LUMBERJACKS AND HOODRATS: NEGOTIATING SUBJECT POSITIONS OF LESBIAN REPRESENTATION IN TWO SOUTH AFRICAN TELEVISION PROGRAMMES

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NATALIE DONALDSON

Supervisor: Professor Lindy Wilbraham

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ABSTRACT

With the inclusion of sexual orientation in the Equality clause of the post-Apartheid constitution which demands equal rights and protection for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation, South Africa has been praised as one of the most liberal countries in the world. Because of this legal equality, gay and lesbian experiences have become a lot more visible in every day South African lives. This includes visibility in South African television programmes and film. Today, a number of South African produced television programmes have included at least one lesbian character in their storyline and many LGBTIQ activist organisations have deemed this increased visibility as a positive step for LGBTIQ rights. However, discriminatory discourses such as same-sex sexualities as 'un-African' and unnatural, which often result in brutal hate crimes against LGBTIQ individuals (such as corrective rape), contribute to the social and cultural intolerance of same-sex sexualities.

South African research into the lives of lesbian women has often related lesbian experience to that of gay men or has focused on lesbian women as victims of corrective rape and oppressive practices at the hands of the dominant heteronormative culture. This research was a discursive reception study, using three focus group discussions with self-identified lesbian audiences (black and white). The study explored how this audience received (interpreted/talked about) the available fictional representations of 'black' lesbian women and 'white' lesbian women in three clips from two South African television programmes, *Society* and *The Mating Game*. Using Wetherell's (1998) critical discursive psychology approach, this research focused on examining the 1) Subject positions made available in/by these representations; 2) Interpretive repertoires used by the audience in appropriating and/or negotiating and/or resisting these subject positions; and 3) Ideological dilemmas experienced by participants in this negotiation process.

The predominant subject positions made available in these representations were differentiated according to binary racial categories of white lesbian women and black lesbian women. For example, participants positioned white lesbian women as "lumberjacks" and "tomboys" while black lesbian women were positioned as "township lesbians" and

"hoodrats". In working with these subject positions, participants drew on interpretative repertoires of othering and otherness as well as interpretative repertoires of survival. In negotiating with these subject positions and others found in the discussions, ideological dilemmas often arose when participants found themselves having to draw on interpretative repertoires which extend from a heteronormative discourse. These kinds of interpretative repertoires included religion, nature, and compromise which contradicted and created a troubled position when used in relation to the participants' lesbian sexualities. Therefore, when the ideological dilemma and troubled position became apparent, participants had to work to repair the troubled position by justifying their use of these heteronormative interpretative repertoires.

Keywords: critical discursive psychology, lesbian sexualities, heteronormativity, media representation, audience reception

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To my participants:

"Our feelings are our most genuine paths to knowledge." - Audre Lorde

Thank you for giving up your time to participate in this research. Without you, there would be no research.

To my Mommet and Claudia:

"We cannot destroy kindred: our chains stretch a little sometimes, but they never break." - Marquise de Sévigné

My family consists of only you two. We are a little family. But, with all the love and support I receive, I need no bigger family. You are two of the most remarkable women I know. To me, you both signify strength and courage. Thank you.

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"I'll be reaching for the stars with you, honey. Who cares if no one else believes?" - Blue October, She's My Ride Home

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"True teachers are those who use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross. Then, having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create their own." - Nikos Kazantzakis

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this to all the women in South Africa who suffer simply because of who they love.

We will overcome.

"We may encounter many defeats but we must not be defeated." - Maya Angelou

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"'I'm the idiot box. I'm the TV. I'm the all-seeing eye and the world of the cathode ray. I'm the boob tube. I'm the little shrine the family gathers to adore.'

'You're the television? Or someone in the television?'

'The TV's the altar. I'm what people are sacrificing to.'

'What do they sacrifice?' asked Shadow.

'Their time, mostly,' said Lucy. 'Sometimes each other.' She raised two fingers, blew imaginary gunsmoke from the tips. Then she winked, a big old I Love Lucy wink.

'You're a God?' said Shadow.

Lucy smirked, and took a ladylike puff of her cigarette. 'You could say that,' she said."

— Neil Gaiman (American Gods)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Brief Context of the Research

With the expiration of the apartheid regime and the implementation of the new Constitution of 1996, South Africa's inclusion of 'sexual orientation' in the Equality Clause of the Constitution made South Africa the first country in the world to demand equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) individuals (Croucher, 2002; van Zyl, 2009). In addition to this, the implementation of the Civil Unions Bill in 2006 – which meant gay and lesbian couples could marry with the same benefits as heterosexual couples – South Africa became only one of five countries in the world to legalise 'gay marriage' (Stephens, 2010). Because of these two significant and major milestones in the fight for gay and lesbian equality and liberation, South Africa has been hailed as one of the most liberal countries in the world. Furthermore, because of the legal protection made available under these two laws, gay and lesbian lives are becoming more visible and this includes being featured on South African screens as recurring or main characters in both international and local films and television programmes.

This increased visibility has been deemed a positive step in the fight for gay and lesbian equality, both internationally and locally, and the hope has been that an increased visibility would translate into a greater social and cultural acceptance of gay and lesbian individuals. However, it appears that within South Africa, although advances have been made, discriminatory discourse such as same-sex sexualities being 'unAfrican' and unnatural often result in brutal hate crimes against LGBTIQ individuals (such as 'corrective/curative rape'). This discourse and these discriminatory practices work to contribute to the social and cultural intolerance of same-sex sexualities. Media theorists (e.g. Croteau & Hoynes, 2000; Dyer, 1980; Fairclough, 1995; Hall, 1997a, 1997b) argue that an increase in representation in the media does not necessarily translate into cultural and social tolerance, especially since the media are (more often than not) always connected to the dominant ideology of the society within which it exists. Therefore, what is shown on mainstream television and film is generally connected with a heteronormative ideology which insists on representing

heterosexuality as the norm and alternate sexualities as marginalised and 'other'. While media are generally always connected to the dominant ideology, media theorists (e.g. Buckingham, 1998; Croteau & Hoynes, 2000; Hall, 1997c; Wood, 2007) do argue that audiences are not passive receptors who merely accept the meaning being presented to them. Instead, audiences tend to draw on their own interpretive resources in making meaning from the media images that they are confronted with.

With the above in mind, working within a social constructionist paradigm and within a critical discursive psychology framework (Wetherell, 1998), the current research aimed to explore how self-identified lesbian audiences in three focus group discussions spoke about the fictional representations of South African lesbian women in three clips from two locally produced television programmes, *Society* and *The Mating Game*. The purpose was to look at the subject positions made available by the representations and within the participants' talk and how participants worked with appropriating and/or negotiating and/or resisting these subject positions. In addition to this, a focus is on heteronormativity and the way in which the groups of self-identified lesbian women used various heteronormative interpretative repertoires in drawing meaning from these representations. Because heteronormativity is often in conflict with a same-sex sexualities, the research also looked at how the self-identified lesbian women dealt with the ideological dilemmas created in drawing on heteronormative interpretative repertoires.

1.2. Clarification of Terminology

Because this research was conducted using a social constructionist paradigm, a rationale and justification around the use of certain terms is necessary.

1.2.1. Sexuality vs. Sexualities

Drawing on a social constructionist, particularly Queer Theory, approach to understanding sexualities, this research dissertation rejects the notion of sexuality as a binary phenomenon of an individual being either heterosexual or homosexual. This binary, like the binaries of white and black or male and female, exists as a form of social organisation which is both regulatory and exclusionary (Roseneil, 2000). Furthermore, this research recognised that

'homosexuality' is not a unified identity and rejects the belief that all 'homosexual' people can be talked about and regarded as all the same. Therefore, the use of the terms 'sexualities' and 'same-sex sexualities' will be used throughout this report in order to convey the idea that sexuality is not static but is instead unstable, fluid, flexible and exists on a continuum (Roseneil, 2000). In other words, this research recognises that lesbian identities are not all the same and that various kinds of lesbian sexualities exist. For example, you may have a butch lesbian, a lipstick lesbian, a black lesbian and so on. It is also important to note that, while the term 'heterosexuality' may be used throughout this dissertation, I recognise that 'heterosexual' itself is also a problematic term and, like the term 'homosexual', all heterosexual people cannot be regarded as all the same.

1.2.2. Lesbian

Matebeni (2008), in her paper on the complexities of doing research with a group of black lesbian women in Johannesburg, argues that she needed to use the term 'lesbian' with caution. In using the term 'lesbian', the researcher risks perpetuating a dichotomous view of sexuality which social constructionist research attempts to move away from. Mbali (2009), who draws on the work of Foucault, argues that what is understood by gay identity and lesbian identity is constantly evolving and is "inherently unstable" (p. 81). In other words, in using the term 'lesbian' one risks perpetuating the view that sexuality is a fixed identity and a woman is either heterosexual or lesbian with no fluidity between the two (Matebeni, 2008). With this in mind, the term 'lesbian' is used in the research merely for convenience and with the awareness of the problems inherent in this term. I use this term simply for ease of writing and with full acknowledgment that sexuality is not fixed. However, in order to gain access to a specific group of people (i.e. women who are predominantly attracted to women and who tend to form relationships primarily with women) the term 'lesbian' was a necessary evil.

1.2.3. Black vs. White

With South Africa's history of apartheid and the racist ideologies inherent in that regime, certain terms were developed in order to construct race in ways that were designed and used to demean certain groups of people (Mkhize, Bennett, Reddy, & Moletsane, 2010). For example, the terms 'white' and 'black' were deployed in antagonistic ways where

'whiteness' was equated with pureness and supremacy while 'blackness' (i.e. all those not considered 'white') was equated with evil and inferiority (Mkhize et al., 2010). It is important to note that the term 'black' was not an official apartheid category (Mkhize et al., 2010). In other words, terms such as 'White', 'African', 'Coloured' and 'Indian' were official apartheid racial categories. However, the term 'black' has been (unofficially) used in two ways; firstly, as a derogatory term during apartheid to distinguish all 'non-European' people from 'European' (i.e. 'white') people and, secondly, during the liberation struggle as a way of creating unity between all 'non-white' South Africans against the apartheid regime (Mkhize et al., 2010).

With this in mind, this research dissertation will be using the terms 'black' and 'white'. Once again, I am aware of the problems inherent in dichotomous racial categories and I am aware of the problematic use of such terms under apartheid . However, the terms 'white lesbian' and 'black lesbian' (where 'white' refers to of 'European' descent and 'black' refers to what was regarded as 'African' during apartheid) were terms used by the participants themselves. Therefore, for consistency the two terms have been used throughout the research dissertation. The researcher acknowledges that lesbian women do exist within all racial groupings (e.g. Indian, Coloured, Chinese, etc.), but because the three South African media clips found focused on representations of either 'white lesbian' women or 'black lesbian' women, the focus of this research was on the two. This is, undoubtedly, a limit to the current research but also provides a foundation for future research on South African lesbian representation.

1.2.4. Heterosexism/Heteronormativity vs. Homophobia

Homophobia refers to the "negative and/or fearful attitudes about homosexuals or homosexuality" (Polders, Nel, Kruger, & Wells, 2008, p. 674). Griffin (1998) and Brown (2010) both argue that the term homophobia is limited because it implies that prejudice is located within individuals themselves. While prejudice does involve individual perception and action, such prejudice and action does not necessarily originate from the individual themselves (Brown, 2010). In other words, homophobia is regarded as a psychological construct which works to detract the issue away from the social, historical and cultural causes of discrimination and prejudice against LGBTIQ people (Griffin, 1998). It is because of

this that this research prefers the term heterosexism or heteronormativity instead of homophobia. Heteronormativity includes "a diverse set of social practices – from the linguistic to the physical... covert and overt... in which the homo/hetero binary distinction is at work whereby heterosexuality is privileged" (Plummer, 1992, as cited in Speer & Potter, 2000, p. 543). In other words, heteronormativity is the dominant ideology which informs the thoughts and meaning making practices of individuals in society and it is the belief that heterosexual sexualities are the norm that results in gay and lesbian sexualities being marginalised and discriminated against. Heteronormativity is explained in more detail later on in this research report.

1.3. Overview of the Research Report

The next chapter, chapter two, explores the research around media discourse, representation and audience reception since the theoretical lens used in this research is that of how audiences make meaning from the identities (subject positions) provided by media images. The chapter looks at the link between media and ideology, how representations perpetuate this ideology and how audiences engage with representations in making meaning. The chapter also includes a section on how the media aid and/or inhibit the identity construction of audiences. Finally, chapter two looks at the link between sexualities and audience research and the effect that sexualities may or may not have on how audiences make meaning from representations.

Chapter three engages with the historical and current social and cultural context of South Africa in relation to how sexualities have come to be politicised since 'sexual orientation' was included in the 1996 Constitution. The chapter also looks at the current discourse on sexualities, particularly lesbian sexualities, which work to undermine the gains of the 1996 Constitution and have resulted in an increase in gender-based violence against lesbian women (e.g. one of which is the argument that same-sex sexualities are 'unAfrican'). In addition to this, the chapter traces how the visibility of lesbian sexualities in South Africa have moved from being rendered invisible by the apartheid regime, as well as by various liberation movements, to the ways in which black lesbian sexualities in particular have become hyper-visible post-1994.

It was necessary to include the chapter on the South African context as the third chapter in order to create a link between media discourse (chapter two) and the identities (subject positions) made available by lesbian representation in international and local television and film (chapter four). Chapter four makes this link clear as the chapter focuses on lesbian representation in local and international mainstream film and television and how the social, cultural and political context of the time affected how lesbian women were represented during certain periods of time. This chapter is structured in such a way that shows the kinds of identities (subject positions) made available in these historical, globalized and current representations of lesbian sexualities.

Chapter five draws on the previous chapters in informing the methodology used in the current research dissertation. The chapter looks at how social constructionism informs the framework of this research and then how discourse analysis as a method fits within the paradigm in order to answer the research objectives and questions of this project. A detailed description is given of the process followed in gathering talk in the form of three focus groups and the steps followed in how this talk was then analysed. An overview is given of Wetherell's (1998) critical discursive approach and how this was deemed the most appropriate approach for this project. Finally, the chapter discusses validation and the procedures implemented in ensuring that the analysis and research process followed would result in a coherent, transparent and fruitful addition to the current foundation of research in this area.

The analysis and discussion of various extracts from the three focus groups is broken up into two parts. Chapter six looks at how the subject positions made available in the South African representations of lesbian sexualities and in the participants talk appeared to be formed along gendered, classed, and racial lines. These subject positions include the lumberjack and tomboy lesbian, the atypical lesbian, the township lesbian, and the hoodrat lesbian. This chapter also looks at the interpretative repertoires that were used by participants in appropriating and/or negotiating and/or resisting these subject positions. Many of these interpretative repertoires were drawn from heteronormative discourse, such as religion, nature, the good mother and gender performance, for example. Chapter seven investigates the ideological dilemmas that occurred in two of the focus group discussions and the

interpretative repertoires used in attempts to repair these ideological dilemmas. For example, one ideological dilemma occurred around promiscuity and the interpretative repertoires used in attempting to repair this ideological dilemma include interpretative repertoires of uncontrollable sexuality.

