

**Age is nothing but a number: Ben 10s, sugar mummies, and the South African gender order in the *Daily Sun's* Facebook page.**

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**Dedications**

This thesis is dedicated to my mom, who moved out of her own home to look after my kids so I could pursue my career and complete my Master's degree. I would also like to dedicate this to my grandmother, a businesswoman who only completed a standard six and always pushed me to get an education. After going through a rough patch with my ex-fiancé and allowing it to affect my studies she said, "the best husband you can ever have is a degree it will always guarantee you some form of income". My daughter, Lwazi, and my son, Thami, you have been my rock during tough times, when I didn't think I would make it through.

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I'm eternally grateful for the most supportive supervisor, Dr Priscilla Anne Boshoff, your words of encouragement and support pushed me to complete this thesis.

**Abstract**

This thesis examines how meanings of masculinity and femininity are negotiated by South Africans on a social media platform linked to a popular local tabloid newspaper. In particular it explores conversations surrounding the Ben 10 phenomenon on the *Daily Sun's* Facebook page. A Ben 10 is commonly understood as a young man who enters into a sexual relationship with an older woman, mostly in township settings, and readers engage vociferously over the meanings of such relationships. Using a constructivist understanding of gender, a thematic analysis is used to examine the Facebook comments on the *Daily Sun's* most popular Ben 10 stories. South Africa's constitution promotes the right to gender equality and freedom, which contributes to the normalisation of sex in public conversations and political debate. However, with high levels of unemployment and poverty in South Africa, the narrative of masculine success through work remains relatively unattainable. This tension between the narrative of male-bread winner through work and the reality of South Africa's poverty and unemployment has been referred to as the crisis of masculinity. This thesis will argue that tabloids can play a strong political role by providing an alternative public sphere and that they can also assist their readers in coping with life in a democratic society by creating an imagined community of people sharing common experiences.

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## INTRODUCTION

“Democracy freed young men politically, but rising unemployment and falling marriage rates meant that few men were able to invest resources and energy in building a marital home, which has historically been a key anchor of masculinities.” (Hunter 2010: 164)

This study investigates how contemporary definitions of masculinity and femininity are critiqued and (re)constructed on the *Daily Sun*'s Facebook page in relation to the Ben 10 phenomenon. In recent years Ben 10 relationships have become a noticeable trend. Ben 10s are defined, in simple terms, as young men who offer sex and affection to or date older women in exchange for money, clothes, shelter or special favours (Bougard & Matsi-Madolo 2017).

### **The Researcher's background**

This study examines how *Daily Sun* readers negotiate the meanings of acceptable forms of masculinity and femininity in their Facebook comments on Ben 10 stories published by the *Daily Sun*, and considers how these meanings might interface with their everyday lived experiences. These considerations are closely tied to the socio-economic and political history of South Africa. It is perhaps also important to point out that this study fascinates me due to my personal socio-cultural, class and ethnic identity, an identity that is rooted in working class township culture. Having been raised by a “Shebeen Queen” (the name given to independent women who run township taverns), I have seen and witnessed multiple cases of Ben 10 relations. Shebeens are a great place to learn about everyone, and everything that is happening in your township. I grew up in Sebokeng, a Township south of Gauteng, where every morning everyone would rush to various local stores to get a copy of the *Daily Sun*. We also had every single issue of the publication at home as my grandmother (the Shebeen Queen) purchased it daily – to this day she still does. This experience built my interest in social issues and drove me to Journalism Studies. I graduated with a Bachelor of Journalism from Rhodes specialising in Television Journalism. Yet, despite my exposure to the *Daily Sun* growing up, during my time as a journalism student I was very sceptical about working for a tabloid as it was determined not to be ‘real’ journalism.

In May 2014 all that changed. I began working at the *Daily Sun* as an Online Content Producer and was employed there until November 2016. During this time, I served an online audience of over 2,3 million and contributed towards 7,5 million YouTube video views due to my video background. I was part of many native campaigns which generated millions of rands with brands

such as *Nedbank*, *Scorpion Legal Protection*, *KFC* and *Vodacom*. This was not purely for advertising revenue but to also empower the online readership. My day-to-day job at the *Daily Sun* included updating social media platforms; ensuring that the website was updated hourly; writing current news stories that were not in print; meeting clients to brainstorm what would work best for their online native campaigns; selling ideas to the advertising team; sourcing freelancers to write as well as produce video content for online campaigns; managing online competitions; coming up with video content; planning Facebook live videos; editing videos for the site and producing and co-hosting an online video feature called *Sister Talk* which spoke about issues that women in South Africa face on a daily basis. I was also part of the team that initiated the front-page video logos which encouraged print readers to view the *Daily Sun's* stories online. As we all know, seeing is believing, so having more video content worked in the tabloid's favour, to shake of the stigma off 'trash' and not 'real' journalism, and prove the validity of their stories as this allowed the reader(s) to be the protagonists of their own stories. The reason for sharing my background at the *Daily Sun* is the fact stories online and monitoring the comments and conversations that took place among the online readers was part of my day-to-day duty; this made me familiar with the news content as well as the various ways the readers engaged with the *Daily Sun*.

The *Daily Sun's* growing online readership is another reason that I'm using it as a case study for this research. I was fortunate enough to be part of the online team at a time when they only had a mobi site in the year 2014, and during my time there I took part in two website changes and growing the *Daily Sun's* Facebook page to just over a million followers. The *Daily Sun's* Facebook page currently has over 1,8 million followers and a very high weekly engagement rate of over 120 000 (Facebook 2019). This is the number of times the tabloid's followers like, share or comment on its Facebook content. In 2018 (Effective measure) The *Daily Sun's* monthly website traffic currently has 1 286 585 unique browsers and 12 536 007 page views. The *Daily Sun* has one of the largest readerships of all daily newspapers in South Africa. This readership is predominately black working class (Steenveld 2010). The *Daily Sun* prides itself on being an interactive newspaper and engaging a group which newspapers in South Africa have traditionally overlooked (Gibbs & Jobson 2011: 175).

### **Defining 'real' journalism**

This thesis looks at the conceptualisation of journalism by Betty Medsger (1996) which essentially defines the craft as a form of realist communication. Besides realism, narrative style and other elements defining journalism, probably the most critical aspect is the political, which is

journalism done on behalf of the public interest (Berger 2000). This will direct us in understanding the debate of tabloids not being perceived as ‘real’ journalism. The paper’s critics such as Sparks (1992), Gray and Williamson (cited in Strelitz 2005), strongly believed that tabloids were ruining the credibility of legitimate journalistic practice. They also believed that both the readers and writers of tabloids were less intelligent than readers and writers of ‘serious journalism’. Professor Guy Berger took a clear stance against tabloids, arguing that “They look like newspapers, they feel like newspapers, they even leave ink on your fingertips. But they’re not really newspapers” (cited in Strelitz & Steenveld 2005: 256). On the other hand, those in support of tabloids argued that tabloids had rekindled a relationship with communities that the mainstream media had lost, by providing an alternative arena for the coverage of community issues which resonate with relevant societal issues. This thesis will look at how tabloids break down the hierarchies of discourses ‘typical’ of established journalism and allow space for heterogeneity of voices and point of view; to allow ordinary people’s concerns to impinge on criteria of newsworthiness (Macdonald 2003). The Ben 10 phenomenon is an example of how and along what fault-lines within society, this erosion of hierarchy takes place. It is the kind of material that opens the paper to criticism – but it is also the space that makes it unique, and which makes it so accessible as an alternative public sphere. This research will also examine whether the *Daily Sun*’s Facebook page has the characteristics of an alternative public sphere. Here, it is the unique combination of the *Daily Sun* tabloid (already an alternative public sphere) and its Facebook page (an online potential public sphere) which will be explored in more detail.

### **Ben 10 stories in the *Daily Sun* Facebook page**

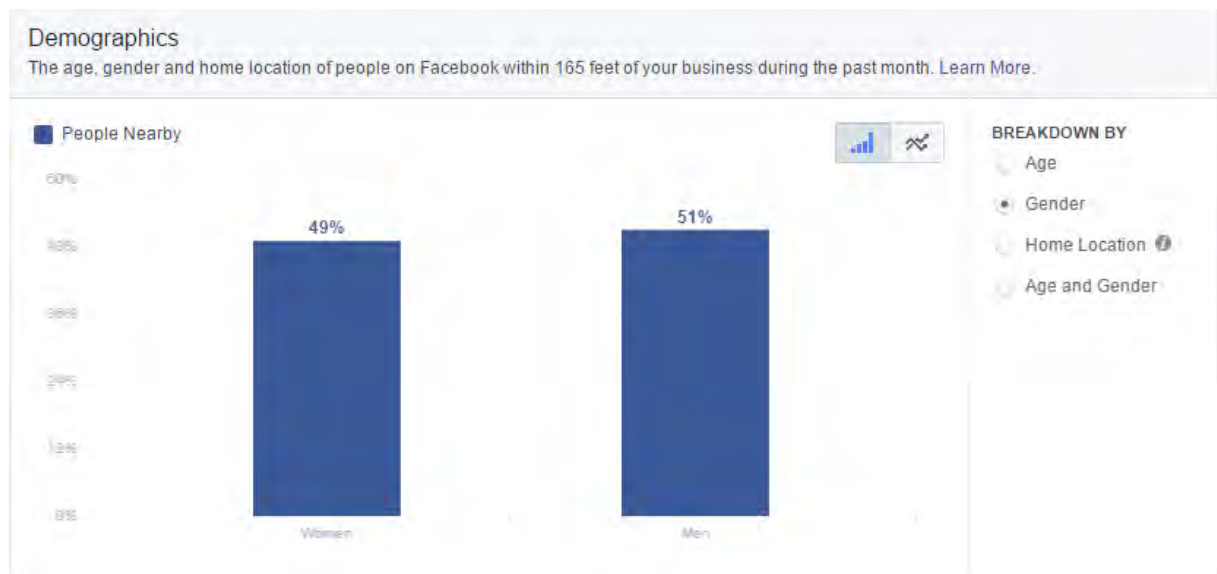
Against the backdrop of radical criticism of tabloids, this chapter highlights the objectives of this study and provides a general and personal background to this study. The *Daily Sun* is popularly known to publish stories surrounding witchcraft, service delivery issues, crime & violence and other social ills that affect people in black communities. One of the social ills which the newspaper covers is that of younger men sleeping with women old enough to be their mothers, whom the publication refers to as “Ben 10s”. Although it may be argued that cross-generational relationships are as old as humanity, literature from social sciences have focused mainly on relationships between older men and younger adolescent females than on older women and younger men or boys. Many studies have revealed the danger posed by the relationship with sugar daddies to younger women particularly in the era of the HIV and Aids pandemic (Masenya 2017). This study, therefore, seeks to compensate for this gap by reflecting on the ongoing

debate about sugar mummies and their younger male counterparts, the Ben 10s in the *Daily Sun's* Facebook page. In so doing, it also attempts to show how the *Daily Sun's* Facebook page provides an alternative arena for public discourse with respect to what is, for many South Africans, a burning social issue. Burdened with high levels of men's violence against women, HIV/AIDS, unemployment, poverty and inequality, South Africa appears to be a real-life test laboratory for insight from studies of masculinity (Ratele 2014). Most studies on gender fail to look closely into how the effects of little or no income for men interact with other psychosocial experiences and in turn flows into burdens of masculinity, promoting violent reactions against women's independence and feminism (Ratele 2008).

My time at the *Daily Sun* gave me an insider's view of the competing discourses generated through Facebook comments surrounding the Ben 10 phenomenon. The readers' comments range from some saying 'age is nothing but number', to others saying that older women who date younger men have no respect, while others try to evaluate why it is acceptable when older men date younger women and yet when the inverse occurs it's seen as an issue. The issue of unemployment and Ben 10s only being with these women for money is also a major theme which will be covered in Chapter 4. According to the 2015 Living Conditions Survey report, which indicates that 33,4% of persons aged 15-24 were considered poor on a multidimensional poverty scale due, primarily, to lack of educational attainment. A fifth of South Africa's youth aged 18-34 fall below the poverty line of R664 per person per month, using a money metric approach (Stats SA 2019).

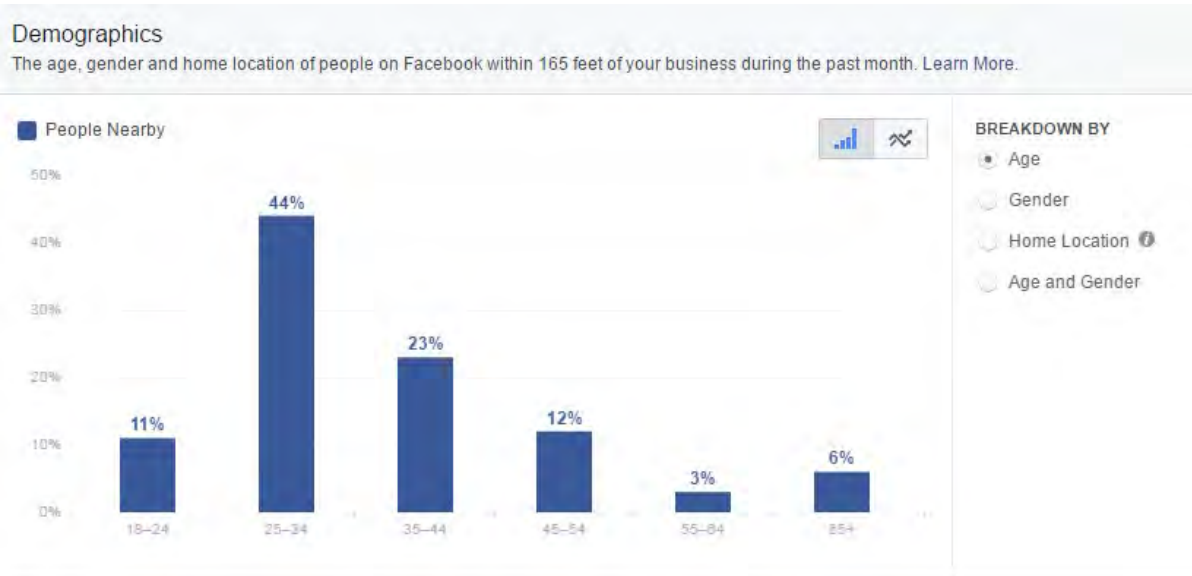
It is also crucial to understand the *Daily Sun's* Facebook community's age and gender demographic in order to fully understand the online deliberations that take place based on the Ben 10 phenomenon. There are 58,8 million people in South Africa and more than half the population (51,2%) is female. The Black African population is at 47 443 259 (80,7%) of which 23 124 782 are male and 24 318 477 (80,8%) are female. The youth aged 18-34 constitute almost a third of the population (17,84 million) and approximately 9.0% (5,3 million) is 60 years and older (Stats SA 2019). Since the *Daily Sun* newspaper first launched as a publication that would be affordable, easy to read and reflected a segment of society that was previously ignored by print all other print media. The publications role is to reflect the reality of the reader and to give readers a voice (Viljoen 2017). The *Daily Sun* newsroom has a mannequin that reflects who their reader is, a black man in a blue overall known as [Jabu](#). The online audience currently reflects the fact that the publication caters predominantly for men as 51% of the publications

online audience is male and only 49% female, as seen in *graph one* below. Since digital media offers marginalised groups a renewed impetus to become politically active (Loader & Mercea 2011). It is thus crucial to understand the audience imaginings of those who participate in the production process. This also involved thinking critically about who is included and who is excluded in these constructions and what the social implication of these decisions might be (Turow & Nora Draper 2004). Fraser (1990) argues that the Habermasian notion of a public sphere excluded women and later Boeder (2005) expressed the fact that digital communication needed to be expanded not only to lower income groups but also to women.



**Graph one:** Gender demographic on the *Daily Sun*'s Facebook page (2017)

The age demographic as seen in *graph two* shows that the majority of the online audience is between the ages of 25-44 (Facebook 2017). I asked the Head of *Daily Sun*'s Digital News, Ben Viljoen if he thought the online audience still reflects the print reader, the blue collar worker, Jabu? He said even though the digital audience is a slightly younger audience, the guy who was 18 when *Daily Sun* launched is now 32. He also added that he thinks that the struggles the *Daily Sun* audience face are still the same such as transport being expensive, high food prices, fuel prices, crime is an issue, electricity is an issue and data is expensive. He further added that "the current online readers' Living Standard Measure (LSM) is between 4-7 often a labourer which still reflects Jabu to a certain extent" (Viljoen 2017).



**Graph two:** Age demographic on the *Daily Sun*'s Facebook page (2017)

It is crucial to state that the *Daily Sun*'s Facebook community or audience is a close reflection of South Africa's age and gender demographics based on the Stats SA's (2019) and therefore a good case study to use. This thesis will look at how social construction of an audience can help address the question of power and position of different actors not only in society but also in the new media system (Turow & Nora Draper 2004), particularly in relation to the South African gender discourse.

## CHAPTER ONE CONTEXT

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the broader South African social and historical context within which this study is located. It begins by examining the ways in which colonialism and apartheid changed the local gender order in the interest of imperialist social engineering. Little attention has been paid to the importance of colonialism in the field of sociology of gender. Through both economic and cultural power, colonialism transformed gender relations in the countries they colonise. This thesis will look at how the normative gender order is challenged by the rise of the Ben 10 phenomenon. There will be four elements which will be explored of the current research literature on hegemonic masculinities that pertain to this study: a man's ability to work or provide; marriage and lobola; male violence; 'isoka' playboy lover with a range of women. Issues such as HIV/Aids as a subset of the isoka lifestyle will also be discussed. Even though these elements are not distinct, to a certain extent, they help shape each other. The social effects of the rise of women's rights and their ability to provide and consume will also be explored. The second half of the chapter outlines the post-independence South African press and the rise of the country's biggest daily newspaper, the *Daily Sun* and its role in facilitating competing gender discourse in South Africa through reports on issues of gender and equality. The study has an interdisciplinary nature and aims to contribute to sociological studies on gender, journalism and media theory on the role of tabloids in a democracy, as well as a still evolving sub-field of political communication in African knowledge production.

### 1.2 The liberated South Africa

The 1994 elections marked the first occasion in South African history where all its inhabitants were included on the country's voters' roll. This included black South African citizens, who had previously been denied this identity (Steenveld & Strelitz 2010). The transition from apartheid to majority rule brought about formal democracy in South Africa. The African National Congress (ANC), which is the ruling party, has consistently committed itself to the eradication of poverty and the reduction of economic inequality. "The negotiated transition to democracy in 1994, however, left the capitalist order intact, in a pragmatic embrace of 'market realities' and the need to affirm some neo-liberal principles in order to attract much-needed foreign investment" (Posel 2009: 158). Certain types of rights were easier to realise than others. The new Constitution guaranteed both "first-generation" democratic rights, such as freedom from discrimination and freedom of expression, and "second-generation" rights, which include the right to food, housing, health care, education, clean water, and so forth.

While the achievement of first-generation rights is often celebrated, the second-generation rights have failed to become a reality for many South Africans (Robins 2005). The implications of this failure for the oppressed and marginalised members of society are sobering, though their severity is often downplayed. A great example is that of the African National Congress' (ANC) 1999 campaign which made a bold statement that even though economic progress is slow, there is progress nevertheless (Bond 2006). However, the figures tell a different story. Consumption expenditure data show that South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world, and that inequality has increased since the end of apartheid in 1994. South Africa had a Gini coefficient (a measure of inequality in a society, with 0 denoting perfect equality and 1 perfect inequality) of 0.63 in 2015, the highest in the world (World Bank Report 2018). The economic situations and life changes of most Africans are still dire, and it is within this socio-political context that changes in the print media landscape are to be located (Wasserman 2010); as well as gender relations as it is within this context that the Ben 10 phenomenon has arisen.

### **1.3 Ben 10s, unemployment and what it means to be a 'man'**

The *Daily Sun* is one of the very first tabloids in South Africa to publish stories relating to Ben 10s. Ben10s are simply defined as young men who offer certain levels of affection or date older women in exchange for money, clothes, shelter or special favours (Bougard & Matsi-Madolo 2017). One of my key claims is that the Ben10 phenomenon cannot be understood outside of the current economic position of young South African men, many of whom are unemployed. High levels of unemployment remains the key challenge for South Africa as the country struggles to generate sufficient jobs. The labour market is characterised by several challenges. These include, among others, an unemployment rate which reached 25,1 percent of the workforce in 2015 and 27,7 percent in the third quarter of 2017, associated with slow job creation as economic growth slowed in recent years (World Bank Report 2018).

According to the Statistics SA report released in 2019 South Africa's unemployment rate is the highest it's ever been in more than 11 years, at 29,1%. This means that over 6,5 million people are unemployed. The youth, those aged between 15-24 years remain the most vulnerable in the labour force, with an unemployment rate of 58,2%. The 2019 third quarter Stats SA report figures show that black men are among the affected group with an unemployment rate of 34,5% while only 6,8% of white men are unemployed (Fin24 2019).

This description of the employment status of young black men is highly relevant to this study because the positioning and celebration of men as workers is a common narrative globally. The

activities that go towards producing or supporting masculinity include things such as working outside the home, avoiding subjects such as baby-feeding in conversations and occupying positions of leadership, overseer, manager and crucially official 'head of the household'. Occupational attainment and income ensure that one affords personal choice on how to participate in the world, eating what one desires rather than what is available, and living in conditions of one's choosing (Ratele 2018). As Baker (2005: 102) remarks, work and producing income are key requirements for being a man in most cultures. When men are without stable work, their ability to become "real" men, to marry and make certain demands on women and junior men is threatened (Hunter 2010). According to Andrew Gibbs and Geoff Jobson (2011), the male breadwinner ideology is closely embedded within a patriarchal discourse of the male head of the household, with an emphasis on heterosexual masculinity and this is crucial in the producing and maintaining of gender inequalities. With high levels of unemployment and poverty in South Africa the narrative of masculine success through work remains relatively unattainable for most black men. This tension between the narrative of male-bread winner through work and the reality of South Africa's poverty and unemployment has been referred to as the 'crisis of masculinity' (Gibbs & Jobson 2011: 179).

"Research done on male gender power remains blind to the imbrication of the experienced realities of a boy or man with the experience of other significant social-psychological categories, such as being without employment. This leads to failure to fully understand the intricacies that riddle the lives of African men" (Ratele 2008: 523). The fact though is that in most African countries opportunities to fulfil the burden of masculinity are slim; unemployment levels in formal labour sectors are high; and salaries for the majority of people are below the poverty line. On this basis we can hypothesise a link between levels of both instrumental and expressive male violence and levels of unemployment, specifically unemployment in context of great income inequality, such as in South Africa which has high levels of unemployment and high levels of male violence (Ratele 2008). To state that gainful employment is more than just about money is to indicate that employment and income go towards satisfying ego needs at the same time that they satisfy material ones. At the same time, salaried employment and wealth may be used to perpetuate the subordination of women to men (Ratele 2008).

It is important to note that there are several factors that underlie problems around the attainment of adequate employment and income in many African countries besides gender inequality (AUC 2006). Internal factors include the marginalisation of youth, high burdens of morbidity and

mortality, low levels of education, low levels of investment in human capital and political instability (Ratele 2008). When this combination of factors interacts with gender factors, the economic situation of women tends to be aggravated while they also result in complex consequences for men and masculinities, such as violent behaviour and sexual relations with other women than their regular partners to refurbish their dented manhood (Barker 2005).

## **1.4 Women and work pre and post-apartheid**

### **1.4.1 Women in apartheid South Africa**

However, the Ben10 phenomenon is not a one-sided affair, and the women who participate in these relationships must also be taken into consideration. For this reason, it is crucial to assess the history of the socio-political and economic position of women in South Africa, in order to assess the development of women's independence, and their ability to realise their citizen rights. By the mid-20 century it redrew women's status to property rights introducing family law which divided women's rights by religion. Women were made legal minors through the hut tax in South Africa for example; women's property rights weakened in most parts of Africa; colonialism made globally normative the idea of the male breadwinner and female homemaker (Ray 2018). South Africa has a long history of gender discrimination stratified along racial lines (Cock 1989). While white women were allowed to vote in 1930, black women, and men were only able to participate in the democratic national vote of 1994 (Ramirez 1997). Many black women worked long hours under white "madams" often for an unfair wage and separated from their families (Cock 1989:1). These women were generally trapped in this domestic labour in order to earn money to survive (Cock 1989). If not employed in the limited number of formal jobs, most black women were restricted to living in overcrowded rural Bantustans (Cock 1989). While men often went to urban areas to find work, the women were left to fend for their families with few agricultural supplies on non-arable land (Cock 1989).

It was not until the 1970s that there was a substantial increase in the participation of women in the labour force (Seidman 1993). Just over a decade before the official end of apartheid in 1994, most black women worked in "the least skilled, lowest paid and most insecure jobs" under dismal working conditions (Cock 1987:134). Those employed in the services sector were mainly involved in food, clothing and textiles production (Cock 1987). In general, African women had limited choice in the kinds of jobs they could take on due to limited formal education and a sex-race segregated labour market (Cock 1989). There were however a small group of black women

who worked as professionals who were likely to live better lives than most women. So although black women were generally marginalised, not all faced the same level of suffering. However, the discourses of sexism and racism which informed apartheid employment patterns also informed areas of legal and social life. Under customary law, black women under the age of twenty-one were regarded as minors (Cock 1989). If married under customary law, they were regarded as minors under the guardianship of their husbands and thus were unable to enter any legal contract, not even to acquire a credit account or hire purchase agreement without their husband's prior permission (Cock 1989). In general therefore, black women were "subjects" rather than "citizens" (Mamdani 1996:16). If the racially divided South African state under apartheid created an identity for black women as subjects governed under customary law, white women were regarded citizens with individual rights under civil law (Mamdani 1996). Under the apartheid state, black women thus generally suffered a "triple oppression as blacks, as women and as workers" (Cock 1987:139). Politically, women organised and played a significant role in the struggle against apartheid. For instance, in 1954, women established a women's political movement named the Federation of South African Women (FSAW) (Geisler 2000). This was a non-racial movement which was a part of the Congress Alliance that consisted of the African National Congress (ANC).

#### **1.4.2 Women in post-apartheid South Africa**

As noted above, during the struggle for democracy issues of the subordination of black women by black men generally went unchallenged in nationalist political organisations (Seidman 1993). Instead a greater emphasis was placed on racial emancipation. By the 1980s, however, this situation was challenged by feminists who were part of the national struggle and as the number of black women participating in the labour force and in political movements increased (Seidman 1993). By the period of the transition to democracy, gender equality was recognised as a key national goal of the new democratic state (Seidman 1993). The African Union Commission (2006) is aware of the multiple functions of employment and money when it states that all the Millennium Development Goals are tied up in direct or indirect ways with gender equality and the empowerment of women. For example, as the participation of women in the country's economic and political life increase so does the control over their own life increase. This control over one's life includes being able to make choices about their sexual desires, contraception, number of and space between children they want to have, their own health and that of their children, and the use of money.

### **1.4.3 Socio-political status of women**

Improving the socio-political status of women was integral to achieving the goal of gender equality, and when the new constitution came into effect in 1996, it secured the right to equality for women. Amongst other gains, it made provision for an autonomous horizontal body that would monitor new policies, represented women's concerns, and offered alternative definitions of both femininity and masculinity within the broad public arena (Seidman 2003:546; Posel 2004). This meant that women were able to move into the labour market which men had previously dominated and accrued equal rights as men.

### **1.5 Marriage in an 'equal' gender society**

Even though democracy freed young men politically, the rising unemployment and falling marriage rates mean that few men are able to invest resources and energy in building a marital home, which has historically been a key anchor of masculinities (Hunter 2010). According to Stats SA's Marriage and Divorces (2016) report, there were a total of 178 689 registered civil marriages in 2003 and only 139 512 in 2016. This means that registered civil marriages declined by close to 22% during this period. The number of registered customary marriages saw a 77% decline during the 2003-2016 period, with 17 283 registered customary marriages in 2003 compared to only 3 978 in 2016.

For today's working class and township youth, while the possibility of gaining employment and marrying remains an ideal, the chances are seen as increasingly unlikely. A prerequisite for men to establish intimate relationships with women is often tied to material resources. The combination of material resources and relationships with a number of women becomes the index of a man's status within the boundaries of hegemonic sexualities in townships. Consistent with this is the notion of *Isoka*, a playboy or a man with multiple partners made possible with material resources, justified as men's custom (Boshoff & Prinsloo 2015). This is described by Hunter (2010) as the winner-takes-all sexual economy in which men marginalised from the productive economy also face marginalisation from the sexual economy.

Apartheid South Africa conflated race and class, with white capitalists' structural violence curtailing economic possibilities and upward social mobility amongst blacks. Structural oppression also limits material demonstration of social status for blacks. According to Hunter (2010) apartheid's form of racial rule didn't simply emasculate men but worked through the patriarchal home to create ideas of manhood that served the apartheid state. The global concept

of a man is still represented as having little or no domestic obligation beyond that of financial provider and this plays into local ideologies of masculinity (Clowes 2005). This ideal is however reconfigured in the current period of chronic unemployment in South Africa. Most studies on gender fail to look closely into how the effects of little or no income for males interact with other psychosocial experiences which in turn flows into “burdens” of masculinity, promoting violent reactions against women’s independence. This can be seen as an attempt for some men to reassert control over women (Ratele 2008).

### **1.6 Hegemonic masculinities, violence and HIV/Aids**

Masculinity conceived and displayed via consumption, such as in the form of flashy expensive cars, cellphones, multiple sexual partners, and other status symbols may be described as a hegemonic masculinity from which these young men are excluded. Rather, their socio-economic circumstances position them as inferior and inadequate. It is perhaps within this context of very real economic and social marginalisation that violence derives (Vetten & Ratele 2013). The inability to easily assert and achieve a sense of validated masculinity and the frustration that result, are not disconnected from the manifestation of violence, specifically gender-based violence (Boshoff & Prinsloo 2015). The increase in the perpetration gender-based violence across Southern Africa is a product of the collapse of the masculine narrative of men as breadwinners alongside the attendant need for men to continue to assert their authority and status (Gibbs and Jobson 2011). Hegemonic masculinity is in other words is a mash of social practices which produce gender-based hierarchies, including violence that supports these hierarchies, in particular the unequal relations between men and women as groups (Ratele 2008).

