty work makes you a man? Are you that desperate for his validation?". Fanie exclaims "whoa! Mthiyane. I came here to help you." before getting up and leaving the apartment angrily. Later in the same episode, Fanie sits down at a table at the cafe, sighing and putting his head in his hands. There is a menacing soundtrack building, accompanied by Lelo's words as they replay in Fanie's head. "You're a piece of trash. You think that doing Lehasa's dirty work makes you a man? Are you that desperate for his validation?". Fanie shakes his head as if to rid himself of the thought and leans back in his chair.

This scene emphasises Fanie's moral dilemma: he reflects on the idea of Lehasa's validation being equated with successful masculinity. Lelo's words reflect a difference in understanding between a masculinity that is earned through Lehasa's validation, and a loyalty to Fanie's friendship with Emkay. The complicit hegemony displayed by the other male characters including Fanie, Emkay and Mfundo in allowing Lehasa's hegemony to go unchallenged, is not overtly problematised by the series but ultimately ignored.

Chef Francois: Signifying Whiteness and Acceptable Masculinity

Apart from his relationship with Lelo, Lehasa is portrayed as isolated and autonomous like Clowe's description of a more Western-influenced masculinity above. While he is aggressive and confrontational in his interactions with his employees at the cafe, he makes an exception for the chef of the restaurant, his only white employee Chef Francois. The depiction of the relationship between the two men is notable as Francois is treated by Lehasa as a friend and equal. Francois is also privy to the details of Lehasa's personal life and relationship with Lelo, implying a bond and level of trust that Lehasa shares with none of the other characters.

In episode 170, when Lehasa is working late at the cafe one evening, Francois approaches him and gingerly says "Is everything okay boss? I don't mean to pry it's just you've been sitting here for a long time." Sighing, Lehasa responds to Francois, and begins to share details about his problems about Lelo. Francois tentatively sits down opposite Lehasa a symbol of his acceptance on Lehasa's part as the other employees of the restaurant always hover nervously around his table, waiting for an invitation. Lehasa's aggressive barking tone is replaced by a softer, more conversational way of addressing the chef. The scene is notably less tense because of these factors, implying an automatic acceptance of Chef Francois by Lehasa.

A particularly significant exchange sees Lehasa across the table and ask "Do you have a girlfriend Francois?" to which the chef responds "Yes, in Polokwane. We're quite tight".

In what can be observed, due to Lehasa's softened tone and the content of the dialogue, as a display of friendship, Lehasa offers Francois some advice, saying "You must be careful man. Women are very...complicated." The discussion turns to marriage as the camera moves closer into Lehasa's expression providing a more intimate shot. In another rare moment of intimacy, Lehasa tells Francois that he's still in love with Lelo.

A later scene shows the men sitting together at a table after the restaurant has closed. Both are clasping glasses of whiskey, as they discuss Lehasa's relationship difficulties. The sharing of a drink in this scene also further signifies a more equal relationship between the chef and Lehasa. The camera focuses on Lehasa, who gives a rare smile and says "you have no idea how glad I am to have someone to offload to." Francois chuckles and responds "don't go all soapy on me now. I'm definitely no Dr Phil."

Francois' response is also notable as he dismisses this small display of emotion by Lehasa. They laugh together as if both recognising that Lehasa's actions are worthy of a joke between the two men. The display of care and friendship is thus seen as something to be laughed at coming from a man like Lehasa. These exchanges see Francois as exempt from Lehasa's usual distant and intimidating persona and stands in stark contrast with Lehasa's belittling and dismissal of his other employees.

This marks the beginning of a series of scenes showing a friendship developing between Francois and Lehasa. Lehasa's relationship with Francois is significant in two ways. The first is to establish the hierarchy of masculinities within the urban setting according to race. Lehasa sees Francois, his only white employee, as an equal, someone he can relate to and speak openly to, and someone whose opinion he values and shows some concern for Francois' personal life although this friendship is forged over speaking about "their" women. As Francois' race and skill level as a qualified chef are the only distinguishing factors from Lehasa's other employees (who, when inquiring

about him and Lelo's relationship are chastised by Lehasa for gossiping) the implication is that Francois is more respected by Lehasa, as he is deemed a friend and equal.