Finally, chapter eight ties the research together by providing a summary of findings, limitations of the current research and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: MEDIA DISCOURSE AND REPRESENTATION

2.1. Introduction

A number of media theorists (e.g. Livingstone, 1996; 1998; 2000; 2003; 2004; Mazzarella, 2003; Reinhard & Dervin, 2009; Robinson, 2009) have given overviews of the kind of research that has been and/or is being done within the field of media studies, audience reception and representation. With regard to the ways in which objects, events or people are represented in the media, Robinson (2009) argues that theories and research generally fall within two groups; namely, the "mirror of society" view and the "social influence" view (p. 497). The 'mirror of society' view believes that the media reflects the thoughts and feelings of the dominant culture and/or society and, therefore, media representations are capable of providing insight into "the nature of our culture" (Robinson, 2009, p. 497). An example of this strand of media theory is Hacker (1951, as cited in Robinson, 2009) who argues that the "social status of groups can be identified through these portrayals" (p. 497). In other words, groups who are considered to have a higher social status are accorded more visibility within the media with more positive portrayals. The 'social influence' view of media and representation is considered the most common approach to media studies. Simply, this view advocates the belief that the media have the ability to affect audience members' attitudes toward certain issues and, therefore, the concern in this view is on negative and/or stereotyped portrayals and how these could affect how certain groups of people in society are treated (Robinson, 2009).

Linking with the 'social influence' view, Mazzarella (2003) identifies two dominant strands in audience research. The first strand is coined "effects" studies (Mazzarella, 2003, p. 228) and the focus is on how the media affects audiences. This kind of research has a long history in media studies and the earliest example cited by Robinson (2009) is that of Gerbner (1969, as cited in Robinson, 2009). Gerbner developed the "cultivation hypothesis" (Robinson, 2009, p. 499) where he contended that audiences do not voluntarily accept the thoughts and beliefs provided by media portrayals. Within this theory, it is reasoned that media portrayals contain underlying themes which occur throughout television programming and, therefore,

audiences "acquire or "cultivate" a view of reality" (Robinson, 2009, p. 499) which is based on these underlying themes. The assumption is that these underlying themes result in a view of reality that is the same as the reality the media are portraying. Since these attitudes are not voluntarily acquired, it is suggested by this theory that audiences are unable to defend themselves against such portrayals. In contrast, however, Bandura's (as cited in Robinson, 2009) Social Learning Theory argues that audiences play a more active role in what they accept from media portrayals. This theory argues that individuals imitate or model behaviour based on the perceived or imagined consequences of the behaviour being portrayed. Therefore, in this view, audiences are not passive receptors of the views portrayed in the media, but do have the ability to control their behaviours. An example of this strand of research is studies which look at the effects of violent media images on young people – thus, modelling effects are negatively influenced if perpetrators of violence are depicted as being caught out, exposed, punished or as receiving due come-uppance from their deeds.

The second strand in audience reception studies is that of how audiences use the media and what they do with the media. This has been coined 'uses and gratifications' theory (Livingstone, 1998; Mazzarella, 2003; Reinhard & Dervin, 2009). The focus in this strand is on the kinds of choices audiences make in what type of media they use and what needs they attempt to meet in these choices. For example, research under this strand may look at why people watch news programmes on television and find that it is because people want to stay informed about what is happening in order to be able to interact in social situations where political debates may arise. In this view, then, audiences are also regarded as active agents who make deliberate and conscious choices in their use of media. A South African media researcher, Fourie (2008), argues that 'social influence' theories effect how the media are regulated within society. As he argues, "the more one believes the media may have a strong effect on the behaviour of people, the more government would try to control and misuse the media for their own purposes, including the spread of their political ideologies" (p. 32).

The number of theories on representation and the influence of the media on individuals, societies and cultures is diverse and varied, but one thing that this vast amount of literature

does show is that the media and audience reception of the media are complex and far from simple (Morley, 2006). This section will look at theories on how the media are believed to perpetuate the ideology of the dominant and ruling social group within society and the ways in which audiences receive and interpret these images using various interpretive resources. This section will also look at theories on how representation constructs identities (or subject positions) and meaning, and how media images make various identities (or subject positions) available to audiences which they can accept and/or negotiate with and/or reject/resist.

2.2. Media and Ideology

Meaning is produced and exchanged through all social interactions and one of the major ways in which meaning is circulated is through the media (Hall, 1997a). The advent of newer and more advanced technologies has seen older and newer as well as different forms of media being able to address a wider mass of audiences (Nightingale & Ross, 2003). It is because of this that the twenty-first century saturates us with media images on a daily basis. Wasserman (2008) states that the United States of America (USA) and Europe are far more media-saturated than South Africa, but that South Africa "forms part of a globalised world" (p. 267) where the media are increasingly becoming more and more important. This media-saturation comes in the form of repeated images from various types of media including television, magazines, radio, film, internet, and music (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000). Due to this increase in media images, Marxist, neo-Marxist and feminist theorists argue that the media have become the most powerful social institution together with religion and education (Batchelor, Kitzinger & Burtney, 2004; Croteau & Hoynes, 2000).

Most media theorists believe that the media provide ways of seeing and interpreting the world. In other words, the media provide a means which aids individuals in defining the world in which they live as well as providing models for how to behave in this world (Dyer, 1980; Croteau & Hoynes, 2000). According to Marxist theories, the media, television programmes and films in particular, form one of the dominant ways in which individuals are able to receive and internalise the values, beliefs and norms of the culture and society in which they live (Chung, 2007; Croteau & Hoynes, 2000). From a discursive perspective,

Fairclough (1995) argues that media have "[t]he power to influence knowledge, beliefs, values, social relations, [and] social identities" (p. 2). Marxist theorists tend to believe that the media promote the ideologies of the dominant group in power and are used to justify the actions of those in power (Chung, 2007; Croteau & Hoynes, 2000). Therefore, the images provided to us – in predominantly entertainment media such as films and television programmes but also in the news media – are more often than not a misrepresentation of reality (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000). Discursive theorists such as Fairclough (1995) and Hall (1997a), however, argue that the media provide different versions of reality which are positioned on particular political ideologies, for example, but are not necessarily 'misrepresentations'. Media images, therefore, are connected to the dominant ideology and to political, social and cultural power (Staiger, 1992, as cited in Haslop, 2009, p. 3).

A review of the literature makes evident that there is much disagreement on whether the media do influence individual perception or not. Following the discursive tradition of Hall (1997a; 1997b; 1997c) and Fairclough (1995), the argument of this research dissertation is that (at the very least) media representations have the potential to act as a source of information, as a cultural resource of identity-positions, for audiences. This is particularly true when it comes to representations of gay men and lesbian women (Batchelor et al., 2004; Jackson & Gilbertson, 2009). As Jackson and Gilbertson (2009) concur, "[m]edia representation of heterosexual alternatives is particularly salient for young people negotiating sexuality, more so for those with limited access to other cultural resources to inform their homosexual understanding" (p. 199).

In other words, although the dominant view is that individuals are "critical consumers" (Buckingham & Braggs, 2004, as cited in Jackson & Gilbertson, 2009, p. 203), if these individuals do not have access to other sources of information (for example, interaction with gay or lesbian individuals in their own personal environments), the media provide a resource that individuals may draw on in order to understand and make sense of their own sexual identities as well as those identities that do not conform to heterosexual norms. Gross (2001, as cited in Jackson & Gilbertson, 2009) further explains that when individuals only have heterosexual versions of sexuality made available by the media, they have "little choice but to accept the media stereotypes they imagine must be typical of all lesbians and

gay men" (p. 203). Cover (2000, as cited in Jackson & Gilbertson, 2009) agrees stating that an individual is more likely to accept these heterosexual versions of sexuality if they are not provided with alternative representations. Individuals may not accept these images completely but, according to Batchelor et al. (2004), the media do play an important role in how knowledge and attitudes are shaped around sexualities.

Fairclough (1995), coming from a discursive position as mentioned earlier, argues that "the media are shaped by, and in turn contribute to shaping, the system overall" (p. 12). In other words, individuals and the dominant ideologies that exists in society work to shape what is shown and represented by the media. What has become clear is that these images are not neutral and this needs to be realised when viewing the images given by the media. More often than not, the images presented perpetuate the ideologies, opinions and points of view of those who hold political, social and economic power (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992). The media – news and entertainment – are sites where certain ideas are circulated as truth and, thereby, certain ideas are regarded as natural and normal, thereby reinforcing the power and domination of these ideas (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000). Following a Marxist perspective, the mass media are the most crucial sites where power and domination are exercised and promoted (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000). Furthermore, Hall (as cited in Croteau & Hoynes, 2000) and Fairclough (1995) believe that the media do not simply reflect the social world, but rather engage in practices that define reality and makes meaning. In other words, the media constitute realities and selves within those realities.

For the purposes of this research dissertation, the term 'ideology' is used to refer to the system of meaning which enables individuals within that system to understand, explain and make judgements about the world in which they live (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000; Fairclough, 1995). Fairclough (1995) adds that ideology "contribute[s] to producing or reproducing unequal relations of power [and] relations of domination" (p. 14). Fairclough (1995) further argues that discourse, the way in which language is used, is a social practice that is linked very closely to ideology. In other words, media images contain discourse and "implicit assumptions" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 14) within them that contribute to "producing or reproducing unequal relations of power" (p. 14). Reid (2008), a South African media theorist, agrees with this line of argument, stating that "representations have also

functioned as the social carriers of ideology" (p. 203) and also, therefore, work to produce and reproduce unequal power relations within societies. She adds that past thinking around ideology (e.g. Marx and Althusser, as cited in Reid, 2008) has tended to take the view that representations automatically transmit ideologically laden messages to audiences which they absorb.

However, the production and reproduction of unequal relations of power is not as simple as the media pitching and disseminating one particular image and meaning in a certain way and audiences merely accepting the image and meaning as it is presented to them. The media presents sites where contestation can and does take place (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000; Hall, 1997c; Reid, 2008). Different representations are a result of different ideological interests and, although, much of the time, the challenging less-dominant ideological representation/s is/are not visible (since the dominant ideology is the most popular and, therefore, the one made the most visible), it can often be found if one looks carefully (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000). In order to understand how audiences can and do resist or challenge dominant ideological representation, it is first necessary to look at theories of representation.

2.3. Media Representation

Gamson et al. (1992) explain that "we walk around with media-generated images of the world, using them to construct meaning about political and social issues" (p. 374). Livingstone (2003) adds that the media possess an "unprecedented power to encode and circulate symbolic representations" (p. 337). In addition to the focus of media studies being on audience reception of media images and messages, a large focus of textual analyses in media studies has been around how objects, people and events have been represented in the media. Reid (2008) and Hall (1997a) argue that representation has often been theorised and viewed in one of two ways; either as a reflection of reality or as a distortion of reality. Hall (1997a) argues that both these views see representation as the process through which meaning is given to the thing being depicted. In other words, something exists first and its characteristics are what give it its meaning. Representation, therefore, in this view, is secondary and only occurs once something already exists.

Hall (1997a) proposes that representation is constitutive of events, objects and people in that there is never "one, true meaning" (Hall, 1997a, p. 9). He further states that, because of this, there is never one interpretation to these events, objects and people and that meaning is not transparent or straightforward; meaning changes according to context, history and utility and is, therefore, never fixed and can always be contested. Meaning depends on the meaning that individuals give to the event, object or person and, furthermore, meaning does not exist until it has been represented. In short, representation is not a process through which meaning is given, but rather forms part of an event, object or person. To understand this better, one first needs to look at what representation is and how it works.

Hall (1997b) defines representation as the ways in which an object or person is described, portrayed, depicted or symbolised and the means by which meaning is produced through language. Thus, objects and people do not have an innate meaning, but rather that, through representational systems, individuals construct meaning for the objects and people that confront or address them (Hall, 1997b). One of these representational systems is the culture we belong to. Hall (1997b) posits that the culture to which one belongs is the primary force in how one makes sense of and gives meaning to the world. Through our culture we internalise certain "conceptual maps" or "mental representations" (Hall, 1997b, p. 17-18) of things that exist and the relationship between these things that exist. These concepts are organised and classified into categories which help us make sense of the world around us and, therefore, make meaning of the world, objects, events and the people around us. These conceptual maps are shared between members of the same culture. If we did not share certain concepts, we could not make sense of the world together or build a social world (Hall, 1997b). In other words, culture/s would not exist.

Reid (2008), writing from a South African perspective, agrees with this, arguing that it is our shared world view which enables audiences (for the most part) to decode media messages in a similar way. It is important to remember that Hall (1997b) is writing from a first world context and, within South Africa and its myriad of languages and cultures, it is important to consider how this mix of languages and cultures affects our own 'conceptual maps' or 'mental representations'. Zeleza (2002) and Miller (1995) as cited in Salo & Davids (2009) mention that there are theorists who argue that globalization from first world countries will

ultimately lead to the demise of local cultural practices, meanings and understandings, resulting in what Miller (1995) terms "generic Westernisation" (as cited in Salo & Davids, 2009, p. 53). However, both Zeleza (2002, as cited in Salo & Davids, 2009) and Miller (1995, as cited in Salo & Davids, 2009) disagree, arguing that the meanings derived from global images provided by 'northern' countries (e.g. USA) to individuals within 'southern' countries (e.g. South Africa) are shaped by local, cultural and historical contexts.

Whichever context we live in, however, our culture and our social world require language in order to externalise and share the meanings we make. Language (which refers not only to written and spoken words but also to visual images, music, digital and electronic communication, gestures, facial expressions, clothes and many more) is also a representational system and is central to meaning-making because it is used to share and circulate meanings between individuals and audiences (Hall, 1997b). "Language is a system of signs [sounds, words, images, etc.]" (Hall, 1997b, p. 31) we need in order to communicate and express our meanings to other members of our culture. Therefore, it is through language that the meanings we make of the world become externalised. As mentioned, 'things' do not have meaning; meaning needs language and things become meaningful through the language used (Hall, 1997c). In other words, it is through discourse (or language) that objects, events and people become meaningful; not whether they really exist or not. Therefore, if language did not exist, representation could not exist (Hall, 1997b).