The Anti-apartheid struggle did not only promote masculinities that celebrated honour and sacrifice but also violence (Hunter 2010). According to the South African Stress and Health survey, domestic violence is the most common form of violence experienced by women. In 2010 one in five women reported an incident of violence by an intimate partner; there has also been a rise in men killing of their intimate partner, intimate femicide is now the leading cause of female homicide (Vetten & Ratele 2013). Paradoxically, even when absent, violence remains a powerful presence within men and women’s sexual relationships, as Maheshvari Naidu and Kholekile Ngqila’s study which explores the negotiation of condom use in long-term heterosexual relationships illustrates. In some cases, it is almost an acquiescence (short-term sexual partner) were the men in these relationships are physically abusive (cited in Vetten & Ratele 2013).

Hegemonic forms of masculinity place men and women at risk of contracting HIV through reinforcing gender inequalities. This form of masculinity increases risky sexual behaviour by promoting multiple concurrent partners and reduces the likelihood that men will use condoms during sex. Therefore, challenging these forms of hegemonic masculinities is necessary to address the HIV/Aids epidemic (Gibbs & Jobson 2011).

Hunter (2005) argues that in South Africa with the impossibility of achieving the hegemonic masculinity associated with the male worker and breadwinner, having multiple sexual partners is one alternative route through which men can sustain the image of an ideal masculinity and this is a central driver in South Africa of the HIV and Aids epidemic. This is further complicated by shifting and contesting femininities. On the one hand, women are co-constructed within the discourse of hegemonic masculinity, and as a consequence are complicit in their tendency to accept such relationships and behaviour as normal. On the other hand, there are women who selectively embrace a rights discourse in their relation to men. They navigate their intimate relationships by celebrating their independence and right to sexual pleasure in similar ways to men and negotiate sex with a plurality of relationships (Boshoff & Prinsloo 2015). Hunter (2010: 154) cites Kuli Roberts who speaks for non-nonsense up-and-coming women: a defining feature of middle-class women is their ability to define the terms in which they will interact with men to have pleasurable sex, and also negotiate safe sex. On the account of their age and the economic disparities between sugar mummies and Ben 10s, sugar mummies are most likely to challenge the use of condoms as condom use is commonly viewed as a sign of unfaithfulness in relationships (Hunter 2002). This creates an unfortunate vicious cycle which will pose a serious threat in our fight against the HIV/Aids pandemic (Masenya 2017).

### **1.7 Gender equality and sexuality**

After 1994 the granting of rights to women became a key aim of activists, in particular a better legal system to address sexual violence and reduce HIV infection rates. But the relationship is complex and rights cannot solve all evils, including backward traditions (Hunter 2010). Deborah Posel (2004) mentions that South Africa is playing “catch-up” within a wider world long accustomed to more liberal policies on the display and the representation of sex. The post-apartheid sex talk also has a local logic as it is bound up with the reconstitution of the country’s political agenda since 1994.

South Africa's constitution is a founding rights-based document that is internationally hailed for its progressive nature. It inscribes a position against gender injustices in its equality clause that protects the rights of people against discrimination on various grounds including gender (Republic of South Africa 1996, clause 9 (3)). The country's constitution promotes the right to gender equality and freedom, which contributes to the normalisation of sex in public conversations and political debate. Sex has thus taken its place in public talk alongside other routine matters of public policy, governance and even service delivery (Posel 2004).

### **1.8 Female blessers**

This is explained by Madipoane Masenya (2017) who writes about Proverbs 7 in the Bible, in the context of the female 'blessers' and sugar mamas in South Africa. She mentions how Proverbs 1-9 speaks of the so-called Woman Stranger who is portrayed negatively, the traits that this woman has is that of a woman that exercises her sexual powers outside of the boundaries of conventional heterosexual marriage. It entails among other traits the seduction of younger men, commonly known in South African township terms as Ben 10s. The narrative of the woman in Proverbs 7 is of a woman that dares to misbehave by breaking conventional rules. Thus, she acts deliberately against the patriarchal status quo. South African masculinity has been subject to unprecedented public scrutiny. Increasingly we hear the complaints and anxieties of men who feel their masculinity undermined by women who assert their rights as much in the bedroom as in the workplace (Posel 2004). The concept of sugar mummies or female 'blessers' form part of the broader discourse on cross-generational relationships. In this case, cross-generational sex happens between an older woman and a younger man in exchange for money or material goods. The age gap between the sugar mummies and their younger consorts varies from six years to more than twenty years in some cases (Masenya 2017). Female 'blessers', traditionally known as sugar mummies are older heterosexual women, who have some form of income. They thus have the capacity to satisfy the many material needs of young males. What they seem to lack though is someone to satisfy their sex drive and perhaps also massage their female egos (Masenya 2017). Hunter (2010) mentions that, during the course of his ethnographic research in the jondolo (shack) settlement, he visits a local tavern there, he was surprised to learn that Msizi, a friend of his, had just started a relationship with a sugar mummy, a woman named MaDoris, the tavern owner, who was in her fifties. She managed to translate her income into remodelling her brick house, from which she ran her business, as well as power to attract a much younger guy. Men had come to jondolo settlement in Zululand for work, instead they only found casual employment if any and some women earned a steadier wage than they did.

### **1.9 Transactional sex vs prostitution**

In a cross-generational relationship the less powerful member of the relationship – based on age or economic disparities – basically avails his/her body for sex in exchange for gifts. In the South African context, many young people get entangled in such relationships due to poverty, many of them are motivated by the materialistic context of globalisation (Masenya 2017). In this case, Masenya (2017: 128) argues that “Sex no longer becomes an expression of love between two consenting adults within the confines of marriage, sex can happen in a loveless, cold, yet commercialised atmosphere”. This critique is countered by Economic Sociologist Viviana Zelizer (2016), who argues that the sugar baby, in this case the Ben 10, seems to echo the idea that money correlates with intimacy and sustains it. She states that intimacy and the market should not be seen as opposing forces that corrupt each other when combined. Feminist scholars point out that sex and intimacy are still considered special and sacred sites for authentic connection in the increasingly mediated and commercialised social world which makes it difficult to accept sexual transactions as a norm (Nayar 2017).

Masenya (2017) further argues that a religious term such as ‘bless’ has been hijacked by its users. The blesser becomes by virtue of their higher socio-economic status, able to give or ‘bless’ the ‘blessees’ (the recipient of the blessers’ gifts). Given the stigma of sex work in South Africa within the Christian context of the majority of South Africans, it comes as a shock that a religious concept like bless could be used to refer to payment for sexual transactions.

Transactional sex is perceived as a non-marital, non-commercial carnal relationship driven by the inherent notion that sex can be exchanged for material benefits. This is a term which came into existence to distinguish the practice from sex work, and in these settings mutual emotional familiarity is central (Bougard & Matsi-Madolo 2017).

A clear distinction needs to be made between prostitution and transactional sex, due to the different dynamics that the two practices entail. First, with transactional sex there is no pre-arranged amount of money agreed upon, and it functions as a tangible relationship which lasts longer than one between a sex worker and his or her client. Then, whereas the exchange of money for the services of a sex worker is illegal in South Africa, transactional sex is not illicit (Bougard & Matsi-Madolo 2017).

Intergenerational relations, which Nayar (2017) refers to as “sugar dating” empowers some men and women to reap the economic and intimate benefits while buffering the stigma associated

with providing and soliciting sex work. Sugar dating is seen as a relationship, not a service, and both parties agree that mutual and individual choice are defining features of arrangements that differentiate them from sex work.

The ethnographic work done by Bernstein (2001) in San Francisco on sex workers which describes the postmodern desire for ‘bounded authenticity’, a paid sexual exchange that includes an emotional intimacy that is experienced as genuine and mutual. Whether it is the money a sugar mama provides, or the affection and attention desired from the Ben 10, there are forms of capital flow whether financial or social in both directions and this should result in an equal exchange in the dating market (Nayar 2017).

### **1.10 The South African print media landscape**

We will look at the emergence of the *Daily Sun* and how it facilitates gender equality. One of the most critical factors for the role of media in democratisation and socio-economic transformation concerns ownership and control. Under the apartheid regime, the white minority controlled the print media, both English and Afrikaans, serving only a small, select group of regular newspaper readers. Most Afrikaans newspapers were funded by government and used for ruling party propaganda (Berger 1999). English language newspapers were ultimately owned by the Anglo-American group and purely looked after English corporate interests. There was very little direct competition between the groups as there were high barriers to entry. Afrikaner capital companies such as Naspers and Perskor competed for control of the media market in the former Transvaal province in the 1970s, with Naspers emerging victorious with its *Beeld* newspaper (Muller 1987). The political significance of this battle meant that Cape Nationalist influence triumphed over Transvaal - which had a bearing on developments towards wider democracy but which, ironically in a sense, snuffed out the voices of several other Afrikaner papers in the process. In short, if a pluralism of media owners, and ease of entry into the industry, are healthy for democracy and socio-economic development, pre-1994 South Africa was far removed from this. During this period a very small number of black-owned, independent newspapers were started up, but few survived (Jones, Vanderhaeghen & Viney 2008).

In 1994, the newspaper and print landscape changed due to foreign investment and changing political circumstance. Irish magnate Tony O'Reilly bought 35 percent of the Argus Group and later acquired full control of newspaper titles such as, *Cape Times*, *Natal Mercury* and *Pretoria News*. The entry of international capital saw a noticeable increase in competition in the

newspaper industry. New publications such as *Business Report* (which competed with *Business Day* for advertising and readers) and the *Sunday Independent* (taking on the *Sunday Times*) were launched. The foreign investment trend was also evident with 62 per cent of *Mail & Guardian* being bought out by the United Kingdom-based *Guardian* in March 1998 (Berger 1999).

The liberation of South Africa, however, saw the death of the liberation movement media, mainly because foreign funds for these alternative publications dried up under the donors' mantra that the country was now normalised (Berger 1999: 97). This post-apartheid period witnessed the withdrawal of foreign funding for the alternative press, resulting in the demise of papers such as *Grassroots*, *Saamstaan*, *South*, *Vrye Weekblad*, and *New Nation*, as they primarily addressed the then disenfranchised black working class, which was not appealing to advertisers (Steenveld & Strelitz 2010). Due to the commercial nature of the media in the post-apartheid era, newspapers had to sell lucrative audiences to advertisers, and the working-class and unemployed majority in the country did not count among these readerships. The small number of free "knock-and-drop" newspapers which had been circulating in black townships, were also a vehicles for local advertising. The major newspapers catering to a black readership, like *Sowetan* and *City Press*, had their sights trained on the middle class and elites (Steenveld & Strelitz 2010).

Vusi Mona, Editor of *City Press* in the late 1990s, believed that the paper catered for black middle-class readers while *Sowetan* and *Sunday World* catered for the working-class audience. Economic pressure at *City Press* lead him to propose a new newspaper that could compete with *Sowetan* and *Sunday World's* working-class market hence the launch of Media24's first tabloid, *Sunday Sun*. This was later followed by what is now known as the biggest newspaper in the country the *Daily Sun* (Steenveld & Strelitz 2010). The *Sowetan's* circulation figures saw a rapid decline after the 2001 introduction of the *Sunday Sun*, more so after the 2002 introduction of the *Daily Sun*. Within its first year, the *Daily Sun* grew its circulation by 228 percent (Wasserman 2010).

The *Daily Sun* was aimed at first time newspaper readers who are predominantly black with a minimum high school education, in other words a working-class earner. In the late editor, Deon du Plessis's words, "it had to target one guy, the blue-collar worker, skilled working-class guy who generally lived in the township" (Steenveld & Strelitz 2010: 533). Even though the major challenge facing the South African press is that daily newspaper circulation seems to decline by 10% year-on-year, the *Daily Sun* remains the country's biggest daily newspaper, with a

circulation of around 112 155 copies per day (ABC Q2 2019 April – June 2019), which translates into over 3,8 million regular readers (Media24 2019).

The popularity of the *Daily Sun* can be linked to the idea that tabloids have a certain role to play in our democracy. Ken Owen, then editor of the *Sunday Times*, said newspaper readers wanted ‘to see their own views and emotions reflected in newspapers. They want a voice to speak for them much more than they want to be informed.’ They wanted a ‘user-friendly product’ that was quite different from the existing ‘serious broadsheet newspapers’ (Jones, Vanderhaeghen & Viney 2008: 168).

### **1.11 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have looked at how the move to democracy has left a large proportion of South Africans in dire socio-economic situations. It also looked at the emergence of the *Daily Sun* and what this meant for the previously marginalised voices in society. Even though democracy promoted freedom and basic rights, most of these basic rights are still far from being met. High levels of poverty and unemployment make it difficult for most men to live up to the core societal feature which celebrates men as workers.

In recent years, there has been a rise in Ben 10 relations, young men who date older women, mostly in township settings, for financial benefits. These young men are excluded from desirable forms of hegemonic masculinity, conceived and displayed in forms of material resources and multiple sexual partners, and other status symbols. It is perhaps within this context of very real economic and social marginalisation that violence derives. This study will look closely into how the effects of little or no income for males interact with other psychosocial experiences and in turn flows into burdens of masculinity, promoting violent reactions against women’s material and sexual independence.

Due to the impossible nature of achieving hegemonic masculinity in South Africa, in the ideal form of the male worker and breadwinner, having multiple sexual partners is one alternative route through which men can sustain the image of masculinity and this is a central driver in South Africa of the HIV and Aids epidemic. To some extent, due to age and economic disparities between sugar mummies and Ben 10s mean some sugar mummies are most likely to challenge the use of condoms, which means they may or may not use condoms with their partners. The

latter creates an unfortunate, vicious cycle which will pose a serious threat in our fight against the HIV/Aids pandemic.

Even though some might argue that Ben 10s enjoy the benefits of sex work without the stigma attached to it, it is crucial to understand that transactional sex differs from sex work. One also has to consider that in the case of the sugar mummy and her Ben 10 there is a mutual exchange of love, affection and gifting, which offers a 'fair and equal exchange'. One can therefore say that the line between romantic love and provider love is blurred. In the case of Ben 10 relations, sex and intimacy are still considered special and sacred sites for authentic connection in the increasingly mediated and commercialised social world. In the next chapter we will look at what the role of a tabloid such as the *Daily Sun* is in providing an alternative public sphere where its readers can deliberate issues of gender identity and gender equality within our fledgling democracy.

## CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

Newspapers play an important role in agenda setting and shaping dominant social and political views, as well as providing a range of alternative voices in the public sphere in South Africa (Gibbs & Jobson 2011). During the apartheid era, the white press was a crucial institution in the racially and ethnically based struggles for economic and political power (Horwitz 2001: 36). Post-apartheid, newspapers continue to play an important role in defining how we understand our young democracy and our place within it. We therefore need to understand why the emergence of South African tabloids is significant, not only as a case study that might contribute to a richer understanding of journalism, but also for what they say about the mediated public sphere in emerging democracies (Steenveld & Strelitz 2010). This chapter examines the various definitions of tabloid journalism and the theoretical positions and perspectives about its roles that have emerged as media scholars try to understand the relationship of tabloid journalism to society. This section also explores debates on whether popular tabloid newspapers constitute a viable framework for the formation of public opinion concerning issues such as democracy and equality.

In this chapter, I also draw on a cultural studies framework, in which representation is central to the construction of identity. Representation informs how we understand our world and construct our relationships within it (Hall 2013). Connected to this approach but extending its implications is Foucault's understanding of discourse, which encompasses the notion of identity. One important form of identity that draws on representational and discourse practices is that of gender. This research is informed by Connell's constructivist understanding of gender as produced within the gender order.

I further argue that, as a popular newspaper, the *Daily Sun* is an important space in which to set the social agenda and shape "dominant views of important issues as well as providing a range of alternative voices in the public sphere in South Africa" (Gibbs & Jobson 2011: 174). One such alternative view is that of the Ben 10 phenomenon, a contentious gender topic that frequently appears within *Daily Sun* news reports. We will look at how The *Daily Sun*'s Facebook page provides an alternative arena for public discourse, especially in relation to gender equality. By drawing on the experiences of ordinary people's lived reality, this formal representation attracts working-class readers, who are addressed as an 'us' (Boshoff 2017). This, we suggest, together

with the daily act of reading the *Daily Sun* and the newspaper's slogan 'our lives our paper', helps constitute these readers into an imagined community of people sharing common experiences – the basis of an alternative, popular public sphere (Strelitz & Steenveld 2010).

## **2.2 The role of tabloids in emerging democracies**

### **2.2.1 Tabloids - 'Journalism or Trash'?**

In South Africa, tabloids have contributed to a stronger presence in the mediated public sphere of people who historically were disenfranchised politically and continue to be marginalised socially and economically in post-apartheid society (Wasserman 2010). We however need to ask ourselves can a tabloid such as the *Daily Sun* be considered to play a political role? It might not be too implausible to consider the emergence of the tabloids themselves as directly linked to the country's democratisation process, even as they might point toward the limits of liberation (Robins 2005) and complicate notions that are central to the democratic discourse in the country, such as citizenship and human rights (Wasserman 2010). The political role that the *Daily Sun* plays should be broadly examined on three potential political roles which are identified by Wasserman (2010) and apply to this study. The first one being the fact that tabloids can play a political role by providing an alternative public sphere. Secondly, tabloids can resist the exclusion of certain groups from mediated public discourse and contribute to "media citizenship" and lastly, tabloids can assist their readers in coping with life in a democratic society.

The term 'tabloid' is slippery and does not lend itself to a clear and universal definition, as its characteristics are hard to pin down with precision (Garcia 2005; Fiske 1992). The term itself is murky and often confused, often bandied for anything people disapprove of in the news media (Norris 2000). Thus, Gripsrud (2000) argues that the term 'tabloid' is more of a journalistic buzzword than a scholarly concept, which connotes a process of decline of serious journalism (cited in Machin & Papatheodorou 2002). The term is often interchangeable with the word 'popular', sometimes in a pejorative sense (Sparks & Fiske 1992). In so far as some consensus may exist with regards to particular meaning or definition of the term one observes that it can be used as a compass to navigate the often unpredictable waters of market driven journalism. According to Norris (2000), the term 'tabloid' can refer most simply to the production of newspapers, designed to be physically smaller and more manageable than broadsheet papers. However, understanding the term "tabloid" to refer to content rather than form is all the more important since broadsheets have been changing shape to more closely resemble the tabloids' size, although their content arguably has remained the same. It pays to consider that a tabloid

isn't just a newspaper format, it's embedded in content that is more appealing and more personal, redefining the old definition of news (Garcia 2005).

One crucial meaning, which aroused great concern, and is more relevant to this study, refers to the distinctive matter of news stories, characterised above all by focus on minor scandals of celebrities, entertainment stories, sexual shenanigans, crime, sport and lurid victims or disaster stories, as their staple fare (Machin & Papathederou 2002; Bird 1992 ). It is against the backdrop of this understanding that Ornebring and Jonsson (2001:287) note that “from the very beginning, the tabloid press was criticised for sensationalism and emotionalism, for over-simplification of complex issues, for catering to the lowest common denominator and sometimes for outright lies.”

Tabloids also belong to the realm of popular culture because they can be seen to express the social presence of those who are subordinated, mainly on the grounds of race, economic or social capital, and geographic region, even if arguably they in turn perform exclusions in terms of other categories of disempowerment like ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender (Glynn 2000).

Tabloids are seen as part of such a post-apartheid restoration of citizenship by enabling readers to exercise their social rights: “Under apartheid, a sense of self was denied along with political and civil rights. The core of apartheid entailed dehumanising many South Africans and rendering them invisible. Tabloids, at some level, enable a sense of visibility and voice.” (Steenveld 2006: 18).

Issues dealt with in the *Daily Sun*, such as violence, corruption, gender power struggles provide opportunities for ‘conversations’ which lead towards specific discourses that empower readers. “To the extent that this newspaper creates some form of validation for people as human and social beings, the *Daily Sun* serves democracy by contributing to a sense of empowerment” (Jones, Vanderhaeghen & Viney 2008).

As Steenveld (2006) rightly continues to point out, acknowledging that tabloids have given marginalised subjects a voice does not preclude a critical interrogation of the terms and conditions under which such vocalisation takes place. Even if a space might be given for the subaltern to speak, that space might be clearly circumscribed by powerful economic interests (Wasserman 2010).

Critics appear to agree that the tabloid style seeks to engage media publics emotionally, with private enjoyment and pleasure as its primary function (Machin & Papatheoderou 2002). It is this function that sets the tabloid journalism at odds with ‘serious journalism’, which is driven by its express objective of facilitating the exercise of democratic citizenship. The tabloid press is thus a binary opposite of the ‘quality’ press, which is concerned with quite different values and priorities and hence regularly and vehemently expresses scorn and disapproval for not only transgressing norms but also exceeding them (Sparks 1992 & Fiske 1992).

A column by Guy Berger (2004) in the *Mail & Guardian* titled “Headline grabbing tabloids: Are they Journalism?” expresses one of the key questions asked of tabloids by many mainstream journalists. According to this column one of the key definers of what constitutes journalism is that it provides information about the social world that its readers can use to make informed social and political decisions (Berger, Rabe, & Thloloe 2005). In contrast to mainstream news that normatively fulfils this function, Steenveld & Strelitz (2015) argue tabloids privilege melodramatic tales of everyday personal experience, and arguably, in so doing, draw attention away from the wider political and economic processes that shape the lives of readers. From this perspective, tabloids contribute little to the social processes that help build democratic societies – the defining rationale of journalism – and are thus dismissed as worthless.

Within the broad field of popular journalism, Gripsrud (2000) further identifies tabloid journalism as a subcategory of news, which is distinguished by its use of “personalisation as a rhetorical device”. In addition to this, he proposes that ‘tabloid’ itself contains the subcategory ‘trash’. “Tabloid may sometimes be useful and relevant popular journalism; trash may at best be brutal entertainment. Trash is on the whole probably best defined by its disregard of ethics and the professional ethos of journalism” (Gripsrud 2000: 292).

Criticism that the new tabloids are not political enough, or that they do not provide a sufficiently alternative perspective to that of the mainstream press, should be taken seriously (Wasserman 2010). It is crucial to understand that the perspective from which these papers have been debated and criticised often is that of a professional elite that has not bothered to find out why these papers are popular, what they mean to their readers, or how they articulate an experience of daily life – in the case of the *Daily Sun*, that of the ordinary person in post-apartheid South Africa – that differs vastly from theirs. One also needs to take into account that the relationship among race, ethnicity, class, and media markets has not yet been adequately studied in the South African

context (Wasserman 2010).

Tabloids undermine the high-culture, low-culture hierarchy, this providing a voice to marginalised publics, and serve as a site for resistance against cultural hegemony, thus contesting bourgeois societal values (Fiske 1992). Drawing on a Marxist view of the production of reality, cultural studies draw attention to the essential role of mass-mediated messages in sustaining the status quo as well as the interests and perspectives of media managers and the interests they serve, which often are at odds with the everyday life experiences of audiences who use this popular culture content (Hall 1977; Kellner 1995; Kidd-Hewitt & Osborne 1995). To a certain extent, tabloids maintain a society's dominant values and norms by showing spectacular instances where these norms are transgressed (Wasserman 2010).

Critics of tabloids see them as lacking the quality of enabling democratic debate and having a negative impact on the rational public sphere (Sparks 2000). Instead of seeing the *Daily Suns* as 'trash,' or lowering the standard of public discourse (Strelitz & Steenveld 2005), this study argues that tabloids have rekindled a relationship with communities that the mainstream media had lost, by providing an alternative arena for the coverage of community issues that resonate with wider societal problems (Steenveld 2006).

### **2.2.2 The Public Sphere**

The criticisms of tabloids flow from a Habermasian notion of the rational public sphere as the terrain where public opinion can be formed outside of state or commercial pressures, a notion with its roots in liberal democratic theory and the philosophical legacies of the Enlightenment (Glynn 2000; Glenn & Knaggs 2008). The public sphere is an ideal space in which ideas and information are shared, leading to the formation of public opinion (Habermas 1996). According to Habermas (1962), the development of the bourgeois intellectual circles appeared as an experience of the democratic process amongst members of the educated elites. In Habermas's original model, then, the normative public sphere is understood as an elite process, through which highly educated and propertied social classes from the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century in France, Germany and Great Britain, gained leadership and political influence.

According to Fraser (1992), Habermas supposes that an efficient public sphere should be led by a community of philosophical leaders, experts, and social thinkers. Habermas conceptualised the

idea of a public sphere as that of a body of 'private persons', assembled to discuss matters of public concern or 'common interest' (Fraser 1992). He idealised the liberal bourgeois public sphere as a place where citizens come together to engage in rational discussions on issues of common concern, and where differences of identity would be put on hold so that true equality might prevail in reaching a consensus (Macdonald 2003).

Mahlouly (2018) argues that while this community of intellectual leaders improves public deliberation, their position does not rely on their economic privileges (2018). Indeed, leading public opinion by becoming a public figure was not only the privilege of the intellectual elite, but was also a ground-breaking process, the cultural and political consequences of which most people could hardly understand (Mahlouly 2018). From this perspective, the bourgeois public sphere generated the social capital and the criticism necessary for the establishment of democracy.

We need to acknowledge that the public sphere concept has often been taken rather too literally. This study leans more on the revised concept of the public sphere as discussed by authors such as Fraser (1992), who argues that we need to accommodate more contemporary models of the public sphere, categorised by smallness of scale and composed of small interest groups which key into underlying theoretical issues that motivate Habermas' account of the public sphere. Despite the limitations of Habermas' account of the public sphere theory, his ideas have provided an attractive reference point for critics wanting to examine the democratic function of the media (McDonald 2003). For Habermas, the public sphere is most constructive when it is not influenced by commercial interest or state control, and the public sphere was thus conceptualised as entailing insulation from the interest of such powers. Only in this way would it effectively produce democratic conditions (Fraser 1992). It is however important to note that society has changed from the forms of societal organisation where dialogue and face-to-face communication are viable instruments for day-to-day democracy as suggested by Habermas (Ornebring & Jonsson 2004). In fact, Habermas himself acknowledges the concept of the public sphere and public opinion acquire their specific meaning from a concrete historical situation (Habermas 1974). Thus, under present day altered conditions such as the rise of social media, the bourgeois or liberal model of the public sphere is no longer feasible. We are, therefore, not able to participate in political life in the same way as described by Habermas.

On the other hand, public life is now marked by greater visibility, mediated publicness or mediated public sphere (Thompson 2005). This mediated public sphere is characterised by the struggle for visibility, which seems to indicate that there might not be one single mediated public sphere but rather a mainstream and a number of alternative spheres from which marginalised groups strive to gain access to and representation in the mainstream (Örnebring & Jönsson 2004). This is contrary to Habermas' account, which stresses the singularity of the bourgeois conception of the public sphere.

This study draws selectively on Habermas' theory of the public sphere, as appropriate in the context of the digital era, and identifies the parameters likely to influence the way citizens from the twenty-first century express their subjectivities and shape their political reality (Mahlouly 2018). In this regard, Fraser's reconstructed conception of the public sphere is relevant to this study. She contends that some new form of public sphere is required to salvage that arena's critical function and to institutionalise democracy (Fraser 1992).

Acknowledging feminist perspectives that have highlighted the exclusionary, elitist nature of the public sphere's original conception, Fraser (1992) points out how Habermas' public sphere was based primarily on the process of debate and knowledge exchange. The participants' status was not a factor in the success or character of the public sphere. Fraser (1992) argues that it is unrealistic to assume that the historical exclusion of women, other races and lower class groups in the participation of the bourgeois public sphere can be overlooked.

According to Fraser (1992), Habermas later admitted that the exclusion of women and other minority classes had structuring significance in the formation of an idealised bourgeois public sphere, but argued that this posed no fundamental challenge to his model, since the bourgeois public sphere has the capacity to transform itself from within. However, Fraser critiques this position, and argues that creating possibilities for alternative public spheres to exist and thrive is a better way to promote democratic participation and open public debate: "In stratified societies, arrangements that accommodate contestations amongst a plurality of competing publics better promote the ideal of participatory parity than does a single, comprehensive, over-arching public" (Fraser 1992: 122).

In the digital age especially, it is crucial to view Habermas' idea of a public sphere as a conceptual, rather than physical, arena in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk (Fraser 1990). It is rather a space in which citizens deliberate about their

common affairs. Additionally, this study argues that the digital era affects the quality of public discourse by empowering amateurs with the same legitimacy as traditional leaders, professionals and experts. This underlines a major distinction between the normative public sphere and today's connective culture, which lies in the fact that everyone is now likely to contribute to public discourse (Mahlouly 2018).

The latest research into cyber activism highlights the fact that online social interactions increase political engagement by providing users with the opportunity to uphold their individual identity, while being part of a larger social movement (Mahlouly 2018). Henry Jenkins' (2006) technological optimism as well as his research on participatory culture suggest that the digital revolution empowers citizens with more freedom of expression, and more influence on their cultural and political environment.

A critique of this position is that fact that technology is not simply a 'thing' that fills a predetermined social purpose. Technologies are socially shaped along with their meanings, functions, domains and use. Thus, they cannot come into existence simply to fill a pre-existing role, since the role itself is co-created with the technology by the makers and users. More importantly, this role is not a static function but something that can change over time for groups of people (Sterne 2003).

Van Dijk (2013) on the other hand argues that the way online social platforms are designed is conditioned by economic interests, intended to ensure that a large number of users provide and share content, creating opportunities for commercial transactions. From this perspective, economic parameters are most likely to affect the quality of social interactions as well as citizens' ability to debate rationally on public matters. Not only does this debate echo the traditional debate on cultural imperialism, but it also emphasises certain similarities between Habermas' bourgeois public sphere and the culture of connectivity (Van Dijk 2013).

The emergence of the mass press was based on the commercialisation of the participation of the masses in the public sphere. Consequently, this 'extended' public sphere has lost much of its original political character in favour of commercialism and entertainment (Habermas 1996). The emergence of the electronic mass media in the public sphere has exacerbated this tendency. The news is made to resemble a narrative from its own format, down to stylistic details the rigorous distinction between fact and fiction is ever more frequently abandoned. At the same time they

have an impact, with more penetration than the print media, yet their format prevents interactions and deprives the public of the opportunity to say something and to disagree, leading Habermas to the conclusion that the world fashioned by the mass media is a public sphere in appearance only (Boeder 2005).