In a setting where transnational, neoliberal business masculinity is deemed the most acceptable way of being a man, Francois is welcomed as he is a skilled labourer and a white man. Their bonding, however, is constructed as more acceptably masculine as displays of emotion are accompanied by jokes which diminish these displays, and signifiers, such as the sharing of a whiskey, which connote a more hegemonically stereotypically masculine relationship and friendship. The choice of drink shared by the two men is also a significant signifier of their masculine relationship: whiskey is often associated with consumerism and seen as a symbol of luxury and wealth in the South African context (Iqani, 2019), further entrenching the association between hegemonic masculinity and consumerism.

In episode 172, when Lehasa has just reprimanded the wait staff for gossiping about his private life, Francois approaches Lehasa's table again. Sitting opposite Lehasa, Francois asks him if everything is okay. Lehasa responds wearily with a slight smirk, "don't pretend you don't know people here are gossiping about me", to which Francois responds: "You know I don't pay attention to the gossip." With this reassurance, Lehasa tells Francois about his difficulties with Nomalanga, Lelo's aunt, as she "expects [him] to take care of Lelo until she gives birth". Lehasa continues "My question is, what if this child is not mine? I can't be expected to take care of another man's woman and child".

Lesejane's ideals of fatherhood which speak to the representations of masculinity in Turfloop, see the father figure as not only a biological father, but a responsibility that extends beyond the biological family to the community. Lehasa's statement about caring for "another man's woman and child" indicates an ideal of fatherhood far removed from the "benign patriarch model" and more interested in biological family than community. Like Clowes' observations about the influences of more Western conceptions of

fatherhood, Lehasa's understanding of fatherhood can also be seen as more isolated, autonomous and aspiring to a globalised, individualistic masculinity.

Lehasa ends the conversation with a comment that further cements Francois' position in the masculine hierarchy of the setting. Lehasa, narrowing his eyes and glancing over his shoulder, with sinister music building in the background, says "maybe it's also time I got some HR specialists to teach my employees a lesson. All this gossiping could affect my bottom line and I can't have that." Francois nods, not quite meeting Lehasa's eye. Lehasa's disdain for personal information being shared in the workplace does not extend to Francois, who he deems an equal and a friend. Seemingly, the only thing separating him from the rest of the restaurant staff is his whiteness and his job and his position as a chef. The implication is that these factors exempt him from the status of "employee". While the waitstaff are depicted as "boys" and a nuisance to Lehasa, Francois is elevated in his proximity to Lehasa's masculinity.

The second way in which this friendship is significant is the way in which the representation of Lehasa's discussions with Francois seem to justify his aggressive displays of patriarchy towards Lelo. In episode 176, Francois, having finished his shift, approaches Lehasa's table again, this time saying to Lehasa "Boss, please don't put me in an uncomfortable position by bawling your eyes out". Lehasa laughs uproariously and then responds "I needed that man. Thank you." Again, Francois sits down opposite Lehasa as Lehasa talks openly to him about his relationship with Lelo. Lehasa says "You know, Sifiso warned me about Lelo. Many People did. But I somehow thought I could be her hero." Lehasa adds "how can somebody who's committed such atrocities be a good mother to my child? Francois with a concerned but steady tone says to Lehasa "I seriously think you should go and talk to someone before you sink into a depression", which Lehasa ignores. After Francois asks again if Lehasa is okay, Lehasa smirks saying "I'm a big boy. I'll be fine. Thanks for listening".