Human beings have a complex relationship with meaning. Meaning has the ability to arouse both positive and negative emotions and often calls our identity into question (Hall, 1997a). Meanings define what is normal and who is excluded from normality. Therefore, when looking at representation, one always has to look at power: who holds the power to decide what gets represented and how it gets represented (Hall, 1997c). What this means is that ideological representation serves the interests of the ruling class or dominant norms in society. Power, together with ideology, attempts to fix representations of objects, events and people in an attempt to naturalise the meaning within the image thus resulting in a closure in representation (Hall, 1997c). Hall (1997c) terms this the 'preferred meaning' of the representation. Reid (2008) views Hall's (1997c) theory on 'preferred meaning' as a "good illustration" (p. 219) of how audiences engage with representation. She argues that

whether an audience member agrees or disagrees with the "ideologically coded messages" (p. 219) would depend on their own position in relation to the representation. Later on in this chapter I go into more detail around what this positioning entails and how it works, but suffice it to say that Reid (2008) argues that ideology "is not a simple matter of top-down domination as Marx and Althusser's theories encourage us to believe" (p. 219), but rather that audiences are able to exercise their own power onto the text and derive their own meanings from the text. Therefore, although ideology involves attempting to impose these dominant norms onto individuals within a society or culture, 'preferred meanings' are not incontestable. Audiences are able to accept and/or negotiate and/or resist the 'preferred meaning' being offered to them (Hall, 1997c; Reid, 2008). Two different examples of empirical studies will be used to explain this.

The first example is from a paper written by Wilbraham (2008) which looks at the interactive discourse of a mixed group of professionals and postgraduate university student who were parents. Their discourse was analysed in relation to a media text from a sexual health campaign instructing mothers how to communicate with their children about sex and sexuality. Sexual health campaigns in South Africa utilise didactic media (a form of media that intends to deliver important information to audiences in an entertaining way) as its main form of transmitting a message to citizens, and audiences are expected to appropriate the 'preferred meaning' in the text since, as Wilbraham (2009) writes in a separate paper, "'preferred meanings' are wittingly encoded with expertise, with particular reading subjects in mind" (p. 62). Wilbraham (2008) argues that this specific didactic media text aimed to convey the message that 'good mothers' need to talk to their children openly about sex in order to "normalise and naturalise sexuality as a young person's central axis of identity construction" (p. 96) which would ultimately result in safer sex practices. What Wilbraham (2008) concludes is that, although there was a kind of appropriation of this preferred message, it was more of a "partial, piecemeal, negotiated process" (p. 96) where other factors such as gender, race and class came in to play.

The second, and quite different example, is a study conducted by Hallam and Marshment (1995) which looked at how audiences engage with the 'preferred meaning' being offered in a film. Although the study was not based on a film which features a dominant

heteronormative ideology (but rather an ideology which attempts to challenge heteronormativity), it is still useful in looking at whether audiences merely accept the 'preferred meaning' being offered or whether they engage with this 'preferred meaning' in order to make their own meaning. The study looked at a made-for-television film entitled *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* based on the Jeanette Winterson book of the same title. The film focuses around Jess and the reactions and obstacles that she has to endure as a lesbian woman. Hallam and Marshment (1995) chose eight British women of different ages, races, occupations, religions, and sexualities to be involved in a viewing of the film, and in-depth interviewing about the meanings of sexualities they made from it. Out of the eight women, one woman did not finish watching the film due to her religious beliefs; she felt that she was being manipulated by the film in order to like Jess and view Jess's sexuality as normal and this went against what she had been taught. One viewer disliked Jess while two lesbian viewers felt the portrayal of Jess was positive and they were able to find similarities with their own personal experiences.

Hallam and Marshment (1995) state that the film was made in such a way that it is "tightly constructed to close down its polysemy" (p. 2) and that the 'preferred meaning' of the film was to encourage audiences to sympathise with Jess rather than identify with those who persecuted her and it is an attempt to challenge the audience's ideas of heterosexuality being the only 'normal' sexuality (Hallam & Marshment, 1995). From their findings, even though an individual's own experiences and backgrounds (e.g. religion and sexuality) are integral to how they interpret the images and how much they are able to identify with the film's imagery, Hallam and Marshment (1995) conclude that "the 'naturalizing' of lesbianism that [they] had identified as the text's strategy was largely successful" (p. 14). However, what this study also shows is that audiences use their own interpretive resources (such as their own background, religion, etc.) in making meaning from the film. It also shows that the position from which one comes affects the way in which the film or representation is read. For example, because the film was seen to challenge her position as a religious person, one woman did not finish watching the film as she felt manipulated, while the two lesbian audience members identified with Jess and the storyline because of their positions as lesbian women themselves. Audiences, therefore, actively engage with media representations.

2.4. Active Audience Theory

While the above sections advocate for an 'active audience' approach to reception of media images and representations, before we can understand what 'active audience' theory is, we need to look at how theorizing on audience reception has moved from viewing the audience as passive receptors of the ideologies perpetuated in media representation to viewing the audience as more active in what meanings that they make and/or take from media representations. In the introduction of this chapter, the traditions in audience reception studies were touched on briefly and some detail has already been given on the 'active audience', but this section will provide a more detailed description and engagement with active audience theory and research.

Hall (1982, as cited in Gamson et al., 1992) argues that "people are not "cultural dopes"" (p. 388); they are not passive when it comes to what they are viewing. Media studies and audience research has moved to focusing on individual, social, cultural, and historical differences and how these affect the ways in which audiences respond to various media images (Buckingham, 1998). Audiences, no matter what their age, are now being referred to as "active audiences" (Buckingham, 1998, p. 170). It is now believed that audiences have the ability to draw on their own contexts, history, culture, experiences, knowledge and other media exposures when making sense of what is shown to them by the media (Hall, 1997c). The active audience theory of media believes that meaning within media images is not merely delivered to audiences, but rather meaning is constructed by the audiences (Buckingham, 1998). In other words, audiences do not just respond to the images they see, but rather engage in an active process of interpretation and evaluation of the information in the images (Buckingham, 1998). This theory is also known as the ethnographic turn in media studies since it focuses on "contexts of consumption... [and these have a] significant impact upon the processes of the interpretation of media" (Wood, 2007, p. 76).

Active audience theorists agree on two main points when it comes to the audience interpretation of media images and messages (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000). Firstly, although ideology attempts to naturalise and fix meaning and offer to audiences a 'preferred meaning' (Hall, 1997c), meanings within images or representations are not fixed in the

sense that audience will always interpret or take the 'preferred meaning' being offered. Audiences themselves have the ability to construct their own meaning from representations (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000) and, therefore, how we interpret the images presented to us determines the meaning we take from those images. The intended meaning or 'preferred meaning' provided from the creators of the image is not merely transmitted to a passive individual; instead, the individual interprets the image and derives her or his own meaning from the image (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000), and might read the image 'against the grain' (i.e. deliberately opposing the intended meaning; see more on this below). Sometimes, the intended meaning on the part of the producer and the meaning constructed by the individual is the same, but it is never guaranteed that this will always happen. Secondly, that interpretation is not always an individual activity, but rather a social activity whereby interpretations are based on the social and cultural contexts in which an individual lives (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000). The media form a large part of our social lives and, therefore, these meanings are often constructed within groups in a social setting. For example, individuals often watch television programmes with family or friends or go to the cinema with family or friends. We relate our interpretations and the meanings we constructed of the television programme or film to our friends, family and partners and we engage with their interpretations and constructions almost on a daily basis (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000).

Because audiences, as active interpreters of media images, have different experiences and backgrounds, this means that one fixed meaning of media images is not possible and it is difficult to identify a single message within media (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000; Wood, 2007). Theorists refer to these multiple meanings and interpretations as polysemic (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000). What this means is that meaning surfaces from the context in which it is being interpreted and that this leads to diversity in meaning because media images contain an "openness that invites [audiences] to actualize the meanings they want" (Schrøder, 2000, p. 239). In addition, media images do not fit into one neat and coherent whole. Croteau and Hoynes (2000) explain this idea using the metaphor of a jigsaw puzzle with too many pieces; an individual only needs some of the pieces to create a picture, but if s/he uses different pieces then a different image will form. In other words, this is a similar idea to what Fairclough (1995) calls 'interpretive resources' whereby, if an individual has been exposed to multiple and different ways of looking at the world (i.e. multiple and different discourses)

then s/he will receive media images in a different way to someone who has not. For example, using the woman in the Hallam and Marshment (1995) study used earlier: if the woman had been exposed to multiple discourses on sexualities and not just a religious discourse she may have interpreted the film in a different way.

Fairclough (1992, as cited in Wilbraham, 2008) argues that reading, understanding and using a particular media text works on the principle of coherence. A "coherent text is one whose constituent parts and preferred positions are encoded so that the text 'makes sense' and 'persuades' in the advocated way" (Wilbraham, 2008, p. 97). However, very often in mainstream television programmes and film, although the dominant ideology or interpretation might be there, there are other images or representations around and within an image that make it difficult for the dominant interpretation to contain all the images into one coherent, persuasive whole (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000). For example, when sarcasm, humour or irony is used within television programmes or films, the interpretation becomes unclear; one is not sure if the representation is meant to be taken seriously or not.

Furthermore, it is precisely the ambiguity, openness and contradiction within popular television programmes and films which allows for different interpretations and meanings to be constructed by audiences based on the context in which they find themselves (Buckingham, 1998). Buckingham (1998) concurs, explaining that "[audiences] are seen... as sites of conflict" (p. 176). Fairclough (1995) argues that discourse and discourse practices as a form of knowledge and experience determines how audiences interpret media images where they either use this knowledge and experience to fill in the missing gaps in media images or reframe media images. It is because individuals draw on their own experience and knowledge that a diverse range of interpretations of the exact same media image is possible.

Morley (as cited in Wood, 2007) found that audiences from different socio-economic positions all interpreted certain media images differently; and Radway (1985) found that gender (sex) differences had an effect on how media images were interpreted. More recently, Wood (2007) conducted a study, in the United Kingdom, with twelve women which involved three modes of data collection: 1) watching daytime television programmes and

recording the conversations that occur; 2) focus group discussions on how the representations of daytime television are interpreted; and 3) individual interviews on how the representations of daytime television are interpreted. What was found in this study was that the women in the sample interrogated the media representations (Wood, 2007). In other words, the women argued and debated with each other and the media images before agreeing or disagreeing with the messages being provided by the images. Furthermore, when interrogating these media images, the women tended to draw on their own culture, knowledge and personal experience when discussing and debating the messages within the media images.

From the examples presented, it is clear that the engagement of viewers with media texts and messages involves a wide range of "analytic competencies, social practices and material circumstances" (Livingstone, 2004). As mentioned previously, these are referred to as 'interpretive resources' (Fairclough, 1995) and some of the 'interpretive resources' that individuals draw when making sense and meaning from media images includes culture, ethnicity, gender (sex), education, previous exposure to different kinds of media images/messages, and socio-economic position. Dobinson and Young (2000) include social location, identity, subjective interests, and personal and cultural histories in the list of resources which individuals use in their interpretation of media images. Now, it is time that we include sexualities.

Morley (2006) believes that media images are also interpreted according to local cultural norms and this is evident in a study presented by Detenber et al. (2007) which looked at Singaporean audiences and their reception of homosexual representations in the media. Representations (both local and international) were banned in Singapore until 2003 when the Censorship Review Committee stated that "portrayals of homosexuality are allowed in films only if they are deemed 'nonexploitative' and nonpromotional" (Detenber et al., 2007, p. 368). Films with explicit 'homosexual' themes are apparently not allowed to be made in Singapore or imported into Singapore for commercial release or they are restricted to an adult audience. What Detenber et al. (2007) found was that Singaporeans who conformed to religious and cultural norms were less tolerant of representations of same-sex sexualities. In fact, the study showed that nearly fifty-eight percent of the sample used in the study

disliked representations of same-sex sexualities because they believed that the representations were too positive and promoted 'homosexual' behaviour. Those that were more tolerant of representations of same-sex sexualities were believed to be more tolerant because they conformed less to societal norms and were "more exposed to Western ideas" (p. 374). What this shows in relation to 'active audience' theory, once again, as with the studies mentioned in the representation section, is that audiences bring with them their own culture, background, history, race, gender, class and so on when drawing meaning from representations and in how they interpret these representations.

The previous sections have looked at theories of representation, media influence and how audiences engage with media representations. A necessary and particularly relevant aspect to look at for this research dissertation are theories on the role of the media in identity construction.

2.5. Media and Identity Construction

A number of media theorists (e.g. Couldry, 2006; Kellner, 1995; Strelitz, 2002; Wasserman, 2008) argue that there is a powerful belief that the media are "central to the way we shape our lives, the way we think about ourselves, interact with others, conduct our work and make our political decisions" (Wasserman, 2008, p. 259). Strelitz (2002) concurs, arguing that consumption of media texts is believed to be significant in the process of identity formation in that viewing television programmes, for example, helps in the construction of identities. Hall (1997c) explains this by arguing that meaning can only be attached to representations in the media if and when the reader can identify with the image. Therefore, every representation of an event, object or person holds an identity claim. In other words, when we see an object or a person we automatically make a claim about whom or what the person or thing is (Hall, 1997c). This claim of recognition, the ability to recognise what something is and how it fits in with the rest of the world is necessary in making sense of the world and the thing being represented. Therefore, representations could not work without an identity claim being associated with them. A process of identification needs to occur in order for meaning-making to occur; the reader needs to be able to project her/himself into the representation being offered and identify with what is being represented (Hall, 1997c).

Individuals can only get something out of the representation if they are able to position themselves in relation to what the representation is telling them. In other words, the media make available various identities (what will be referred to later on in this dissertation as subject positions) for individuals to appropriate.

However, as shown in a previous section, individuals are not passive receptacles who merely absorb and accept the identities (subject positions) that they are given as to how the world and the people in the world operate (Gledhill, 1997). As Wasserman (2008) argues, the media are an important part of the construction of identities but that "media representations and discourse form an interrelationship with other social forces to construct identities" (p. 259-260). Livingstone (2000) agrees, arguing that "texts attempt to position readers as particular kinds of subjects through specific modes of address" (p. 183) but that, for example, within the complex arena of sex, sexuality and sexualized subjectivity, a diversity of discourse will make different identities (subject positions) available which audiences can take up and/or resist and/or negotiate with (Kellner, 1995; Wetherell, 1998, 2001a). Wetherell's (1998, 2001a, 2001b) method of subject positioning will be discussed in more detail in the method section of this research report but, as Kellner (1995) argues, audiences can resist the identity (subject position) being made available to them by the media representation and use it to create their own meaning and identity and they do this using, for example, their own culture or context to "invent their own meanings, identities, and forms of life" (p. 3). Media and representations within the media then provide audiences with "resources which individuals can appropriate, or reject, [or negotiate with] in forming their own identities against dominant models" (Kellner, 1995, p. 3)

Hall (1980; as cited in Schrøder, 2000 and Wood, 2007) states that individuals can take on one of three decoding positions when deconstructing media messages: Firstly, a "dominant-hegemonic" position (Wood, 2007, p. 76) whereby the individual accepts the 'preferred meaning' of the media text and appropriates the subject position being made available to them; secondly, a "negotiated" position (Wood, 2007, p. 76) in which the individual has an ambivalent reading of the representation where the individual accepts some of the 'preferred meaning' but, from personal experience, might not accept other meanings made available in the representation (in other words, s/he may accept the meaning being made

available in some situations but not others); thirdly, an "oppositional" position (Wood, 2007, p. 76) whereby the individual makes sense of the media message by using an alternative frame of reference or 'reading against the grain' (in other words, they reject the meaning being made available to them or only accept certain aspects of that meaning). Although Hall's (1980; as cited in Schrøder, 2000 and Wood, 2007) three positions are around 'preferred meaning' these can be reworked slightly to relate to the identities (subject positions) made available in representations in that individuals may appropriate and/or negotiate and or oppose/resist the identity (subject position) being made available to them in the representation.