Fernback and Thompson's critique (1995) of the democratic potential of virtual communities interrogates the claim that online communications can actually strengthen civil society. They criticise the general lack of debate about issues of ownership and control of the technology and for whose benefit it is being developed, and they conclude that citizenship via cyberspace has not proven to be a solution for the problems of democratic representation. According to Boeder (2005), telecommunications gives certain people access to means of influencing certain other people's thoughts and perceptions, and that access – who has it and who doesn't have it – is intimately connected with political power. If internet use expands into middle income groups, lower-income groups and women, it may yet present a real opportunity for greater participation, democratic communication and a true revitalisation of the public sphere.

Other critiques state that online discourses are considerably affected by a lack of rational thinking and effective deliberation. Flichy and Cardon (2010), in their essay on *Online Practices*, develop an analysis similar to Van Dijk's criticism, claiming that social media platforms simplify discourses and reduce the robustness of public opinion. Schudson (1997) concurred by stating that there is little evidence that a true ideal public existed, and that public discourse is not the 'soul of democracy', for it is seldom egalitarian, may be too large with no clear structure, is rarely civil, and ultimately offers no magical solution to the problems of democracy. This is because digital technology provides everyone with the opportunity to contribute to public discourse. In other words, the factors likely to affect the rationality of social interactions, as well as the sustainability in the digital world, might reside in the fact the online public sphere provides every citizen with the opportunity to express themselves publicly. This is one of the most significant differences between the Habermas' model of the bourgeois public sphere and the virtual public sphere of the twenty-first century (Mahlouly 2018).

The position that this study takes is that counter publics, which emerge in response to exclusions within dominant publics, help expand discursive space, elaborating alternative styles of political behaviour and alternative norms of public speech. In this way, people who previously have been denied access in mainstream public spheres manage to find their way into the discourse of the

alternative public sphere(s) representations of their interests, aspirations, life problems, and anxieties that are close enough to resonate with their lived self-representations, identities and feelings (Fraser 1992: 139).

The advantage of online deliberations such as those of gender relations on the *Daily Sun's* Facebook page is that a wide range of opinions can be expressed. This digital revolution empowers citizens with more freedom of expression and more influence within their cultural and political environment (Mahlouly 2018). Thus, groups and individuals have the potential to accomplish democratic change through communicative action via digital technology (Boeder 2005). The proponents of cyberspace promise that online discourses will increase political participation and pave the road to a democratic utopia. In this way, the alleged decline of the public sphere or civil society will be halted by the democratising effects of the internet and its surrounding technologies. The absence of face-to-face communication fosters more heated discussion which might actually promote democratic emancipation through disagreement and anarchy (Papacharissi 2004:360).

### **2.2.3 Tabloids and the public sphere**

What is important for our discussion of tabloids, is Habermas' emphasis on public discussion that is concerned with public, rather than private, issues about which a rationally based consensus can be reached after due consideration of all the relevant facts. It is out of this process of rational engagement that 'public opinion' or 'public consensus' emerges on issues of civic governance. It is these conceptual understandings that inform the normative view of what constitutes 'journalism' in liberal democracies.

Even within the Habermasian view, accessibility to the public sphere is a key requirement for debates about citizenship and democracy to have broader validity. In this respect, tabloids are contributing to a widening of the public sphere by making it more accessible to more people (Johansson 2007). Popular journalism can also contribute to an alternative public sphere because its discourse takes place somewhere other than the mainstream, because it has other participants, other issues are addressed, and tabloid debates take a different form than those in mainstream journalism (Örnebring & Jönsson 2004: 286). Tabloids can be seen to contribute to an alternative public sphere when they provide ordinary people with the opportunity to tell their stories and bring the struggles of their everyday lives into the public arena (Örnebring 2006: 862). By

broadening the media landscape to include audiences who often do not recognize themselves in the mainstream print-media discourse, tabloid media can create an alternative public sphere where citizenship and democratic politics are debated and negotiated (Wasserman 2010). A crucial critique of Habermas' public sphere which is pertinent to our discussion of South African tabloids with respect to its class character which is class bias, and its patriarchal nature (Fraser 1990: 60 & 1996: 114). This class bias is evident in the so-called 'mainstream' press, I argue, that robs working-class people of the 'platform(s) to express themselves' allowing the tabloids to usurp this position. This situation is particularly dire in a post-colonial situation such as South Africa in which the working class has been systematically denied access to basic education, let alone one that encourages and promotes critical thinking (Wasserman 2010). One also needs to consider that if the mediated public sphere in South Africa, represented by the mainstream press, was contracted as a result of economic forces, it has also been subject to political pressures. As with many other aspects of the media in contemporary South Africa, the political dimension of tabloid newspapers is best understood against a historical background. Under apartheid, the White press was a "pivotal institution in the racially and ethnically based struggles for economic and political power" (Horwitz 2001: 36). The mainstream commercial print media were broadly divided along ideological lines that corresponded with ethnic and linguistic differences in the white community. They made only limited attempts to cater to black audiences, while English-language newspapers were linked to the interests of mining capital, and Afrikaans-language newspapers supported Afrikaner nationalism and the apartheid state (Wasserman 2010).

The positive potential of tabloids is that they provide readers that are excluded from dominant discourses and social processes with the pleasure of seeing the establishment's norms subverted, undermined, or mocked. This is the point of view of John Fiske (1989: 117), for whom the existence of tabloids should be read as an index of the "extent of dissatisfaction in a society, particularly among those who feel powerless to change their situation." Fiske (1989) claims that tabloid narratives render societal norms visible so that they lose their status as natural common sense, and are brought out into the open, turning these norms back on themselves. It is the disconnect between the everyday lived experiences of tabloid readers and dominant explanations of so called "common sense or rationality" promoted by mainstream discourses of science, politics, and culture that explains the popular demand for this type of publication (Fiske 1989). In the South African case, this disjuncture between formal politics and the lived experience of ordinary citizens is predicated not only on the legacy of the historical exclusion of the majority

of South Africans from the democratic community of citizens, but on continued economic exclusion and marginalisation (Wasserman 2010). The growth of the tabloid press in this country might thus be a sign of the alienation felt amongst the working classes from formal political processes and the frustration engendered by inadequate service delivery, employment and housing. Deon Du Plessis, the former *Daily Sun* editor, offers a simpler view, arguing that the *Daily Sun* had to target the ‘blue-collar’, skilled working-class guy’ living in the townships. For this reader, “the politics of the anti-apartheid struggle was over”, and his new struggle was for “the betterment of himself and his family” (Strelitz 2006: 50).

Tabloids can be “used as a resource for political knowledge” and establish a “framework for political events and processes” (Wasserman 2010: 94) in the way they construct a view of the world, and the way they are read by their publics. Even content that seems to be mere entertainment or diversion can have implications for the way that tabloid readers view the world and position themselves in democratic life. Johansson (2007) refers to this impact on politics by tabloid discourse as the “politics of the non-political”. In the South African context, the coverage of issues that have a bearing on readers’ everyday lives can be political in the sense that it can assist readers in finding their way in a transitional society which has seen tremendous and rapid changes in recent years.

Tabloids have therefore played an important role post-apartheid, supporting the restoration of citizenship by enabling readers to exercise their social rights: “Under apartheid, a sense of self was denied along with political and civil rights. The core of apartheid entailed dehumanizing many South Africans and rendering them invisible. Tabloids, at some level, enable a sense of visibility and voice” (Steenveld 2006: 18). This is why tabloids are considered by millions of readers in the country as telling a “true story” even as they are dismissed as trash by others. What exactly it means to tell a “true story” is more complicated than just doing fact checking. It means telling stories so that they resonate with the narrative of people’s daily lives, which, for millions of people in post-apartheid South Africa, remain difficult and uncertain (Wasserman 2010). Tabloids are a complex genre which should not be seen as a singular entity, but rather as part of a range of public communication that reflects ordinary people’s lived experience in contemporary South Africa. This position necessitates looking at the material constraints of working class lives and locating their consumption of media within this context. This helps explain why they appear to be drawn to a news publication that is deemed ‘worthless’ by critics. It also points to the weakness of a notion of ‘ideology-free reasoning’ which is seen as the touchstone of the public

sphere, and the role of journalism within it. The *Daily Sun* fulfils the function of publishing stories of the lives of working-class people, and the fact that it is this class in South Africa that most directly bears the burden of poor service delivery by local government. It is this particular role that helps to explain the paper's popularity (Steenveld & Strelitz 2015).

### **2.3 The rise of network journalism**

The shift from conventional journalism to “networked journalism” has taken place in South Africa media, as elsewhere in the world (Wasserman 2010). Conventional journalism, described as “hierarchical, professionalised, and rigid” (Beckett & Kyrke-Smith 2007), mainly catered for a passive audience, while the latter is characterised by “constant communication and exchange of information between journalists and society” (Beckett & Kyrke-Smith 2007). The South African press has been quick to adapt to international trends in convergence; the combination of old print media and new technologies such as websites, cell phone news services, as well as social media platforms such as Facebook (Taylor & Milne 2006). One should note the fact that electronic media offers a unique channel for publishing and communicating. It has immediate active participation which is fundamental for democracy as readers can voice their concerns in real time (Rheingold 1998). As discussed in the first chapter, one of the democratic issues being negotiated in the *Daily Sun*'s Facebook page are gender discourses.

### **2.4 Gender and representation**

The global subordination of women to men provides an essential basis for gender differentiation within all realms of social life. When we speak about gender relations we essentially speak about power relations. Power as a dimension was central to the Women's Liberation concept of ‘patriarchy’. The idea of men as a dominant ‘sex class’, and the power of husbands over wives is still accepted in much of the world, even in modified forms such as the idea of the father as the ‘head of the household’. Regardless of the presence of women in the economic sphere, it is still culturally defined as a men's world (Connell 2009: 79).

A macro sociological perspective looks at gender in three different dimensions: gender as a social construct, gender regimes and the gender order. These can all be understood within the three key structures of gender relations, firstly the division of labour between men and women; secondly, authority, control and power; and third, cathexis or sexual energy. These are all fundamentally connected, and form a crucial structure surrounding the complexity of institutionalised interactions between men and women, at the same that they place constraints on

certain social practices. (Connell 1991: 93)

“We make our own gender, but we are not free to make it however we like. Our gender practice is powerfully shaped by the gender order in which we find ourselves” (Connell 2009: 74). Even though gender is usually regarded as relating to an individual it is better seen as structured and collective social practices. Gender refers to the practices organized in terms of, or in relation to, the reproductive division of people into male and female sexes. For this reason, Connell (1991) refers to gender as a linking concept. It is about linking of social practice to the nodal practices of engendering such as childbirth and parenting. It is the social process of organizing social life in a particular way (Connell 1991: 140).

From a constructivist perspective, gender is understood as socially constructed in contrast to an essentialised biological approach. Importantly, to speak of masculinity and femininity is to speak about gender relations and the concern is with the position of men and women within a broad gender order (Connell 1995). The gender order represents the pattern of power relations between masculinities and femininities that are widespread throughout society. Within this gender order we find competing masculinities and femininities. Gender studies have been enriched with development of an additional focus on men and masculinity, this development began in 1985 when Connell introduced the concept of hegemonic masculinity as a form of masculinity that was dominant in society, established the cultural ideal for what it was to be a man, silenced other masculinities and combated alternative visions of masculinity (Ouzgane & Morrell 2005). This form of masculinity which is crucial to this study and defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men, and the subordination of women. Thus, the concept of hegemonic masculinity is also used to refer to that which constitutes a ‘real man’ (Morrell 2013). Therefore, hegemonic masculinity is a set of social and cultural practices that allow women’s social subordination to men to continue (Carrigan, Connell & Lee 1985). The compliance with this subordination that accommodates the interests and desires of men Connell terms ‘emphasised femininity’. This form of femininity gives most cultural and ideological support to the patriarchal gender order. Emphasised femininity, as a cultural construction is very public, though its content is specifically linked with the private realm of the home and the bedroom (Connell 2009).

In South Africa, the idea of hegemonic masculinity has been used in a variety of ways, for example it was used in health literature first used to understand young men's gendered practices, including their use of violence against women in the context of their aspirations as men.

Hegemony is an expression of social power and evident in the ability to impose a definition of the situation to set terms in which events are understood and issues discussed to formulate ideals and define morality (Morrell 2013). Hegemonic masculinity may embody a more subtle form of power over women through providing, insofar as men protect or provide for others who are in the process are positioned as weak, needy and inferior, furthermore provision for others may entail expectations of service in return, most notable sexual availability (Morrell 2013). As discussed in chapter one contesting femininities are women who embrace a rights discourse in their relation to men. They navigate their intimate relationships by embracing their right to sexual pleasure in similar ways men do often referred to as 'isifebe' (promiscuous). (Hunter: 2010) As earlier discussed, it is also crucial to take into account that men who do not fit the provider narrative are excluded from forms of hegemonic masculinity which constitute 'manhood' (Boshoff & Prinsloo: 2015). In most black communities in South Africa these men are called 'Skotheni' a men with no financial, intellectual or sexual power.

## **2.5 Hegemonic masculinity & Constructivism**

In further understanding hegemonic masculinity, structured action theory looks at the construction of sex, gender and sexuality as they grow out of embodied social practices in specific social structural settings and serve to inform such practices in reciprocal relations. According to Christian biblical scriptures God made man and women and this distinction imposed inequality on bodies from the outset, as to be a man or a woman was to have a specific place in society measured by God (Messerschmidt 2018). These two opposite sexes are conceptualised as the source of political, economic, cultural lives of men and women since biological differences are understood as the epistemic foundation for prescriptive claims about the gender order (Messerschmidt 2018).

Hegemonic masculinity is, in other words, a mesh of social practices productive of gender-based hierarchies, including the violence that supports these hierarchies; that is, the unequal relations between females and males as a group (Ratele 2008). "Where the concept of hegemonic masculinity is most valuable is in showing that it is not in men per se, but certain ways of being and behaving, that are associated with dominance and power" (Cornwall 1997: 11).

While not all literature specifically uses the concept of hegemonic masculinity, all are characterised by the question of men's power and its use in violence. Violence is a common

denominator, something that unites men across race and class and is present even if not explicitly stated or seen (Morrell 2013). Core areas of male power can be linked to the basis of military and industrial complex, which include hierarchies and work-forces of institutionalised violence, control of machinery of central state and working-class milieux that emphasise toughness and men's association with operating heavy machinery (Connell 1991: 109). Masculinity is not biologically inherent to men but emanated from socially constructed gender identities and reflects social norms, which suggest that non-violence masculinities were possible (Morrell 2013).

Ideologies of natural differences have drawn much of their forces from the traditional belief that gender never changes. This includes religious and social constructs such as Adam delved and Eve span, men must work and women must weep, boys will be boys (Connell 2009). This study's analysis argues that exactly the opposite is true and that everything about gender is historical. According to Judith Butler (1988) one is not born but rather becomes a woman or a man. In this sense, gender is not a stable identity, rather it is an identity tenuously constituted in time, y instituted through a "stylised repetition of acts". The interactive approach, developed by West and Zimmerman (1987), which they describe as "doing gender" also argues that gender is something we are held morally accountable to perform, something we do, and not something we are.

Recognising the historical character of gender has an important political consequence. If a structure can come into existence, it can also go out of existence, hence the history of gender may have an end. In modern-day society the total triumph of the market and complete individualism is often presented as a way to gender equality. This logic is seen in equal opportunity and anti-discrimination reforms (Connell 2009). "Gender relations are always being made and re-made in everyday life, if we don't bring it to being, gender does not exist." (Connell 2009: 73). A constructivist view is that gender identity is the outcome of a "stylised repetition of acts" through time and not a seamless identity. This means the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of structuring of social conduct, therefore different gender discourses (Butler 1988).

## **2.6 Discourse and power**

Discourse is concerned with knowledge or what counts as 'truth' and sets the hierarchies of

power. It structures power in such a way that it legitimatises the dispensation of power relations, for example patriarchal discourse is legitimized by the particular sets of ideas such as biological determinism, which is then enacted by institutions and cultural practices which position men and women as unequal (Prinsloo 2009: 207).

The key notion of discourse theory is that of the relationship between power and ‘knowledge’: because we interpret the world in roughly similar ways, we are able to build up a shared culture of meaning and thus construct a social world which we inhabit together. That is why ‘culture’ is something defined in terms of shared meanings or shared conceptual maps (Hall 2013). We all know from our experiences that how we feel or behave as women or men is influenced by the many different messages we receive from other about what is acceptable and appropriate (Cornwall 1997). It is crucial to note that knowledge is conceived as something that is not internal to the agent, but rather as an externally given and structured set of ‘claims’, or as Foucault would have it, ‘statements’. This structured set of claims is conceived as being neither true nor false in an objective sense, but simply as being the perspective that is definitive of some society, group or institution. Also, these perspectives - or ‘knowledges’ or ‘epistemes’ - are held to be a function of the power relationships into which the group in question enters. Therefore, every point in the exercise of power is a site where knowledge is formed. Conversely every established piece of knowledge permits and assures the exercise of power (Miller 1990).

## **2.7 Feminist theory and gender equality**

Feminist theory has often been critical of naturalistic explanations of sex and sexuality that assume that the meaning of women’s social existence can be derived from some fact of their physiology. In distinguishing sex from gender, feminist theorists have disputed causal explanations that assume that sex dictates or necessitates certain social meanings for women’s experiences (Butler 1988). Feminism is a politics directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society. This helps us think about questions such as what it means to be a woman, how their femininity and sexuality is defined, and how they can begin to redefine them for themselves (Weedon 1997). Feminist theory has sought with success to bring female specificity into visibility and to rewrite the history of culture in terms which acknowledge the presence, the influence, and the oppression of women (Butler 1988). We need to examine the way in which men and women both contribute to establishing agreed gender values and thus to distance ourselves from viewing gender relations solely through the prism of male power.

This is especially important in South Africa, where gender relations are primarily discussed in terms of patriarchal power.

Males and females are not by nature men and women. Rather it is in families and other social institutions that the process of turning babies into boys and boys into men, takes place. This is accomplished with the help of available knowledge as well as daily practices and mediated ideas about masculinity and femininity (Ratele 2008). When we look at a set of gender arrangements whether that of institutions or that of the whole society, we are looking at a set of relationships, or ways in which people are connected or divided. The modern liberal state defines men and women as citizens, that is as equals. But dominant sexual codes define men and women as opposites (Connell 2019). Connell's (2013) model of hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity is useful for understanding the ways in which men and women are positioned in unequal ways in our southern space (Ratele 2008). The concept of hegemonic masculinity is used to refer to that which constitutes a 'real man' (Morrell 2013).

Hegemonic masculinity perpetuates the subordination of women to men who provide. In the absence of economic powers and social status amid massive unemployment and poverty, some men seem to rely on sexual practices or violence as ways of asserting male authority (Groes-Green 2009). On the other hand, emphasised femininity is that femininity which is compliant with women's subordination and accommodates the interests and desires of men (Connell 2003).

As a South African woman researching a social phenomenon that resonates with my lived experiences, I have found feminist approaches to the study of gender and the media very helpful. Post-structural feminists employ the concept of gender as a social construct, the structuration of which is visible and thus becomes available for critique within the texts that we create as members of a culture. According to Connell (2009) gender symbolism - such as found in the online representations of men and women in the *Daily Sun* - is necessarily involved in social struggle. The complex politics of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, for example, also shows this, as different symbolic models of masculinity were put into play over time. An example is the union movement which opposed apartheid, which constructed masculinity along the lines of a 'worker' model. Such symbolic expressions of gender change over time and so do attitudes towards gender equality.

Post-colonialist theorists remind us that colonialism was simultaneously a system of rule and of knowledge production (Hall 1996). Through both its economic and cultural power, colonialism fundamentally (through not uniformly) transformed gender in the countries they colonised. By

the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century it had redrawn women's legal status around property; introduced the concept of family law, which divided women's rights by religion; made women legal minors (through the hut tax in South Africa for example); and made the idea of the male breadwinner and the female homemaker globally normative (Messerschmidt, Martin, Messner & Connell 2018). Women's liberation recognised that patriarchy was not just a matter of direct control of women by men but also control of women by the state (Connell 2009).

While colonial rule enforced new set of understandings about gender, it also created what we have come to accept as the master narrative of global patriarchy. Global inequalities in power mean that these narratives continue to be created and re-created in the contemporary world, including South Africa. For this reason, feminists from the global south have argued that their gender interests cannot be addressed by feminist theories from the North without first addressing the imbalances in the global political economy and the legacies of colonialism (Messerschmidt, Martin, Messner & Connell 2018).

African and 'Third World' feminism developed in response to western feminism which developed three distinct approaches: Liberal (rights based), Radical (women only or separatist), Marxist and Socialist based on Marxism and included women's oppression (Messerschmidt, Martin, Messner & Connell 2018). On the other hand, black feminism was formulated in the United States as a means of differentiating itself from hegemonic or white feminism "as a viable, autonomous black feminist movement to open up the space needed for the exploration of black women's lives and the creation of consciously black women-identified art" (Smith 1986: 169).

While useful and necessary, the essentialising of 'black experience' is problematic, as such a position assumes that black women automatically have insight into their experiences by virtue of their socioeconomic, cultural and biological heritage" (Hendricks & Lewis 1994: 66). Many African women reject the labels 'feminist' and 'feminism' because of their Euro-American origins, preferring the term 'womanism' as more accurately referring to the struggles of 'Black' or 'African' women. Womanism has been used to identify a strand of black feminism that incorporated "racial, cultural, national, economic and political considerations" and "conscious of black impotence in the context of white patriarchal culture, empowers the black man" (Ogunyemi 1995: 63-69). It recognizes a common struggle with African men for the removal of the yokes of foreign domination and European or American exploitation (Boyce Davies & Graves 1986: 8, cited in Mekgwe 2008: 17).

In order to decolonise gender politics we need to take into account that a struggle grouped under 'identity politics' "is actually about a struggle for material redistribution and justice, and related desires for existential integrity and security" (Mama 2001: 67). Identity is all about power and resistance, subjection and citizenship, action and reaction, therefore we need to profoundly rethink identity if we are to begin to comprehend the meaning of power. Mama (2001: 69) argues that because women are more pervasively governed by custom and community, women need access to civil law to realise their citizenship rights.

However, African women's experiences are not only about custom, but are imbricated in the global modern and its governing neoliberal order. Within the postcolonial neoliberal economy, described by Fraser (2013) as the new "romance of capitalism", women's labour force participation has increased worldwide. In the meantime, globally, young men who do not have a class advantage are being left behind, and are increasingly being seen as the losers within the new global order. This development changes substantially the picture of the gendered order of the global economy. An analysis of gender must therefore take into account the different ways in which men seek to establish their masculinity if they cannot do it through work or the breadwinner ideology (Messerschmidt, Martin, Messner & Connell 2018). As a way forward, we need to challenge the patriarchal precedents of received 'identity politics' being produced by the old regime (Mama 2001).

Connell (2013) rejects the idea that all men are the same. This has occasioned the shift from the concept of masculinity to the concept of masculinities. The shift allows one to distinguish meaningfully among different collective constructions of masculinity and to identify power inequalities among these constructions. This concept provides a way to understand the evident fact that not all men have the same amount or type of power, the same opportunities and consequently the same life trajectories. Therefore there needs to be a move towards correcting the imbalance of treating men as a unified, homogenous category (Ouzgane & Morrell 2005). One needs to think about how men as a group whose actions against and domination of females is structurally supported, without encouraging a wilful neglect of the conditions of males, who in their personal stations find themselves subordinated to those who are in ruling positions in society (Ratele 2008). However, a positive hegemony still remains a key strategy for contemporary efforts of reform this would mean that hegemonic masculinity should explicitly acknowledge the possibility of democratising gender relations a move towards a version of

masculinity open to equality with women (Morrell 2013: 6).

## **2.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter we have seen how when we look at a set of gender arrangements whether that of institutions or that of the whole society, we are looking at a set of relationships, or ways in which people are connected or divided. I have argued that gender is socially constructed in order to serve the patriarchal order. Ben 10 relationships being a frequent topic within *Daily Sun*'s digital platforms creates an important space in which to set the social agenda and shape dominant views of gender normativity. The newspaper also provides an alternative public sphere through its Facebook page for a range of previously marginalized voices in South Africa. This thesis adopts Fraser's idea of a public sphere as a conceptual rather than physical arena in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk. It is a space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs. An online public sphere such as *Daily Sun*'s Facebook page provides every citizen with the opportunity to express themselves publicly. This is one of the most significant differences between Habermas' model of a bourgeois public sphere and the online public sphere of the twenty-first century. The advantage of online deliberations is that a wide range of opinions can be expressed. This digital revolution empowers citizens with more freedom of expression and more influence on their cultural and political environment. Thus, groups and individuals have the potential to accomplish democratic change through communicative action and digital technology. The next chapter discusses the method used to investigate the competing gender discourses by the *Daily Sun* online readers towards the Ben 10 phenomenon.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the qualitative research design chosen to answer the key research inquiry; “What are the competing gender discourses that take place in *Daily Sun*’s Facebook page in relation to Ben 10 stories?” This will be followed by a discussion of the data collection method and analysis of Facebook comments on various Ben 10 stories published by the *Daily Sun* in the past five years. This chapter also sets out the analytic methods - critical discourse analysis and thematic content analysis - which are used to analyse the data. I conclude the chapter with some thoughts on the present challenges and opportunities with conducting social media research as well as, ethical considerations with online research methodologies.

#### 3.2 Qualitative Research

I have taken a qualitative approach to this research, as I am interested to gain access to and understand the “insider” perspectives characteristic of members of culture or subculture. Qualitative studies start from the assumption that in studying humans, we are examining a creative process whereby people produce and maintain forms of life and society and systems of meaning and value. Given that humans live by interpretations, qualitative studies attempt to recover the ways people live: their intentions, purposes and values (Christian & Carey 1989: 389). Qualitative research approaches provide the opportunity to develop a descriptive, rich understanding and insight into individual beliefs, concerns, motivations, aspirations, lifestyle, culture, behaviour and preference (Priest 1996: 103-107). This approach is appropriate for this study as the central focus is on how the community of *Daily Sun* readers negotiate contemporary meanings of masculinity and femininity in relation to the Ben 10 phenomenon.

Qualitative research is much more fluid than quantitative research: whilst qualitative research focuses on the need to understand social behaviour in its social context (Moore 1993: 33), quantitative research exhibits a tendency for the researcher to view events from the outside and to impose empirical concerns upon social reality (Bryman 1984: 78). The need for the readers’ consumption and creation of online media texts, in order to voice their opinions on social behaviour within a given social context, as underlined in qualitative research is fundamental to this research. The analytic task is to show the meaningful coherence of these expressions as it is experienced by the people who are the focus of the study (Lindloff 1992: 25).

Crucially, qualitative research is primarily concerned with understanding particulars rather than making universal generalisations (Maxwell 1992 & Ang 1996). As such, qualitative research is not designed to produce systematic generalisations to a wider population: rather, generalisations are based on the development of a theory that attempts to make sense of particular persons or situations studied, and also shows how the same process in a different situation, can lead to different results (Maxwell 1992: 293). It is assumed that this theory may be useful in making sense of similar persons or situations, and it does not offer an explicit sampling process which draw conclusions about a specific population through statistical interference (Maxwell 1992). In fact, the major difference between qualitative and quantitative methods is that qualitative methods do not rest on the logic of Mathematics (the principle of numbers), or the method of statistics. It uses actual discussion and social action as the raw material of analysis, which lead to an in depth understanding of the phenomenon in question (Lindloff 1995: 21).

While quantitative researchers have questioned the validity and reliability of qualitative research, the issue of validity in qualitative research should apply the concept primarily of account, and not methods (Maxwell 1992). This means that the application of the concept of validity does not depend on the existence of some absolute truth or reality to which an account can be compared but only on the fact that there exist ways of assessing accounts that do not entirely depend on features of the account itself, but in some way relate to those things that account claims to be about (Priest 1996: 114). Against this background, it is crucial to point out that qualitative studies that follow the basic principles of social science are not 'unscientific' just because they are more interpretive in their approach.

### **3.3 Research paradigm**

The essence of any research inquiry is the search for understanding and insight into phenomena which we do not yet have enough knowledge of. Exploration, description, explanation and evaluation are the four most common purposes of social science research (Babbie & Mouton 2001). These research purposes are all located within a worldview and assumptions that make up the research paradigm. A standard definition of a paradigm is the epistemological, ontological and methodological premises that guide the researcher's actions (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). Epistemology refers to how we come to know about reality or create knowledge and understanding of the world around us. Ontology involves the philosophy of reality, categorisation of what reality is, it answers the why and how; and methodology comprises the practices and tools we use to attain knowledge of reality (Krauss 2005). All these are crucial

elements which will be used in this research to understand the competing gender discourses on the *Daily Sun*'s Facebook page based on the Ben 10 phenomena.

### **3.4 Research Design**

The research design describes the way in which the study is structured. It includes the plan for what data is needed, the methods to be used to collect and analyse the data and how all of this will answer the research inquiry (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 74). The primary aim of this research is to explore the understandings of gender relations - of the ways in which relations between men and women are constructed by the *Daily Sun* readers in response to popular Ben 10 stories. It also looks at how these online deliberations highlight social issues within South Africa's current democracy in relation to gender.

It is crucial that as the researcher when analysing text I also look at the assumptions that lie behind the content. There will be assumptions made about the *Daily Sun*'s Facebook audience and these assumptions need to be made visible if we are to understand the implicit message which a text or Facebook comment may transmit, over and above what is explicitly said in it (Morley 1992: 84). In regards to the actual published Ben 10 stories we need to understand that these media texts do not merely mirror realities but they constitute versions of reality in ways that depend on the social position, interests and objectives of those who produce them (Fairclough 1995).