Here, Francois seems to be acknowledging the damaging masculine ideal in which macho men distance themselves from emotion. Though the *Skeem Saam* is referencing this damaging, emotionless masculine ideal and referencing Lehasa's mental health through Francois' use of the term "depression" this attempt falls flat in its inability to fully unpack and challenge the link between "manliness" and poor mental health. Ultimately, Lehasa's response of "I'm a big boy. I'll be fine" further entrenches the idea that men should not display their emotions through a subtle reference to the common saying that "big boys don't cry".

Francois' character seems to subtly challenge Lehasa's hegemonic masculinity by pointing overtly to its flaws, without receiving the same treatment as Lehasa's other employees. This emphasises how the gendered hierarchy, particularly in this setting is complicated by race, class and the value placed on employment as it relates to hegemonic masculinity. As the findings of my literature review state, the overwhelming majority of media representations favour a white, middle class urban masculinity. Within the gendered hierarchy of cafe Rovuwa, this is once again subtly reinforced in Lehasa's friendship with Chef Francois. His whiteness is never explicitly stated as setting him apart from the other male characters but his whiteness and status as chef are seemingly the only factors exempting him from Lehasa's vitriol.

Familial Expectations as an Interference

While family is an important part of manhood in Turfloop, Lehasa rejects any familial involvement in his relationship with Lelo, implying that this interference is akin to treating him like a child. Lelo's aunt Nomalanga visits Lelo and Lehasa apartment in Sandton from Matsulu, as Mfundo expresses his concern to her over Lelo's relationship. Nomalanga, who lives in Limpopo with Lelo's grandmother, the matriarch of the family and her extended family, could be said to represent the notion of extended family in the urban context. The ways in which Lehasa relates to Nomalanga in this context provides

some insight into how Lehasa relates the concept of masculinity to familial obligation and duty, a notion which young men in Turfloop consider integral to the masculine ideal.

In episode 168, Nomalanga's dramatic arrival is accompanied by a fast-paced, soundtrack and a shot focused on Lelo and Lehasa's shocked expressions. As she enters the open plan kitchen in Lehasa's apartment, she stands, hovering uncomfortably. Her appearance in the apartment is depicted as tense and uncomfortable through her awkward body language and positioning at the edge of the shot. Her arrival creates a cliffhanger for the next episode. She is not greeted with the warmth that is often seen between family members in Turfloop. Against the cold and unwelcoming tidiness of Lehasa's kitchen she seems out of place.

Episode 169 sees Nomalanga apologising for her unannounced arrival. She sits on Lehasa's couch, clasping a mug of tea still not quite at home and uneasy in her surroundings., Nomalanga says to Lehasa in isiZulu "I know me being here makes you guys uneasy. I'm uneasy too. You and Nompumelelo are still dating. You're not married yet. So I have no business meddling in your affairs". Lehasa does not overtly object to her presence but his body language is visibly uneasy as he busies himself with his briefcase and turns away. Frowning and avoiding eye contact with Nomalanga, Lehasa prepares to leave for work. Nomalanga adds "You know what my child? As soon as I've sorted out all the issues that have brought me here I'll pack my bags and go back to Matsulu". Then, pointing at the passage to the bedroom behind her, Nomalanga frowns and asks Lehasa what Nompumelelo is still doing in bed. With annoyance, Nomalanga exclaims "Is she still sleeping? No way. No woman should sleep this late." Lehasa, focused on fastening his briefcase, responds "Well as you can see she's a city girl."

This scene is notable in how it positions Nomalanga's role within the space. She positions her visit as a necessary means to resolve Lelo and Lehasa's issues, but states that she is uneasy meddling in their affairs as they are not married yet. This implies that

Lelo and Lehasa are expected by her family to get married, after which “meddling in [their] affairs" will be expected. Nomalanga’s sees Lelo sleeping late as going against a gendered expectation of a woman’s role in the home. Lehasa’s response that she is a “city girl” implies a dichotomy between gendered expectations in Limpopo and the more urban setting of Johannesburg. This interaction is a small example of the differing understandings of what it means to be masculine and feminine between Lehasa and Lelo, and Lelo’s aunt Nomalanga.