Kates (2001), using a "feminist film criticism, cultural theory, and reader response criticism" (p. 281) approach to identities (subject positions) made available through representation, in relation to gay men in particular, reworks Hall's (1980; as cited in Schrøder, 2000 and Wood, 2007) three decoding positions into what he refers to as three "scopophilic pleasures" (p. 286): resistant pleasures; complicit or guilty pleasures; and identifactory pleasures. Resistant pleasures occur when the individual uses media representation to identify against her/himself and they reject the identity (subject position) made available because they feel that the identity (subject position) being represented is not similar to her/his own circumstances or knowledge; they cannot identify with the identity (subject position) being made available. Complicit or guilty pleasures occur when the individual enjoys the message and the representation of the type of person in spite of what they know or believe (Kates, 2001). In the case of television programmes or films, the representation is able to interpellate the individual by seeming to acknowledge the individual's (in Kate's (2001) paper, specifically the gay male's) social location and provides ways in which the individual can identify with what is being represented, but the representation is filled with many contradictions and often obscures reality. Therefore, the individual might enjoy the representation or media image, but battles with fully accepting the identity (subject position) made available because of the way in which it obscures the reality that the individual knows. Identifactory pleasures occur when the individual accepts the identity (subject position) being made available to them (Kates, 2001). Kates (2001), however, believes that this can only occur if the individual likes the character being represented and can completely identify with the circumstances and actions of the character.

With regards to the films he reviews in his paper, Kates (2001) states that identifactory pleasure is the "undiluted, politically acceptable, guilt-free, non-complicit pleasure of knowing that [the individual is] reading within a sexual code that is very much opposed to the heterosexist sexual binary" (p. 306). Kates (2001) further emphasises the idea that one needs to look at the historical context in which various films and television programmes are produced. He believes that films in the 1970s, for example, offered different identities (subject positions) than they do for individuals watching those films now. He explains that the "text has been shifted by changing social context" (p. 288) which has implications for interpretation and meaning-making. Kates' (2001) paper uses films featuring gay male characters to explain his three scopophilic positions and states that audiences now are able to take a resistant approach to the identities (subject positions) being made available by films in the 1970s, for example, because of the advances offered by three decades of gay and lesbian activism. In other words, historical and social contexts play an important part in how audiences interpret the identities (subject positions) made available and whether they accept or resist these subject positions.

In chapter four, a brief overview will be given of the identities (subject positions) made available by representations of lesbian women since the advent of film (and later television) since the 1900s. Before moving on to that, however, it is necessary to look at some research that has been conducted on how sexualities have been considered one of the interpretive resources (others include race, class, gender, as stated previously) that individuals can draw on in appropriating and/or negotiating and/or resisting the 'preferred meaning' and identities (subject positions) made available in media representations.

2.6. Sexualities and Audience Research

Haslop (2009) argues that sexualities, as interpretive resources, are an important aspect to look at when doing research in audience reception of media representations, especially when it comes to representations of same-sex sexualities. Haslop (2009) states that, since the 1970s sexualities have not been addressed in audience research because the focus has been on race, class and gender. Within a South African context, where there is marked increase in the visibility of lesbian and gay characters in fictional films and television

programmes (discussed in Chapter 4) as well as an increase in the publicity of 'corrective/curative rape' (discussed in Chapter 3) in news stories and local documentaries, has meant that sexualities (specifically same-sex sexualities and prejudice and discrimination) have not only become a lot more visible but also that lesbian and gay rights have now come to the forefront. It is, therefore, important that a range of sexualities now be included in audience research. As Haslop (2009) argues, it is not enough to merely look at how same-sex sexualities are represented in contemporary media, but research also needs to look at how the sexualities of audiences will affect how they interact and engage with media representations of same-sex sexualities.

Dobinson and Young (2000) and Jackson and Gilbertson (2009) agree that, for example, lesbian viewers may draw on different interpretive resources in interpreting or making meaning from media representations. Whatling (2004, as cited in Dobinson & Young, 2000) adds that lesbian audiences use different interpretive resources when identifying and making meaning from the identities (subject positions) made available to them through media representations of lesbian sexualities even if these representations are considered limited. As Jackson and Gilbertson (2009) agree, "lesbian viewers may variously enjoy, subvert, resist or appropriate mainstream representations of 'lesbians'" (p. 202). Therefore, sexuality is important in understanding whether sexualities affect how audiences interpret and/or make meaning from media images of sexual representation.

Very little research was found on the effect that sexualities have on how media representations are interpreted. As Haslop (2009) states, only eighteen studies around audience research have been published in the UK between 1980 and 2003. Of these, only two considered the sexualities of the respondents in the findings. To illustrate the importance of considering sexualities in audience reception studies, two examples of studies which focused on lesbian representation and how these were received by a lesbian audience follow.

The first example is an audience reception exploratory study – using Iser's (1972, as cited in Dobinson & Young, 2000) concept of multiple subject positions – conducted in Western Canada by Dobinson and Young (2000) in 1996. Dobinson and Young (2000) conducted

individual in-depth interviews with fifteen self-identified lesbian women. Because the respondents were described by Dobinson and Young (2000) as "primarily white, educated, and young" (p. 105) they acknowledge that their sample "in no way represents the diversity of the local lesbian community, and its limitations should be kept in mind when considering the results of the project" (p. 105). However, the study is useful as one of the starting points in looking at the interpretive resources the self-identified lesbian women in the study used when viewing mainstream films and television programmes. Dobinson and Young (2000) conclude that the self-identified lesbian viewers based their interpretations on "lesbian-specific life experiences" (p. 97). Interpretive resources emanating from the women's social positions, cultures, histories and backgrounds were relevant to whether they appropriated and/or negotiated and/or resisted the identities (subject positions) in representations being made available to them, but unique interpretive resources such as the impact of heterosexism/heteronormativity as a form of oppression influenced this process (Dobinson & Young, 2000).

What was extremely interesting in this study was that the majority of the women felt that they could not identify with the lesbian representations being offered in the films and television programmes shown. The women also believed that these representations on offer would affect how people view lesbian women and lesbian sexualities in real life. Therefore, when asked what kinds of films and television programmes they watched, the women commented that they would rather choose to watch films and television programmes with non-lesbian characters and that the type of woman that they felt they could identify with were heterosexual women who were independent, successful and exhibited emotional and psychological strength (Dobinson & Young, 2000). This study, therefore, shows that considering sexualities in an audience reception study is necessary in order to look at the potentially unique interpretive resources that a certain kind of audience may draw from in their process of interpretation and meaning making.

The second example is from a paper based on a qualitative somewhat discursive analysis study (she does not mention what her method is but speaks often of 'discourse') conducted by Moore (2009) in her final year undergraduate project which looks at the reception of American produced television programme, *The L Word*. Moore (2009) sought to examine

the themes that arose in the reception of *The L Word* by a group of eight self-identified white Irish lesbian women between the ages of twenty and forty years old. Moore (2009), like Dobinson and Young (2000), states that her study was "not intended as a representative sample of lesbian women in Ireland, [but is] rather, an exploration of a specific lesbian audience's responses to *The L Word*" (p. 57). In-depth interviews were conducted with each woman on how the representations of lesbian sexualities in *The L Word* "impacted on their sense of self" (p. 57). The most common theme that appeared in all the women's talk was that *The L Word* provided them with a television programme that was 'theirs' in the sense that this television programme was about them, for them (Moore, 2009). One of the respondents said: "Lesbians finally have their own drama on television which portrays more than chaste kisses and lingering glances between women" (Moore, 2009, p. 58).

Furthermore, many stated that, because *The L Word* is the only television programme that focuses on the lives of lesbian women, they have nothing to compare it with and, therefore, they continue watching it even though the representations are limited and stereotypical. Moore (2009) felt that the interviewees continued to defend the programme despite its flaws and she explains this by saying that lesbian women will watch anything that features even the smallest of lesbian storylines simply because these representations are few and far between. Many of her participants also felt that, although they may not be represented by the actual characters, they are represented by the issues that *The L Word* includes in the storyline, and that these issues are not specific to lesbian women only. As one respondent commented, *The L Word* contains "stories about people's lives" (Moore, 2009, p. 63). Moore (2009) concludes that even the active audience argument is not "immune to influence" (p. 65) especially when the films and television programmes are being watched and interpreted by an audience that is not used to seeing itself represented. It is ever clear from her study that sexualities need to be considered in audience reception research in order to examine the potentially different types of negotiation and, very often, the compromises that some audiences make in their viewing, reception, and interpretation.

2.7. Conclusion

The research conducted in my study would fall under an audience reception study and the focus is on contemporary South African produced representations of lesbian women and how a self-identified lesbian audience engages with these representations. In other words, the study aims to determine what identities (subject positions) are made available by these lesbian representations and what discursive and interpretive resources a self-identified lesbian audience use in accepting and/or negotiating and/or rejecting/resisting these representations. Before we look at this, however, it is necessary first to look at the history of gay and lesbian oppression and/or liberation in South Africa from apartheid to the present and the various identities (subject positions) which have and/or are being made available by past and current representations of lesbian women, both locally and internationally.

CHAPTER THREE: THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

3.1. Politicization of Sexualities in South Africa post-1994

Drawing on the work of Foucault (1979), Posel (2005a) argues that sexualities are always:

> "a political phenomenon: entangled in relations of power, and fashioned in ways which bear the imprints of other vectors of inequality and difference, such as race, class, status and generation. Yet, at certain moments, the regulation of sexuality is unusually politicized, in episodes of intense controversy and confrontation" (p. 241).

During the apartheid era, issues surrounding sex and sexualities were shrouded in silence and extreme forms of censorship as the apartheid government attempted to protect the supremacy and so-called purity of white power (Posel, 2004, 2005a, 2005b). When many other countries in the world were experiencing a 'sexual revolution', South Africa's government was focussed on policing and repressing any public representation of sexuality through a number of censorship laws (Posel, 2004, 2005a, 2005b). In relation to this silence and censorship, reports of sexual violence were concealed and/or ignored by the government rendering the problem of sexual violence almost invisible and out of the realm of public discourse, meaning that it also remained on the margins of political engagement (Posel, 2004, 2005a). With the advent of democracy and the removal of many of the censorship legislations implemented by the apartheid government, South Africa has experienced a remarkable shift in terms of sexualities and sexual practices becoming both a public and a political issue (Posel, 2004, 2005a). Posel (2005a) refers to this dramatic shift as the "politicization of sexuality" (p. 239), and argues that it is the post-1994 Constitution, together with issues of HIV/AIDS and the increase in sexual violence, which has ultimately resulted in sexualities becoming politicized to the extent that they have.

Posel (2004, 2005b) refers to the discourse of 'sexual liberalisation' whereby sexualities and representations thereof have moved from being actively policed and repressed in order to protect white supremacy, to being circulated in all spheres of political, public and private life. In other words, the current public prominence of sexualities in the media (e.g. television, film, magazines) have been normalised and accepted as part of our daily lives. This is not to say that these prolific displays of sexualities everywhere one looks has become

tolerable and accepted without contestation, but rather that it is these anxieties and contestations which ultimately contribute to the politicization of sexualities in the current South African context (Posel, 2004). To explain this, the 1996 Constitution, which ultimately affords all South Africans sexual freedom and freedom from discrimination and prejudice, has created a new form of sexual regulation in that sexualities and sexual practices are no longer considered solely private matters, but ones which are intensely public and of public and political concern (Posel, 2004).

The 1996 Constitution has ensured that, as an individual right and freedom, sexualities have become enshrined as a social democratic norm thereby making sexualities a matter of "public policy, governance and even 'service delivery'" (Posel, 2004, p. 55). What this means is that increased attention is paid to monitoring and evaluating that the *African National Congress* (ANC) government is ensuring that these rights are upheld by public service policies and services, and upheld by the police and courts when transgressions occur. When these rights and freedoms are not upheld – where policies have loopholes, services are denied and police fail to act – the government is forced to respond to these inadequacies since sexualities are now a political concern (Posel, 2004, 2005b). An example of how sexualities have become a political concern for government is the recent appointment of Constitutional Court Chief Justice, Mogoeng Mogoeng, where the key opposition to his appointment was in relation to his controversial rulings on cases which involved sexual violence, child rape and LGBTIQ issues (Rawoot, 2011; Tolsi, 2011). It was the potential for Mogoeng to violate the rights of women, children and LGBTIQ individuals as the new Constitutional Court Chief Justice (the highest legal position in South Africa), that formed the dominant reason for the media, opposition leaders and activists publicly critiquing his nomination and subsequent appointment.

The lifting of censorship legislation since 1994 has also meant that "[c]ontemporary South African society is saturated with matters sexual" (Reid & Walker, 2005, p. 189). Within mainstream and popular media, sex has become a product for consumption, and with political liberation, sex has become one of the predominant realms in which this freedom is asserted (Posel, 2004). For example, Posel (2004) refers to advertising aimed at black South Africans which now works to position 'blackness' as sexy and where young black South

Africans can use their sexualities to assert their sexual freedom as a means of protesting against an apartheid regime which made this impossible. In addition to this, the increase in HIV/AIDS as well as gender-based violence during the 1990s has meant that these topics are hotly debated and have become central to the preoccupation of news and documentary media and the government (Reid & Walker, 2005).

With the increase in HIV/AIDS, how sex, sexualities and sexual practices are now talked about and represented is remarkably different to that during apartheid. HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence has made 'sex talk' even more public than it ever has been before (Posel, 2004, 2005b). While apartheid attempted to regulate sexualities by policing, silencing and reducing them to invisibility, democratic South Africa – with the increase in HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence – is regulating sexualities in a different way. For example, campaigns aimed at distributing information on HIV/AIDS focus on issues of sexual practices and risks, attempting to construct a sexual subject "who is knowledgeable, responsible, in control and free to make informed choices" (Posel, 2004, p. 58). In South Africa, where rights and protecting the Constitution is paramount, positioning individuals as responsible sexual subjects, and as "citizens", further works to position individuals as claiming their constitutional rights, but also responsible for ensuring that the rights of others are protected at the same time (Posel, 2004).