This study uses a qualitative research design to understand the Ben 10 phenomena in 'World 2' or what is known as scientific knowledge which is acquired through methodological and systematic inquiry (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 270). A critical discourse analysis is used to capture online conversation and to track recurring themes surrounding this phenomenon and to evaluate how the *Daily Sun*'s Facebook community negotiates the meanings of masculinity and femininity in Ben 10 relationships. The interpretation of data is done with reference to the surrounding socio-cultural system, which again is conceptualised as historical configuration of social practices and interpretative communities (Jensen & Rosengren 1990: 218).

### **3.5 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

Critical Discourse Analysis is both an approach to research, and a method of analysis (Richardson 2007). I draw on both aspects. As an approach, there are several features of CDA which are relevant to this study. First, is the assumption that social and cultural processes and

structures are to a degree linguistic-discursive (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). This means part of everyday social life is shaped by the production and consumption of texts (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). Our daily social practices are discursive practices in as far as they partly involve the production and consumption (reception and interpretation) of texts, (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). This textual study of the *Daily Sun* focuses on the production dimension of such discursive practice as well as those of its Facebook readers. Discursive practices inform identities and social relations (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002; Richardson 2007). The way in which Ben10s and their sugar mummies are referred to in the *Daily Sun* constructs particular feminine and masculine identities or subject positions that may formulate new conceptions of gender relations or reproduce pre-existing ones. If taken up by readers, these subject positions contribute to the wider socio-cultural practice in society (Fairclough 1995).

Another critical aspect of the critical discourse analysis is that it assumes that discourse as a social practice both constitutes and is constituted by the social world (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). Discourse is on the one hand a form of action which through language may attempt to inform, expose, support or attack certain ideas and so change the social world (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002; Richardson 2007). I analyse the *Daily Sun's* Ben 10 stories as well as the readers Facebook commentary on these stories in order to determine whether these news articles and Facebook comments work to sustain, challenge or shift unequal gender relations. One also needs to note that critical discourse analysis is fundamentally a political project which is intended to bring about social change (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). By bringing to light and critiquing asymmetrical power relations in discursive practice, critical discourse analysis attempts to bring about radical social change in favour of more equitable relations of existence (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). I intend therefore, through this research, to create knowledge that will contribute to the pursuit of more equitable gender relations in the South African society. This will be done through looking at the discursive lens of the competing gender discourses on the *Daily Sun's* Facebook page by analysing the various media texts.

### **3.6 CDA as a method: Lexical analysis**

Critical Discourse Analysis also consists of a range of textual analytic methods, which may be applied in varying degrees to the text under scrutiny. Given the large amounts of data under consideration, I have selectively chosen the most useful elements from the CDA repertoire for my purposes. I primarily employ Lexical analysis, which looks at the choice and meaning of

words which do not only denote particular meanings but have particular connotations. It is therefore important to analyse word choice for both their possible, obvious and associated meanings (Richardson 2007). This analysis will be done by taking a look at five components: Naming and reference, predication, syntax and transitivity, presupposition, rhetorical tropes. These will be explored in more detail below.

### **3.6.1 Lexical analysis: the choice and meaning of words**

#### **3.6.1.1 Naming and reference**

Names in a text may reveal who the named persons wishes to be identified with or perhaps who the author wants the named to be associated with (Richardson 2007). Referential strategies are social categories which may be chosen to refer to a person and these choices have specific consequences for how the person is viewed (Richardson 2007). For instance, a woman may be referred to as a mother or sangoma while excluding her other identities such as her educational background for example. This is used to narrow the way she may be perceived. Similarly with Ben 10s, they might simply be boxed in this term and not much more is known about their social background.

#### **3.6.1.2 Predication**

The values and characteristics of social actors can be more directly represented through predicational strategies (Richardson 2007). Such strategies may include the use of adjectives, prepositional phrases, pronouns, metaphors and similes to highlight particular attributes of these actors (Richardson 2007).

#### **3.6.1.3 Sentence construction: syntax and transitivity**

Transitive analysis is an examination of the way actions or processes are represented. The key questions are “who (or what) does what to whom (or what)” (Richardson 2007: 54). There are many possible ways of representing one event – from the names chosen to represent those involved in it, to the description of how the processes occurred (Richardson 2007). There are three components of a process that can be changed in order to represent an event in one way or another.

1. The participants: predication and naming and referential strategies can be used to denote or connote certain meanings about participants.

2. The process: the process itself can be changed by particular uses of verbs. There are four kinds of processes that can be used in a sentence (Richardson 2007). These are verbal processes such as speaking, singing and shouting; mental processes such as thinking, dreaming and deciding; relational processes of being which are often signified by the use of words such as be (or is); material processes which may be transitive – involving two or more participants, for example in the phrase “she reads books”, or intransitive processes which involve only one participant, as in the phrase “she ran” (Richardson 2007).
  
3. The circumstances: there are two ways in which the circumstances of a process may be changed. Either through additional contextualisation by the use of prepositional or adverbial phrases or through the structuring or framing of relations (Richardson 2007). For example, in describing the same event pertaining to a demonstration that ends with an act of violence, one observer may say, “the Ben 10 attacked the sugar mama” while another individual may describe it as, “the sugar mama provoked the Ben 10”. Depending on the person’s interpretation of the event, s/he will describe the circumstances in a particular way which may vilify one group and make another appear as victims.

#### **3.6.1.4 Presupposition**

Presupposition refers to the way certain meanings which may not be made explicit in the text, are assumed or taken-for-granted by the author (Richardson 2007). For example in the statement “sugar mamas are damaging Ben 10s mentally” it is taken-for-granted that any relationship is two-sided.

#### **3.6.1.5 Rhetorical tropes**

Rhetorical tropes can generally be defined as the unusual use of words in order to denote or connote an extra level of meaning which can make arguments more robust (Richardson 2007). For example, commonly used tropes are hyperbole (excessive exaggeration) or metaphor (describing a thing or person in terms of something else).

#### **3.6.2 Visual composition interpretation**

Visual composition interpretation is one way in which we can interpret the hidden meanings material in the sampled news articles. In chapter four I use visual references (screen grabs) of the

actual Facebook posts and draw from a method of compositional interpretation proposed by Rose (2007). This method of visual analysis is useful because it enables the researcher to look carefully at the content and form of images to develop a sense of the possible impact the image could have on a reader (Rose 2007).

### **3.7 Social media research**

As discussed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a particular strand of discourse analysis that focuses on the role of language in society and in political processes. The aim is to reveal discourses buried in language used to maintain power and sustain existing social relations. However, since the internet and social media have come to define much of the way that we communicate, this brings numerous challenges and also opportunities for CDA. The relationship between text and ideology, and between the content creator and reader, appears to have changed. It is also clear that new methods are required for data collection, as content takes new forms and also moves away from running texts to language that is much more integrated with forms of design, images, and data. Also, new models are required to address how the technologies themselves come to shape the nature of content and discourse. (Bouvier & Machin 2018)

### **3.8 Narrative analysis**

A narrative analysis will also be used, which is a broader level of linguistic analysis (Prinsloo 2009), it involves narrative and argument analysis. Narrative analysis is an integral part of this study because newspapers tell stories. It is therefore necessary in the process of critical discourse analysis (which will be explored in chapter four) to analyse how these stories are told in order to identify and critique the meanings they privilege. In this research, narrative analysis of the sample texts involves an examination of their syntagmatic and paradigmatic structures. Syntagmatic analysis involves the identification and analysis of the sequence of events in the narrative (Prinsloo 2009). Prinsloo (2009) suggests the use of the narrative models of Todorov (1981) and Propp (1968) for syntagmatic analysis.

#### **3.8.1 Todorov's narrative model**

Todorov's (1981) narrative model consists of five stages. First, a state of equilibrium exists, which is followed by the second stage involving a disruption of this equilibrium. The third stage is recognition of the disruption, followed by an attempt to repair it, being the fourth stage. The fifth stage is the establishment of a new equilibrium, which differs from the first (Prinsloo 2009). The narrative outlines the process whereby the disruption is resolved, culminating in the creation of a new equilibrium, which is similar but not identical to the first (Prinsloo 2009; Fiske 1987). It is necessary in my analysis to pay particular attention to what constitutes the forces of disruption and to critique the nature of the final equilibrium in *Daily Sun's* stories of the Ben 10 and sugar

mama relationships for these draw attention to the discursive position taken by authors (Prinsloo 2009).

### **3.8.2 Propp's model of narrative**

Propp's (1968) model of narrative analysis provides a more detailed interpretation of a narrative's syntagmatic structure. Propp (1968) argues that characters in any story serve particular functions or purposes in moving the story along (Prinsloo 2009). He identifies seven character functions, namely the hero, donor, helper, princess, dispatcher, villain and false hero.

All characters may not be present in a narrative but every story has a hero. There are two kinds of heroes – the seeker hero and the victimised hero. A seeker hero goes on a quest and is driven by his or her desire to search for something (Propp 1968). The seeker hero can either be dispatched or voluntarily go on a quest. The victimised hero on the other hand tries to overcome some imposed difficulty or adversity (Propp 1968). This type of hero can be identified by his/her forced departure from home and the lack of a specific search.

The character functions operate within Propp's (1968) thirty-one sequential narrative functions divided into the following six sequential stages: preparation, complication, transference, struggle, return and recognition. A Proppian model of narrative analysis enables me to identify what details are left out of the narratives in *Daily Sun's* narrative of Ben 10s and with what effect (Prinsloo 2009). Who is constructed as the hero and who is the villain and what or who is sought after by the hero can point to the discursive position taken by the authors (Prinsloo 2009).

### **3.8.3 Lévi-Strauss method of myth analysis**

It is crucial to interpret the deeper meaning of the narrative once the syntagmatic structure of a narrative has been analysed (Prinsloo 2009). This can be achieved using Lévi-Strauss (1955) method of myth analysis. For Strauss (1955), myth is “an anxiety-reducing mechanism that deals with unsolvable contradictions in a culture and provides imaginative ways of living with them” (Fiske 1987: 131). To illuminate these contradictions, it is necessary to analyse the characters, settings and actions in a narrative in terms of their relations of similarity and difference (Prinsloo 2009). An assessment of the abstract binary oppositions such as good and bad and the manner in which they are metaphorically concretised, perhaps into irrational old women (sugar mamas) and smart young men (Ben 10s) respectively, provides a way of understanding the underlying meanings the text suggests (Fiske 1987).

In the example given, good is transformed to mean Ben 10s, while bad is transformed to mean sugar mama. The discursive consequence of binary oppositions can be, as in the example given, that one group is represented as inferior to the other. The purpose of analysing the binary oppositions in *Daily Sun*'s gender narratives is thus to evaluate the nature of power relations that are legitimised through the valuing and devaluing of certain people or groups (Prinsloo 2009).

### **3.9 Thematic Analysis (TA)**

This study utilised a four stage approach to investigate the recurring themes produced by the readers Facebook comments through a thematic analysis method. Thematic analysis can be applied within a range of research interests and theoretical frameworks, from essentialist to constructionist (Clarke & Braun 2013: 3), and is useful in a number of ways. First, it works with a wide range of research questions, from those about people's experiences or understandings to those about the representation and construction of particular phenomena in particular contexts. Second, it can be used to analyse different types of data, from secondary sources (Clarke & Braun 2013).

Four data reduction phases were used to analyse the Facebook comments from sixteen Ben 10 stories published from the year 2015-2019 which had the most social media engagement, these stories generated close to 11 000 comments in total. The story headlines are as follows: 1. My Ben 10 is my superman; 2. Ben 10 accused of sing Gogo Betty! 3. Ben 10s keep away; 4. Ben 10 runs away with stockvel money; 5. Zodwa is happy with her Ben 10; 6. Ben 10 to be Mr Zodwa; 7. Zodwa: It's all over; 8. My Ben 10 has vanished; 9. Evil Ben 10 killed our mum! 10. Ben 10's revenge! I dumped him so he set fire to my house! 11. Sugar mama stabs Ben 10! She was with another man; 12. Gogo's Ben 10 sex drama; 13. I live with my Ben 10 and my hubby! Woman takes a second husband for sex! 14. I'm a Ben 10 to make my life better; 15. Sugar mama stole my underpants! She was hot in bed but she ruined me says Ben 10; 16. Jealous sugar mama stalks Ben-10 Ex.

The first phase involves using Microsoft Word to place the actual online stories (text), images, website address and Facebook link of all sixteen stories. This was done in order to have the actual news article text, to better understand the content of the story. The second phase was preparing and organizing the readers' Facebook comments to ensure the data was ready to be analysed word-by-word to trace recurring themes. The third phase involved highlighting each of the five themes with a different colour for example Facebook comments relating to violence were highlighted in blue, comments about money versus love were highlighted in green, and comments surrounding the issue of HIV/AIDS were highlighted in red, comments relating to democracy and equality in yellow and, witchcraft comments were highlighted in orange.

The last phase of data reduction involves using the highlighted comments to break the data into smaller workable segments based on the various themes (Alhojailan 2012).

Once the themes were established, the analysis and writing up process began, which included summaries of the sixteen stories which were published online, and translation of Facebook comments which were written in various South African languages or vernacular. This research uses firstly, a manifest analysis, using the readers' direct comments by referring back to the original text, and in this way staying closer to the original meanings produced. And, secondly, a latent analysis in which I immersed myself in the sixteen stories to analyse the produced meanings (only summarised text is used) in Chapter 4. I also immersed myself in the readers' Facebook comments to identify 'hidden' gender discourse meanings (Bengtsson 2016). It is particularly important in the light of the view that meaning is defined by both the text produced by the newspaper and its audience (Hart 1991).

Content analysis is defined as a technique used for gathering and analysing the content of text. Content refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes or any message that can be communicated (Deacon 1999). Qualitative content analysis adopts an interpretive approach that seeks to explore the ways in which language and images are presented. When analysing texts we also have to look at the assumptions that lie behind the content. There will be assumptions made about the audience and these assumptions need to be made about the audience and these assumptions need to be made visible if we are to understand the implicit message which a text may transmit over and above what is explicitly said. (Morley 1992: 84)

### **3.10 Reflexive research**

Because this study is embedded in black, working class, township culture. I speak about my experience and personal encounters, to lift them out of the "True Confessions" genre and relate them to gender theory, specifically looking at behaviour constrained by our society's sex-gender system. This study also includes the challenges encountered in my epistemological stance and personal and methodological concerns shown in my reflexivity notes or insights in chapter 4.

As researchers, we need to be cognisant of our contributions to the construction of meanings and of lived experiences throughout the research process. We need to acknowledge that indeed it is impossible to remain "outside of" one's study topic while conducting research (Palaganas et al., 2017). Although, through reflexivity, researchers acknowledge the changes brought about in themselves as a result of the research process and how these changes have affected the research process.

The journey of discovering how researchers shaped and how they were shaped by the research process and output is an iterative and empowering process. More so when their positionality is challenged and the researcher acknowledges that reflexivity should be recognized as a significant part of the research findings. The value of reflexivity has been widely neglected. The absence of reflexivity in qualitative social research is surprising, perhaps researchers feared it would be unprofessional or intrusive to disclose their personal characteristics, or perhaps they thought personal disclosure would be inconsistent with editorial demands when publishing. (Palaganas et al., 2017)

Reflexivity pertains to the analytic attention to the researcher's role in qualitative research (Dowling 2006). It is both a concept and a process. As a concept, it refers to a certain level of consciousness. Reflexivity entails self-awareness (Lambert, Jomeen, & McSherry, 2010), which means being actively involved in the research process. It is about the recognition that as researchers, we are part of the social world that we study and this is reflected in this study.

Reflexivity as a process is introspection on the role of subjectivity in the research process. It is a continuous process of reflection by researchers on their values (Parahoo, 2006) and of recognizing, examining, and understanding how their “social background, location and assumptions affect their research practice” (Hesse-Biber 2007: 17). The key to reflexivity is “to make the relationship between and the influence of the researcher and the participants explicit” (Jootun, McGhee, & Marland 2009: 45).

This process determines the filters through which researchers are working (Lather, 2004) including the “specific ways in which our own agenda affect the research at all points in the research process” (Hesse-Biber 2007: 17). However, this does not mean limiting what one can know about social realities. The researcher’s positionality does not exist independently of the research process nor does it completely determine the latter.

Instead, this must be seen as a dialogue – challenging perspectives and assumptions both about the social world and of the researcher. This enriches the research process and its outcomes.

Practicing reflexivity is a significant component of qualitative research (Morse et al., 2002) but as a process, it should be embedded in all the principles (van de Riet, 2012) and “relate to the degree of influence that the researchers exert, either intentionally or unintentionally, on the findings” (Jootun, McGhee, & Marland, 2009: 42). Jootun et al. (2009: 1) also expressed, “inclusion of a reflexive account increases the rigour of the research process”.

The reflexivity insights of this study reveal position based on gender relations in relation to the Ben-10 phenomenon. This is shaped by the socio-economic and political environment and plays a fundamental role in the research process. Reflexivity must then be a part of our commitment. It must become a duty of every researcher to reveal and share these reflexivities, not only for learning purposes but towards enhancing theory building. (Palaganas et al., 2017)

### **3.11 Challenges and opportunities of social media research**

Technological advances have enabled widespread access to the Internet in most countries and the number of social media users has grown rapidly over the past decade (Kemp 2017). Social media usage is one of the most popular online activities. In 2020, an estimated 3.6 billion people were using social media worldwide, a number projected to increase to almost 4.41 billion in 2025. With over 2.7 billion monthly active users as of the second quarter of 2020, Facebook is the biggest social network worldwide. In 2025, the number of Facebook users in South Africa is expected to reach 26.8 million, up from 22.9 million users in 2020 (Clement 2020). This study uses the Daily Sun's Facebook page as a data tool to gather public opinions while also allowing the researcher to be a participant observer of these opinions. People's online activity in social media is also increasingly being used as a source of data for research (Wilson et al., 2012). Such 'secondary uses' include studies seeking to profile or understand users' behaviours, demographics, interactions and to assess their responses or sentiments towards particular topics. (Anstead & O'Loughlin, 2015; Murphy et al., 2014).

One of the most significant trends, from both a scientific and societal perspective, is the application of automated tools for mining and analysing social media as a means of revealing new associations or predicting future behaviours or outcomes. Increasingly this is taking place alongside data mining from institutional or business repositories, to link historical and real-time information (Smith, 2014). While the business sector has been using social media data for some time; such as to monitor brand reputation; their value for academic research is gradually being realised. In the United Kingdom (UK) considerable government funding has been invested in a network of major 'big data' research centres. Although these are mainly concerned with public sector administrative data (including health, housing and tax records, amongst others), recent investments include research centres focused on social media (Cardiff University, 2012).

There are a number of potential benefits of using social media in research which including the ability to reach larger numbers of participants than might otherwise be possible (Moorhead et al., 2013), being able to analyse trends and associations within large quantities of open-access data

(Paul and Dredze, 2011) and reducing the costs of conducting research in large populations (Munson et al., 2013). Social media research also affords researchers greater opportunities for interaction across extended time periods, as may be required in most social science research (Hokby et al., 2016). This also provides a channel for social research that is less prone to bias than approaches involving direct contact between researchers and participants (McKee 2013), and generates new channels for research dissemination (Balm, 2014).

Social media research is taking place across multiple academic disciplines and applications for research ethics approval may thus defer to a range of different bodies. This presents challenges for the effective oversight of such research where, it has been claimed, ‘no official guidance or answers regarding internet research ethics have been adopted at any national or international level’ (AoIR, 2012). Given the growth of research using social media platforms, and its potential implications for information privacy and confidentiality, it is timely to examine the extent to which existing research ethics guidelines take such uses into account and what additions may be warranted.

### **3.12 Ethical considerations**

Online research has the same features and characteristics as offline research therefore no new rules are required. This means that research ethics for online should be derived from the ethics of offline settings. With social media research, harm is a major consideration as confidentiality and anonymity is breached when user profiles are made public and can be traced by outside observers (Fielding, Lee & Blank 2008). Due to this threat, this study does not identify the *Daily Sun*'s Facebook users under their profile names to ensure anonymity.

### **3.13 Understanding the text produced by the newspapers and its readers**

The sources used in the Ben 10 stories which will be covered are stories of ordinary people. This is mainly because the focus of most of the stories is rooted in the lives of ordinary people, and this is also evident in the pictorial content of the *Daily Sun*. The paper puts emphasis on social issues that occur among the ordinary people as news, hence their slogan ‘our paper, our people’. These are in the majority of cases disadvantaged members of urban communities residing mainly in the township. As discussed in Chapter one & two, this is a key feature of tabloid journalism (Ornebring & Jonsoon 2004: 287). The stories are reported in or tend to be structured in the form of the African Folk tale which has a narrator, and are a fusion of fact and fiction, fantasy and romance with the occurrence, the unusual being the common trend (Matenda: 2001: 57).

In general the paper places emphasis on township gossip and rumour mongering all of them bursting at the seams with idiomatic and slang expressions usually reserved for spoken rather than written communication. It is quite clear that the *Daily Sun* uses the language of its readers which is conversational in nature and in so doing allowing the Facebook readers to interpret Ben 10 stories in a similar manner. This will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter draws on Raewyn Connell's notions of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity to argue that sexual practices are rooted in and flow from cultural ideals of gender identities. This frame also enables us to gain some insight into why the men and women in the *Daily Sun* stories behave as they do, given the emotional and material context within which their sexual behaviours are enacted (Jewkes & Morrel 2010: 1). It also considers some of the complexities of conflicts and expectations that surround heterosexual partnerships, love and money, marriage and morality. It takes into consideration studies on the materiality of non-marital sex, highlighting the vital role that gifts play in fuelling everyday sexual relations between men and women, and asks why this is a frequent explanatory factor for the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS.

This chapter examines the sixteen chosen Ben 10 stories and evaluates the images and choices of words used in the produced text. The full text of the original story is given, in order to ground the textual analysis which follows, which is carried out using elements of critical discourse and narrative analysis methods. The various texts are grouped under the following five themes that are derived from the readers' Facebook comments: Love in a time of chronic unemployment; Violence as a form of control; democracy and sexuality; The spread of HIV/AIDS; and Witchcraft. Within the thematic findings, I also draw on my own personal encounters with female relatives and family friends who have been, and those that still are, sugar mummies.

In South Africa, young people's sexual relationships are often underpinned by an economic exchange: gifts or favours for sex. Studies have pointed out the negative consequences of the exchanges that are often characterized by large age differences or power imbalances. Perhaps more pervasive but largely ignored, gift giving in like-age relationships may also be associated with sexual leverage, an exchange which somehow entitles one partner physical and sexual rights to the other's body (Kaufman & Stavrou 2004: 377). We have also seen how high levels of unemployment in the country mostly affect young black men. The first theme to be explored covers the issue of romantic love versus provider love in a time of chronic unemployment. It will also look at whether the sugar mama and Ben 10 relationship is any different from any other romantic relationship.

### 4.2 Theme one: Love in a time of chronic unemployment

#### Story 1: Appendix A

#### MY BEN 10 IS MY SUPERMAN



### Summary of the story

Gogo Flora Skhosana thought love had left her life forever when her husband died 10 years ago. But today the 80-year-old from Mohlakeng kasi, near Harrismith in the Free State, has a Ben 10 who makes her feel like a young woman again. Talking about her 34-year-old boyfriend, Morena Sethole, she said: “He is my superman in bed. He’s a hot bonker (good in bed) and I love him so much.” Gogo Flora started dating Morena two years ago and although he was unemployed, she hoped they would be able to get married soon. Morena said he’s never liked dating younger women because they complained a lot. “Flora is the love of my life. My friends used to tease me about my old lady but now they are used to me dating her.” When the SunTeam asked the lovebirds how they survived, gogo Flora said: “We’re living on my social grant and we also have a business selling veggies from my garden. Morena lost his job a year ago and we’re still waiting for his money from the unemployment insurance fund (UIF).” (Daily Sun 2017)

### Story analysis

This headline plays on the fact that Ben 10s are named after the iconic young cartoon character with supernatural powers (Bougard & Matsi-Madolo 2017). The way the *Daily Sun* has depicted Morena in the image is that of a man in control. The use of the word ‘superman’ depicts Morena (the Ben 10) as a hero, who “rescues” gogo Skhosana, the “princess” and “victim”. She now “feel[s] like a young woman again”, and is in love, a transformation brought about by Morena’s “magical agent”, his “[hot bonking]”. Whilst the phrase ‘hot bonker’ is used to show that he has

great sexual energy, it is also important to see how the narrative begins with sexual hero and then moves to unemployed man who lives off gogo's social grant and vegetable business. The story concludes with the representation of him as a man who is waiting on his UIF payment, and there is no mention of him looking for an actual job.

### **Facebook comments discussion**

The most noticeable reaction to this story was one of amusement, and the readers do not hesitate to display their feelings of absurdity, highlighting the irony that they read into the relationship:

**Boipelo Dibobo:** Lol (laugh out loud) sexual healing... the guy is also probably after the pension and life cover money.

This reader comments ironically that the Ben 10 is only after his older partner's pension money, an opinion which is shared by many commentators. However, readers try to rationalise the man's decision, citing poverty as the motivating factor for the relationship. The idea of "love" or "attraction" being part of this relationship is roundly rejected:

**Leo:** Indlala inamanyala (poverty is powerful) for this young boy to get his hands to granny's grant he opts to sleeps with her. No one can call this is love never. What attracts you to an 80-year-old woman?

Indeed, the man is constructed as "too young" for the woman concerned, and his mercenary motives - his desire for her "monthly grant"- is taken for granted and emphasised:

**Moris Khoza:** Morena you're so young to be in a relationship with granny. You don't love that magogo you only want only her monthly grant.

The following reader takes it for granted that his mercenary aims are bound to undermine the relationship, and the man will, it is presumed, "vanish" once he has achieved his objective:

**Duduzile Mpongose:** I'm sure this Morena guy will vanish once he receives the pay out money he's waiting for.

Poverty alone, however, is not enough for some readers, who look for other motivations to explain the man's behaviour. Thus the man is also presumed to be "lazy", and unwilling to work:

**Daphney Ngobeni:** There is no such thing as love here, what I see is a guy who is lazy to go to work who only wants ipension ka gogo klaar. (gogo’s pension money)

This comment highlights what is left out of the original story, as there is no mention in the report of Morena (the Ben 10) looking to find work again. This reader views the Ben 10 as lazy and happy to live off gogo’s pension fund; as above, the idea of “love” is rejected out of hand.

## Story 2: Appendix B

### **BEN 10 ACCUSED OF USING GOGO BETTY!**



#### **Summary of the story**

The stench of death hung over the house where the Ben 10 lived with his sickly old lover. But Ben 10 Happy Ngwenya (54) had an explanation for the smell. Apparently gogo Betty Majola wasn’t able to go to the toilet any more. When he emerged on Sunday morning, telling neighbours gogo Betty had just died, they didn’t believe him. They claimed Happy had been living with a corpse for days and only told them because he couldn’t take the stink anymore! Councillor Anthony Makhaye from Leslie, Mpumalanga said when they opened the door, they were greeted not only by the thick smell of death but by the fact that the gogo’s body had started decomposing. Then Happy vanished and their suspicions grew. “He has always been like this,”

said a neighbour. “He would leave gogo Betty alone in the shack. He never cared for her. All he wanted was her money.” (Daily Sun 2017)

### **Story analysis**

In this story a villainous Ben 10 conceals the fact that his “sickly” and “old” lover has passed on. The use of the opening phrase, “the stench of death”, which draws the reader directly into the story, evocatively emphasizes the state of the body of the dead woman. Gruesomely, the body is now “decomposing” and the shack where she died is filled with the “thick smell of death”. The older woman is constructed by her neighbours as a victim of the man, who callously “never cared for her” in life. He would “leave her alone in the shack”, for “all he wanted was her [pension] money”. In the story he is made to seem like he never looked after gogo while she was ill. He is also depicted as being afraid that, should he let her family and friends know that she has passed on, the SASSA grant would be closed and he would have no money to live on as he’s unemployed.

### **Facebook comments discussion**

In this story, in response to the gruesome details of the report, the amusement and ridicule that is noticeable in the first story above are replaced by a more concentrated examination of the role that poverty might play in the man’s behaviour. Instead, the readers’ Facebook comments below focus on the theme of unemployment and the temptation posed by the government grant to unemployed youth.

**Anita Boledi:** Being a Ben 10 won’t sustain you in the near future. Why don’t you find a job or something? I think that you’re lazy to think there are many careers to follow than giving yourself to gogo.

**Oupa Malope:** Hi wonderful people. As you know there’s a high rate of unemployment in South Africa.

These bold comments bring straight to the fore of the argument the high unemployment rate in South Africa, a situation in which young people are left “desperate”. Below, Siphso simply responds to Oupa that, due to the high unemployment rate, most South African youth are desperate to have some form of income:

**Siphso Kunene:** Other youngsters are desperate for cash.

However, the comments go on to probe the ‘relationship’ that is established between older women and younger men by the presence of the social grant:

**Bro Benji:** Errr'modende is the main problem. (The word ‘mondende’ is a common township slang word for government grant)

In other words, the “problem” here is South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) pension grant, not the man’s troubling behaviour. South African senior citizens who are 60 years and older receive roughly R1780 each month from the government. In the eyes of these commentators, young men “use” gogo’s to get their hands on some of this money.

This is, however, a simplistic explanation, considering the burden of unemployment is concentrated amongst the youth aged 15-34 years, as they account for 63,4% of the total number of unemployed persons. Almost 4 in every 10 young people in the labour force did not have jobs in the first quarter of 2019 (Stats SA 2019).

### Story 3: Appendix C

#### **BEN 10s KEEP AWAY!**



#### **Summary of the story**

Ntswaki Mokalapa is a 62-year-old pensioner. She said she's sick and tired of wanna-be Ben 10s who keep knocking on her door! "I don't need a Ben 10," said Ntswaki from Alexandra, northern Joburg. "I'm too old to have a man in my life. The oldest who came to me was a 30-year-old man! I turned him away. "I'm a pensioner and I'm happy being alone, raising my grandkids." (Daily Sun 2017)

### **Story analysis**

This story focuses on an older woman, Ntswaki Mokalapa, who constantly has young men knocking at her door as she is single. She mentions that she is happy raising her grandkids and being alone. She says she does not need a Ben 10. The 62-year-old gogo mentions that the oldest man to pursue her is only 30-years-old. The image used in the story is set in her home, and shows her, respectable but unhappy, as she talks to the reporter. It consists of a head and shoulders portrait, taken at an angle so that we can observe her face and greying hair. She is looking towards the frame of the image as she talks, and does not make eye contact with the viewer. The light-coloured clothes and background emphasise her dark skin, which is deeply pigmented on the cheeks, what in township slang is called 'chubaba', a condition that is normally associated with unattractiveness and old age.