Lehasa is greatly troubled by Nomalanga’s presence. When Nomalanga finds out about Lelo’s pregnancy she is furious that Lelo has fallen pregnant out of wedlock, and encourages Lehasa to provide and care for Lelo until she gives birth and a DNA test can be performed to determine the child’s paternity. Once Lehasa assures her begrudgingly that he will do his best, Nomalanga returns home. It is important to note that Lehasa, although courteous and respectful to Nomalanga to her face, expresses his anger toward her interference to Francois.

While Nomalanga sees it as her duty to intervene in their relationship, Lehasa sees it as an unnecessary burden. The hegemonic masculinity depicted in Johannesburg is not one rooted in the familial masculine ideal of the father figure, like it is in Turfloop. It is characterised by a rejection of familial duty as an unwelcome burden, once again reminiscent of Clowes’ more Western ideal of manhood discussed above.

This is made clearer in later episodes, in which Lehasa sees Nomalanga’s interference as infantilising him. Episode 178 sees Lelo telling Lehasa that he should marry her so that she feels secure, as the father of her first child dragged his feet. Lehasa refuses and remarks that he will not be held responsible for another man’s mistakes. In episode 179, Lelo tells him that she has given up on the idea of marriage as she “will not succumb to family pressure”. At this Lehasa pauses on his way out to work, frowning

and turning to face Lelo, who is sitting at the table having breakfast. He asks “what family pressure?” but Lelo dismisses him.

Later, in a phone call between Lelo and Nomalanga, the details of the “family pressure” to which Lelo referred are revealed. Lelo tells Nomalanga that her and Lehasa are doing better, to which Nomalanga responds “Good so now he’ll come and do the right thing”. Lelo frowns and asks “the right thing?”. Nomalanga says “Yes, the damages.” with a tone that implies this should be obvious to Lelo. Sitting down on the couch, Nomalanga slowly and patiently says “My child, it’s your culture. If he doesn’t tell his family, then I’ll send our people to inform them.” Nomalanga emphasises her points with firm hand gestures, emphasising the inevitability and importance of this culturally-expected process. Lelo refuses to accept this and tells her aunt that she will not be subject to any more embarrassment. This conversation further distances what are deemed “cultural expectations” by Nomalanga, from the urban setting, as they are seen by Lelo as an embarrassment, but seen by Nomalanga as an unquestioned expectation.

Lehasa’s reactions to these expectations depicts them as counter to his masculinity as they are seen by Lehasa to be condescending. This can be seen throughout numerous episodes, as Lehasa interacts with Nomalanga and navigates Lelo’s family’s demands. In episode 180 Nomalanga calls Lehasa to tell him how pleased she is that he and Lelo have resolved their argument. Although he does not speak with warmth or affection, but his usual business-like tone, Lehasa tells her that he’s pleased she got involved and she responds “I’m glad I did Lehasa”, before continuing “But, my child, we need to talk about something. I think now’s the right time for you to pay your dues to the Mthiyane family. Gogo’s gravely disappointed by all of this.” As Nomalanga’s voice is heard over the phone, the camera is focused on Lehasa, as he narrows his eyes, a tense soundtrack building, culminating in Lehasa’s disapproving scoff and a shake of his head. He is clearly in objection to Nomalanga’s demands, although he says nothing.

Later, he enters the apartment, slamming the door behind him and aggressively confronting Lelo about the phone call. Lehasa exclaims “Your family wants me to do right by you. What does that even mean?”. When Lelo explains that her grandmother is not pleased about her pregnancy, Lehasa pauses, scowling and says “I don’t want our relationship under a microscope again” adding “ I don’t want people interfering”. The use of the word “interfering” echoes Nomalanga’s earlier hesitations about interfering in their relationship, as Lehasa and Lelo are not married. These exchanges once again reveal an incompatibility – between Lehasa’s idea of gendered familial norms and Nomalanga’s.