With regards to gender-based violence, the regular reporting and analysis of rape statistics of South Africa in relation to global trends, in local and global media, has meant that sexual violence has become a matter of personal, public and political concern (Posel, 2004). Knowledge about rape in terms of latest statistics, latest reports, sentencing of perpetrators and cases that go to court, are now considered a "site of legitimate public knowledge" (Posel, 2004, p. 59), where the 1996 Constitution is used to ensure that people's right to know and be informed is confirmed. This would include reportage of 'hate crimes' and 'corrective rape' against LGBTIQ individuals (which is discussed later on in the chapter). Posel (2004) goes on to argue that, even though sticky cultural and social issues still remain in relation to gender-based violence, the establishment of gender-based violence within the political arena (where freedom from sexual violence is considered a right) has meant that rape survivors are able to speak openly about their victimisation, as well as report rapes to

the relevant authorities. Statistics provided by Vetten (1997) agree with this in that, while South Africa has the highest rate of rape in the world, these statistics illustrate that South African women are more likely to report gender-based violence than anywhere else in the world.

This liberalisation and politicization of sexualities has also meant that same-sex sexualities have become a lot more visible in South Africa (Posel, 2004). LGBTIQ individuals now too are protected from prejudice and discrimination under the 1996 Constitution, which has ultimately resulted in the growth of more visible and vocal LGBTIQ organisations working to ensure the government upholds the rights enshrined by the 1996 Constitution. Furthermore, with the implementation of the new Constitution, South Africa became the first country in the world to officially and explicitly include the protection against discrimination of all sexualities in its equality clause (Croucher, 2002; Posel, 2005b; van Zyl, 2009). South Africa also became the first African country and the fifth country in the world to provide legal recognition of same-sex marriages, which bear the same privileges and rights as heterosexual marriages, through the passing of the Civil Unions Bill in 2006 (Stephens, 2010). It was the explicit inclusion of 'sexual orientation' in the Equality Clause that has resulted in further non-discriminatory laws such as equal rights to adoption and equal partner benefits (Croucher, 2002; van Zyl, 2009). In addition to this, the Domestic Violence Act includes protection for individuals experiencing abuse in same-sex relationships (Stephens, 2010). Posel (2004) further remarks that this visibility of LGBTIQ individuals is not only found in 'real-life', but also within the mainstream media where lesbian and gay (even transgender) characters are often found in soap operas and other mainstream television programmes and films.

These achievements, however, are regarded by many gay and lesbian activists and writers as only good on paper (Croucher, 2002; Mbali, 2009; Potgieter, 2006; van Zyl, 2009). Posel (2004, 2005b) is also careful to add that, while the 1996 Constitution has opened spaces for sexual freedom and expression, it has also worked to create "new sources of anger and discomfort" (p. 60). Much of this anger and discomfort is in reaction to the sexual explicitness that permeates South African society and the belief of many NGOs and religious institutions that South Africa is in a process of moral decay which has meant that

heteronormativity and anti-gay sentiments are increasing. Why this legal and political equality has not smoothly transformed into practice is arguably due to the legacy of apartheid and the 'culture of violence' (Vetten, 1997) created by the apartheid regime, as well as the history of the gay and lesbian liberation movement in South Africa, and how these histories still affect the lived experiences of gay and lesbian people.

In a review of the literature on the gay and lesbian rights movements in South Africa, two things become clear. Firstly, that the gay liberation movement, since the 1950s, has been intimately intertwined with many other political movements throughout the course of recent history, for example, the movement for black liberation from the oppressive apartheid regime, the women's rights movement and HIV/AIDS activism (Cock, 2003; Gevisser, 1994; Mbali, 2009; Rydström, 2005; van Zyl, 2009). Secondly, that there appears to be a marked invisibility of lesbian sexualities within these movements. What follows in the next section is a look at how lesbian sexualities were rendered invisible through various human rights movements in South Africa and how certain lesbian sexualities are a lot more visible than others in the current South African context. In other words, how white and/or middle-class lesbian sexualities are still rendered invisible by the dearth of South African research on non-sensational topics (e.g. parenting, marriage, relationships), while the spotlight on 'corrective/curative rape' in copious amounts of media exposure as well as public and political debate has meant that visibility has been concentrated on black lesbian sexualities.

3.2. Sexual Repression and Lesbian Invisibility during Apartheid

Drawing predominantly on the work of Gevisser (1994), Mbali (2009) and van Zyl (2009), this section will focus on the invisibility of lesbian sexualities within the gay (and lesbian) liberation movement in South Africa and its intersection with the early apartheid gay bar culture, the black liberation movement, HIV/AIDS activism and the movement towards viewing gay and lesbian rights as human rights.

3.2.1. Gay Bar Culture and the Black Liberation Movement

As mentioned earlier, the 'sexual revolution' or rather the 'sexual liberation movement' during the early days of apartheid meant that many parts of the world were becoming more liberal in their views of sexualities and sexual practices (Peach, 2005; Polders, 2006; Posel, 2004, 2005a, 2005b). The apartheid regime, however, was becoming ever more repressive and suppressive of particular forms of sexuality and, therefore, with its heavy censorship laws, South Africa was prevented from experiencing similar changes (Posel, 2004, 2005a, 2005b). One of the main markers of the apartheid regime was the attempt to prohibit sexual practices across racial lines and, therefore, extensive regulations and prohibitions were put in place to alleviate what Posel (2005b) refers to as "typically colonial anxieties about rapacious black sexuality" (p. 128). In line with this, sodomy (a definition of which included penetrative sexual practices between two men) was considered illegal in South Africa, although Gevisser (1994) argues that there was a gay subculture in the major cities (i.e. Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town), which existed without harassment or persecution. The early beginnings of the gay liberation movement can be found within this white gay male bar culture (Mbali, 2009), where the focus was solely on providing a space of support and a feeling of community among white gay men in South Africa.

This is in stark contrast to the lack of community among the majority of lesbian women in South Africa. In the USA and Europe, the beginning of the women's liberation movement meant that "lesbians found, in feminism, a philosophical framework for living lives independent of men" (Gevisser, 1994, p. 19). In South Africa, however, what existed of a women's movement was focused on attaining rights in the workplace and forming an anti-apartheid resistance. In addition to this, lesbian sexualities were ignored by the early apartheid legal system, and it was only in 1967 that lesbian sexualities started being mentioned or considered for inclusion in apartheid legislation (Croucher, 2002; Gevisser, 1994). For example, in 1967, after a number of raids on popular gay clubs, proposals began emerging in government discussions around 'anti-homosexuality' legislation in order to deal with and eradicate this 'immoral' behaviour. These 'anti-homosexuality' proposals intended to make same-sex sexual practices illegal and punishable by imprisonment (Croucher, 2002; Gevisser, 1994). The proposals around this new legislation would explicitly include lesbian sexualities and would make same-sex sexualities (both male and female same-sex

sexualities) illegal, whereas previously it had only been public displays of 'homosexual' practices that were regulated (Croucher, 2002; Gevisser, 1994). After much debate and advances by the *Homosexual Law Reform Fund* (also known as *Law Reform*), the 'anti-homosexuality' law was dropped from the proposal (Croucher, 2002). However, the Immorality Act of 1957 (the act prohibiting sexual relations and marriage between races) was amended in 1969 and became known as the Sexual Offences Act and the amendments included, firstly, the age of consent for gay male sex being increased to nineteen years old and, secondly, and more damaging clause, was the inclusion of what has been dubbed the "men at a party clause" (Gevisser, 1994, p. 35). This clause meant that no sexual behaviours or acts (including kissing) were allowed between men at a party (public and/or private), where a party constituted more than two men. Therefore, from these amendments, lesbian sexualities were omitted again.

Potgieter (2006) comments on the marginalization of lesbian women with regards to apartheid laws arguing that this further illustrates the marginalization of women in South Africa. She goes on to argue that it is possible that the apartheid government did not see female same-sex sexualities as important enough to warrant criminal sanctions (Potgieter, 2006). However, even though lesbian women were ignored by the law and, therefore, did not have to worry about legal restrictions on their sexual practices, lesbian women had fewer spaces in which to build a sense of community since they experienced more social and cultural pressure to conceal their sexualities. Gevisser (1994) argues that this was due to a number of reasons: firstly, there was pressure on women to conform to expectations of marriage; secondly, the lesbian groups that did exist consisted mainly of women in public service positions who needed to keep their sexualities hidden out of fear of losing their jobs; and, thirdly, lesbian women did not experience the same kind of economic independence that gay men did because of the lack of rights afforded to women in general.

3.2.2. The Black Liberation Movement

Gay communities were not immune to apartheid segregation and racist ideologies. Due to an insurgence of people into the big cities, away from families and communities and the mining rush, a kind of gay subculture was created among black male migrant workers. Unless sex was paid for (older white men paying younger black men), however, there was

no interaction between the white gay male community and the black gay male community (Croucher, 2002; Gevisser, 1994). As Gevisser (1994) and Mbali (2009) argue, many gay clubs in the major cities were reserved for white gay patrons meaning that there were very few spaces where black and white gay men came into contact. Nightclubs, bars, gay owned businesses and gay owned newspapers became more visible within the white, middle-class, gay male community; however, attempts made by black gay men to visit these bars or clubs were met with much resistance and more often than not black gay men were turned away (Croucher, 2002; Gevisser, 1994; Mbali, 2009). This is largely because the white gay male subculture that had developed prided itself on its 'apolitical stance' and did not want to be seen as engaging in any form of an anti-apartheid struggle (Croucher, 2002; Gevisser, 1994; Mbali, 2009).

Although there were gay and lesbian people who wanted to officially oppose heterosexism and/or homophobia, many of these did not want to join the wider opposition against racism and apartheid (Mbali, 2009). However, after the 1976 student protest and what has now been called the 'Soweto Uprising', the social and political climate in South Africa began to drastically change (Gevisser, 1994). It became clear that, due to the increased visibility and activism of a multifaceted black liberation movement, the apartheid era was nearing its end. What this also meant is that, despite racial tension existing within the broader gay community, black gay men and black lesbian women became visibly active in the gay liberation movement (Croucher, 2002; Gevisser, 1994). The gay liberation movement which arose in an attempt to join the black liberation movement, however, consisted of predominantly gay men. While lesbian organisations, such as the *Lesbians in Love and Compromising Situations (LILACS)*, were formed these tended to collapse soon after their formation due to divisions within the organisations between lesbian women who wanted to be more political and those merely wanting a socially supportive space of community of practice (Gevisser, 1994). Drawing on Potgieter's (2006) explanation earlier on the marginalization of lesbian women in apartheid legislation, it is also plausible that lesbian women did not have access to the kinds of resources that would have been needed to create effective and visible organisations which could join the broader anti-apartheid struggle. Therefore, because gay men had access to these resources, they were able to create and maintain strong visibility within the black liberation movement.

3.2.3. HIV/AIDS Activism

During a time when racial and political division were reaching boiling point, both in South Africa as a whole and within gay communities themselves, one of the important issues that came up for gay communities and their relation to the wider South African context was that of HIV/AIDS. The 1980s saw the majority of HIV/AIDS cases being diagnosed in the "white 'homosexual population'" (Mbali, 2009, p. 80) and the media in South Africa and globally, therefore, began referring to HIV/AIDS as the "gay plague" (p. 85). This served to create an atmosphere of increased heterosexism, stigma and discrimination (Mbali, 2009). This heterosexism and discrimination created barriers for gay communities in that raising funds for social support and being able to refer those with HIV/AIDS for counseling became problematic. As Mbali (2009) explains, discriminatory apartheid laws had a "disabling effect on gay AIDS activism by creating a sense of officially sanctioned taboo around any discussion or organising around gay sex, even when public health was at risk" (p. 89). Not only were there barriers created by the apartheid government, but divisions within gay communities increased as disagreements arose around how serious an issue HIV/AIDS was to their particular gay community (Mbali, 2009).

In order to deal with this, a number of organisations and movements (e.g. *Gays and Lesbians of the Witwatersrand (GLOW)* and *Association for Bisexuals, Gays and Lesbians (ABIGALE)*) included HIV/AIDS activism in their struggle (Gevisser, 1994; Mbali, 2009). However, while lesbian women were members, it was predominantly gay men who were at the forefront of these organisations (Croucher, 2002; Gevisser, 1994; Mbali, 2009). Because of this, and with HIV/AIDS becoming one of the primary issues needing to be addressed, lesbian women (both black and white) began to feel more marginalized within gay communities than ever before. Lesbian women felt that focus was solely on gay men and HIV/AIDS, and that gendered issues (such as 'corrective/curative rape') which also made women vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, were being ignored or sidelined (Mbali, 2009). In addition to this, lesbian women's sexual practices were (and still are) considered a low risk for HIV-transmission and, therefore, lesbian women were (and still are) often ignored in HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns and activism globally (e.g. Wilton, 1997), and in South Africa itself (e.g. Mkhize et al., 2010; Thomas, 2004). In contrast, heterosexual women's sexual and reproductive practices continue to bear the brunt of most research, targeting and

biomedical surveillance in contemporary HIV/AIDS scholarship, campaigning and treatment – as men's sexual partners, as bearers of children, and as care-givers for the sick (Walker, Reid, & Cornell, 2004; Wilbraham, 2009).

3.2.4. Gay Rights Are Human Rights

Researchers argue that it was mainly due to the social and political climate of the time which allowed for gay rights to be included in the Bill of Rights and later the new Constitution of 1996 (Cock, 2003; Croucher, 2002; Posel, 2004, 2005a, 2005b). Firstly, one of the major reasons for lobbying for the inclusion of 'sexual orientation' into the Bill of Rights was that gay activists focused on equality rather than gay rights per se. In other words, activists used an "accommodationist tone" (Cock, 2003, p. 194) in arguing for their need for legal recognition and that they wanted to be accepted and incorporated within South African norms and legal customs rather than change the broader South African context. Secondly, Croucher (2002) argues that the experience of exile to Europe and the USA – where the gay and lesbian movement was visible and vocal – sensitized many senior level ANC members to the struggle of gay and lesbian rights. Thirdly, a number of gay activists (such as Simon Nkoli, Peter Tatchell and Edwin Cameron) were intimately involved in the black liberation movement and had been invaluable allies in this struggle (Croucher, 2002). Lastly and probably most importantly, was what Croucher (2002) refers to as the influence of the "discursive or ideational realm" (p. 324), where a discourse of human rights and equality was central to the transition from apartheid to democracy. Utilizing this discourse of rights and equality gave social movement groups a foundation on which to build their own cases; something the gay liberation movement took advantage of.

What is particularly striking about the narratives (from Cock, 2003; Croucher, 2002; Posel, 2005b) which exist around how 'sexual orientation' was eventually included in the 1996 Constitution and the ANC's Bill of Rights is the lack of lesbian voice and/or visibility in the struggle for this inclusion into the Constitution. In other words, while lesbian sexualities are protected under the exact same legislation and Constitution, researchers rarely mention the names of lesbian women who contributed to ensuring that this protection was granted.