### **Facebook comments discussion**

**Suya Golden:** I suspecting that those young aged guys are gold diggers they need pension money from gogo.

The choice of the word 'gold digger' is interesting in this case as it is usually used to describe a woman who is only after a man's money or riches. This reader therefore compares these young men (Ben 10s) to just that, men who are after older women's pension money.

**Mapasekarose Mpsi:** tjo ai nyaope e bataile hle (they are high on drugs) or maybe they just want your pension.

This reader alludes to the fact that they can't be in love with gogo, they are simply high on nyaope. [Nyaope is a mixture of heroin and dagga and other substances like sugar, baby powder or bicarbonate of soda] or they're simply after her pension money.

**Roanne Johnson:** Keep your pride gogo, don't allow these good for nothing losers

to corrupt you. They just want your pension and a warm place to sleep, kyabanda la ngaphandle (it's cold outside).

Defending the older woman, and commending her reticence and chastity - "keep your pride" – this reader reproaches Ben 10s as "good for nothing losers", useless young men who are only looking for a place to sleep and a warm body to lay next to. The phrase 'it's cold outside' also refers to the fact that they have no sexual partners (due to no material resources) and are looking to release their sexual frustration while at the same time cashing out gogo's pension money. As we have seen in chapter one, material resources are key amongst men in securing intimate sexual relationships: here, the combination of material want and sexual frustration has the potential to "corrupt" the older woman. A range of warnings and advice follow on a generalised reading of the Ben 10 character:

**MaHundreds:** They are just lazy gluttons who are craving to devour your pension money.

Their "desire" for sex and material resources is described as a hunger: Ben 10s here are "lazy gluttons", excessively greedy eaters who will quickly "devour" all gogo's money, an idea that links to the 'gold digger' comment above.

Ben 10s are also seen as blood sucking creatures – "parasites" – who simply just need money and a place to stay according to the following readers:

**Tshitari Munyai:** They want to steal your property those parasites.

**Tumie Mashiane:** Maybe they love your pension money and not you.

Indeed, it is impossible for a young man to love an older woman according to most *Daily Sun* readers:

**Stephens Letlalo:** If this Ben 10s are loving gogos for money, I now believe money is evil.

The Christian biblical teaching of money being the root of all evil is used to prove that it is indeed

true, that no young men could ever fall in love with a gogo. Instead, for these young men the Ben 10 relationships are seen as possessing merely monetary value, while the older women derive from them only sexual value. There is available evidence which suggests that young people in many countries attempt to take advantage of such relationships to meet their basic needs, upscale their living standard and outlook among peers or to get money, clothes, school fees, gifts and various favours in return for sexual relationships of some duration (Kuate-Defo 2004).

#### Story 4: Appendix D

### **BEN 10 RUNS AWAY WITH STOKVEL MONEY!**



#### **Summary of the story**

Gogo Nonkanyiso Dakuse (74) was a good stokvel treasurer. But then her 23-year-old Indian Ben 10 promised her discounted rates for the stokvel’s tour to Cape Town – and that is when the trouble started! The Ben 10, known as Mohammed Motsepe, has now disappeared with the sum of R65 000 belonging to the Transkei Retired Educators’ Stokvel. The members were told they would spend a week’s holiday at the five-star Table Bay Hotel and they would fly in an executive jet. “We almost died of shock when we heard Motsepe had disappeared with our money. “Nonkanyiso had told us that young man was her boyfriend,” said stokvel chairperson madala Sigidimi Xundu (84). “He said they hoped Nonkanyiso would be present at their last stokvel meeting, but she never arrived. “Police told us we can’t open a case because we gave the money voluntarily and we have no written agreement.” Nonkanyiso told the *Daily Sun* Mohammed told her that he was related to Patrice Motsepe. “He said he was rich and knew hotel owners who would give him discounts. “I know Mohammed loves me and he will bring back the money,” the gogo said. (Daily Sun 2016)

### Story analysis

This is a rare story of a Ben 10 being partly of Indian extraction, a race which is often considered to be wealthy in some black communities. The gogo, Nonkanyiso Dakuse, was, the report tells us, a “good stokvel treasurer”. However, “trouble started” when her Ben 10 enters the picture. By giving the ages of the victim and the villain in brackets in the first sentence, the report foregrounds their incommensurate ages. She defends him, asserting that Mohammed (the Ben 10) had presented himself as well off: not only did he say he “was rich”, but that he was also “related to Patrice Motsepe” (South Africa’s mining businessman and billionaire, a well-known public figure). The story makes it clear that it was not only the older woman but also her fellow stokvel members who were conned, lured by visions of five-star hotels and jet-powered travel. They have all been gullible; the image shows them, respectable and indignant, posting as a group for the *Daily Sun* camera. However, while the other members express their shock, Dakuse seems to be in denial that she was conned out of the stokvel money and she tries to salvage her image. The report ends with her quoted as saying “I know Mohammed loves me and he will bring back the money”, doubtless a calculated provocation of the reader on the part of the paper.

### Facebook comments discussion

The discussion is sparked by a reader who used to be a Ben 10. While unable to resist a laugh at her expense (lol), he kindly tries to give her some hope, and suggests that Ben 10s tend to return even after they have stolen money from their sugar mamas.

**Swaxboy Mitambo:** Lol (laugh out loud) don’t worry if he was really a Ben 10 he will come back...it’s not that easy to forget a sugar mama...#talkingfrom...

Another reader responds by finishing off the first reader’s hashtag (#talkingfromexperience) but poses it as a question. And alludes to the idea that the drawback is that Ben 10s only return when they are financially stranded.

**JDee Mrholozi:** From experience???? But he’ll only come back when the money is finished man.

The humour of this conversation between these two readers is based on the fact the one used to be a Ben 10 and is commenting based on his personal experience. He is convinced that the Ben 10 who stole gogo's stokvel money will return. However, the next reader also makes it clear that even if he does, he would have used up the money and probably coming back for more.

Some readers scold the gogo by asking her how she thought she would pay the Ben 10 for sex – she should know that sex, especially “super service” is not free (the word used is “mahala”, a jokey and knowing colloquialism):

**TaSporo Ntwana:** When you agreed to super service what did you think you were going to pay with? Nothing for mahala (free).

The use of the words ‘super service’ means sex, but not just sex, great sex. In other words, she simply paid the Ben 10 for his sexual services rendered.

**Nkosi Makhosazana:** Haaaaaaa he did the right thing. What the hell were you doing with him?

While some feel that it serves the gogo right to have lost R65 000 to her Ben 10, others feel that the Ben 10 is ungrateful, and that he ought to be ashamed:

**Tello Letele:** He must bring back the money, the poor woman was looking after him and this is how he repays her. Shame on you Ben 10.

Another reader makes mention of the fact that she has witnessed a Ben 10 vanishing with their older female partner's money and uses an emoji (an ideogram used in electronic communication) to express shock.

**Adi Dintwe:** Ijooh 🤔 same thing happened to my aunt.

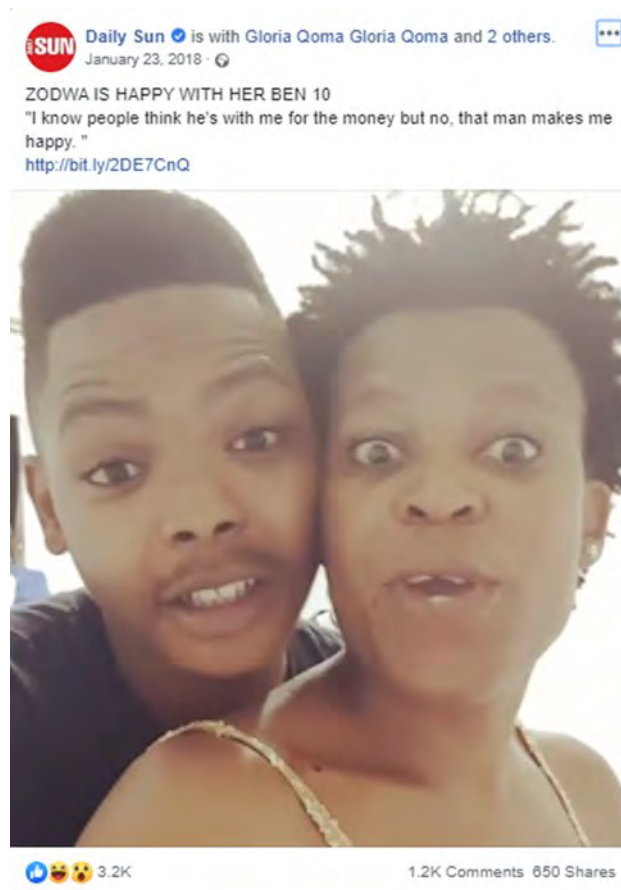
I can personally relate to this comment as I have an aunt who is in her late 40s and attracted to younger men. She is a famous musician and lives in Soweto. At one time, she was dating a 23-year-old man from Mozambique who was the same age as my cousin, her first-born son. She allowed this young man to manage her music career and finances, and ended up buying him an

expensive car, an Audi A6. After buying herself a ring and planning their wedding, he vanished with the car and has never been found since. She tried again a few years later with a local South African Ben 10 from Soweto who she helped get a driver's licence and new clothes. Just a few months into the relationship, he vanished with her brand new BMW. His excuse was that his family thought she was too old for him. She was lucky this time around as she had not paid off the vehicle, so the bank repossessed the car and the Ben 10 is now a pedestrian again. She, however, never went public with any of these relationships but the celebrity below has.

### Story 5: Appendix E

#### ZODWA IS HAPPY WITH HER BEN 10

**“I know people think he's with me for the money but no, that man makes me happy”**



#### Summary of the story

The dance queen Zodwa Wabantu caught herself a Ben 10. “That man respects me and he loves me. I know people think he's with me for the money but no, that man makes me happy. I'm in that space where all I care about is being happy, and he does it. I actually don't want the Ben 10 tag for him because people associate it with bad things. My man is not with me for that kind of

thing, we are just happy together” she said. (Daily Sun 2018)

### **Story analysis**

Zodwa, a local media celebrity, is revealed by the *Daily Sun* as enjoying a new relationship with a younger man. She takes some pains to draw a distinction between her lover and other Ben 10s. She declares the following words that this Ben 10 ‘loves me’ and ‘respects me’, and for these reasons she doesn’t want “a Ben 10 tag for him”, in other words a bad reputation. She simply wants the public to view this as a normal love relationship that has no material connotations: ‘we are just happy together’, she asserts. The image used is one she posted on her Instagram account, a selfie (an image taken with by the person with a smartphone’s front camera) of her and her Ben 10. This can be seen as shining the spotlight on her new relationship. In the image Zodwa and her Ben 10 are both smiling – Zodwa showing her characteristic gap-toothed smile, while he is standing behind her as a symbol of having her back, smiling quizzically. In this image we can also clearly see the age gap as this young man looks younger than Zodwa.

### **Facebook comments discussion**

The recurring theme of Ben 10 relationships with their older partners as simply being of monetary exchange for sexual pleasure is debated vigorously by the readers:

**Darlington Chabalala:** If she’s older than me but has money I can give it to her even in public.

The use of the words ‘give it to her’ means to have sex; using this charged expression, the reader voices his opprobrium at the idea of the collapse in values the Ben 10 relationship suggests. You can have sex in public as long as the older woman has money. A response to that is in agreement with the first reader’s comment by also makes mention of the idea that younger men like exploring their sexuality and in some ways do so with older, more experienced women.

**Neliswa Mrobo:** True. These young men like to explore and I am sure he eats bra Zodwa’s money with his girlfriend who is his age.

The word ‘bra’ here is meant to identify a man (“bra” is Afrikaans slang for “brother”). Zodwa, is identified as the ‘man’ in the relationship as she is the ‘provider’. This comment further mentions that the Ben 10 must have a girlfriend his age and is simply after Zodwa’s money.

Zodwa is notoriously known for dancing with no underwear on while drinking in Mzansi's most popular clubs. This reader makes a bold statement about the type of women a 'real man' would date, possessing the emphasised femininities which are submissive to men that we met in chapter two. He says that no man would date an independent woman who embraces are sexuality and sexual freedom unless it was purely for money:

**Mr Raymond:** Nah his there to cash in, no man will commit himself with a woman who show the whole world her punani (vagina).

The fact that Zodwa says that she is happy with her Ben 10 and that he is not in the relationship for money is contested by some readers:

**MaNolo Kgafela:** This young man 🤔 thou...Yes he makes u happy but he's in it for the money 💰.

**Tshidi Mofokeng:** Yeah he makes u happy, that's what he's been paid for.

**Chisha Nsunge:** This guy is just chewing your hard earned money.

**Awakhiwe Ngwenya:** Ja, he will make you happy until he sucks you dry (leave her penniless), you will never see him again seyekontanga yakhe (he will go to someone his own age).

**Nakedi:** He's making sure you're happy because he knows you have money. I know because I used to date a doctor who was 8 years older than me.

The readers reject Zodwa's interpretation of her new relationship as one based on love. Here we see yet another Ben 10 (Nakedi) who is expressing his view based on his past experience. This Ben 10 simply says that these young men are only in these relationships for money. This is the negative connotation which Zodwa tried to steer away from by saying that she does not want the Ben 10 tag for her 'man'.

**Enzile:** The joke is on you Zodwa, your Ben 10 won't tell you why he is with you, that

one is really there for your money my dear. Wake-up Zodwa, and next to this young man you look like a gogo😂😂😂. Did I say that out loud 🙊🙊🙊🙊 ? I couldn't hold myself.

The above comment is a warning to Zodwa, and the use of the words 'wake up' 'that one is really there for your money dear' makes this warning clear. The reader also mentions that Zodwa is making a fool of herself as she looks older than that young man (as seen in the story image). The readers respond to this post by pointing out the disparities between the young man and the older woman and the transactional nature of the relationship:

**Thando Mogwena:** He is more beautiful than she is. Who are u fooling Zodwa? If u think he is with you for love then you are more foolish than I thought. Why would a young boy like this date a person old enough to be his mom? It's your money. All grannies think they are clever and that the young man loves them for real. My advice is keep giving him money that is the only way to keep him.

**Percival Setlhare:** Vele (it's true), stop protecting him that's a job for him, ten round of sex from him, five thousand rands. Includes some licking for about two thousand rands that's business.

The Ben 10 tag is seen to come with certain connotations, and the main one is that being a Ben 10 is simply a form of 'prostitution'. The above comment views it simply as 'sex work', the use of the word 'job' and the mention of rates which he could potentially charge per round (sexual encounter) states this. As I have argued in chapter one, Ben 10 relationships cannot be seen as a form of prostitution but rather transactional sex, as they is a mutual and equal exchange of gifts for affection.

Story 6: Appendix F

**Ben 10 to be Mr Zodwa**



### Summary of the story

She asked Ntobeko Linda (24) to marry her and said she would pay lobola to his family. Now that they have agreed to be married, *Daily Sun* asked an important question. “Will your Ben 10 change his surname to yours?” “Definitely, yes,” said the famous dancer without hesitation. “We have talked about it and we agree.” She said people will start telling them about culture. “But culture has nothing to do with us. We were not there when old people decided to do things their way. We will decide things for ourselves,” she said. (Daily Sun 2019)

### Story analysis

In this story, Zodwa continues to flaunt her unconventional relationship and uses it to directly challenge customary practice with regards to gender relations. This challenge is constructed on a number of fronts. First, the image shows us the happy husband and wife to be, holding hands and smiling. The headline ‘Ben 10 to be Mr Zodwa’ plays on the fact that since Zodwa proposed she will be the one passing her surname to her husband, but in addition, she will also pay lobola for her young husband to be. The couple is said to have agreed on this arrangement which customarily is a man’s duty. She rejects culture and custom, brazenly declaring that “We were not there when old people decided to do things their way”. Rather, tradition has nothing to do with their relationship as they will decide how to navigate their relationship in their own way.

### Facebook comments discussion

The *Daily Sun*’s Facebook community reacted strongly to these provocative ideas: some adopted an amused or ironic stance, but others took umbrage at Zodwa’s cultural iconoclasm and had this to say about a man taking a woman’s surname after marriage:

**Ya Nwana:** This relationship was upside down. How can a man be a makoti (bride) and the woman be the husband?

**Angel Mafalo:** I have never heard of such a thing!

**Misis Jones:** The woman can propose but then she must take the man's last name.

**Spha:** Zodwa I'm available in case you want to be a polyandrist.

**Lebo:** I want to be a makoti (bride) husband too!

**KaMazana:** That's very un-African. As Africans we have our own values and beliefs.

In African communities it is considered taboo for women to pay lobola, as lobola is rooted in what Hunter (2010) terms 'provider love', and is seen as a sign of a man's ability to support his wife. With the decline of marriage and the rise of independent women as seen in chapter one, the concept of lobola being a man's sole duty is constantly confronted with the reality of everyday life lived on the economic margins.

In his ethnographic study set in Kwazulu-Natal, Hunter (2010) describes how on one occasion he heard residents gossip somewhat surreptitiously about a female teacher who had given her unemployed lover the money with which to pay lobola. Zodwa Wabantu on the other hand makes it no secret that she would be paying lobola for her Ben 10 (Ntobeko), which she did. Zodwa said she had spoken to her Ben 10 and they had agreed that he would take her surname. She also said to the *Daily Sun* (2019) "people will tell me about culture but culture has nothing to do with us, we will decide things for ourselves". She has however, since separating from the young man, come out demanding that the Ben 10's family pay her back at least half of her lobola money.

Story 7: Appendix G

**ZODWA: IT'S ALL OVER!**



### Summary of the story

Mzansi was stunned when Zodwa Wabantu proposed to her Ben 10. At the time, she said her lover made her happy and forced her to rethink marriage. The performer, whose real name is Zodwa Libram, had tongues wagging when she proposed to Ntobeko Linda during a performance at the popular Eyadini Lounge in Durban, flipping traditional gender roles, on 6 May 2019. It wasn't clear what led to the sudden wedding cancellation but Zodwa told *Daily Sun* she has taken a break from her relationship with Ntobeko. She said she was emotionally and physically drained and couldn't take any more strain. "The queen of the dance floor shocked her fans when she broke the news on her Instagram account. She wrote: "I'm losing myself. I need my spark back. I'm not happy anymore. Free Ntobeko, he's still growing. No wedding." (Daily Sun 2019)

### Story analysis

For regular *Daily Sun* readers, the headline, "It's all over", would have come as a shock, given the previous reports. "Zodwa: it's all over" announces boldly – again from her perspective – that the relationship has ended. The words 'I'm not happy anymore' stand in direct contrast to what Zodwa said when she first introduced her Ben 10 publicly. She mentions that she is "drained" and can no longer take anymore "strain". She cites her emotional and physical exhaustion, an oblique reference to the burden of taking care of her younger lover which could include emotional and financial support. She asks her fans to 'free him' (allow him to date other people in peace) as 'he's still growing'. This stated immaturity contrasts with Zodwa's referring to her Ben 10 as 'a man' in the first story. However, the *Daily Sun* chooses to directly refer to that fact that she proposed as a challenge to normative gender norms.

### Facebook comments discussion

The readers hardly seem concerned about the couple's break-up, and feel that it's a good decision on Zodwa's part. They also allude to the fact that the popular dancer could have only attracted this young man due to her 'bad' behaviour. The two readers below mention that her excessive public drinking causes her to make bad decisions, like undressing as well as dating younger men.

**Leornard:** It's good to make some very important decisions when you are sober.

**Thsuma:** Savanna is not good, you drink and undress.

Another reader feels that since Ben 10 relationships are preserved to only be for financial gain for these young men, Zodwa should continue to fund her former lover's lifestyle.

**Ponkie Madolo:** But please sisi continue to support the boy financially please.

While a response to this comment is as follows:

**Shune Ndlovu:** No more cornflakes for the little boy back to porridge.

The word 'cornflakes' is a reference to a middle class breakfast, whereas 'porridge' refers to a lower class breakfast, assumed to be the lot of the Ben10 before he got together with Zodwa. This reader suggests that Zodwa's Ben 10 would need to downgrade his lifestyle now that he has no sugar mama to financially support him. In this case, the mockery is directed at the young man, rather than at Zodwa, whose social status as a celebrity somewhat protects her from the censure directed at more hapless "gogos" who get taken in by ruthless younger men. However, Zodwa does not get off altogether: her calculated behaviour with respect to the young man, in light of her social status, is also censured and seen as deserving punishment. The comment that follows asks the *Daily Sun's* Facebook community to assist the Ben 10 in accessing funds from Zodwa, or purely to get revenge:

**Sandile Mdluli:** Guys let us help this guy, Lawyers come on what can Ntobeko sue Zodwa for?

However, the rights and wrongs of the relationship are overshadowed by a long discussion concerning the issue of physical maturity and sexual pleasure. This topic is sparked by a male reader who speaks about his genitalia in the following way:

**Mantshingilane:** Zodwa must take me to replace this pikinini (child). I have a long gigabyte (penis) I will satisfy her.

This reader not only asserts that he can provide Zodwa with sexual satisfaction due to the size of his penis but also argues in relation to this physical prowess that the Ben 10 was simply a child – a “pikinini”, a somewhat dismissive term – with no real sexual experience. But perhaps this commentator has gone too far: a response to this comment is as follows:

**Moss Makhaya:** She has tasted all types of gigabytes in the world, who do you think you are? Anaconda?

This reader mocks not only Zodwa, by referring to her promiscuous sexual appetite, but also the man who is offering his sexual services, mocking him that his penis will never be big enough to satisfy Zodwa. “Who do you think you are?” the writer taunts. “Anaconda?” implies that his penis would have to be the size of a snake to offer anything Zodwa new. This spat does not deter other male readers, and one man feels that he would be the right fit for Zodwa and this is what he has to offer:

**Frans Mphotholoz:** Buyakimi (come to me) Zodwa I am not expensive. I only need punani (sex) then I wash your clothes, cook for you and drive you everywhere in your car.

This man readily promises that he will do all the domestic obligations as long as he can be offered sexual intimacy with Zodwa; in effect, promising to take on the customary role of the “wife” within the relationship (with the exception, perhaps, of driving the car). In chapter two I discussed how socially gender norms separate men from household obligations and place them within a narrative of being a provider. Here, however, we see a man who has no material resources. He declares that he will drive Zodwa everywhere in her own car and that he is not expensive to maintain. We have also seen how due to the state of chronic unemployment in

South Africa, many men fail to live up to normative definition of a male provider but, this comment suggests that there are other forms of provision in heterosexual relationships.

In the story *Zodwa* also touches on the issue of age and mentions that her fans should ‘free Ntobeko as he’s still growing and that there will no longer be a wedding’. This reader comment emphasises just that:

**Radie Zee:** That boy still needs to grow and be aware of his decisions, grow up sonny don’t rush.

This sympathetic commentator views *Zodwa*’s Ben 10 as someone who is yet to reach maturity and realise his decisions. The reader mentions that he should not rush, referring to the wedding being cancelled. In most instances the Ben 10 is still seen as a boy and not yet a man. These are not just semantic differences, but definitive social categories. The general point to underline as far as masculinity is concerned is that age positions males in specific bio-psycho-cultural ways and hence differentiates within and between genders. In certain ethnic groups within South Africa, when a male gets to a certain age, he is permitted to undergo the rites of passage, such as *ulwaluko* among amaXhosa and *lebollo* among Basotho (Gqola 2007). These rites of passage, if successfully completed, reposition the young man bio-psycho-culturally; from then on, others within the culture are required to relate to him differently – as a man and not a boy.

Story 8: Appendix H

**MY BEN 10 HAS VANISHED!**



### Summary of the story

When Victoria met her Ben 10 she thought he was an answer to her prayer.

Victoria Sowane (51) from Masona Village in Bushbuckridge met and fell in love with a Ben 10 from Mpumalanga in 2012. “What I didn’t know was that he had ulterior motives,” said Victoria. Victoria, a pastor and nurse by profession, said her lover left her high and dry. “When we first met he presented himself as someone who was vulnerable. I learnt the hard way that he was nothing but a hyena in a sheep’s skin,” said an angry Victoria.

She said the Ben 10 had claimed to be an orphan. “He claimed to assist the less fortunate at my church. I decided to take him under my wing. With time we decided to formalise our relationship by getting married at home affairs.” Since her man wasn’t working, Victoria organised everything, including paying for the rings, which were about R20 000. “We were married in community of property. I even bought a car for us in his name,” she related. Sadly, the Ben 10 has gone missing . . . he has vanished into thin air. “He packed all the clothes I bought him and disappeared. He started showing his true colours. And he was cheating on me, calling me names like gogo. “He would even threaten me with death. I thought he’d change but he went from bad to worse. “He even sold my car to one of his relatives. He used to tell me he would never work as long as the world is full of rich women. “Imagine targeting those who’ve lost their husbands. I just want to warn women to be careful and not make the same mistake as I did,” said Victoria.

(Daily Sun 2017)

### Story analysis

In contrast to the self-reliant *Zodwa*, the *Daily Sun* positions Victoria as a victim who appears in the paper to tell the readers a cautionary tale. The accompanying image represents her as a professional woman sitting at a desk in her nurse uniform. She is also described as devout, a woman of God, “pastor” Victoria. It is crucial to look closely at the words used in the story to represent the sugar mama and her Ben 10 as there are constructing elements. When she first met him the use of the words ‘he presented himself as vulnerable’, ‘an orphan’, ‘I decided to take him under my wing’. She further uses the words ‘he left me high and dry’ and that she learnt the hard way that he was a ‘hyena in a sheep’s skin’. She trusted him, but he deceived her; she gave things to him, he took from her; she was transparent in her motives, while he is wolf in sheep’s clothing (he appears as something he is not). The story for her is structured around herself as the hero, rescuing him as a victim; but ultimately it turns out that he is the villain in disguise, and she the victim!

### **Facebook comments discussion**

Anti-Ben 10 relationship comments are prominent in the Facebook conversation. Victoria (the sugar mama) is said to not be a good role model to her church congregation, having had intimate relations with a Ben 10 while she is supposed to be their leader:

**Mokgadi Rammalo:** I wonder what you teaching people in your church because what you did is chicken murder. For the people who attend your church you misled them. Back to drawing board madam. You don’t pray enough you just making money from your church. Ladies out there are clever you are the only one left buying a Ben 10 a car. Wake up and smell the coffee.

The use of the phrase “chicken murder” is crucial, as it refers to dating someone way younger than you, who, like a simple chicken, can be easily “killed”. This reader also accuses the woman of not praying enough: in other words, she questions the sincerity of her Christian beliefs, an accusation that is repeated in the charge that she is “just making money from the church”. She is not a good example to her church congregation. In fact, she is foolish compared to most women, as she bought her Ben 10 a car.

Other readers agree, and scathingly dismiss her predicament as being brought on by her own foolishness. Instead of sympathising, they insult her roundly, sweeping aside any claims that she has made about her emotional attachment to her missing partner:

**Cayen Haylls:** wa phapha mom khulu (you are forward old woman) Ben 10 and

marriage in community of property, just imagine a panty on top of a dressing table so huge like a winter blanket, hai nawo lama (these) Ben 10s.

**Modise Senatle:** I don't have time for rubbish old woman who fall in love with young boys. baikapolela bana dipentie sis mane (they take off their underwear for kids, disgusting).

These readers express their disgust at the idea of an older woman in a state of undress, the one mocking her "panty", while the other castigates her for her indecency. The images are juxtaposed with shock, that the sugar mama married this unemployed man and, trusting him, has placed all her assets and financial obligations in one basket. Another reader poses a rhetorical question directed at the sugar mama based on this union in the following words:

**Zuntu Mzu:** You were married in community of property. What were u joining together entlek? You knew he wasn't working. What were u thinking from the beginning? Sorry to attack you. But this is obvious you married yourself with your money.

The phrase "you married yourself" as stressed by the above comment refers to fact that she bought the rings and paid for everything. She is asked by the readers how foolish she could have been to get married in community of property with someone who has absolutely nothing. While another reader calls attention to the fact that he could possibly return with the following intensions:

**Diana Delisile:** He's coming back for half of everything including your pension fund since you married in community of property Uzavuka (you will wake up).

This reader makes Victoria (the sugar mama) aware that the Ben 10 might file for divorce in order to get half of what she owns including half her pension fund. She is told that she will 'wake-up' (be wiser next time).

The reader above apologises to Victoria for having to scold her "sorry to attack you", acknowledging her humanity even if she has been foolish enough to let herself be taken in. Even though we have seen that some readers have portrayed the sugar mama as foolish and desperate, others are on the opposite side of the fence and have this to say on her behalf:

**Bongani Mthethwa:** It's not the end of life and he's an old tsosti (thief) hunting for single old women, especially professionals like you. Age it's not a problem if you love

someone just keep on praying, God will answer you.

The Ben 10 here is painted as a thief, a villain who steals money from older women. Contrary to the angry insults in the comments above, this reader also asserts that there is nothing wrong with dating someone younger as long as there is love involved and that one day “God will answer” her prayers. A response to this comment is as follows:

**Abuti Davies:** Bongani tell her to worry not she will never run out of Ben 10s. If that is her in that nurse uniform, I can drop my contact number.

Abuti agrees with Bongani, and encourages Victoria by pointing out that there is a large supply of Ben 10s. Indeed, he even offers himself to be her Ben-10 if that is truly how she looks in person based on the image of her in her nurse’s uniform. Following on this male reader’s offer to become Victoria’s Ben 10, another reader mentions his frustration, based on personal experience on the Ben 10 and sugar mama sexual encounters which sparks this conversation:

**Ntsako Ndhumanyane:** You can’t blame the young man he was probably tired, these sugar mamas will keep you awake the whole night until you sperm air. It’s like you are paying for chowing (spending) their moola (money). When you go out with them they start cuddling when they see girls your age, then they start controlling you.