In episode 181 we see Lehasa and Lelo waking up next to one another and reflecting on the enjoyable weekend they spent together. The scene is one of romantic bliss until Lelo mentions her family and their understanding of Lelo and Lehasa’s relationship. When Lelo tells Lehasa that her family wanted to speak to his, there is an instant shift in the mood of the scene. The familiar suspenseful music, indicating tension starts up and Lehasa shakes his head and scowls. “You see now? I refuse to be treated like some schoolboy. I can handle my own business”. Lehasa’s reaction to Lelo’s familial expectations imply a sharp divide the understanding of familial obligation between Lehasa and Lelo’s family. Lehasa’s use of the term “schoolboy” with such a derisive tone implies that this cultural expectation is belittling and prevents him from “handling his business”.

As previously discussed, Lehasa’s “business” is something that he takes seriously and is integral to the construction of masculinity. It can be argued that these cultural expectations are deemed as contradictory to the construction of urban masculinities. Lehasa sets up his neoliberal, transnational business masculinity as entirely autonomous from any familial obligations, relegating them to the status of boyhood and separating them from his ideals of successful masculinity.

Lehasa vehemently objects to Lelo's family and cultural expectations, implying that this interference is condescending and, with the use of terms such as "schoolboy", unmasculine. In the South African context, the Lehasa's rejection of the familial and the responsibilities that come with fatherhood, have broader implications. Morrell (2007) looks at more contemporary understandings of the discourse of fatherhood and how it relates to masculinity in different South African contexts. Undertaking interviews with a variety of young men from the more urban middle class, to those living in townships, close to the poverty line, Morrell concluded that, for those young men living in the townships "in a way, fatherhood is synonymous with manhood and fatherhood is the primary signifier of masculinity because other signifiers (for example work) are not immediately available)" (2007:90).

Morrell emphasises that it is important to understand fatherhood through the prism of the unequal effects of globalisation, situating the concept of fatherhood within the broader context of inequality. Unlike the young men in Turfloop, Lehasa's statements directly oppose this association and his attitude toward fatherhood restructures the role to encompass a more neoliberal understanding of what it means to be a father, based entirely on provision. This further removes masculinities in both the Johannesburg and Turfloop settings from a social context in which fatherhood and masculinity are inextricably linked and will be further explored in the following section.

Incorporating Fatherhood into Neoliberal Hegemony

According to Messner "Hegemonic masculinity is hegemonic to the extent that it succeeds, at least temporarily, in serving as a symbolic nexus around which a significant level of public consent coalesces. But as with all moments of hegemony, this consent is situational, always potentially unstable, existing in a dynamic tension with opposition" (2007: 462). Here, Messner is describing how a popular American media trope of the macho action hero, began to shift towards incorporating elements of emotion and care towards women and children in order to retain its hegemony. I argue

that the same is true for Lehasa's character, whose aggressive persona was already ridiculed by other male characters behind his back, follows the transformation described above, although with a slightly different trajectory.

An integral shift in Lehasa's representation of masculinity is marked in episode 177. Lelo phones Nomalanga to express her distress that Lehasa might leave her with a child as her first partner did. A close up shot shows tears streaming from Lelo's eyes as she admits to her aunt that she cannot return home to Matsulu as she will be embarrassed. Lelo wears her pajamas and a silk cap over her hair, a contrast to her usual trendy attire giving the scene an air of vulnerability. Sobbing, Lelo says to Nomalanga "Mangaliso left me with a child, and now I am scared that Lehasa is going to do the same". As Lelo puts down the phone there is a pause as the camera pans to the door showing Lehasa standing in the open doorway. There is a swell of hopeful music as the camera settles on Lehasa's bewildered, somewhat ashamed expression.

The scene seems to emphasise an emotional connection as the camera goes between Lelo's tear-stained face, and Lehasa's wide-eyed shame. Neither of them acknowledge what Lehasa has just witnessed, as he mutters that he has forgotten something and walks somewhat awkwardly across the apartment to retrieve it. The scene is set up to show that Lehasa witnessing this moment of vulnerability holds significance. This scene marks a shift from the cold and aggressive exchanges between the couple, and is also a significant break from Lehasa's usually detached demeanour.