3.3. The 'Rainbow Nation' and Same-sex Sexualities

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the inclusion of 'sexual orientation' in the 1996 Constitution made South Africa the first country in the world to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (Butler, 2000; Peach, 2005; Polders, 2006). Since the Constitution came into effect in 1996, the inclusion of 'sexual orientation' has meant a number of positive changes in South Africa with regards to sexualities and sexual practices (Monamodi, 2009; Polders, 2006). For example, Mbali (2009) argues that the inclusion has been "central to liberating AIDS-related speech and expression in ways that would facilitate freer promotion of safer-sex post-1994" (p. 81). Other positive accomplishments include the establishment of outreach programmes in the townships, the decriminalisation of sodomy, adoption rights of gay and lesbian couples and same-sex partner benefits (Croucher, 2002). Posel (2005b) further argues that a non-discrimination clause created "openings for the unprecedented visibility of various same-sex sexualities" (p. 136) which further resulted in more visible and more vocal gay and lesbian social movements.

In addition to this, the mere inclusion of the phrase 'sexual orientation' in the Constitution was instrumental in guaranteeing the passing of the Civil Union Act in 2006 (van Zyl, 2009). Furthermore, legislation resulting from the Constitution included rights to adoption as well as parenting rights to gay and lesbian couples who choose to have children within their same-sex relationships (whether this be by adoption and/or the use of assisted reproductive technologies) which has worked to include the conception of what Lubbe (2007) terms 'same-gendered families' into current ideas of family formation. However, as Lubbe (2007) argues, the nuclear family unit (where a female mother and a male father live with their children in a household, in a married relationship) is still considered the norm and the benchmark by which all family units are measured against. In other words, the accomplishments that have occurred as result of Constitutional protection for LGBTIQ individuals are regarded as being accomplishments *in spite of* the increasing heterosexist culture that exists. What follows is a look specifically at lesbian sexualities and the lived experiences of lesbian women within this 'new South Africa' and how heteronormative assumptions worked to adversely affect the advances made politically and legally.

3.3.1. Lesbian Sexualities and the New South Africa

From being disregarded during apartheid, lesbian sexualities have come under the spotlight of both the media and academic research in the past couple of years (Mkhize et al., 2010). It is important to note that it is specifically lesbian sexualities within poorer or working-class communities (predominantly black) which take centre stage in this new visibility; while middle-to-upper-class (predominantly white) lesbian sexualities still maintain some sense of invisibility within the current South African context. In other words, much research that is conducted on lesbian sexualities tends to focus on the negative and often violent effects of heteronormativity within the current South African context, which means that much of this research has focused on lesbian women within township settings. Lubbe (2007), for example, comments that issues such as same-gendered parenting are somewhat ignored by academic research. To illustrate her argument, Lubbe (2007) states that in doing a search on popular academic databases with the keywords "gay/lesbian/homosexual/parenting" (p. 266), only twenty-five references came up from South African sources and, of these, twenty references were from popular magazine articles such as Sarie, Drum and Femina. The lack of academic research on 'ordinary' experiences of parents (who also happen to be gay or lesbian) results in a noticeable invisibility of some South African lesbian sexualities, and highlights the elevation of working-class lesbians – as at risk of violence - into the realm of hyper-visibility.

The following section will investigate the current dominant discourse of same-sex sexualities as 'unAfrican' and the discourse of heteronormativity which fuels the current prejudice and discrimination against same-sex sexualities. Furthermore, this section will look at how and why black lesbian sexualities in particular have attained a status of hyper-visibility as opposed to white lesbian sexualities, and how this hyper-visibility works to construct and position black lesbian women as 'victims' and 'survivors' (requiring extraordinary powers of resilience) in South Africa. Before this, however, a note needs to be made on the use of the term 'corrective/curative rape' which will be mentioned a number of times in the following sections. Some human rights organisations (e.g. POWA and the Triangle Project) have challenged the use of the term 'corrective/curative rape', because it creates differentiation between all women and lesbian women and serves to separate hate crimes against lesbian women from the broader social and cultural problem of gender-based violence against

women (Anguita, 2011). Furthermore, Matebeni (2011) states that the term 'corrective/curative rape' is problematic as the 'corrective/curative' aspect implies that the perpetrator is trying to correct a problem in society and, therefore, could be "misinterpreted to implicate the victim as 'deserving' of the crime" (p. 157) because s/he went against dominant societal norms. However, using Anguita's (2011) argument, the expression is a "necessary evil" (p. 2) since it places a necessary emphasis on lesbian sexualities which are an important component specific to the hate crime which distinguishes it from forms of gender-based violence against *all* women.

In other words, the term 'corrective/curative rape' emphasises gender-based ideologies which are inherent to all forms of sexual violence, but it also includes heterosexist ideologies about lesbian sexuality which are central to the enactment of 'corrective/curative rape'. As a number of researchers (e.g. Mkhize et al., 2010; Moffett, 2007; Muholi, 2004; Reddy, Potgieter, & Mkhize, 2007) argue, perpetrators of 'corrective/curative rape' are intent on "humiliating and punishing... and in 'transforming' them [i.e. lesbian women] – by coercion – into heterosexual women" (Mkhize et al., 2010, p. 25). To put it more simply, the sexual assault of lesbian women is perpetrated, not only because the victims are women, but because the victims are perceived or identified as *lesbian* women.

3.3.2. Same-sex Sexualities as 'unAfrican'

At a social and cultural level, within many African black cultures, and traditions, same-sex sexualities are considered 'unAfrican' in that they are considered practices which originate from colonial powers which have no place in 'African' societies (Anguita, 2011; Engelke, 1999; Mbali, 2009; van Zyl, 2009). Individuals, then, who identify as gay or lesbian, are believed to have been influenced by white colonial ways. In attempts to show this line of thinking as flawed and false, historians have argued that, although a gay or lesbian identity did not exist in (South) African culture per se, same-sex sexual practices did exist in at least fifty different African societies in pre-colonial times (Cock, 2003). Furthermore, Anguita (2011) and Croucher (2002) argue that same-sex sexualities are not accepted in some so-called 'westernized' or 'semi-westernized' societies and cultures either. For example, under apartheid, same-sex sexualities were considered deviant, as a threat to white supremacy and Christianity and, therefore, there were attempts to control it and eradicate it (Anguita,

2011; Croucher, 2002). Croucher (2002) further explains that a similar discourse exists, for example, within a conservative Afrikaans culture which also maintains that "same-sex sexuali[ties are] foreign to, and inconsistent with, true Afrikaner identity" (p. 316). Therefore, it is incorrect to label same-sex sexualities as 'unAfrican' when it might also be considered 'unAfrikaans' or 'unAmerican'. As Lubbe (2007) mentions in her article on 'same-gendered families', South Africa is a country where the traditional family values prescribed by culture and conservative religious beliefs are prominent. Therefore, many cultures in South African society (not just so-called 'African' cultures) who subscribe to heteronormative values would be against same-sex sexualities.

Reddy (2002), working from a Foucauldian perspective, takes a different stance to the 'homosexuality is unAfrican' argument. In his paper, which employs a discursive reading of the homophobic statements uttered by political representatives in African countries such as Zimbabwe, Namibia and Botswana, Reddy (2002) argues that hate speech is "a discourse of power, dominance and control" (p. 167) which is used in a performative way in order to disregard gay and lesbian people as legitimate members/citizens of a society or culture. In other words, hate speech (which the unAfrican argument is) is a "performative operation because it articulates a call to action" (p. 167). Its intention is to be persuasive in that it is employed to invoke and incite discrimination against gay and lesbian individuals. Reddy (2002) argues that employing the rhetorical strategy of positioning same-sex sexualities as unAfrican is encouraged by "a xenophobic logic" (p. 172). By arguing that same-sex sexualities are practices that originate from colonial European and/or 'western' countries, same-sex sexualities are strongly positioned as being foreign and, therefore, dangerous. Same-sex sexualities thereby become seen as practices which need to be eradicated in order for the country to sustain itself and to progress (Reddy, 2002).

Reddy (2002) and van Zyl (2009) comment that, ironically, African countries which use this rhetoric (i.e. most African countries) draw on and utilise legislations criminalizing same-sex sexualities which were brought in by the colonial powers. This, together with research that has shown the existence of homosexual sexual practices existing in African societies before colonialism, suggest that it is homophobia which is imported from the colonial powers and not same-sex sexual practices per se (van Zyl, 2009). Regardless of this irony, however, the

repetition of this discourse, together with cultural beliefs of what an 'African' is, ensures that hate speech is tolerated and homophobia and heterosexism remain (Reddy, 2002; Sanger, 2010). Together with beliefs around legitimate 'African' identity are traditional constructions of femininity and masculinity. Like the discourse around constructions of legitimate 'African' identity, a similar discourse occurs on what constitutes a 'real woman' and a 'real man' and, within a heteronormative society and/or culture (which South Africa is), those who defy the gender norms and standards dictated by society and/or culture – whether through behaviour and/or appearance – often become victims of discrimination (Stephens, 2010). This next section will look at how heteronormative gender ideologies intersect with the prejudice and discrimination faced by gay men and lesbian women.

3.3.3. Heteronormativity and Same-sex Sexualities

Drawing on what appears to be a post-structuralist feminist approach to understanding discrimination against same-sex sexualities, perhaps following Judith Butler's ideas on gender performances and citizenship within heteronormativity, Van Zyl (2005) and Mkhize et al. (2010) argue that norms around sexualities intersect with ideas around citizenship. In other words, beliefs around what constitutes 'normal' sexuality determine who is considered a legitimate citizen of South Africa and who is not. In order for rights to be accepted socially and culturally, one needs to be considered a legitimate citizen (Mkhize et al., 2010; van Zyl, 2005). During apartheid and even before, during colonial times, the definition of citizenship was not uniform for all those living in South Africa. In other words, rights were not guaranteed but instead "negotiated and balanced in relation to other people's rights, set against a backdrop of struggles for economic/political dominance" (Mkhize et al., 2010, p. 7).

Put simply, maintaining white supremacy in the form of political and economic dominance meant that black people were afforded fewer rights than white people in South Africa. Sexualities in South Africa today intersect with citizenship simply because of the social organisation of people in terms of gender and sex and heterosexuality (Mkhize et al., 2010). Due to this social organisation, where heterosexuality is considered 'normal' (conducted by most people) and 'natural' (instrumentally connected to reproduction, given by God for this purpose), those who do not identify as strictly heterosexual are denied legitimate

citizenship in ways that are often violently discriminatory (Mkhize et al., 2010). In addition to this, heteronormativity manifests in prescribed gendered behaviour which men and women must perform. In other words, South Africa is regarded as "arch-conservative" (Mkhize et al., 2010, p. 9) in terms of what constitutes 'normal' feminine (female) and masculine (male) behaviour and, therefore, those who do not conform to these notions are at risk of experiencing violent discrimination.

As Sanger (2010) reasons, violence against women and LGBTIQ communities is "centrally located within heteronormative values" (p. 114) of what femininity and masculinity is and should be, and this has roots within various cultures and traditions in South Africa. The intersection of 'corrective/curative rape' and hate crimes against lesbian women with both gender-based ideologies and heteronormative ideologies about lesbian sexualities are evident in the mere definition of 'corrective/curative rape'. To refresh, 'corrective/curative rape' is the act of rape perpetrated against a lesbian woman with the purpose of curing or correcting a woman's (real or imagined) sexual and/or romantic desire for other woman (Anguita, 2011; Mkhize et al., 2010; Nel & Judge, 2008; Padmanabhanunni, 2010). In other words, the belief underlying the act of 'corrective/curative rape' is that a woman's desire for other women can be changed and a lesbian woman can be turned into a heterosexual woman through (forced) sexual intercourse with a man. Nel and Judge (2008) and Anguita (2011) further argue that gender behaviour and presentation play a large role in 'corrective/curative rape'. Therefore, black lesbian women who display stereotypically masculine (male) behaviour or dress are at a higher risk of 'corrective/curative rape' (Anguita, 2011).

Anguita (2011) argues that (lesbian) women who do not conform to traditional forms of feminine behaviour or dress are seen as challenging traditional gender roles (subject positions) and prescriptions (discursive practices) and, therefore, 'corrective/curative rape' occurs as a means of attempting to control women who do not conform to heteronormative performances of femininity. Muholi (2004) adds to this, stating that in her discussions with young men who had been involved in gang rapes of lesbian women, many stated that they had raped a lesbian woman to prove to the woman that she was not a man and would never be a man. From this it can be seen how misconceptions of what lesbian sexuality constitutes

is tied to heteronormative ideologies. Heteronormative ideologies dictate that men and women form reproductive sexual relationships with each other and, therefore, if a woman forms a relationship with another woman, she must want to be (or must mistakenly think of herself as) a man. But, because women are afforded a lower social status than men in patriarchal heteronormativity, it must be proven to the woman that she cannot be a man because a woman being treated like a man is unfathomable.

Within a South African context, Anguita (2011) argues that, with acts of 'corrective/curative rape', gender, race and sexuality intersect "making it a weapon of social control of the three-times 'other', the black-lesbian-woman" (p. 2). In the section that follows I look at why black lesbian women appear to be the primary targets of 'corrective/curative rape' and how this contributes to the hyper-visibility of black lesbian sexualities and works to position black lesbian women as 'victims' or as 'survivors' (requiring extraordinary powers of resilience) in South Africa.

3.3.4. Black Lesbian Sexualities and Hyper-visibility

Before looking at the racialised element to 'corrective/curative rape', it is necessary to understand gender-based violence within the broader South African context. The legislation under apartheid not only worked to oppress black South Africans but also all women in South Africa and, after apartheid ended, a number of legal reforms were implemented to ensure that women's rights were safeguarded (Mkhize et al., 2010). For example, women now have the right to terminate pregnancies, there is legislation designed to protect women against domestic violence and the new Sexual Offences Act is worded specifically to incorporate the multiple forms that gender-based violence takes (Mkhize et al., 2010). Gouws (2005, as cited in Mkhize et al., 2010), however, argues that these legal reforms have done little in ensuring women's safety and security. South Africa is considered the country with the highest sexual violence incidence and prevalence rates in the world, and all women, of all races, experience some form of gendered discrimination and prejudice (Anguita, 2011; Mkhize et al., 2010). This being said, research has found that it is women who live in poorer areas with little security in the form of physical safety and financial stability who are more vulnerable to violence (Mkhize et al., 2010). In South Africa, with our legacy of apartheid, where legislation ensured that the majority of black people were

prevented from obtaining high levels of education and, therefore, economic security and autonomy, these class differences still translate into racial differences (Mkhize et al., 2010; Moffett, 2007).