**Mantombi Dhlamini:** Tell us more Ntsako, because it looks like you talking from experience.

**Ntsako Ndhumanyane:** I have been there ok, that’s all you should know.

This reader, who is a former Ben 10, speaks out about the great sexual appetite sugar mamas have. He used the words ‘sperm air,’ which means you end up running out of sperm and instead ejaculate air, as sugar mamas are said to never be satisfied. He complains that sex with older women is as if you are paying for spending their money. He also bemoans the way that sugar mamas are controlling, making sure that other women know that she is in a relationship with you, as to keep you away from dating people your own age.

This Facebook discussion takes a twist when a female reader asks for more information on the Ben 10 who has vanished to find out if he could potentially be the same Ben 10 whom she is currently supporting financially.

**Foxy-Brown Maleka:** What's his name? I'm currently supporting a Ben 10.

Instead of readers responding to her question, Ben 10s offer themselves to this female reader teasing her with the following commentary:

**Ntsako Ndhumanyane:** Sisi Fox-Brown, squeeze me in hlee (please) if he gets tired or vanish in December I'll be your Ben 10.

**Thabo Baloyi:** I'm available 24/7.

**Elder Bento:** Ben 10 available, inbox now. No vanishing, no calling you magogo, only true Ben 10 love. Inbox please!

**Bush Nkhwashu:** Count me in as well!

These responses to Foxy-Brown (the female reader) are by young men who represent themselves as wanting to be next in line to be financially supported by her. An older man also makes an attempt to let this female reader know that she should leave the young boys and be with him based on his commentary portraying himself as a 'real man'.

**Floyd Mohale:** You should come to me and leave the one you're currently having. A real man is waiting for you!

She responds by saying that his muscles make him look too masculine and somewhat violent.

**Foxy-Brown Maleka:** Tjooooo Floyd Mohale you want to beat me with those muscles.

He laughs and says he won't raise his hand to her but what he will do is carry her during sex and do things to her which other men won't do (this means give her great sexual satisfaction).

**Floyd Mohale:** Lol (laugh out loud) Foxy-Brown Maleka, I won't beat you. I'll make you sleep on my chest and carry you nicely! I'll do what other men won't do!

Amongst the banter, what appears is a deep appreciation of the benefits of sexual pleasure for well-matched couples. Sexual pleasure becomes an end in itself, outside of the social pros and cons of the couple's age difference. The rise of modern individualism is related to the decline of

social structures such as religion and the family. In this context, individuals develop a 'reflexive self' that constantly evaluates the environment and relations with others to make decisions about a course of action that is considered entirely self-determined. The reliance on the reflexive self to navigate the social world and generate individualised life strategies affects intimacy because the choice of a romantic partner is not as powerfully dictated by religion or kin. Rather, it is based on self-determination criteria such as mutual feelings of attraction, connection or chemistry.

Intimate relationships become the key to the project of self, expected to provide emotional and sexual fulfilment. Therefore intimacy becomes characterised as a functional tool to manage a world increasingly devoid of social support (Nayar 2017).

In the case of the material discourse we have just seen in various Ben 10 stories we need to take the following statement into account. The sharpening of individualism and market logic can be seen as neoliberal rationality as the norm for relationship tracking is based on progress which in this case is manipulated for return on investment and evaluated by the cost-benefit ratio. (Brown 2015 & Rottenberg 2014).

Other readers' Facebook discussion which relate to Nayar appear acutely aware of the commercialization of relationships, and some discussion support the above point of cost-benefit ratio:

**Sarah Msaries:** I was dumped by a Ben 10 for refusing to buy him a cellphone.

**Tshepo Devenish:** I am looking for a sugar mama please inbox me only if you have R10 million in your bank account and drive a Mercedes Benz SLS (sports car).

**Sicelo Shongwe:** As long as the old lady pays good money why not? She could be 134 years old, it doesn't matter, because a job is a job and some jobs are dirtier than others. Just respect the job, in this day and age money is king.

**Tsw Mashobane:** @Sicelo, sometimes when you give examples, make sure not to overdo it. 134 years is disturbing. Unless it's a good looking 134-year-old sexy vampire or an immortal.

**Sicelo Shongwe:** Ok then maybe from 30 to 60 years and they must have hard cash and a bottle of whisky, for every sex session.

**Ka Mdinyane:** I would love to have a sugar mama.

**Van De Levie:** It's not really about love, it's all about money neh, I see.

While a Ben 10 biasing is that of a young man who offers a certain level of affection or dates older women in exchange for money, clothing, shelter and special favours (Bougard & Matsi-Madolo 2017), we need to understand that transactional sex is perceived as non-material, as discussed in chapter one. This means that the Ben10-sugar mama relationship cannot be classified as sex work, as mutual emotional familiarity or attachment is central to it. The Ben 10 relationships therefore represent an intensification of a true romantic relation, therefore leaving room to attract those looking for a paid sexual encounter that is more authentic, spontaneous, fluid and customised to individual needs and desires than other forms of sex work (Nayar 2017). This is because sex is not traded impersonally for money, instead it is enmeshed in new forms of emotional ties and reciprocity – exchanges more akin to gift relations, marked by mutual, if uneven, obligations that extend over time. (Hunter 2010: 180)

Even though an intimate relationship between the Ben 10 and the sugar mummy could be identified primarily in terms of provider love in contrast to romantic love (Hunter 2010), sugar dating exemplifies what economic sociologist Zelizer (2005) calls a 'hostile worlds' argument which sees intimacy and the market as opposing forces, corrupting each other when combined. Challenging this position, she offers a 'connected lives' approach which argues that across a wide range of intimate relations, people manage to integrate monetary transfers due to mutual obligations without destroying social ties. Ben 10s seem to embody Zelizer's point that money cohabits regularly with intimacy and even sustains it. (Nayar 2017). Therefore, the key to understanding the materiality of everyday sex is not love's absence from the relationship but how money and love have come together in new ways (Hunter 2010).

When women and men talked about love, they expressed it in terms of doing something for someone else; when they talked of "doing something", they were talking about spending money. To "spend and spend" on someone was, in many contexts, a sign of the love of the spender; a love that is never for itself, but instead in itself constitutive both of the personhood of the spender and the social relations that spending enables (Cornwall 2002).

#### **4.3 Theme two: Violence as a form of control**

This thesis seeks to show how to think of males as a group whose actions against and domination

of females is structurally supported, without encouraging a wilful neglect of the conditions of males, who in their personal stations find themselves subordinate to those who are in ruling positions in society (Ratele 2008). One of the tools that have been used to analyse male violence and other male practices is that of “hegemonic masculinity”. This model has had a deep influence in masculinity studies that are concerned with relations of power. Hegemonic masculinity, as a sociological concept, is now well-known in Western research but its explanatory power extends into the heart of studies of boys and men in Africa (Ratele 2008).

Hegemonically masculine men are expected to be in control of women, and violence may be used to establish this control. Instead of restricting this, the dominant ideal of femininity embraces compliance and tolerance of violence and hurtful behaviour, including infidelity. (Jewkes & Morrel 2010: 1). In several African societies, traumatic acts of violence against women and girls go on daily – such that they may be referred to as part of undeclared yet public gender wars (Ratele 2008).

The South African Police Service (SAPS) crime statistics for 2018 also show that 67.3% of reported domestic abuse cases in South Africa which also involves sexual violence happen in homes (SAPS Crime Stats: 2018). At least three women die at the hands of their partners daily, according to the South African Board for People Practices (SABPP) Women’s Report (2019). These statistics on gender-based violence do not only reveal a crisis in South Africa but also the fact that gender power inequality in relationships and intimate partner violence places women at enhanced risk.

Story 9: Appendix I

**EVIL BEN 10 KILLED OUR MUM!**



### Summary of the story

Nobengazi Matshoba (50) was found dead in front of her new RDP in Missionvale kasi, Port Elizabeth, at 5.40 am. According to her family, Nobengazi met the Ben 10 – who is believed to be about 40 years of age and from New Brighton – three years ago while he was living in a backyard shack in her yard. Nobengazi’s daughter Ntombizandile (20) told *Daily Sun*: “My mum and her boyfriend had been fighting for the whole week because she had dumped him and told him to leave her property. “We found our mum lying in a pool of blood near the gate. She had deep wounds on the back of her body and an axe was lodged in her head.” Nobengazi left behind six kids, and three grandkids who all depended on her financially as she earned a monthly income as a domestic worker. The Ben 10 was a drug user and allegedly also took the deceased’s handbag which contained money and her cellphone.

### Story analysis

This is a devastating story of a woman who was brutally killed by her Ben 10 for asking him to leave her yard. She was found in a pool of blood and the axe was lodged in her head. This woman was the sole breadwinner in her family, taking care of her kids and grandkids. The Ben 10 is said to have been a drug addict and a thief. The image used in the story of the 20-year-old daughter holding up an image of her deceased mom, while wearing a doek on her head to show that she is still mourning her mom’s death, emphasises the pain that this family is going through.

### Facebook comments discussion

The Facebook deliberation between the *Daily Sun*’s readers is split between the fact that violence is a form of crime and, what is perceived as an immoral act by older women who have romantic

relationships with younger men. Here we see two readers who sends out a warning in the following words:

**Thandi Thetyana:** Women please, please stop dating Ben 10s they very cruel.

**Philisiwe Sibiya:** These Ben 10 are scaring me now!!! This is not the first woman to be killed by a Ben 10. I know a lady who was stabbed to death by a Ben 10, ladies be careful Ben 10s are very jealous don't take them for granted.

This reader warns women about the violent outbreaks relating to Ben10 relationships while others feel that sugar mamas are simply asking for it. Again the readers contest whether the violence against sugar mummies is really a crime or, if the real crime is committed by these older women who date younger men.

**Lithole:** Killing is very wrong but also getting involved with Ben 10 is also wrong.

**Steven Chomutuku:** What's wrong with these mamas can't they find someone their own age?

**Dave:** How do they feel dating young boys? I think sugar mamas need to see a doctor they are not well.

**Mashudu:** Askies (sorry) but that's what Ben 10s do.

**Thembi Mshengu:** They call them Ben 10s because they are younger than them, they are spoiled brats who don't want to work and these older women do everything for them. So what do you expect after they dump them, when bread is taken out of their mouth? I think we as women must Stay Far, far away from Ben 10s, they don't need a lover but a blesser.

**Mandla** responds to Thembi by saying: Ben 10s are trending these days, they don't want to be dumped. Last week one of them set fire to the sugar mama's big house. So sugar mamas please don't say it's over to us.

**Wa Mothokoa:** Eish this so bad to lose a mom just because of a useless drug abuser.

Anyway let this be a lesson to other older woman, don't ever be so desperate please.

Here, the readers try to find a solution to the problem of violent Ben 10s and their victimised sugar mamas, debating the pros and cons of the case and extrapolating to the phenomenon at large. The one reader (Lithole) seems to compare dating a Ben 10 and killing as equally wrong. However, another reader (Steven) is not concerned with the fact that the Ben 10 is a murderer; rather, they place the blame on women who date younger men. The comment further states that women who date younger men 'are not well' (mentally ill) and in need of medical attention. The use of the words 'but that's what Ben 10s do' by Mashudu stereotypes Ben 10s as a class of men who are likely to be violent, and reinforces unequal gender relations and ideologies of this form of masculinity. The comment made by Thembi looks at the fact that these young men are financially dependent on older women and that when that financial support is taken away they may react violently. She also warns women to stay away from Ben 10s as they are only after money and not love. The response by Mandla (a Ben 10) warns sugar mamas that they should never end their relationships with these young men as they will most certainly react in a cruel and violent manner. The use of the word 'desperate' by Wa Mothokoa gives another dimension to the Ben 10 phenomenon, for older women are seen as desperate for love. But in the context of some of the comments we have seen so is the Ben 10, desperate for love and support.

This discussion is taken further by readers who argue that Ben 10s should be held accountable for their violent crimes and that women have the right to navigate their own sexuality. Issues of morality and manhood are also explored:

**Gumbi Radebe:** Ben 10 or not this man should rot in jail.

**Lerato Moratuwa:** I don't understand one thing, if I date a younger man than me, does he have a right to abuse or kill me? Please Mzansi, I'm waiting for your honest answers.

This reader asks a very crucial question and highlights the fact that violence is wrong regardless of the situation it takes place in. However, a response to this is as follows:

**Maria Nguni:** The wage of sin is death.

This punitive response is set in a religious or Christian philosophy and constructs the idea that older women who date younger men are sinners and therefore deserve to die. But this is an extreme response. Others are not as punitive, while at the same time espousing customary norms as an answer. For example, the next reader looks at the normative gender role of a man as the ‘head of the household’ and argues that a man should always be older than the woman he is having sexual relations with.

**Wa Mothokoa:** A man is born a leader and should be older than the woman he’s dating.

However the idea of a man as the head of the household, or the breadwinner seems to be deeply contested in modern society; “The fact though is that in most African countries opportunities to fulfil the burdens of masculinity are slim. Unemployment levels in the formal labour sector are high; and salaries for the majority of people are below the poverty line. On this basis we can hypothesise a link between levels of both instrumental and expressive male violence, and levels of unemployment, specifically unemployment in contexts of great income inequality, such as in South Africa.” (Ratele 2008: 529)

As stated in chapter two violence is a part of the structure of power. It is deeply embedded in power inequalities and ideologies of male supremacy. It is seen as a significant act of the enforcement of social order. Most of the comments above view sugar mamas as sick, needing help, or needing to be abused in order to learn a lesson. Even though some readers speak of social justice and are against male violence most of them are simply reinforcing patriarchy by saying that these women should date people their own age, warning them about dating younger man and by simply saying this is how Ben 10s behave, “boys will be boys”; in other words, violent and untrustworthy.

Story 10: Appendix J

**BEN 10’s REVENGE! I dumped him so he set fire to my house!**



### Summary of the story

When Sangoma Janet dreamt she was living in a shack, she should have known it was a warning from the ancestors. Because soon after that, her raging Ben 10 allegedly destroyed her house and stole her possessions! Now Janet is living in a back room and the Ben 10 is behind bars. Janet Letswalo (56) told the *Daily Sun* she didn't know she was heading for trouble when she took a Ben 10, aged 35, into her 10-roomed house and her double bed over a year ago. She mentioned that at first it was great, but then she realised that their relationship could never last as they had too many differences. So when she went to a family gathering that Friday she told him to pack his things and get out of her house. But before she even reached the gathering, she got a call from a neighbour who said her house was on fire. The Ben 10 had set her house alight and she could not even determine the cost of her loss. "Everything I worked for over so many years has gone up in smoke," said Janet, sitting in the back room of her house in Sebokeng, in the Vaal. (Daily Sun 2017)

### Story analysis

The irony of the story is derived from Janet's social position and power as a sangoma, a traditional healer who has the gift to see into the future. Ironically, she is unable to clearly see what the Ben 10 would do. In the image she is seen wearing the beads which are associated with the calling of being a sangoma, the image invites us to look at her, as she stands outside the ruins of her large township house, which she says she had worked for over so many years. The story emphasises the man's villainy, for the only reason given for the Ben 10 burning down her

house is that she asked him to pack up all his things and leave ‘her house’. The use of the words ‘her house’ and ‘her double bed’ portrays the Ben 10 as someone who came to her with close to nothing, what is called *rabaki* in township slang, a man (ra) who moves into a woman’s house with only his jacket (baki) and no other material possessions.

### **Facebook comments discussion**

The commentators on this story are punitive. It appears that a woman who breaks up with a younger man must accept whatever he decides to do to her in revenge:

**Buyi Bam:** Serves you right what were you doing with a small boy.

**Miya Mapule:** That’s what you get for dating a kid.

**Samantha Makhanya:** A 21 year age difference you’re shameless.

**Morapedi:** You lucky he didn’t burn you to death.

**Khadzi Munyangane:** No one dumps a Ben 10 and gets away with it mommy.

**Tumi Phaka:** He set it on a little fire, he could have burned the whole house including you. You’re busy stripping naked in front of a kid. How do u expect a kid to behave when u take away his lollipop?

**Nkuna:** You gave him a home he bragged about assuring him he’s the man of the house, then you chase him out after finishing him in bed. You brought this to yourself. What about his efforts? He can’t just burn that house for no reason.

**Motsamai:** I mean what did you expect, he is a Ben 10 after all not mature enough to handle a break up.

**Lucky Dabula:** If it was someone your age that shouldn’t have happened. He took the flames from the bedroom and put them on the rooftop of your house. Next time go for someone your age or older.

The above comments seem to enforce the idea that it serves her right for dumping the Ben 10. Another reader (Tumi Phaka) makes it seem immoral for an older woman to sleep with younger man. This reader also uses the words ‘take away his lollipop’ which is the ‘sugar’ he is now addicted to, referring to either the sex or the financial support. The use of the words ‘man of the house’ by one reader (Nkuna) shows us that the Ben 10 had a false impression of being in charge. The Ben 10 is said to be too young to handle a break up and is therefore justified in his act of violence by Motsamai; while the idea that he was chased out after being used sexually is emphasised by the words ‘you chase him out after finishing him in bed’ by another. Lucky says that the heat that the sugar mama felt in bed has not caught up with her and that she should have dated a man and not a boy.

Not all readers agree with this punitive and violent reasoning: a male reader responds by saying that man should take no as a no, if a woman says it’s over the man should accept it and move on peacefully. He reinforces this opinion by arguing that killing a woman or destroying her property is a sign that the man is a coward. This opinion is supported by the next reader, who contests the idea that it is the Ben 10’s age that is the primary factor in acts of violence. Any “stupid” and “jealous” man is able to do what the Ben 10 did.

**Mzwandile Mbatha:** But guys we must be proud of ourselves, if the lady says it’s enough let’s accept and leave peaceful. Killing or destroying is a sign that you’re a coward.

**Boity Lady:** Say thanks no one died inside the house that is just a material thing you will work hard again and fix it. I’m sorry mama you have my condolences and to those who judge you for being with a Ben 10, even an older man of your age who is stupid and jealous could have done that.

If even an older man might have done the same, then the idea of violence is not just an act of transgression by younger men but rather the outcome of a masculine syndrome. Most readers seem to think that sugar mamas deserve whatever happens to them in their Ben 10 relationships, as their sexual and social union is viewed as immoral. The sugar mamas are portrayed as villains by some commentators; in order to avoid censure, they should be dating partners their age:

**Ngwak Melva:** But old grannies what is your problems, why don’t you date your old

match and stop dating kids this is disgusting, now see where you end up.

**Mponda Kamanga:** You wanted a fresh young penis to leave a mark on you. No one dumps a Ben 10 and gets away with it after milking him unless he says it's over.

This comment describes the Ben 10 as being “young” and “fresh”, with the implication of innocence and vulnerability. The older woman is said to ‘milk him’ (sexually use him) and dump him. The implication is that by virtue of this service, only the Ben 10 determines when it's over, not the sugar mama. However, a contesting view is that of a reader who views both the Ben 10 and the sugar mama as immoral by partaking in cross-generational sexual relations: while the woman is “disgusting”, the younger man, a “boy”, has “no shame” and should “get a life”:

**Siphiwe Sphumy:** That's a good lesson to be learned by Magogo (granny) who dates young boys, iyanyanyisa jhoo (you are disgusting). As for the Ben 10, awunahloni (you have no shame) that's your granny, get a life boy.

While we have seen how strongly some readers oppose the idea of older women dating younger men, other readers make mention of age being nothing but a number, and compare the relationship to the common practice of older men dating young women.

**Nhlapo Zulu:** Age is just a number! The Ben 10 is a loser period.

**Busisiwe:** There is nothing wrong in dating a younger man same as is not a taboo for an older man to date or marry a younger woman... age is nothing but a number!

Nhlapo argues that relationships should not be judged based on age and that they should also end peacefully. In the same vein, Busisiwe mentions a crucial point, that it's not taboo for an older man to date or marry a younger woman, and therefore there should be nothing wrong with an older woman dating a younger man. Early gender research aimed to understand what it was that allows women's social subordination to men to continue (Carrigan, Connell & Lee: 1985). And we can clearly see from the above comments that these violent men are mainly seen as doing what's right, putting these older women in their place, instead of offering a reflection on toxic masculinities.

Forms of violence against women by males as well as legislation and cultures which shore up such violence as exemplified above, are one set of justified cautions that have been advanced for the “turn to males and masculinity” in interventions and analyses of gender power and sexual violence (Ratele 2008). On this basis, and given the fact that “most political, cultural and religious leaders around the world – those in better positions to influence change – are also men” it is vital to engage “men to end gender-based violence” (Ratele 2008: 518).

### Story 11: Appendix K

#### **SUGAR MAMA STABS BEN 10! She was with another man**



#### **Summary of the story**

He thought he was the only man in his sugar mama’s life. But Ben 10 Siphwe Tshabalala (29) got the shock of his life when he found her in another Ben 10’s arms! Siphwe allegedly went crazy and started fighting them, so the sugar mama (43) allegedly took a knife and stabbed the jilted Ben 10 to death! Siphwe died on the spot. After the incident, the woman ran away but then handed herself in to the Tembisa police station and is facing a murder charge. Siphwe’s angry family said they hoped the woman would rot in jail. She was homeless but Siphwe took her in and gave her a place to stay. The family never liked Siphwe’s sugar mama from the start, said his sister-in-law Sina Rantho (in the story image). “She was too old for him. We tried to warn him not to continue the relationship, but he insisted. “Siphwe told us he had been trying to get

the right person, but the women he found cheated on him. He thought because his sugar mama was mature she wouldn't do the same thing. His older lover not only cheated on him, but murdered him. Rantho also said the sugar mama had brought two children from her previous relationships with her and Siphwe was taking care of them. (Daily Sun 2015)

### **Story analysis**

This particular story is a twist to the Ben 10s we have been introduced to in the previous reports: in contrast to the preceding stories, here it is the woman who is the murderer, who kills the younger man in a crime of passion. Siphwe is constructed as both a hero and the ultimate victim of this narrative. Unusually for a Ben 10, he is employed, and he has taken a sugar mama – unusual, also, for being homeless – into his home with her two kids. He is portrayed by his family as a responsible young man who not only gave the sugar mama a home but also her two children from previous relationships. The sugar mama is portrayed as ungrateful for cheating on the Ben 10 who provided for her. While the Ben 10 is seen as a young man who has been cheated on multiple times and only wanted a good woman. The story tells us that Siphwe (the Ben 10) told his family that he had been trying to get the right person, but the women he found cheated on him. He thought because his sugar mama was mature she wouldn't do the same thing. The use of the words 'he went crazy and started fighting them' shows his anger and disappointment after finding the sugar mama in another young man's arms. The story plays on the reader's emotions by portraying the sugar mama as the villain who killed the Ben 10, ran away and eventually turned herself in to the police; and the Ben 10 as a hero who took a sugar mama into his family home, got criticised for it, stuck with her and died while defending their relationship.

### **Facebook comments discussion**

This story is interpreted by readers as a warning for younger men to stop being in romantic relationships with older women:

**Booyesen:** Beware of sugar mamas.

**Mgere Manqele:** Bafana ngithi phumani konyoko bukani manje sebeyanibulala. (Boys leave this Ben 10 life behind, look now sugar mamas are killing you).

This reader warns Ben 10s to stop dating older women as they could be next. One young man's

response to these warnings is as follows:

**Luna Slindile:** Eish these sugar mamas! I'm scared now

He expresses his fright at this act of violence by an older woman, implying that he might be exposed to similar treatment. The Facebook comment which follows validates the portrayal of the sugar mama in the story and suggests that the *Daily Sun's* Facebook admin should have use the following wording in their headline:

**JDee Mrholozi:** You see...he didn't want to listen now he's gone and Admin she's a KILLER Mama NOT Sugar Mama, kanti for the WHY (but why), eish!!!

For this reader at least, the woman is simply a "killer", not simply an older woman in a relationship with a Ben 10; the man is also at fault for he "didn't want to listen". The man's motivation comes under scrutiny here. A rhetorical question about such young men's aims is posed by one reader while directly stating that he would never have sexual intercourse with an older woman.

**Zorrhho Magena:** What do young boys want in these sugar mamas? It is in fashion these days. I don't see myself sleeping with an older woman it is taboo.

Sleeping with older women is seen here as both a "fashion" and a "taboo", a fraught contradiction, something both desirable and repulsive. In response to the above Facebook comment, Mablessing Moseki (an older woman) agrees, and says "me too I will never sleep with someone younger than me...imagine. Both readers state that personally they would not date outside their age range and believe that cross-generational sex is absolutely wrong. More readers are in agreement with these comments as the following indicates:

**Dineo Ramaite:** This Ben 10 thing is annoying now boys where is your respect.

**Brenda:** What is up with these grannies dating young boys old enough to be their kids? Where are your morals? You disgust me.

**Charlotte Tebbs:** And this old mama lol (laugh out loud), isn't there men of her age out

there geez man.

These readers view both the Ben 10s and sugar mamas as lacking self-respect, and their actions incur their visceral disgust: the women have no “morals”, as they are “grannies” who “date boys” (“geez man”, a South Africanism, expresses impatient contempt); while the men (or “boys”) should know better. This condemnation however, does not go unchecked, as the following comment suggests:

**Thato Sekese:** You should stop judging others because when it’s done by a young girl dating older men it’s a good thing. But come on black people the matter at hand is the person’s life here.

Thato boldly brings into the conversation the fact that older men are rarely judged for dating younger women and goes as far as chiding the readers, who are understood as constituting a particular social group which needs to be admonished: “come on black people”. Unlike the commentators above, for this reader the gender order is not the issue: rather, the issue here is the murder of the Ben 10 and not whether Ben 10 relationships are right or wrong. However, more mundane reasons are sought to explain the woman’s behaviour. One response to this is that the sugar mama simply acted in self-defence:

**Pantsula Motsamai:** She knew that Ben 10 was going to bliksem her.

By using the word ‘bliksem’, a colloquialism that refers amusingly to the act of beating someone up, this reader suggests that the sugar mama knew that her partner would react violently to the discovery of her infidelity, and therefore had to act out of self-defense. Another reader response to the fact that the sugar mama was found in another man’s arms, cheating with the following rhetorical question:

**Masala Maths:** Tjo, so Ben 10 lost energy?

This comment uses the colloquial ‘tjo’ an expression of shock while the reader refers to ‘energy’ as sexual energy and insinuates the fact that maybe the sugar mama cheated on the Ben 10 because he lost his sexual energy and could no longer satisfy her in the bedroom.

Growing up in Sebokeng, Zone7, notorious for its high crime rate, I had the unfortunate experience of seeing the woman next door, who happened to be a regular at my grandmother's shebeen, stab her Ben 10. She cut her Ben 10 with a broken beer bottle on his bum several times due to his refusal to have sex with her. He later passed away due to having lived with HIV for years and not being on ARVs. I was 10-years-old at the time and also attended his funeral, as in most township communities, everyone is family. The lady next door (the sugar mama) is still alive and has been dating yet another Ben 10 for over 15 years now.

While most of the research and literature on violence focuses primarily on men being the perpetrators of violence. I argue that the above cases suggest that women too can be violent and are violent when they defend their interests within relationships. Infidelity is almost always seen as an attribute of masculinity but it is a natural human behaviour that both men and women are capable of. The fact that we all have desires means that we also could potentially desire a different sexual encounter or partner.

#### **4.4 Theme three: Democracy and sexuality**

This theme explores the femininities that rest on women's economic independence and sexual satisfaction (Hunter 2010). It will also explore conversations surrounding sex being pleasurable for both men and women. This thesis argues that while women do comply with prevalent social norms, they also challenge these norms and sex becomes a domain in which they can exert power. Female sexuality and sexual gratification – acknowledged and valued by women as well as men – play a pivotal role in the mode of sexual intercourse. This provides women a central position in sexual relations, which affords them sexual power. Women should be seen as active social agents who have the capacity to challenge male dominance in both to practice safer sex and to access decision-making power and material resources. This suggests that inherent in sexual relations is a potential for the empowerment of women and the transformation of gender relations (Skafté & Silberschmidt 2014).

Story 12: Appendix L

**GOGO'S BEN 10 SEX DRAMA!**



### Summary of the story

Gogo Sophie (76) and her Ben 10, Keneels (36) have a great time in bed.

It seems the gogo's neighbour, Tello (52) also wants some of what Keneels is getting.

But gogo Sophie refuses, no matter how much money the neighbour offers her. "I am in love with my Keneels and he satisfies me all the way!" said Sophie Dimpane. "But my neighbour is always after me. He wants me to sleep with him so much he has even offered me money for sex," she claimed. (Daily Sun 2015)

### Story analysis

This story centres on the sexual satisfaction enjoyed by the couple, while its humour derives from the older woman's refusal to entertain her jealous neighbour. The couple is said to have a great time in bed, so much so that the neighbour is tempted to sleep with "gogo", as he "wants some of what Keneels is getting". Sophie, however, refuses, and emphasises that she is in love with her Ben 10 and would never sleep with anyone else. The use of the words 'he satisfies me all the way' seem to emphasize how great the sex is for her. The image used in the story shows the couple hugging while facing the photographer, looking out of the frame of the image at the viewer and demanding the viewer's response. He smiles broadly, indicative of his happiness, while she leans her head on his chest, her arms around his neck, and looks thoughtfully, and even challengingly, at the viewers, defying them to question their happiness.

### **Facebook comments discussion**

Here we see how *Daily Sun* readers debate issues of gender equality and sexuality: while some feel that gender equality should prevail, patriarchal ideologies are sometimes still at play. The premise of the debate is set by a reader who points out the constitutional rights enjoyed by women in South Africa:

**Steady Chumisa:** SA freedom 50/50 uzosala wena zibhekele owakho nawe (don't be left behind find your own partner).

This comment evokes women's right to gender equality (freedom as the reader calls it) and the writer encourages that people should date whomever they please. The reader's use of the vernacular words which means 'don't be left behind' speaks to the idea of society being more progressive in terms of gender politics and sexuality. In other words, those who deny this reality will get "left behind" and miss out on rewarding relationships.

