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Multiple concurrent partnerships: an analysis of the representations of male sexual behaviour in the "Soul City OneLove" television series

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Abstract

In developing countries, such as South Africa, the HIV infection rate is an issue that can be addressed through the mass media by encouraging behaviour change particularly in terms of male sexual behaviour and more specifically with regard to multiple concurrent partnerships. One of the most powerful ways to motivate behaviour change on a large scale is through broadcast television. Soap operas or televised dramas have been used to encourage behaviour change for over 3 decades and in the 1970's Mexican television producer Miguel Sabido formulated a theoretical framework for the design and implementation of effective soap operas for social change. This research report uses Sabido's theoretical framework to analyse one series of *Soul City* which aims to encourage men to reject multiple concurrent partnerships and remain sexually faithful to one partner at a time. The practical film component explores how televised messages are received and demonstrates how even highly targeted behaviour change messages can be lost in the sea of information that a media consumer is faced with daily. The film also looks at images of masculinity as consumed by a young television viewer. This report and the practical film component find that while the *Soul City OneLove* series fulfils some of the criteria described by Sabido for effective behaviour change television, it fails to deliver the messages in an appropriately entertaining way, and when received in context these messages may possibly not be understood or appropriated by viewers.