It would be inaccurate and illogical to argue that white lesbian women do not experience the negative repercussions of heteronormative ideologies and cultural and traditional justifications for heterosexism; however, with the above sections in mind, black lesbian women are particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence because they embody three identities which make them the "three-times 'other'" (Anguita, 2011, p. 2). First, as women, black lesbian women are vulnerable to violence in a context which still regards masculinity as a superior category of cultural rights and power (Mkhize et al., 2010). Secondly, as black women, black lesbian women are vulnerable to violence because they generally live in poorer neighbourhoods with little security to protect themselves (Mkhize et al., 2010). Thirdly, as lesbian women, black lesbian women live in a context which is extremely heteronormative and where sexual violence is a popular weapon of control (Mkhize et al., 2010). To illustrate the differences in experience between black lesbian women and white lesbian women in South Africa, a couple of studies will be referred to.

A quantitative study using questionnaires was conducted by Wells (2006) with a group of gay men and lesbian women across different racial groups and focused on the experiences of hate crimes (verbal, physical, and sexual) in Gauteng, South Africa. A number of striking differences were found between the experiences of white participants and those of the black participants. In these experiences a number of intersections can be found in relation to 'sexual orientation', gender, and socio-economic status (or class). Black gay and lesbian participants stated that hate crimes were more likely to occur at public transport venues, such as train stations, taxi ranks and bus stops. Wells (2006) concluded that this probably was due to black people being more reliant on public transport systems due to their not having private motor vehicles like most middle classed (white) participants. Swarr and Nagar (2003) agree, arguing that the violence and harassment faced by, mainly, black lesbian women is related to poverty in that means of transportation and insecure living establishments ensure that black lesbian women remain in vulnerable positions in urban environments. Both Wells (2006) and Swarr and Nagar (2003) further argue that a large

number of black gay and lesbian individuals are reluctant to report hate crimes to the police out of fear of victimisation from police officials. Stephens (2010) adds that unemployment as well as lack of access to support services prevents black gay and lesbian people from reporting hate crimes. In relation to this, thirty-one percent of black participants (compared to sixteen percent of white participants) did not report hate crimes because, as one participant argued, "these incidents happen so often that I am used to them" (Wells, 2006, p. 26). This, according to Wells (2006), shows that hate crimes predominantly occur in spaces where same-sex sexualities are particularly discriminated against and not tolerated. What these studies illustrate is the intersection of sexualities with race and class and how risk is perceived as being higher for black gay or lesbian individuals in poorer settings (Mkhize et al., 2010).

Similar findings were found in a participatory action research study conducted by Graziano (2004) with three black gay men and four lesbian women from four different townships in South Africa. The study used a method of 'photovoice' in order to collect information from the seven gay men and lesbian women. Over a period of four weeks, participants were asked to take photographs as a way of responding to the four research questions (one question a week) posed by this study. These research questions included (Graziano, 2004, p. 306):

> (a) What kind of relationship exists between the participants and White gay men and lesbians in South Africa? (b) What differences and similarities exist between the participants and White gay men and lesbians in South Africa? (c) As a result of the participants' sexual identity, what forms of oppression have participants experienced? And (d) How do the participants cope in an oppressive environment?

After the four weeks came to an end, Graziano (2004) sat with each participant and asked them to select a single photo for each research question and engaged in a dialogue with each participant about the chosen photos. According to his participants, socioeconomic status (or social class privileges) was perceived as being the most significant difference between white and black lesbian and gay people. This class divide meant that black gay and lesbian individuals did not feel they had the same access to security and police protections, which made them increasingly vulnerable to hate crimes, specifically physical and/or sexual assault in public spaces. Participants also remarked that the media and literature available

(they do not specify what kind of media and literature) are targeted predominantly at white gay men and/or white lesbian women, and also only feature white gay men and/or white lesbian women. One participant observed that black gay men or black lesbian women are only featured in the media (once again, the kind of media is not specified) in negative ways, such as in relation to HIV/AIDS or when black lesbian women are raped. Furthermore, Graziano's (2004) study echoes what is found in much of the South African research on experiences of black gay men or black lesbian women and that is the dominant discourse of same-sex sexualities being regarded as 'unAfrican' (e.g. Anguita, 2011; Engelke, 1999; Graziano, 2004; Mbali, 2009; Muholi, 2004; Nel & Judge, 2008; van Zyl, 2009; Wells, 2006). Where same-sex sexualities are regarded as 'unAfrican', those who are perceived as being gay or lesbian are attacked verbally and/or physically and/or sexually by people in the community. A participant in Graziano's (2004) study argued that a lack of education on different forms of sexuality has resulted in this dominant discourse of intolerance in South Africa and on the African continent.

As the three-times-other, therefore, the increase in violence against black lesbian women over the past decade has been profound. A recent report compiled by *ActionAid* (2009, as cited in Anguita, 2011 and Sanger, 2010), a human rights organisation focused mainly on women's rights, states that since 1998 there have been thirty-one reports of 'corrective/curative rape' in South Africa and only one of these has resulted in the perpetrator being convicted. These, however, are just those that are reported since *ActionAid* (2009) mentions that one support group in Cape Town has said that it deals with at least ten new 'corrective/curative rape' cases every week and Muholi (2004) states that since 2002 she has recorded forty-seven cases of hate crimes against lesbian women, half of which would be considered 'corrective/curative rape'.

What this increase in incidence has resulted in is a number of human rights organisations, LGBTIQ activists and academics working in the area of LGBTIQ issues, focusing much of their advocacy and research work on the experiences of black lesbian women (Mkhize et al., 2010). This increased focus and attention predominantly on black lesbian women in South Africa has, therefore, moved black lesbian sexualities from the "discursive terrain of invisibility and marginalisation to one in which 'they' are recognised only as 'special

victims'" (Mkhize et al., 2010, p. 15). As the participants in Graziano's (2004) study remarked, the dominant picture being circulated to the public is that black lesbian women are victims and targets of violence. Mkhize et al., (2010) argue that this appears to be the only story, resulting in black lesbian women predominantly being spoken of as "raped victims with HIV unable to walk down their own streets" (p. 29). Research and advocacy work, therefore, tends to neglect the strength, diversity, unique identities, creativity, and complexities within black lesbian sexualities (Mkhize et al., 2010). Furthermore, white lesbian sexualities are still rendered invisible and somewhat insignificant.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter aimed to contextualise the current lived experiences of lesbians in South Africa and how lesbian sexualities and representations have become politicized. Lesbian sexualities have moved from significant invisibility during apartheid to a marked hyper-visibility as a result of the 1996 Constitution which protects same-sex sexualities from discrimination and prejudice, as well as through the increase in gender-based violence perpetrated predominantly on black lesbian women. What this has worked to do is place black lesbian sexualities under the spotlight and the predominant issue that is now available for scrutiny and surveillance in terms of media responses and governments responses (or lack thereof) to cases of 'corrective/curative rape'. In the next chapter, I look at the identities (subject positions) made available in fictional representations of lesbian sexualities in both international and local films and television programmes. It was necessary to put this chapter on the South African context before because, as Weiss (1992) argues "[r]epresentation changes over time, and there are complex historical reasons why lesbian representation appears as it does in particular historical moments" (p. 73). What this means is that, before we can look at the representation of lesbian sexualities in South African film and television, it was necessary to gain an understanding of where South Africa is (politically, socially and culturally) in relation to LGBTIQ rights and the visibility of lesbian sexualities.

CHAPTER FOUR: LESBIAN REPRESENTATION IN MAINSTREAM TELEVISION AND FILM

4.1. Introduction

For the purposes of this research, 'mainstream' refers to films and television programmes (locally and internationally) that are intended to reach a majority audience and are targeted primarily at the dominant culture (Stacey, 1995). It is because of this that mainstream television programmes are being used in this research and not independent films and/or television programmes or documentaries which may (or may not) offer different or resistant representations of lesbian women. To clarify, this research will not be looking at non-fictional media such as news, documentaries and/or educational programmes but rather media whose intent is to entertain people through drama soap-opera type genres. Furthermore, this research will not be looking at independent film and/or television programmes (e.g. those shown as gay and lesbian film festivals) since these genres are usually targeted at a specific kind of audience and tend to be more sensitive and/or critical in the ways in which they represent certain groups of people (Stacey, 1995). Since the abundance of research and literature on the history of lesbian representation in mainstream film and television programmes comes from international contexts (e.g. USA and the UK), there will be an imbalance in this section between the lesbian representations that appear in international film and television programmes and the representations of lesbian women in South African film and television programmes. However, every effort has been made to ensure that (as far as is possible with limited sources) as much South African research and theory is included in order to look at similarities and/or differences in representation.

The following chapter first looks at heteronormativity and how this relates to representations of lesbian women in mainstream film and television. Once heteronormativity has been defined and explained, a review of the kinds of representations found in past and current films and television programmes will be provided in order to demonstrate how researchers (e.g. Dean, 2007; Lugowski, 1999; Patton, 1995; Weiss, 1992) have interpreted these representations and how these representations are said to conform

to a heteronormative ideology which works to keep lesbian sexualities as deviant, a heterosexual male fantasy and a product for consumption. In addition to this, this review will identify the possible identities made available for audience members to accept and/or negotiate with and/or resist. Finally, since this research focuses on two locally produced, funded and directed television programmes, a special focus is included on South African television and research done on the South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) incorporation of lesbian representation.

4.2. Heteronormativity and Lesbian Representation

Vito Russo (1987, as cited in Dean, 2007) states that "[g]ay visibility [including lesbian visibility] has never really been an issue in the movies. Gays [and lesbians] have always been visible. It is *how* they have been visible that has remained offensive" (p. 381, emphasis his). Furthermore, as will be touched later on in this chapter, mainstream popular culture generally tends to coincide with the economic, political and social climate of the time. Cilliers (2008), writing from a South African perspective, expands on this idea arguing that "[f]ilm analysis suggests that when minority groups do attain visibility, the manner of that representation will reflect the biases and interests of those élites who decide on the public agenda" (p. 338).

This is evident in how lesbian women have been and are being represented in mainstream international as well as South African television programmes and films. Currently, lesbian and gay representations are fairly common in both films and television programmes locally and internationally. But, as Moore (2009) states, we may have more gay men and lesbian women being represented in films and in almost every television programme we watch, but an increase in visibility does not necessarily mean an increase in social acceptance or liberation from the dominant discourse of heteronormativity. Drawing on a neo-Marxist perspective, Dow (2000, as cited in Moore, 2009) states that "what gay visibility can be is hugely regulated" (p. 62) and it is regulated by the dominant ideologies that exist. During the apartheid regime, this was the dominant ideology of white heterosexual men, now it is the dominant ideology of black African heterosexual men where heterosexuality is deemed the only acceptable performance of sexuality.

Weiss (1992) argues that heteronormativity defines how those who deviate from the norm (e.g. gay men or lesbian women) are portrayed in the media. To refresh, heteronormativity is defined as the ways in which heterosexuality, where men and women are attracted only to each other, is deemed "natural, unproblematic, taken-for-granted, [and] ordinary" (Kitzinger, 2005, p. 478). Heterosexuality is privileged within a heteronormative culture and the practices which allow for heterosexuality to be regarded as the only 'normal' way of being include cultural, legal, organisational and interpersonal practices (Chambers & Carver, 2008; Kitzinger, 2005). Speer and Potter (2000) identify two ways in which heteronormativity manifests: Firstly, in cultural ways (e.g. religion) and, secondly, in psychological ways (e.g. attitudes and behaviour). Since the media has permeated our society and/or culture to such an extent that it is inescapable, Weiss (1992) argues that the depiction of lesbian sexualities (or rather a lesbian 'lifestyle' where men are not needed and/or wanted) is seen as a threat to a heteronormative culture and this threat affects how lesbian women are represented within mainstream films and television programmes.

In chapter two I explained how representations make available various identities (subject positions) for audiences to engage with and in the next chapter, the methodology chapter, I will provide more detail on how this relates to Wetherell's (1998, 2001b) theory on subject positioning. But, for now, we need to look at the kinds of representations of lesbian sexualities that have and continue to appear in mainstream films and television programmes and the possible identities (subject positions) that are made available in these representations for audience members to engage with. It is important to note that these are not the only representations and/or identities made available in mainstream representation and that, because meaning in representation is not fixed, other identities are possible. However, this section is drawing on the work of various media analysis researchers (e.g. Dean, 2007; Lugowski, 1999; Patton, 1995; Weiss, 1992) and their textual analyses of lesbian representations throughout history. Research on lesbian representation is fairly scant, especially in South African literature, and therefore gay male representation is included from time to time in order to illustrate certain arguments. Furthermore, although films used to illustrate these representations and identities (subject positions) may come from a specific time period, it is important to stress that these representations and the identities (subject positions) made available through these representations did not only occur during

these specific historical periods but that similar representations are recycled and still occur today. These representations include identities of the butch lesbian, the heteroflexible lipstick lesbian and the normal lesbian.

4.3. The Butch Lesbian

Miller (1991) refers to subtle clues in representing the sexuality of a character as the practice of 'connotation' whereby gay and lesbian sexualities can be implied through the use of certain inferences and suggestions. Gender performance and gender inversion as a form of connotation is a common technique used to signify the sexuality of a character in films and television programmes (Lugowski, 1999; Weiss, 1992). For example, lesbian sexualities is often represented or implied using a woman with short hair, dressed in male clothes, holding a cigarette, speaking in a deep voice, and displaying aggressive attitudes and behaviours (Lugowski, 1999; Weiss, 1992). All of these are gender performances stereotypical of masculine (i.e. male) attributes. One example of an early American film often cited in literature using gender performance and gender inversion as a form of lesbian representation is *Borderline* (1930) which featured lesbian lovers, Hilda and Winifred. These two characters were identifiable as lesbian women through the narrative and the visual clues of the two characters; Winifred was androgynous with short hair and smoked cigars (i.e. considered stereotypical masculine traits and behaviours) while Hilda was more feminine but had an "unglamourized elegance [that] suggests at times a feminized man" (Weiss, 1992, p. 18).

4.3.1. Gender Inversion and Media Censorship

Connotation through gender performance and gender inversion, and therefore this positioning of lesbian women as 'butch' in film representations, was particularly popular during the early emergence of film in both South African and American films. This was largely due to the restrictions placed on portraying gay and lesbian sexualities by The Motion Picture Code of 1930 in the United States of America and the Publications Act implemented during apartheid by the *South African Publications Board* (Botha, 2008; Lugowski, 1999; Weiss, 1992). The Motion Picture Code (and the Publications Act during apartheid) was implemented because the view at the time regarding the influence of media

was what media theorists term the "hypodermic" (Reinhard & Dervin, 2009, p. 506) influence of media images where it is believed that media portrayals would inject their influence into audience behaviour and thought. For example, The Motion Picture Code argued that films had the "power to evoke bodily pleasure and transgression" (Patton, 1995, p. 26) and it was, therefore, believed that if gay or lesbian sexualities was portrayed this would influence viewers to become gay or lesbian and/or indulge in gay or lesbian sexual practices. In order to prevent this, the code states that "[n]o hint of sex perversion may be introduced into a screen story [including the] characterization of a man as effeminate, or a woman as grossly masculine" (1930, as cited in Lugowski, 1999, p. 5). Same-sex sexualities could never be overtly expressed through the dialogue, the images, or within the relationships between two characters of the same sex. If 'deviant' portrayals were found to be present, films were heavily censored with much of the dialogue and scenes being deleted and film makers were fined and in some cases imprisoned (Weiss, 1992).