The premise is accepted: older women can be sexually active and enjoy sex with younger men who are similarly satisfied. The comments that follow are by men who somewhat sexualise older women in this manner:

**Gerry Semono:** She must be good. I want a piece of her too.

**Dzu Shirinda:** I don't blame him some gogos are too sexy.

Considering the fact that gogo's neighbour also "wants a piece" of her, the one reader seems to also be tempted to get a taste, while the next reader agrees, admitting that he is attracted to some older women, who are "too sexy". Indeed, the readers here appear convinced of the authenticity of the attachment and ratify it by complimenting and encouraging the man. One reader places the Ben 10 in high regard and compliments him on his sexual energy. He further says that the Ben 10 is doing a great job in keeping gogo sexually satisfied.

**P Mash-go:** Keep it up bra, to make her dreams come true.

Story 13: Appendix M

**'I LIVE WITH MY BEN 10 AND MY HUBBY!'  
Woman takes a second husband for sex!**



### Summary of the story

The hubby has the money, the Ben 10 has the hot 4-5 (penis) and Puseletso has too much love for just one man. “It wasn’t an easy decision for me,” said Puseletso Motselebane (44). “After 15 years of marriage I love my husband as much as I ever did, but I needed more action in the bedroom than he could provide.” She hated the idea of cheating on her husband. So she decided to find herself a Ben 10 and move him into the house with her and her customary husband, Petrus Moshawa (55). “People told me it was a bad thing and called me names, but I believe this is better than cheating,” she said. “Because of some chronic disease he couldn’t satisfy me in bed. I felt guilty about my boyfriend so I decided to tell Petrus about Kagiso.” She said at first Petrus was not happy about Kagiso Monnamoncho (34), but in the end he understood. She said they are all living together in an RDP house in Khotsong kasi, Bothaville, Free State. “We are living together as one happy family,” said the smiling Puseletso. Now the mother of four children is planning to get married to Kagiso, who joined the family a year ago. She has three children with Petrus and a one-year-old with Kagiso. Kagiso is unemployed and Petrus gets a disability grant from government and works as a full-time gardener. Puseletso is a shebeen queen and she doesn’t like what she sees happening around her. “Most women I know in my kasi (township) cheat on their husbands but they do it in secret. I decided to live with both of my men faithfully.” The two men have separate rooms. Petrus said he is not completely happy with the situation but he has accepted it for the sake of his children. “Although I have become the laughing stock of our kasi I have to accept things the way they are for the sake of my kids.”

“I won’t comment on our sex life, but as long as my wife is happy I am satisfied.” According to Kagiso “Puseletso told him she had spoken to her husband and he didn’t have a problem with me moving in. I didn’t have a problem either, so I moved in. I’m a happy man.” (Daily Sun 2015)

### **Story analysis**

There are three key elements in the story. The first salient fact is that the husband is no longer able to satisfy his wife sexually. The second is that to avoid cheating, she asked her husband if her Ben 10 boyfriend could move in with them. The third is based on their income situation, in which the husband gets a disability grant, the Ben 10 is unemployed and Puseletso is an independent Shebeen queen. However, all is not entirely well: even though Puseletso is happy with her two men, her husband is not happy. The use of the words ‘I have become the laughing-stock of our kasi’ (township), shows how he feels emasculated by the idea that he has to live under the same roof as her wife’s Ben 10. Even though Puseletso has three children with her husband, she also has one child with her Ben 10. The Ben 10 describes himself as ‘a happy man’ suggesting that he is well taken care of by the shebeen queen. The image used in the story places Puseletso in the middle of the trio; while she looks directly at the camera, the two men look towards her. It suggests that she is in charge; in addition, the Ben 10 is positioned closer to her hip while a gap exists between her and the husband, symbolic of the couple’s lack of sexual intimacy. The *Daily Sun* has chosen to photograph the Ben 10 wearing a comic kid’s hat, which can be read as indicative of his dependency on Puseletso, who has somewhat become not only a lover but a mother to him.

### **Facebook comments discussion**

**Siyabulela Banzi:** Abraham had an affair with his slave and they had a child together and Sarah the wife was aware of it. Christ came with the law, love others as you love yourself. There is nothing wrong with what this woman is doing. All parties are happy and who are we to judge them. They are a happy family and I for one believes in a God who’s all about love, joy and happiness.

**Lisa Phera:** I salute you for the respect that you have for your husband. You decided not to disgrace him by floating around with young men, nature is nature and that poor woman needed to satisfy her needs, Amen. Nobody should judge, let anyone without sin cast the first stone.

Significantly, the first two comments are grounded in biblical Christian scripture. The first mentions that women in the Bible have had no issue with men cheating and having children outside their marriage. The use of the phrase ‘nobody should judge’ averts potentially harsh criticism, deferring any conclusion about the relationship to God: he can be the judge as we are not without sin. The use of the words ‘nature is nature’ by the above reader (Lisa Phera) suggests that Puseletso has sexual needs which need to be met – one way or another. This is an interesting inversion of the more common idea that it is men’s sexual drive that needs to be satisfied at all costs (Hunter 2010).

The following readers comment gleefully on the fact that it has been socially normal for a man to have more than one partner and that it’s about time women did the same. They also feel that sex is crucial in a marriage and believe in true gender equality.

**Chester Qha:** Yes mama, it’s your time now. Men have been doing this since the beginning of time.

**Sedimosang Nomnga:** Good for her! These men must feel how some of the women feel about polygamy.

**Kenneth Molokomme:** Marriage without good sex doesn’t succeed.

The statements made by the female readers place Puseletso as a role model and some make mention of the fact that they too would like to have more than one husband:

**Jay Magubane:** I wish it could be me, she’s my role model nami ngifuna ukuba nesthembu (I would also like be a polyandrist).

**Zee Msindwana:** You go girl!

**Siphesihle Mhlongo:** This lady is a straight up boss. I want to be like her, Yesus!

The words ‘straight up boss’ refer to her being in charge not only of her household but also her sexuality. This authority is applauded: ‘you go girl’ shows the reader’s approval of her choice. Moreover, she is also given credit for not sneaking behind her husband’s back but making their

love triangle official by this reader:

**Rethabile Moichela:** At least you made it official unlike those who judge you while married and sneaking around with younger men. #ThumbsUpURock

This reader's comment below asserts that polygamy is not frowned upon, so polyandry should also be seen in the same light:

**Mabandlase Cleveland:** Polyandry is favoured by our constitution. I will be your Advocate Puseletso in registering both marriages legally – this is the 21st century. Equality must prevail!!!

The use of the words 'equality must prevail' speaks to the gender equality that we are guaranteed by the constitution. In 1996, two years after the first democratic election, South Africa adopted one of the most liberal constitutions in the world which gave birth to the commission of Gender Equality. However, this could lead some to position rights as a modern alternative to backward traditions and thus sealing the political-economic changes that mould gender inequality and intimacy today (Hunter 2010). In South Africa's current democracy some women employ rights to argue that, in a 50/50 world they now have the rights to have multiple partners, just like men. (Hunter 2010:132)

In order for us to also address the reader's comments on polyandry, we must also look at the defenders of polygamy. The main argument for polygamy states that since polygamy has existed for centuries and has structured many cultures, traditions and the lives of many in our country, it is morally acceptable. However, McKaiser (2012) argues that polygamy should be accepted based on the fact that a liberal society is one that values the autonomy of individuals. This means that each individual is allowed to make choices that are in accordance with their most deeply-held values and beliefs. "The role of the state and fellow citizens is to interfere as little as possible with one's freedom, as that is the kind of society we have chosen for ourselves and these rights are underwritten by the Constitution which guarantees each person's freedom and autonomy" (McKaiser 2012:14). I agree with the Eusebius Mckaiser's position above, however, the same rule should apply to polyandry which he does not touch on in his book titled a *Bantu in my bathroom: debating race, sexuality and other uncomfortable South African topics*.

To further extend this argument Masenya (2017) refers to Proverbs seven in the context of sugar

mamas in South Africa and highlights the biblical ‘Woman Stranger’ as a married woman unlike other sugar mamas. She also notes that the house is referred to as ‘her house’. In a patriarchal content the house and the wife belong to the husband, however the Woman Stranger such as Puseletso (who lives with her husband and a Ben 10) has the power not only to own a house but to employ that house to use male sexuality for her pleasure. She further quotes Proverbs 15:16 “If a man neglects the sexual satisfaction provided by his wife, then the wife may seek sexual satisfaction elsewhere, outside the marriage”. This underlines the main reason a woman can stray from her marital vows, lack of sexual satisfaction (Masenya 2017: 125).

While some readers are pro-Puseletso, other readers are totally against the idea of one woman having two men, let alone two under one roof, and the comments are as follows:

**TC Chonco:** lomama isifebe (this woman is promiscuous), lobaba wokuqala akayeke lomama (the husband should leave her).

The use of the word “isifebe” is contentious. According to Hunter (2010: 180) the word ‘isifebe’ can mean a promiscuous woman or a prostitute. I however, have an alternative – and less derogatory – understanding of this word, having grown up in a township community where this word was loosely used. In my experience the term simply means a woman with an excessive sex drive, this will be the definition used in this study. It is crucial to note that the ‘isifebe’ label is used in black communities as a policing tool to ensure that women do not express desire or engage actively in sexual encounters with men, but are rather passive participants in the bedroom. Sex is still greatly seen as the male domain and sexual appetite as a masculine feature and women who dare explore their sexuality are so called ‘loose’ as sex is still traditionally seen for male pleasure. Such expression of desire can be interpreted as the woman lacking “respect”, as revealed in the following comment:

**Tumie Palesa Senyolo:** That old woman should be ashamed of herself, she clearly has no respect.

Hunter (2010) refers to “hlonipa” (respect) as guiding customary social relations, a form of social ordering which I argue can be used to reinforce structural inequalities, in this case of gender. By taking another husband, she is flouting custom, and thereby disrespecting her first (legitimate) husband, under whose authority she is customarily expected to reside. Respect is

linked to one's social standing; but is also linked to what counts as moral behaviour and adherence to customary values. These male readers feel that it is impossible for two men to live under one roof and view this act and as simply immoral.

**Nkele Dk Gomba:** We are seriously losing our morals and values. Poo pedi sakeng tthe banna (two bulls in one sack), this is too much.

**Ngcobo Nathi:** yoh how can I sleep knowing my wife is having sex with another man?

The use of the vernacular idiom which means "two bulls in one sack", in other words, two men under one roof, is key. The metaphor of the "bull" implies that men, like bulls, are rivals who cannot share a space (as, implicitly, women can). The issue of jealousy is also highlighted by the next reader, who says a man cannot be at peace knowing his wife is sleeping with someone else.

However, today the language of rights and new forms of sex talk seem to have disturbed gendered and generational lines of authority denoted by the concept of 'hlonipa' (respect) (Hunter 2010: 138). Discourses on immorality frame the problem as one of the present and one in which women's agency stands out as the prime cause for concern. Although hints of dissonance emerge in life histories, revealing a past that often fails to conform with idealised olden days in which women knew their place (Cornwall 2001).

The social pressure on women to be good and respectable wives is substantial. The respect a woman owes her husband is embodied in obeying his rules and not questioning his behaviour. A wife is expected to be sexually available for her husband any time and is not allowed to refuse sex – her marital duty. The women are very aware of the consequences if a woman has extramarital sexual relations and such behaviour may result in abandonment. (Skafte & Silberschmidt 2014)

Moreover, and with its origin in colonial discourses, African female sexuality has been constructed as hyper-sexual, primitive, filthy and morally corrupting – thus in need of control (McFadden 2003; Tamale 2005, 2011). This has resulted in a suppression of women's sexuality, erotic culture and sexual expression and sexuality emerges as 'a key site through which women's subordination is maintained and enforced in postcolonial Africa' (Tamale 2005: 9). However, just like gender, sexuality is socially constructed and should be understood in its social and

cultural context (Cornwall & Jolly 2006; Parker, Barbosa & Aggleton 2000). And over time, variant discourses on female sexuality have offered more space for the legitimacy of female sexual pleasure (Cornwall 1996). Legal changes in the 1980s granted women certain property rights and a large number of single women gained access to low cost RDP housing provided by the South African state (Hunter 2010:142). Women such as Puseletso who have access to an RDP house and an income through her shebeen business have more power to navigate intimate relations with men.

Very little investigation has been done on African women's agency, in particular their sexual agency (Cornwall & Jolly 2006; Tamale 2011). In fact, female sexuality, sexual desire and gratification have been noticeably absent within African women's and gender studies and or rarely the object of analysis (Arnfred 2004; Spronk 2005; Tamale 2011). This is surprising given that HIV constitutes a major public health concern in sub-Saharan Africa and is a disease that is primarily spread through sexual activity.

#### **4.5 Theme four: The spread of HIV/Aids**

I have argued that sexualities are unstable and are produced through men and women's practical engagement with shifting economic, cultural and spatial conditions and relations. A crucial factor is the agency of women themselves. A central argument of this thesis is that women approach transactional relations not as passive victims, but in order to access power and resources in ways that can both challenge and reproduce patriarchal structures (Hunter 2002). It is also crucial to look at how hegemonic masculinity ideals can perpetuate the spread of HIV/Aids. One example of an African hegemonic masculinity is found in the Zulu concept of *isoka*, an idealised heterosexual, virile man, who is desired by women and whose prodigious sexual success are the envy of other men. In simple terms *isoka* is a man with 'multiple sexual partners' (Reid & Walker 2005). Instead of seeing types of hegemonic masculinities in South Africa as demonstrating some kind of innate African "promiscuity," as some accounts on AIDS imply we need to explore more factors.

In a given relationship for example, a man may expect to lead and control sexual relations and his woman partner to comply, and he may feel entitled to have sex with multiple partners but expect her to remain faithful. Gender differences take many different forms in different settings but an area of commonality lies in differentials in power. There is strong evidence that gender power inequality in relationships, which is a cause of intimate partner violence, places women at

enhanced risk of HIV infection (Jewkes & Morrel 2010: 1). What plays an important role is not biology but gender differences in sexual socialisation as this influence male and female partnerships and in which circumstances. Thus the key issues here are differences in the way in which men and women position themselves and act as social beings based on constructed ways of being a man or a woman. For it is gender and not sex that is more influential in determining behaviour (Jewkes & Morrel 2010).

Since January 2019, more than 77 000 new people have tested HIV positive in South Africa. This was revealed by former Health Minister, Aaron Motsoaledi in a written reply to an Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) Parliamentary question (SABC News 2019). Health Minister, Dr Zweli Mkhize, responded: “we all know now that the problem of HIV and Aids is not getting better in South Africa. It is still a major problem that needs us to stand up as a society. So, right now South Africa as a whole is the one that has got the largest treatment problem with antiretroviral treatment of over 4.9 million people. But we still have about 7.1 million people who have been diagnosed as HIV positive. We need to close the gap. We need to make sure that 90% of all of those who are diagnosed are on treatment and their viral load is reduced. We need to make sure that the level of the spread of the disease is reduced.” (SABC News 2019) For many men condoms represent “bad sex”: It is not a manly thing to wear condoms. Men will convince women that using a condom represents “unfaithfulness” and that true love is symbolised by *inyama enyameni* (“flesh to flesh” sex). (Hunter 2002: 101)

Story 14: Appendix N

**I'M A BEN 10 TO MAKE MY LIFE BETTER**



### Summary of the letter

Dear MizzB

I am a 24-year-old man and my life is a mess. I completed my matric in 2011 but I still have nothing to show for it. I could not study further because of financial lack. I recently started dating a 34-year-old woman. I'm not doing it because I am a failure. I am dating her because I am trying to make my life better. However, it seems I am not getting anywhere. Every day I have to clean and cook. I am not happy because I feel like I am useless. My mum always compares me with other people and other family members, some of whom are even younger than me. I've tried everything, but there has been no luck. Please help me! (Daily Sun 2016)

### Facebook comments discussion

The first comment on this letter on the *Daily Sun's* Facebook page is regarding safe sex, and is made by Small, who says "using a condom is like standing outside a club but telling people you went in". In other words, condom users are lying to others – and to themselves – if they say sex with a condom is the same as sex without one. Metaphorically, the man remains outside the "club", and must imagine, rather than experience, what goes on inside. The Facebook response to Small that follows around the use of condoms, posted by Masebenza is as follows; "don't fool people while you use condoms as long it gets you to the same destination as flesh on flesh". This

reader is emphasizing the importance of safe sex by saying that using a condom still ensures the same sexual satisfaction.

In story one: appendix A, **‘MY BEN 10 IS A SUPERMAN! Gogo Flora Skhosana (80) loves Morena (34)**, a comment relating to HIV by Luvhuno links the Ben10 relationship to sexual safety: “I think it's much safer for this guy as magogo is not sexually active any more, he is her only lover which means less chance of getting std's...lol (laugh out loud)”. The laughter here is provoked by the idea of the Ben 10 being safe from contracting an STI, due to the impotence of the husband and the lack of any other potential lovers of the sugar mama (which, as we have seen in the story headlined Sugar mama stabs Ben 10: she was with another man (Story 11: Appendix K) cannot be taken for granted).

The health of the sexually active couple emerges as a cause of concern and also as a means to repudiate or chastise them. This is apparent in **“I LIVE WITH MY BEN 10 AND MY HUBBY!” Woman takes a second husband for sex!** (Story 13: Appendix M). The comment that follows relating to HIV/Aids, points out the couple's apparent health as interpreted in the photograph: “I'm worried about their health as they all look weak”. Dan Thakgalo agrees with this interpretation, and on this account calls the couple “mad”: “this is a pure madness, Puseletso wa teng a mme wa ipona gore o fedile Jang?” (Does she not see how thin and sick she looks?). The Ben 10 is also at risk and should look after his health, the assumption being that too much sex will make him ill: “Mama looks very unhealthy some fruit and veggies and multivitamins might do the trick before being a sex slave”. In each of these comments the couple's apparent health is used as a means of censoring their sexual conduct.

In a story about a local dance queen Zodwa Wabantu, who is notoriously known for doing the vosho (a cool township dance which is similar to frog jumps) with a savanna drink in her hand with no underwear on also sparked a debate relating to the issue of HIV/Aids. **ZODWA IS HAPPY WITH HER BEN 10 “I know people think he's with me for the money but no, that man makes me happy”** (Story 5: Appendix E). Neliswa Mrobo hopes that the Ben 10 uses protection as Zodwa is seen as promiscuous: “naye akazithandi (he doesn't love himself) I hope he uses protection”. This reader. Bakba Mandisi isn't convinced, and denies that Ben10s in general take care of their health: “#Neliswa if it's nice and comes with good perks they forget about protection. You will hear one asking the other “are you clean?” And the other saying you know I'm clean babe”. The phrase ‘are you clean’ refers to being HIV negative, and this reader

highlights the fact that some couples simply take their partner's word for it in terms of their HIV status. Diteko Lesetedi takes this opportunity to warn the readers, some of whom may be Ben 10s: "who is next after the Ben 10? Play your game safe and don't make any foul please". Diteko does not forbid the practice as so many do, and simply says they can have sex but safe sex. The word 'foul' refers to unprotected sex and its possible health consequences, and continues the metaphor of sex as a 'game' that must be played 'by the rules' as it were – so no 'foul' should interrupt it. Stone however is convinced that the Ben 10 is at risk from Zodwa: "shame she's burning this toddler's blood, next month he will be looking like an ancestor. He constructs Zodwa as diseased, and the Ben 10, a "toddler" vulnerable to being 'burned' by Zodwas, implying that the Ben 10 will soon be infected. The phrase 'looking like an ancestor' means he will look sickly, like an elderly person.

It was interesting to find how most of the Facebook comments relating to the HIV/Aids theme placed only women as 'diseased', actively producing and reinforcing the idea of the healthy male. This perception perpetuates gender hierarchies, as a man being ill undermines his status in society (Gibbs & Jobson 2001). This popular idea of the diseased woman resonates with biblical injunctions against the "Woman Stranger" who is the carrier of death for young men "Young men who have fallen prey to her seduction end up in Sheol (chambers of death)" (Masenya 2017: 124).

Hegemonic and relatively rigid forms of masculinity place men and women at greater risk of contracting HIV through reinforced gender inequalities. These hegemonic masculinities increase risky sexual behaviour by promoting multiple concurrent partnerships and reducing the likelihood that men will use a condoms during sex. Hegemonic masculinities are the dominant, socially constructed, understandings of what it means to be a man in a given context. Yet for a majority of men, hegemonic masculinities remain aspirational, with men unable to achieve these publicly and collectively held notions of what it means to be a man. Therefore, narratives of masculinity can provide recipes of living for men through providing a story of what it is that men do, and should do. Men's social and sexual behaviour can be understood as an attempt to secure men's sense of self in a world where they cannot achieve what is expected of them (Gibbs & Jobson 2001). Hence, changing these hegemonic forms of masculinity is becoming a necessity in addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

#### 4.6 Theme five: Witchcraft in black communities

Witchcraft can be broadly defined as the capacity to cause harm or accumulate power by supernatural means. Since South Africa is governed as a modern liberal democratic state which is integrated with global citizens, capital and culture, political and economic management in the global community leave little room for consideration of witchcraft as anything other than primitive atavism – a social belief mired in ignorance and backwardness. However, in most African communities witchcraft is a central aspect of ‘spiritual insecurity’ – that is, the anxiety aroused by the indeterminacy of invisible forces or pervasive fear of bewitchment. Even though witches and their powers are deemed purely ‘imaginary’ and not real, witchcraft beliefs may be real enough and may provide a potent source of motivation to action (Ashforth 1998: 505-506). The *Daily Sun*’s approach to reporting on witchcraft provides a modernising mechanism – if we understand being modern as successfully managing the ambiguities of witchcraft within a context which denies its possibility, at the same time the tabloid presents overwhelming proof of its presence to its readers (Boshoff 2016: 218).

#### Story 15: Appendix O

**‘SUGAR MAMA STOLE MY UNDERPANTS!’ She was hot in bed but she ruined me says**

**Ben 10**



#### Summary of the story

In this story, when Joseph Tsholota first started dating 52-year-old Ivy Kwenda he was excited and very happy with what she offered him between the sheets. But now Joseph, who is 22 years

younger than Ivy, from Mogale City, said after two years he found out that Ivy's passion was not reserved for him alone. He said other men kept calling her day and night. Not only did they start fighting but Joseph alleges that she also stole his underpants. And since she dumped him, Joseph has never been at peace, and his life changed for the worst. He mentioned that a lot of misfortune occurs in his life and he can't find a woman no matter how hard he tries. Ivy told the *Daily Sun* that she dumped Joseph because he was a baby. Ivy said she is staying with a new man who has promised to marry her. "I don't have time to play with Joseph now. I am committed to one man and Joseph must get a life," she said. "I never took his underpants. I don't steal. Joseph says that everybody seems to hate him and even his own Priest won't want to help him. Sangoma Dumezweni Mahabuke said Joseph's underpants were used to ruin his life and cause him to have bad luck (Daily Sun 2015).

### **Story analysis**

The story opens with a contrast set up between the relationship and what happened afterwards. At first all is well: 'he was excited and very happy with what she offered him between the sheets' referring perhaps to the sugar mama's sexual experience. The twist in the story is that the sugar mama's passion was not reserved for the Ben 10 alone, and he soon finds that she had other men calling and pursuing her. In this way the story so far has already set up the Ben 10 as a victim, while the sugar mama is the villain of the piece. However, the story does not end there, and further evidence is given to support these characterisations. The Ben 10 goes on to claim that the sugar mama bewitched him, as after their break-up his life has been full of misfortune. Not even his Priest is able to reverse the so called curse, he claims. A Sangoma confirms that indeed his underwear was used to bewitch him and bring him bad luck. The sugar mama simply calls Joseph a 'child', belittling him, and declares that she is now committed to one 'man'. She also mentions that her new man has promised to marry her, which is not often the case with Ben 10 and sugar mama relationships, as they end up proposing marriage to their younger partners as we have seen in the case of Zodwa Wabantu (Story 7: Appendix G).

### **Facebook comments discussion**

What the Sangoma says about witchcraft in the story is confirmed by the following reader's comment:

**Tshepi:** underpants are used to ruin your life and cause you to have bad luck.

This reader is speaking from a confident place of knowledge that this is indeed possible. A solution is offered by Thembi, who does not dispute the idea of witchcraft, but also draws up on Christian doctrine in her advice: “you will never get help until you give your life to God. Since you are living a double with your involvement with older women, you will never be happy in life. Church or Sangomas, pick one route and you will be fine”. Thembi tells Joseph that he can’t fight witchcraft with muthi and that he should simply trust God, lead a life of righteousness and he will be healed.

In the story of Puseletso, mentioned earlier in this chapter, the woman who stays with both her husband and Ben 10 under one roof, the theme of witchcraft is also prevalent (Story 13: Appendix M). Simphiwe Ngwenya comments on her ability to keep two men by saying “this mama’s muthi is strong”. In other words, she is using muthi or witchcraft to keep both men together with her in one home. While Josiah Mguni responds by saying “Lol (laugh out loud) either she fed them something or did something down there so that the Ben 10 and hubby keep coming back for more”. The laughter in the Josiah’s comment is from the idea that if it’s not muthi which she feeds the two men, it must be muthi which she has placed in her vagina to keep them close. Tiisetso Maluka also responds by saying “hahaha (laughs) KOROBELA (love potion)”. This love triangle is seen a result of a love potion, or what is known as korobela, in most black communities. It is a form of muthi. Muthi refers to substances which contain or enable one to provoke powerful occult forces. “As the origin of the word suggests (it derives from the Nguni root-word, “thi”, meaning “tree”), muthi is commonly derived from plants; but it is by no means restricted to vegetable matter, and can include any substance or thing considered to contain inherent agency” (Boshoff 2016: 225).

Story 16: Appendix P

**JEALOUS SUGAR MAMA STALKS BEN-10 EX!**



### Summary of the story

Ben 10 Asenathi Marhwanqana from Mthatha, Eastern Cape got the fright of his life. On his 21st birthday, he went to the toilet in the morning and was greeted there by four home-baked cookies on a white plate and, the red note in front of the toilet seat written eat cheater. It was a scary present from the 58-year-old sugar mama he had been dating for a period of two weeks. Asenathi said that it was the demanding behaviour of this gogo lover that made him end the relationship after only a fortnight. “She demanded to be poked five times a day,” he said. “She has been threatening to use muthi to kill me and my new girlfriend if I do not come back to her. “She even said she will send tokoloshes (a dwarf-like mischievous and evil spirit) to come and bite my 4-5 until it looks like a sausage,” said Asenathi. “I am terrified, but I have a strong sangoma on my side.” The gogo, who did not want to be named, admitted that she placed the cookies on Asenathi’s toilet on his birthday, but said she did it out of love. “I love him a lot and he pokes me so good, I cannot lose him. I am using muthi to bring him back, but it is difficult because I know that he is also consulting his own sangoma to fight me,” said the gogo, who is the owner of a chesa nyama (braai meat restaurant). She said the cookies contained korobela (love potion), and she was disappointed that Asenathi didn’t take even one bite. Asenathi said he would not open a case with the police but would rather fight back against the gogo by also using muthi. (Daily Sun 2016)

### Story analysis

The story is initially told from the point of view of the man, and the narrative focuses on his predicament. The staged image of the Ben 10 in the toilet unwrapping his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday “gift” places the reader in the story in real time at the moment of its discovery. The baked cookies which are said to have muthi and the letter written on a red coloured card with the following words ‘eat cheater’ construct the sugar mama as a villain. This villainy is suggested at first by the Ben 10’s complaint that “She demanded to be poked five times a day”, in other words, he was exhausted by her excessive sexual energy. The “gogo” is not prepared to let him go, however, and uses the following words “I love him a lot and he pokes me so good, I cannot lose him”. She reasons that she has not only fallen in love with him but also the sexual intimacy they share. She provocatively agrees that she is using muthi to bring him back. She admits that the cookies contained korobela (love potion), and she was disappointed that Asenathi took “not even one bite”. Asenathi said he would not open a case with the police but would rather fight back against the gogo by also using muthi. The fact that the Ben 10 is also fighting back with muthi shows how strong his believe is in witchcraft and muthi as a solution to his problem.

### Facebook comments discussion

The issue of age being just a number is heavily contested using Christianity as a base of morality, yet the belief in witchcraft by *Daily Sun*’s readers is also highlighted. The fist reader expresses shock toward the Ben 10 sugar mama relationships in this manner:

**Sylvester Lukhele:** Jesus must come back now, imagine a 21-year-old boy on top of a 58-year-old gogo! Yoh that boy needs a strong Sangoma to clean him off the spirit of old granny’s vagina.

This reader sees age as an important factor for appropriate sexual relations. They also believe that this boy is cursed and needs a sangoma to cleanse him of this curse, which is connected to the “spirit” of the “granny’s vagina” The Ben 10 is seen as needing special intercession, a “strong” sangoma, who is able to “cleanse” him of the older woman’s influence.

Another reader’s response to this comment is that the young man must be brave to chance such a relationship:

**JDee Mrholozi:** He has a liver man, unesbindi (he is brave) uAsenathi straight.

This response is based on the age gap, and intimates that a young man needs to be really brave to sleep with an older woman; in his view the young man has a “liver”, a reference to his bravery. But some readers disagree with this interpretation. On commentator responds by flatly contradicting it:

**Sylvester Lukhele:** jDee, aksona nesbindi umkhumula kanjan nje umuntu ongango Gogo wakhe! Yoh! (It’s not bravery. How do you undress a woman old enough to be your grandmother)?

This reader is shocked – “Yoh!” – by the idea of a young man undressing an older woman for sex. But other readers are merely amused. Humour is reflected in the idea of the “gogo” sending mystical creatures by this reader:

**Hambalie Ishmael:** She even said she will send tokoloshes to come and bite his 4-5 (penis) until it looks like a sausage, gogo is going to braai his thing (penis) like their do at her Shisa nyama (braai meat business) kkkkkkkkkkkk (laughs).

The laughter from this reader comes from the idea that gogo has threatened to send a magical creature to “bite” his penis until it “looks like a sausage”. The idea is that she will then “braai” his penis over a fire at her restaurant. A strong connection is made here between the older woman’s superior economic status and the younger man’s fright and discomfort.