A romantic, emotional scene at the end of episode 177 culminates in Lehasa and Lelo's reconciliation. Lehasa returns from work to Lelo reading on the couch. With narrowed eyes she says "What? Have your drinking buddies ditched you? You usually come home at 12 am." Lehasa looks down sheepishly, hunching his shoulders slightly as if to seem smaller. As he tells Lelo that he no longer wants her to leave the apartment, a soft piano soundtrack starts up and Lehasa crosses the room to sit next to Lelo on the

couch. Lehasa, still not making eye contact with Lelo says “I’m sorry for my behaviour lately. I don’t want you to go back home and be humiliated.” He takes Lelo’s hand and looks her in the eyes, continuing “I am not Mangaliso. I’m the guy that’s deeply in love with you”, before telling her how beautiful she looks with her “pregnancy glow”. He leans toward her and they kiss lovingly as the music crescendos.

From this point, Lehasa’s character shifts and scenes focus on him becoming the “ideal” partner and father. However, the role of the father figure that Lehasa steps into is not that of the caring figure seen in Turfloop, but seems to mirror his attitude towards individualism and ownership that he takes towards his business. From the following scenes, we see that Lehasa’s attitude towards fatherhood is rooted entirely in provision and ownership of both Lelo and the baby. It is important to note that the catalyst for Lehasa’s change was not only seeing Lelo emotionally vulnerable, but witnessing Lelo compare him to her previous partner and absent father Mangaliso.

In discussing the attributes of the neoliberal entrepreneur to which Lehasa can be compared, Connel points to competitiveness as a key component of this masculinity. When Lehasa attempts to rectify his wrongdoings, he says to Lelo that he is “not Mangaliso”. From this we see that, although Lelo’s show of vulnerability was a key turning point in Lehasa’s attitude, Lelo’s comparison of him to Mangaliso is what fuelled his desire to embrace fatherhood.

Episode 178 opens with Lehasa laying out a beautifully-prepared breakfast, wearing an apron and grinning as Lelo enters the living area wearing only a button down shirt, and exclaims jokingly “Wow my own personal chef!”. Lehasa bows and says “at your service ma’am” before laughing and affectionately touching Lelo’s cheek. The couple, having reconciled, sit together at the kitchen table and share a meal. Lehasa, sitting opposite Lelo, puts a hand thoughtfully to his chin and muses “I’ll be honest. Pregnancy was not on my to-do list. But who am I to fight fate? I might as well enjoy the ride.” Lelo frowns at

this comment. Again, we see Lehasa's attitude towards fatherhood and family mirroring the running of his business as he compares the role to something that must be ticked off his to-do list.

Lehasa's character continues to show a shift from a rejection of fatherhood towards an embrace of a more neoliberal version of the father figure. Lehasa's understanding of fatherhood rooted in ownership and provision is made particularly clear in episode 179. Lehasa returns from work, one arm clutching his briefcase and the other clasping a large bouquet of flowers. When he enters the apartment Lehasa calls out "honey, I'm home!" a loving tone and choice of phrase, reminiscent of a loving husband returning to his nuclear family, and a departure from his previously sullen and isolated character. When he cannot find Lelo in the apartment Lehasa sits on the couch, and leaves a message on Lelo's answering machine. A close up shot sees Lehasa putting his phone down on a piece of paper, hidden under one of the couch cushions. Frowning, Lehasa picks up the flyer and examines it closely. A full-screen shot of the flyer shows its bold heading clearly: "Abortion Clinic". Underneath the heading, the smaller print reads: "Safe and Pain-free – free body and blood detoxification. You can live independently. You can resume your career." A tense, fast-paced soundtrack builds as the camera shows Lehasa's angry and confused expression. He mutters to himself "what?", as the scene ends with his mouth agape, still holding the flyer.