A response to this also looks at the humour of it all despite all the legal allegations made by the Ben 10 towards his ex-sugar mama. The last comment shows that even though this is a serious matter, the comic relief is based on the Ben 10’s penis being “bitten by tokoloshes”:

**Christina Maluleke:** That part killed me seriously I can’t stop laughing.

Even though witches and their powers are deemed purely ‘imaginary’ and not real, yet amongst ordinary African people, even in the cities of the new South Africa, witchcraft remains vibrant part of everyday life (Ashforth 1988). The current lack of provision for access to justice for witchcraft victims leaves many South Africans without redress. As proponents of a liberal

democracy, the ANC leadership has publicly condemned witchcraft and the attacks associated with it. But little is actually done to help those who suffer from witchcraft's effects. "The current law does not recognise the existence of witchcraft, which is incommensurate with secular justice due to lack of empirical proof. Law enforcement only prosecutes those material crimes that arise out of belief in witchcraft. That is, witchcraft itself is not dealt with so much as its consequences" (Boshoff 2016: 224).

The social and economic dislocation engendered by the rapid change consequent on South Africa's entry into global neoliberalism is cited by Comaroff & Comaroff (1999) as a significant contextual factor which accounts for the recent proliferation of witchcraft. Another feature of the local social landscape is violence. Violence is part of the wider economy, in which crime becomes a means of "routinised redistribution" within an economic order "that has sanctioned dramatic polarities of wealth and caused intense jealousy among neighbours" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1999: 292).

Witchcraft beliefs may be real enough and may provide a potent source of motivation to action. Adam Ashforth (1988), in his ethnographic study of witchcraft, violence and democracy in Soweto, states that jealousy and hate are the main driving forces of witchcraft. However, he also emphasises that old women are most commonly associated with witchcraft, not because they have intrinsically greater occult powers, but because they have no productive or reproductive capacities. It is for this reason that they are thought to have the greatest occasion of jealousy. However, this study argues that older women are perceived to be witches in African communities because they are thought to have had the time to accumulate more evil knowledge and that personal power is the main driving force of witchcraft. It is crucial to also view witchcraft as a form of violence, using supernatural power or *muthi* to bring about misfortune to others, as seen in the story of Joseph above, or to keep someone at your command as seen in the story of the jealous sugar mama who is stalking her Ben 10 ex (Story 16: Appendix P): in both cases power and control can be seen as the driving force.

## CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION

This thesis has sought to explore the function of a tabloid such *Daily Sun* in a democratic South African, through interrogating its relationship with its readers. It specifically sought to investigate key issues concerning contemporary gender relations, and the meanings generated by the newspaper's online readers in relation to the Ben 10 phenomena. The study reveals how these meanings are appropriated into the readers' everyday lived realities through a discourse analysis of the readers' Facebook commentary. The thesis also examines the ways in which the *Daily Sun's* Facebook page provides an alternative arena for public discourse.

In order to explore issues of gender and democracy, this thesis has primarily drawn on a qualitative research methodology with qualitative content thematic analysis of the readers' Facebook comments on Ben 10 stories constituting the main research tools. The thematic analysis led to an appreciation of the complex manner in which *Daily Sun* readers appropriate its textual meanings to their daily lived realities. The observation that ideology operates as much by absence as by presence and that there may be new pleasures embedded in the tabloid texts as they related more to the readers' understandings of their social worlds, is a key finding. As Thompson (2005) rightly proposes, symbolic forms are not ideological in and of themselves, but need to be analysed 'in situ' in relation to structures of power that they may or may not help sustain.

In the tradition of feminist research, this study has the dual objectives of seeking new knowledge and, in the longer term, contributing to social change. It does so by examining the control of women and women's sexuality and how it was especially important given the expansion of opportunities for women in urban settings. The study has an interdisciplinary nature and aims to contribute to sociological studies on gender, journalism and media theory on the role of tabloids in a democracy, as well as a still evolving sub-field of political communication in African knowledge production.

This research was aimed at investigating how Ben 10s, sugar mummies, and the South African gender order is deliberated in the *Daily Sun's* Facebook page, a form of "public sphere". It suggests that more changes to the gendered African world and masculinity are possible if interventions into male lives observe the intersections between, for instance, the social-psychological experience of being an African male and the experience of being young or unemployed. These intersections reveal how male groups are diverse and African masculinities heterogeneous and fluid.

“As a consequence of this recognition of the fragmented, diverse and changing character of African masculinities, we are able to suggest better interventions against ruling ideas of being a man or boy, including interventions against the daily wars around gender” (Ratele 2008:535). I argue that when we look at gender arrangements, we are essentially looking at a set of relationships, or ways in which people are connected or divided. I have argued that gender is socially constructed in order to serve the patriarchal order.

The male breadwinner ideology has been explored as closely embedded within a patriarchal discourse of the male head of the household, with an emphasis on heterosexual masculinity and this is crucial in the producing and maintaining of gender inequalities. The ability of a man to work and producing income are key requirements for being a ‘real’ man in most cultures. With high levels of unemployment and poverty in South Africa the narrative of masculine success through work remains relatively unattainable for most black men. This tension between the narrative of male-bread winner through work and the reality of South Africa’s poverty and unemployment has been referred to as the ‘crisis of masculinity’.

As argued in chapter one, research done on male gender power remains blind to the imbrication of the experienced realities of a boy or man with the experience of other significant social-psychological categories, such as being without employment. This leads to failure to fully understand the intricacies that riddle the lives of most African men. It is crucial to also state that gainful employment is more than just about money, is to indicate that employment and income go towards satisfying ego needs at the same time that they satisfy material ones. At the same time, salaried employment and wealth may be used to in some instances, to perpetuate the subordination of women to men.

The Ben10 phenomenon however is not a one-sided affair, and the women who participate in these relationships must also be taken into consideration. For this reason, it is crucial to assess the socio-political and economic position of women in South Africa, in order to assess the development of women’s independence, and their ability to realise their citizen rights. In a democratic South Africa, rights meant that women have a conspicuous emergence of “modern girl” femininities associated with the exercise of independence, and the use of explicit eroticism. This is an ideal of womanhood that is chiefly the domain of those women with access to at least some material resources. Improving the socio-political status of women was integral to achieving the goal of gender equality, and when the new constitution came into effect in 1996, it secured the right to equality for women.

In South Africa there is evidence that gender identities are changing, although for the purpose of this study, the persistence of gender violence remains a worrying continuity that shapes and binds certain forms of femininity and masculinity. While hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity encompass practices that extend far beyond the arena of domestic, sexual and otherwise intimate relations with women and men, it is the expression of these practices in these domains that is particularly pertinent to the consideration of the intersections of gender power inequality and intimate partner violence and HIV risk. The solution should be to focus more attention on building more gender-equitable and caring masculinities, and less acquiescent femininities.

## APPENDICES

## Story 1: Appendix A

National

# MY BEN 10 IS A SUPERMAN

Modise Tau • 24 March 2017



Gogo Flora Skhosana hopes to marry her Ben 10, Morena Sethole, some day. Photo by Ishmael Ntholeng .

GOGO Flora Skhosana thought love had left her life forever when her husband died 10 years ago.

But today the 80-year-old from Mohlakeng kasi, near Harrismith in the Free State, has a Ben 10 who makes her feel like a young woman again.

Talking about her 34-year-old boyfriend Morena Sethole, she said: "He is my superman in bed. He's a hot bonker and I love him so much."

Gogo Flora said she started dating Morena two years ago and although he was unemployed, she hoped they would be able to get married soon.

"I've been alone ever since my husband died but now I'm happily in love. Even though I knew Morena's mum before she died, I didn't see a problem dating him. He grew up in front of my eyes but now he's my superman.

"People used to talk but now they have accepted that I'm dating a younger man. My Ben 10 gives me life and I feel young again because of him. No one will take him from me because I take care of him. Even my family has accepted him."

Morena said he's never liked dating younger women because they complained a lot. "Flora is the love of my life. My friends used to tease me about my old lady but now they are used to me dating her."

When the SunTeam asked the lovebirds how they survived, gogo Flora said:  
"We're living on my social grant and we also have a business selling

veggies from my garden. Morena lost his job a year ago and we're still waiting for his money from the unemployment insurance fund."

**Story 2: Appendix B**

National

**BEN 10 ACCUSED OF USING GOGO BETTY!**

Thokozani Magagula • 18 April 2017



A picture of the late Betty Majola, taken in the early 80s. .

THE stench of death hung over the house where the Ben 10 lived with his sickly old lover.

But Ben 10 Happy Ngwenya (54) had an explanation for the smell. Apparently gogo Betty Majola wasn't able to go to the toilet any more.

When he emerged on Sunday morning, telling neighbours gogo Betty had just died, they didn't believe him. They claimed Happy had been living with a corpse for days and only told them because he couldn't take the stink any more!

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Councillor Anthony Makhaye from Leslie, Mpumalanga said when they opened the door, they were greeted not only by the thick smell of death but by the fact that the gogo's body had started decomposing.

Then Happy vanished and their suspicions grew.

"He has always been like this," said a neighbour, who did not want to be named. "He would leave gogo Betty alone in the shack. He never cared for her. All he wanted was her money."

When Happy finally pitched up about four hours later, he found the yard filled with angry neighbours baying for his blood. They only calmed down after he told them that he had rushed to town to buy electricity.

Happy said what they were smelling was just kak and urine.

"Betty had been sick for two months. I had to put a bucket for her next to the bed. The smell was unbearable but I lived with it."

He denied that he had only lived with gogo Betty for her money and asked for help to find her family because he can't afford to bury her.

People who know gogo Betty's family, or who want to assist with her burial costs, should contact Councillor Makhaye on 071 358 2495 or Jabu on 071 183 3561.

## Story 3: Appendix C

National

# BEN 10S KEEP AWAY!

Everson Luhanga • 14 June 2017



Gogo Ntswaki Mokalapa says she doesn't need a lover in her life. Photo by Everson Luhanga.

NTSWAKI Mokalapa is a 62-year-old pensioner.

She said she's sick and tired of wanna-be Ben 10s who keep knocking on her door!

"I don't need a Ben 10," said Ntswaki from Alexandra, northern Joburg.

"I'm too old to have a man in my life. The oldest who came to me was a 30-year-old man! I turned him away.

"I'm a pensioner and I'm happy being alone, raising my grandkids."

She is worried one of these pushy young men are going to force themselves on her.

"I'm afraid these men will eventually rape me because they like me too much. I went to the police station but they said I must just ignore them."

She said people in the yard tease her, saying she shouldn't refuse love. She said one of her love pursuers promised her love music.

"I'm not interested. I often lock myself in the house," said the gogo.

"I wish I had somewhere else to stay. This yard is not good for me but I'm stuck.

"Everybody is trying to force me to take a Ben 10. I have no peace in my life.

"I don't know where to go or who I can report this to. Maybe if I speak to *Daily Sun* I might get help. If this continues, I'll seek more advice from cops to keep me safe."

## Story 4: Appendix D

National

# BEN 10 RUNS AWAY WITH STOKVEL MONEY!

Unathi Mshumpela • 26 October 2016



Members of the Transkei Retired Educators' Stokvel want answers from their treasurer and tour planner. Photo by Unathi Mshumpela .

**GOGO Nonkanyiso Dakuse (74) was a good stokvel treasurer.**

But then her 23-year-old Indian Ben 10 promised her discounted rates for the stokvel's tour to Cape Town – and that is when the trouble started!

The Ben 10, known as Mohammed Motsepe, has now disappeared with the sum of R65 000 belonging to the Transkei Retired Educators' Stokvel.

The members were told they would spend a week's holiday at the five-star Table Bay Hotel and they would fly in an executive jet.

Instead, in the end they had to sleep in the Khayelitsha community hall and travel in a "bhokhwe" bus to Cape Town.

"We almost died of shock when we heard Motsepe had disappeared with our money.

"Nonkanyiso had told us that young man was her boyfriend," said stokvel chairperson madala Sigidimi Xundu (84).

"He said they hoped Nonkanyiso would be present at their last stokvel meeting, but she never arrived.

They claimed Nonkanyiso had stopped taking their calls and instead refers them to Pinky Saliwa.

"We were told that Pinky was a private detective, but she was just Nonkanyiso's friend.

"Police told us we can't open a case because we gave the money voluntarily and we have no written agreement."

Nonkanyiso told *Daily Sun* Mohammed told her that he was related to Patrice Motsepe.

"He said he was rich and knew hotel owners who would give him discounts. I gave him the R65 000 when we were having a picnic in Cape Town."

She said she was not avoiding the members and she would pay them back.

"I know Mohammed loves me and he will bring back the money," the gogo said.

She said it was wrong for the media and cops to be involved.

The stokvel was formed in 2004 by retired teachers so that they could travel annually. The SunTeam tried calling what is allegedly Mohammed's office number, but it rang unanswered.

## Story 5: Appendix E

Entertainment

# ZODWA IS HAPPY WITH HER BEN 10

Sun Reporter • 23 January 2018



The dance queen Zodwa Wabantu caught herself a Ben 10.

A parody account under Zodwa's name recently took to the timeline with a special hashtag in search of a new boyfriend for her but she has denied the news stating that she and her young boyfriend are still perfectly happy.

Speaking to Tshisa Live, Zodwa said "sometimes, people that create profiles and pretend to be me do such. It wasn't me, we haven't broken up. I am happy with my man, he makes me happy."

"That man respects me and he loves me. I know people think he's with me for the money but no, that man makes me happy. I'm in that space where all I care about is being happy, and he does it. I actually don't want the Ben 10 tag for him because people associate it with bad things. My man is not with me for that kind of thing, we are just being happy together."

## Story 6: Appendix F

Celebs

# BEN 10 TO BE MR ZODWA!

Zamokuhle Mdluli • 21 May 2019



Photo: Instagram.

She asked Ntobeko Linda (24) to marry her and said she would pay lobola to his family.

READ: [WATCH: ZODWA PROPOSED AND HE SAID YES!](#)

Now that they have agreed to be married, *Daily Sun* asked an important question.

"Will your Ben 10 change his surname to yours?"

"Definitely, yes," said the famous dancer without hesitation.

"We have talked about it and we agree."

She said people will start telling them about culture.

"But culture has nothing to do with us. We were not there when old people decided to do things their way. We will decide things for ourselves," she said.

"We are different and we want to do things differently. Some people may not like the way we do things but we don't care.

"I love my fans but this is a personal issue."

The loving couple have been together for more than four years.

Pictures of Zodwa proposing to Ntobeko were shared widely on social media and caused a debate in Mzansi, with some people condemning and others praising the couple for their stand.

SunReaders on *Daily Sun's* Facebook page had a lot to say about a man taking a woman's surname after marriage.

Nthabe Angel Mafalo said: "I have never heard of such a thing!"

Misis Jones said: "The woman can propose but then she must take the man's last name."

Lesiba Leshilo said: "Some foreign men are doing that for citizenship. As for South African men? This is total madness!"

Mgcini KaMazana said: "That's very un-African. As Africans we have our own values and beliefs."

## Story 7: Appendix G

Celebs

# ZODWA: IT'S ALL OVER!

Stephens Molobi • 10 June 2019



Zodwa Wabantu and her fiancé Ntokozo Linda will not be getting married. Photo from Instagram/ Eyadini.

MZANSI was stunned when Zodwa Wabantu proposed to her Ben 10 a few weeks ago.

At the time, she said her lover made her happy and forced her to rethink marriage.

HOWEVER, IN A SHOCK MOVE, ZODWA CALLED OFF THE WEDDING ON SATURDAY!

The performer, whose real name is Zodwa Libram, had tongues wagging when she proposed to Ntokozo Linda during a performance at the popular Eyadini Lounge in Durban, flipping traditional gender roles, on 6 May.

It wasn't clear what led to the sudden wedding cancellation but Zodwa told *Daily Sun* she has taken a break from her relationship with Ntokozo. She said she was emotionally and physically drained and couldn't take any more strain.

She said she didn't want to end up trying to kill herself because she was pleased other people before herself.

"Definitely, yes," said the famous dancer without hesitation.

"We have talked about it and we agree."

She said people will start telling them about culture.

"But culture has nothing to do with us. We were not there when old people decided to do things their way. We will decide things for ourselves," she said.

"We are different and we want to do things differently. Some people may not like the way we do things but we don't care.

"I love my fans but this is a personal issue."

The loving couple have been together for more than four years.

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Mgcini KaMazana said: "That's very un-African. As Africans we have our own values and beliefs."

## Story 8: Appendix H

National

# MY BEN 10 HAS VANISHED!

Thokozile Mnguni • 21 December 2017



Victoria shows the certificate proving her marriage to a Ben 10. Photo by Thokozile Mnguni.

Victoria, a pastor and nurse by profession, said her lover left her high and dry.

"When we first met he presented himself as someone who was vulnerable. I learnt the hard way that he was nothing but a hyena in a sheep's skin," said an angry Victoria.

She said the Ben 10 had claimed to be an orphan.

"He claimed to assist the less fortunate at my church. I decided to take him under my wing. With time we decided to formalise our relationship by getting married at home affairs."

Since her man wasn't working, Victoria organised everything, including paying for the rings, which were about R20 000.

"We were married in community of property. I even bought a car for us in his name," she related.

Sadly, since July, the Ben 10 has gone missing . . . he has vanished into thin air.

"He packed all the clothes I bought him and disappeared. He started showing his true colours. And he was cheating on me, calling me names like gogo.

"He would even threaten me with death. I thought he'd change but he went from bad to worse.

"He even sold my car to one of his relatives. He used to tell me he would never work as long as the world is full of rich women.

"Imagine targeting those who've lost their husbands. I just want to warn women to be careful and not make the same mistake as I did," said Victoria.

Mpumalanga police spokesman Brigadier Leonard Hlathi has advised Victoria to seek legal help, since they were married in community of property.

## Story 9: Appendix I

National

# EVIL BEN 10 KILLED OUR MUM!

Chris Qwazi • 20 April 2017



Nobengazi Matshoba's daughter Ntombizandile holds a picture of her murdered mother. Photo by Chris Qwazi.

COPS are looking for a Ben 10 who allegedly killed his lover with an axe yesterday morning.

Nobengazi Matshoba (50) was found dead in front of her new RDP in Missionvale kasi, Port Elizabeth, at 5.40am.

According to her family, Nobengazi met the Ben 10 – who is believed to be about 40 and from New Brighton – three years ago while he was living in a backyard shack in her yard.

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**Story 10: Appendix J**

National

**BEN 10'S REVENGE!**

Stephens Molobi • 18 April 2017



Janet Letswalo in front of her wrecked home in Zone 14, Sebokeng. Photo by Stephens Molobi.

WHEN SANGOMA Janet dreamt she was living in a shack, she should have known it was a warning from the ancestors.

Because soon after that, her raging Ben 10 allegedly destroyed her house and stole her possessions!

NOW JANET IS LIVING IN A BACK ROOM AND THE BEN 10 IS BEHIND BARS.

JANET Letswalo (56) told Daily Sun she didn't know she was heading for trouble when she took a Ben 10, aged 35, into her 10-roomed house and her double bed 15 months ago.

"At first life was great, but then I realised our relationship couldn't last because we had too many differences.

"So when I went to see my family for a family gathering last Friday I told him to pack his things and get out of my house."

But before she even reached the gathering, she got a call from a neighbour.

"I was told my house was on fire," she said.

She claimed the Ben 10 had set her house alight. Her dining-room, three bedrooms, kitchen and bathrooms were all burnt down.

"I can't even determine the cost of my loss. Everything I worked for over so many years has gone up in smoke," said Janet, sitting in the back room of her house in Sebokeng, in the Vaal.

After the fire, she remembered the warning dream the ancestors had sent her a week before.

But Janet is not entirely satisfied that the warning she got was clear enough.

"I wish my ancestors had been more specific about what was going to happen.

"I rely on them for guidance.

"Dreaming about a shack didn't tell me much because I thought they were showing me something else.

## Story 11: Appendix K

National

# SUGAR MAMA STABS BEN 10!

Ntebatse Masipa • 22 September 2015 • Uitgawe She was with another man



Siphiwe Tshabalala's sister-in-law Sinah Rantho is grieving for him. Photo by Muntu Nkosi

HE thought he was the only man in his sugar mama's life...

But Ben 10 Siphiwe Tshabalala (29) got the shock of his life when he found her in another Ben 10's arms!

Siphiwe allegedly went crazy and started fighting them, so the sugar mama (43) allegedly took a knife and stabbed the jilted Ben 10 to death!

Siphiwe died on the spot.

After last Tuesday's incident, the woman ran away but then handed herself in to the Tembisa cop shop two days later. She was bust and is facing a murder charge.

Siphiwe's angry family said they hoped the woman would rot in jail. "She was homeless but Siphiwe took her in and gave her a place to stay. Look now what she's done to him," said his sister-in-law Sina Rantho.

She said the family never liked Siphiwe's sugar mama from the start. "She was too old for him. We tried to warn him not to continue the relationship, but he insisted.

"Siphiwe told us he had been trying to get the right person, but the women he found cheated on him.

"He thought because his sugar mama was mature she wouldn't do the same thing...

"This one not only cheated on him but killed him as well."

Rantho said the sugar mama had brought two children from her previous relationships with her and Siphiwe was taking care of them.

A murder case has been opened at Tembisa cop shop.

The woman made her first court appearance last week and is expected to appear again soon.

Story 12: Appendix L

National

# GOGO'S BEN 10 SEX DRAMA!

Kabelo Tlhabanelo • 20 November 2015



Gogo Sophie Dimpane and her Ben10 Keneels Meyes, who is 40 years her junior. Photo by Kabelo Tlhabanelo. .

GOGO SOPHIE (76) and her Ben 10, Keneels (36) have a great time in bed. It seems the gogo's neighbour, Tello (52) also wants some of what Keneels is getting.

BUT GOGO SOPHIE REFUSES, NO MATTER HOW MUCH MONEY THE NEIGHBOUR OFFERS HER.

"I am in love with my Keneels and he satisfies me all the way!" said Sophie Dimpane.

"But my neighbour is always after me. He wants me to sleep with him so much he has even offered me money for sex," she claimed.

Smiling Ben 10, Keneels Meyes,

who is a full 40 years younger than Sophie, has been living with her in their house in phase 6, Mangaung, Bloemfontein for four years.

"My lover is hot in bed. I wish that neighbour would stop bothering her," said Keneels, giving gogo Sophie a long kiss.

But the neighbour, Tello Vermeulen, who is only 24 years younger than Sophie, insists he isn't interested in the hot gogo!

He said he slept with her when her husband was still alive but that was a long time ago.

"I never offered that woman any money," he said.

"She's not my type because she prefers younger men."

Keneels told Daily Sun that he not only loved Sophie very much, but was also happy with her family.

"Her children have accepted me and they love me," said Keneels.

Sophie's daughter, Miki Molosi (43), said they were angry when they first saw gogo and her Ben 10 together.

"But we ended up accepting the situation because we love our mother," said Miki, who at 43, is nine years older than her mother's lover.

"I have heard about Tello's issues as well."

Police spokeswoman Constable Joy Xaba said gogo should open a case of intimidation if she felt threatened by her neighbour.

Keneels said if Tello doesn't stop his nonsense he might have to take some action.

"I might end up hurting him," said Keneels.

But gogo said Keneels doesn't have to worry.

"Tello told me he would give anything up to R200 for a poke but that will not happen," she said.

"I have never slept with him and I am not interested in sleeping with any other man other than my Keneels!"

## Story 13: Appendix M

National

# I LIVE WITH MY BEN 10 AND MY HUBBY!

Modiri Michaels • 12 March 2015 • Uitgawe Woman takes a second husband for sex!



**THE HUBBY** has the money.

The Ben 10 has the hot 4-5.

"It wasn't an easy decision for me," said Puseletso Motselebane (44).

"After 15 years of marriage I love my husband as much as I ever did, but I needed more action in the bedroom than he could provide."

But, said Puseletso, she hated the idea of cheating on her husband. So she decided to find herself a Ben 10 and move him into the house with her and her customary husband, Petrus Moshawa (51).

"People told me it was a bad thing and called me names, but I believe this is better than cheating," she said.

"Because of some chronic disease he couldn't satisfy me in bed. I felt guilty about my boyfriend so I decided to tell Petrus about Kagiso."

She said at first Petrus was not happy about Kagiso Monnamoncho (34), but in the end he understood. She said they are all living together in an RDP house in Khotsong kasi, Bothaville, Free State.

"We are living together as one happy family," said the smiling Puseletso.

Now the mother of four children is planning to get married to Kagiso, who joined the family a year ago.

"We are still trying to raise money for our wedding," said Puseletso.

She has three children with Petrus and a one-year-old with Kagiso. Kagiso is unemployed and Petrus gets a disability grant from government and works as a full-time gardener. Puseletso is a shebeen queen and she doesn't like what she sees happening around her.

"Most women I know in my kasi cheat on their husbands but they do it in secret. I decided to live with both of my men faithfully."

The two men have separate rooms.

Petrus said he is not completely happy with the situation but he has accepted it for the sake of his children.

"Although I have become the laughing stock of our kasi I have to accept things the way they are for the sake of my kids."

"I won't comment on our sex life, but as long as my wife is happy I am satisfied."

Kagiso said he isn't worried that his girlfriend is married.

"When we first met I didn't know she was married but then we decided to take our relationship to the next level," he said.

"Puseletso told me she had spoken to her husband and he didn't have a problem with me moving in. I didn't have a problem either, so I moved in. I'm a happy man."

**Story 14: Appendix N**

Mizzb

**'I'M A BEN 10 TO MAKE MY LIFE BETTER'**

MizzB • 30 August 2016



Dear MizzB

I am a 24-year-old man and my life is a mess.

I completed my matric in 2011 but I still have nothing to show for it.

I could not study further because of the lack of money at home. I recently started dating a 34-year-old woman. I'm not doing it because I am a failure. I am dating her because I am trying to make my life better.

However, it seems I am not getting anywhere. Every day I have to clean and cook. I am not happy because I feel like I am useless. My mum always compares me with other people and other family members, some of whom are even younger than me. I tried everything but with no luck. Please help me.

- Needing help

Dear Needing Help

You are in a very challenging place in your life as you seem to be trying numerous things to be a success, but they are not panning out the way you had hoped.

We all have different destinations in life and it means we will not always travel the same route to our success.

What is your definition of success?

At times starting something small in terms of a business can help elevate you to the next level in your life financially. But all this starts with you!

You need to have faith in yourself and your abilities to be a success in order to attract people and opportunities that will bring about the required results.

Yes, your mother will push you to get a job.

This is because there's no parent who wants to see their children not getting ahead in life.

Don't lose hope. Keep trying and one day things will happen for you.

## Story 15: Appendix O

National

# SUGAR MAMA STOLE MY UNDERPANTS

Everson Luhanga • 19 March 2015 • Uitgawe SHE WAS HOT IN BED BUT SHE RUINED ME!



Joseph Tsholota said his ex- girlfriend stole his underpants to curse him. Photos by Noko Mashilo

WHEN Joseph Tsholota first started dating 52-year-old Ivy Kwenda he was excited and very happy with what she offered him between the sheets.

But now Joseph, who is 22 years younger than Ivy, from Mogale City, said after two years he found out that Ivy's passion was not reserved for him alone.

He said other men kept calling her day and night.

"Sometimes they would call while she was in my arms in the middle of the night, telling her they missed her in bed," he said.

Not only did they start fighting but Joseph alleges that she also stole his underpants.

And if he asked questions, she would get violent.

"One day she hit me with a hot frying pan on my head and set all my clothes alight, including my church uniform," he said.

And when she dumped him, Joseph has never been at peace.

"My life changed for the worse," Joseph told Daily Sun.

"Thugs have threatened me with guns and forced me to go to the ATM to withdraw money.

"I can't find other women. Everyone hates me. Even my priest doesn't want to help me," Joseph said.

He said sangomas told him the stolen underpants were being used to curse him.

Ivy told Daily Sun that she dumped Joseph because he was a baby. Ivy said she is staying with a new man who has promised to marry her.

"I don't have time to play with Joseph now. I am committed to one man and Joseph must get a life," she said.

"I never took his underpants. I don't steal.

Police spokeswoman Sergeant Tshepiso Mashale said Ivy was arrested for malicious damage to property but released pending further investigation.

Sangoma Dumezweni Mahabuke said Joseph's underpants were used to ruin his life and cause him to have bad luck.

Story 16: Appendix P

National

# JEALOUS SUGAR MAMA STALKS BEN-10 EX!

UNATHI MSHUMPELA • 09 November 2016



Asenathi shows the birthday gift left in his toilet by his ex sugar mama. Photo by Unathi Mshumpela .

**THE unsuspecting Ben 10 Asenathi got the fright of his life when he went into a toilet and saw a strange "gift" there.**

*When he saw some cookies and the message that came with them, he knew immediately who left them.*

**"EAT CHEATER," THE NOTE SAID!**

"That note told me who the sender was," said Asenathi Marhwanqana, of Ntlekiseni Location in Mthatha, Eastern Cape.

On Tuesday, Asenathi's 21st birthday, he went to the toilet in the morning and was greeted there by four home-baked cookies on a white plate and the red note in front of the toilet seat.

"It was a scary present from the 58-year-old sugar mama I have been dating for the past two weeks."

Asenathi said that it was the demanding behaviour of his gogo lover that made him end the relationship after only a fortnight.

"She demanded to be poked five times a day," he said.

"That was hard on me. She is too tall and too fat."

He said the sugar mama also wanted him to use her photo as his profile picture on social networks – and she insisted on being by his side all the time.

He said the sugar mama bought him a skorokoro Nissan Bakkie and also a new shack, but he gave them back to her when they broke up.

"She has been threatening to use muthi to kill me and my new girlfriend if I do not come back to her.

"She even said she will send tokoloshes to come and bite my 4-5 until it looks like a sausage," said Asenathi.

"I am terrified, but I have a strong sangoma on my side."

The gogo, who did not want to be named, admitted that she placed the cookies on Asenathi's toilet on his birthday, but said she did it out of love.

"I love him a lot and he pokes me so good, I cannot lose him.

I am using muthi to bring him back, but it is difficult because I know that he is also consulting his own sangoma to fight me," said the gogo, who is the owner of a chesa nyama.

"This is a battle for love and if we cannot get back together, then one of us has to die."

She said the cookies contained korobela, and she was disappointed that Asenathi took not even one bite.

Asenathi said he would not open a case with the police but would rather fight back against the gogo by also using muthi.

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