Later in the episode the scene resumes, with Lehasa pacing his apartment back and forth on his cellphone, his hardened demeanour returned. He says with anger and urgency: "Hi is this the abortion clinic?". There is a pause. "Right I need to know if Nompumelelo Mthiyane made an appointment with you". When he is refused the information due to client confidentiality, Lehasa's anger escalates as he shouts: "do you know who I am? I've got a lot of time and money on my hands. If you kill my baby, I'll shut your clinic down". The series positions this scene as Lelo trying to manipulate Lehasa into marriage. When she returns to the apartment she explains that if she has

another child unwed she will be ridiculed in her community and become a disgrace to her family.

It is Lehasa's reaction to this, however, that is most important to my argument. This scene shows Lehasa chanelling his aggression towards compassion for his family, as he makes an overt display of his threatening wealth to the abortion clinic that might harm "his baby". This not only implies that Lehasa's wealth allows him to exert control and ownership over Lelo's body but also sets Lehasa's actions up as that of a caring and loving father while demonising Lelo.

Ultimately the series sees fatherhood and dedication to family as the most important masculine role to fulfill. Lehasa is not the perfect father figure, but his acceptance of this role softens his aggressive persona thereby obfuscating his transnational, neoliberal business masculinity. Although his embrace of family and fatherhood is worked into his business-focused persona, he is nonetheless redeemed. He still does not embrace the cultural expectations voiced by Nomalanga but steps into a version of this role as financial provider.

Lehasa's entrepreneurialism "increasingly detached from local gender orders, does not valorize the family or the husband/father position for men"(Connell, 2005: 256). Like Messner's description of the shift from emotionless macho trope above and Clowes' discussion of a shift from family man to isolated and autonomous provider, Lehasa's representation of masculinity shifts to incorporate an understanding of fatherhood that mirrors a more neoliberal idea of family, focusing solely on provision.

Although there are attempts to problematize Lehasa's globalised, aggressive masculine persona through the other male characters calling it out behind his back, ultimately his acceptance of fatherhood – albeit in a way that mirrors this business-like persona – integrates his hegemonic masculinity with a more acceptable, caring, masculinity. This

is due, at least partially, to his transformation which mirrors the Schwarzenegger trope, and in comparing his masculinity with the masculine ideal espoused in Turfloop. He is successful in business, wealthy and willing to provide for his family. While on the surface, the masculinities represented in Johannesburg differ from those in Turfloop as Lehasa's aggressive persona is foregrounded, ultimately Lehasa seems to embody the traits that the young men in Turfloop aspire to.

Conclusion

Addressing the current trajectory of masculinities studies in South Africa, Ratele states that “Critical scholarly, pedagogical and media engagement with men and masculinities is meant to ultimately contribute to the development of progressive masculinities, a term used as a shorthand for non-patriarchal, non-sexist, egalitarian and caring masculinities” (2016: 137). As the concept of hegemonic masculinity is not fixed, but fluid and constantly evolving, this call for the transformation of hegemonic masculinity to progressive masculinities is echoed by numerous other scholars both globally and in the South African context including Connell (2012) and Morrel.

My research aimed to interrogate representations of masculinity in *Skeem Saam* to determine what the series deemed as responsible manhood and what discourses were used to inform these representations. The mass media play an integral role in the dissemination of hegemonic masculine ideals and as a popular, wide-reaching media text focused on masculinities, *Skeem Saam* has the potential to provide representations of masculinity that are more in line with the progressive masculinities described by Ratele above. Lesejane argues that one of the ways in which we can transform masculinities to be more in line with this ideal is by drawing on a more responsible masculinity aligned with the ideals of fatherhood. He elaborates: “The image of a father as a patriarch, somebody who cares for, nurtures, leads, guides, and is a role model in the family and community, can be restored. To overcome attendant distortions and abuses, it is proposed that such a restoration process should be in harmony with the core values of equality, respect, human dignity and freedom such as those enshrined in South Africa’s Constitution” (2006: 180).

The representations of masculinity on *Skeem Saam are* complex, and *do* combine discourses of responsible, constitutional manhood and fatherhood in both the Johannesburg and Turfloop contexts. These representations also deviate from the use

of popular tropes in South African media representations which associate black men with violence and gangsterism. However, although these representations are different in their construction, they follow the same patterns as historical representations that privilege consumerism, prioritise class mobility and alienate the working class.

The way these discourses are combined in their representation imply that this seemingly less damaging hegemonic ideal is only achievable through neo-liberal ideals of success based on individualism and hard work. In Turfloop, Kwaito Seakamela struggles to fulfill the role of responsible father figure and provider that the series equates with failing his family and the family name within the broader community. This struggle is ultimately attributed to his absent father figure, and Kwaito sees hard work as the only way to avoid failing his family, obfuscating the role of the neoliberal state and decontextualising his struggle within an unequal society. In Johannesburg, Lehasa Maphosa embodies characteristics of a transnational, hegemonic masculinity rooted in business success and individualism. His aggressive displays of patriarchy, while seemingly problematized by the other male characters in Johannesburg, are still implicitly condoned as he remains a powerful figure within the gendered hierarchy of the setting.

The findings of my research closely mirror Sarah Ives' exploration into South African television post 1994 and can be perfectly surmised in Ives' statement on representations in another popular South African series *Generations:* " These depictions of wealthy Black South Africans mask the enduring racial and socio-economic inequality persisting in the country and portray individual wealth and power as the *de facto* aspirations for the 'new' country, obviating other possibilities beyond those espoused by neoliberal capitalism" (2007:167). This shows that while inequality continues to deepen, South African televisual representations rooted in ideals of neoliberal capitalism have remained relatively stable since the introduction of the SABC's nation-building mandate post-1994. Although the text does at times attempt to challenge these representations

by making discussions around them more nuanced and showing the tensions in these different masculine ideals, ultimately this finding still strongly underpins representations of masculinity in the series.

Connell, discussing the impact of globalisation on the future of masculinities states that: “The hegemonic masculinities are those of the corporate world and contemporary corporate masculinity depends culturally on its relation with mediated professional sports, especially football; on the existence of a growing ‘security’ sector of practitioners of violence; on a legal system in which the proof of rape, domestic violence or sexual harassment remains extremely difficult; and on a callousness towards poverty and social distress that is now institutionalized in the political world as neoliberalism” (2012: 13). Linking this to Connell’s theory above, my research has shown how this overarching neoliberal agenda has come to impact and shape representations of masculinities as hegemony is constructed within a neoliberal framework and combined with discourses of fatherhood in both the Turfloop and Johannesburg contexts.

To conclude, I return to Dube’s (2016) observation that masculinities studies in South Africa have problematically focused on violence while ignoring the overarching violence of white hegemonic masculinity, therefore stigmatising black men. This is not to say that masculinities theorists should not consider the high rates of gender-based violence when theorising about gender in South Africa, but consider the broader social implications of the scope of their research. With this in mind, theorising about gender from the intersectional perspective that Ratele calls for also has implications for the broader gender order in South Africa. Ratele states: “the struggle to represent and transform black masculinities is part of the same cloth as the struggle to emancipate black women against patriarchy, racism, heterosexuality and capitalist exploitation” (2016:136).

An examination of the representations of masculinities in *Skeem Saam* illustrates how these representations do not reinforce a link between black men, violence and gangsterism as historical representations have. However, these representations do not adequately engage with the social context of a violent society in which inequality continues to subordinate black South African men and women. Through an examination of this popular media text through the lens of Kopano Ratele's theory of "hegemony within marginality, I have aimed to show how *Skeem Saam* shows tensions between various masculine ideals, such as the responsible father figure and breadwinner, but ultimately seems to value a hegemonic ideal that is unattainable for the majority of South African men.

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