Russo (1987) agrees that Hollywood did attempt to censor films, but that this was largely ineffective since there were a number of films with potentially 'homoerotic' undertones released in Hollywood during this time. Miller (1991) agrees, stating that The Motion Picture Code did not eliminate gay or lesbian characters; it merely made them less obvious. Media analysts (e.g. Miller, 1991; Weiss, 1992) repeatedly give two examples of such films where homoerotic storylines can be read and these are two of Alfred Hitchcock's films *Rebecca* (1940) and *Rope* (1948). In her analysis of *Rebecca* (1940), Weiss (1992) argues that the film seemed to incorporate fairly overt lesbian overtones, especially in the depiction of the female housekeeper's (Mrs Danvers) obsession with Rebecca. With regards to *Rope* (1948), although it is never explicitly stated, some film analysts (e.g. Miller, 1991) have interpreted the relationship between the two male characters, Brandon and Phillip, as being a gay relationship since the film was based on the true story of Leopold and Loeb, a gay couple, who murdered a fourteen year old boy in 1929, as well as that the lead actors comprised of a well-known gay man and bisexual man. Using Fairclough's (1995) media discourse theory, it becomes clear in this second example that the acknowledgment of these connotations and subtle clues as well as recognition of the identities (subject positions) made available through media representations are not only dependent on audience members own background, culture and experience, but also from an audience member's knowledge of the

context of the storyline and their knowledge of who is portraying the character/s. For example, an audience member who is aware of the so-called facts of the story would be able to pick up the subtle clues of a gay or lesbian relationship within the film while an audience member who is not aware of the so-called facts might not.

It is necessary to mention that, during apartheid in South Africa, lesbian sexualities was invisible in legislation which only specified that sexual relations between men were illegal. Botha (2008) concludes this meant that lesbian representations were also non-existent on South African produced television programmes and films. This includes even subtle, coded images such as gender performance and gender inversion which could be interpreted as lesbian sexualities. That being said, according to Peach (2005), early Afrikaans films seemed to be "rich in sexuality and gender ambiguity" (p. 89). For example, *Sarie Marais* (1931), the first South African film with sound, has been dubbed as the first film to contain homoerotic images (Peach, 2005). The scene referred to as homoerotic in this ten minute long film is one where two Boer war fighters waltz together to the song titled *Sarie Marais*. A number of mainstream South African films from this point until around the 1970s, which are regarded as having homoerotic undertones, seemed to be focused on male-bonding and physical intimacies in the military (Peach, 2005). The apparent homoerotic undertones of these films were very subtle though and Peach (2005) remarks that "the degree of intention is difficult to assert as Queer [referring to LGBTIQ individuals] people have always been able to invest sexually in images not necessarily intended for them" (p. 90). How this relates to media and representation theory (from chapter two), however, is that meaning in representations is never fixed and is open to multiple interpretations which are dependent on the position of the audience member. So, for example, a gay man may interpret this representation as having homoerotic undertones, but a heterosexual man may see the scene as humorous and one which depicts mere heterosexual male-bonding.

4.3.2. Heteronormative and Racialised

Through the use of gender performance and gender inversion as a means of connotation and representation of lesbian women, the identity (subject position) of lesbian women being made available is that of lesbian women as more masculine than feminine in both behaviour and appearance; the identity (subject position) of the butch lesbian. Theorists

(e.g. Eves, 2004) who draw on queer theory such as Judith Butler (1990) and Theresa De Lauretis (1993) have reclaimed the position of 'butch' as being a transgressive performance of gender. What this means is that lesbian women who adopt and/or perform a butch lesbian identity display stereotypical male appearances and behaviours, thereby challenging the heteronormative notion that masculinity is a biologically male identity (Eves, 2004). However, in dominant heteronormative discourse, masculinity is almost always considered a performance of maleness (Innes & Lloyd, 1995) and, therefore, the positioning of lesbian women as butch and masculine is risky as it imitates the heteronormative assumption that lesbian women are not 'real' women (whatever this means) and want to be and behave like men. Because the butch lesbian appears to refuse any characteristic associated with heteronormative femininity, she is disqualified by the dominant culture and/or society from being a woman.

Furthermore, the butch lesbian position in contemporary American film and television is almost always a black lesbian woman making the butch lesbian identity now a racialised position (Tung, 2004). Representations of the white butch lesbian woman was popular in early film and television programmes, however she is becoming less visible in mainstream film and television which are now opting for the more consumable 'lipstick lesbian' (discussed later on) (Ciasullo, 2001). However, this does not appear to be the case when it comes to representing black lesbian women. It must be stressed that heterosexual black women are historically invisible in mainstream Hollywood film and, when she is represented, she is and has often been portrayed in minor roles or roles of domestic servants, prostitutes, and/or single "welfare mothers" (Sullivan, 2000, p. 449). She is also, more often than not, portrayed as physically strong, hypersexual and aggressive (Tung, 2004). Therefore, since the heterosexual black woman is almost invisible, finding a representation of a black lesbian woman is even more difficult (Sullivan, 2000). However, Tung (2004) comments that, very often, when lesbian sexualities coincide with the representation of a black lesbian woman, "the black lesbian body becomes, ironically, acceptable to viewers" (p. 11). This is because of the positioning of black women in American popular culture as strong, hypersexual and aggressive which in itself is a deviant form of gender performance and sexuality since aggression and hyper-sexuality do not conform to heteronormative notions of femininity (Tung, 2004). To put it simply, black

women are positioned by American popular media as not conforming to traditional gender roles anyway, therefore, adding a lesbian sexualities to the representation becomes acceptable because the black woman is already "linked to masculinity" (Tung, 2004, p. 11).

Furthermore, butch lesbian characters are often portrayed as being attracted and forming relationships with femme (heteronormatively feminine) lesbian women thereby conforming to heteronormative gender roles (Innes & Lloyd, 1995). An example of a film to illustrate this butch/femme dichotomy is the American film *Desert Hearts* (1985). Stacey (1995) explains that the gender differences between Cay and Vivian in the film are made obvious through Cay's masculine dress and mannerisms while Vivian is portrayed as feminine in her passivity and pink flowery dresses. Innes and Lloyd (1995) extend this butch/femme representation of a lesbian relationship, arguing that it is extremely rare for a mainstream film to feature a romantic relationship between two butch lesbian women. Two feminine lesbian women in a relationship is accepted, as will be explained in more detail further on in this chapter, because it conforms to the heterosexual male fantasy often depicted in pornography where a male presence or a male gaze is always included (Innes & Lloyd, 1995). Furthermore, a butch/femme lesbian relationship is fairly accepted because it conforms to heteronormative gender roles in romantic relationships (Innes & Lloyd, 1995). However, portraying a butch/butch relationship would mean the exclusion of a male presence since the butch lesbian does not conform to heteronormative understandings of attractiveness and sexual appeal and it would also imply that for some women "a man appears superfluous, and perhaps even endangered" (Innes & Lloyd, 1995, p. 17).

4.3.3. From Butch to Femme

The relaxation of the restrictions in The Motion Picture Code in the USA together with the advancements made by the American gay liberation movement and women's liberation movement in the late 1960s, gay and lesbian activists began lobbying for more positive portrayals of gay and lesbian people in film and television (Weiss, 1992). In South Africa, the 1980s saw a relaxation of the regulations set out in the South African Publications Board's Publication Act which meant that previously banned films were allowed to be shown in public cinemas (Botha, 2008; Peach, 2005). Films with visible storylines focusing on gay themes were now allowed to be shown with minimal censorship. For example, the American

film *Making Love* (1982) which is a story that revolves around a married man who develops romantic feelings for a male novelist is referred to as the "first gay film premiere at a public cinema" (Peach, 2005, p. 128). The first film to be released in South Africa featuring a lesbian story line was the American film titled *Silkwood* (1983), once again with very few scene cuts. This paved the way for the public release of the first South African made film, *Quest for Love* (1988), focusing on the romantic relationship between two women (Peach, 2005; Botha, 2008). Not only was this a major breakthrough in itself, but the two main characters were portrayed by two very famous and well-known Afrikaans actresses, Sandra Prinsloo and Jana Cilliers. Peach (2005) describes this film as the "first open representation of lesbian sexualities in the history of South African film making and in a feature film, a remarkable achievement considering the lack of same-sex sexual representation in South Africa at all in this period" (p. 138).

What needs to be noted about this film, however, is that a year before the film was to be released popular newspapers had heard about the film and heard that it would feature two famous actresses in a lesbian scene (Peach, 2005). In writing about the film, newspapers focused on the sexual elements of the film causing a large amount of sensationalism around the film (Peach, 2005). Even though the film received much publicity and was sold to eleven countries it only spent two weeks on the circuit in South Africa and achieved very little commercial success. However, stereotypically feminine actresses were used to portray the lesbian characters, deeming this a positive representation of lesbian sexualities (Peach, 2005). However, the way in which the film was publicised and the sensationalism with which it was received advances the notion of using lesbian sexualities as a form of drawing in a predominantly heterosexual male audience. This idea of lesbian sexualities being used to draw in a male audience is a theme that comes through to current representations in film and television programmes today. This representation of lesbian women which has emerged and dominates international and local screens has been dubbed the 'lipstick lesbian'.

4.4. The Heteroflexible Lipstick Lesbian

As mentioned earlier, the late 1980s saw a complete relaxation of the regulations set out by the Publications Act in South Africa (Peach, 2005). This is due to the social, cultural and political climate of the time where South Africa was beginning its transition into democracy. As argued in chapter three, lesbian sexualities were rendered invisible by apartheid legislation as well as the various liberation movements that had developed against apartheid. However, the gay (male) liberation movement had made enormous strides allowing for the first extremely visible gay pride march in 1990 which was held in Johannesburg (and has been held every year since) as well as the first *Out in Africa Gay and Lesbian Film Festival* in Cape Town in 1996 (Peach, 2005). Films shown at this festival included the American film *Desert Hearts* (1970) and the Australian film *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1993), which had initially been banned in South Africa when they were first released internationally. Since 1997 no films have been censored or banned in South Africa and films dealing with same-sex sexualities have merely been given age restrictions.

4.4.1. Reaching a Wider Audience

Monamodi (2009) explains that the possibilities for representations of same-sex sexualities in film and television have increased mainly because television and film industries have become (and arguably, always were) capitalist corporations where the purpose is to increase viewership, ratings and ultimately make a large profit. In order to do this, production companies want to reach as wide an audience as possible, preferably constructing crossover audiences that combined heterosexual and homosexual constituencies (Patton, 1995). Dyer (as cited in Tasker, 1998) agrees, arguing that appealing to "'more than one audience looks like box-office sense" (p. 12).

To illustrate this complex crossover appeal to 'gay' and 'straight' audiences, Sedgwick (2006) unpacks the examples of the American television programmes *Roseanne* and *Picket Fences*. Both *Roseanne* and *Picket Fences* featured a number of lesbian characters during their duration and featured kissing scenes between the characters. However, before the kissing scenes were shown to the public, word had got out that there would a lesbian scene causing an outcry from the mainstream heterosexual public (Sedgwick, 2006; Warn, 2006). This

outcry resulted in directors re-filming the scene in such a way that made it acceptable to a mainstream heterosexual audience (Sedgwick, 2006; Warn, 2006). For example, the kissing scene in *Picket Fences* took place in a dark room and, in *Roseanne*, only the back of the one character's head was shown (Warn, 2006). This reaction to the outcry works to position lesbian sexualities as something unacceptable and something which should not be shown so explicitly or overtly. In a way, it conforms to a common heteronormative saying of 'we don't care if you're gay, we just don't want to have to see it'. However, what is necessary to point out is that, instead of deleting the scene entirely, the producers and directors kept the scene in, changed it, thereby making it more acceptable to a heterosexual audience but also ensuring that it did not lose its gay and/or lesbian viewers. It appears then that the needs and interests of gay and lesbian audiences are being included in decisions around who and what gets represented in contemporary mainstream film and television programmes.

This is evident in how, since the turn of the century, representations of gay and lesbian characters and relationships are becoming more common and overt (Graham, 2006). In fact, it is virtually impossible to watch any television programme or film without at least one gay or lesbian character. This is evident in South Africa where soap operas such as *Isidingo* and *Generations* have both featured gay male storylines and television dramas such as *Hard Copy*, *Society* and *Rhythm City* have all featured a lesbian storyline at some point. The most common form of representation, however, tends to be what Patton (1995) refers to as "incidental lesbians and gay men" (p. 27) which are gay or lesbian characters who appear in the films and/or television programmes to 'fill a space'. In other words, the character or storyline is not important to the entirety of the film or the television programme but they appear in order to have a representative and diverse set of characters in the programme in an attempt to attract a larger audience (Monamodi, 2009; Patton, 1995). This is very similar to the way in which race is often dealt with in mainstream television programmes and films where there is always at least one black character, but this character almost always has a very insignificant role to play. In other words, a scene which involves two women kissing or having sex is added into a film or television programme simply to increase ratings and create a stir among audiences (Patton, 1995).

4.4.2. Lesbian Sexualities as 'Hot'

Lesbian sexualities in international film and television started becoming overtly and explicitly more visible during the 1990s and mainstream media has moved to portraying "lesbian sexualities [as] hot" (Jenkins, 2005, p. 491). Jenkins (2005) uses films such as *Wild Things* (1998), *Cruel Intentions* (1999), *American Pie 2* (2001), and *Not another Teen Movie* (2001) to illustrate this, as these are films which portray explicit lesbian sex scenes. However, these explicit lesbian sexualities are represented in ways that play into a heterosexual male fantasy which serves to keep lesbian sexualities as non-threatening in a still very heteronormative world (Jenkins, 2005; Diamond, 2005). Diamond (2005) calls this type of lesbian character 'heteroflexible' and argues that some may regard this new explicit representation of lesbian sexualities as a representation of women's sexual freedom where women are now being positioned as being able to want sex and enjoy sex with different kinds of people.

However, drawing on the feminist theory of Wilkinson (1996; as cited in Diamond, 2005) and Rich (1980; as cited in Diamond), Diamond (2005) states that such representations of lesbian sexualities work to trivialise and depoliticize not only lesbian sexualities but women's sexualities as well. She goes on to argue that this 'heteroflexible' lesbian conforms to heteronormative standards of sexuality in three ways (Diamond, 2005). Firstly, lesbian sexuality is represented in a way that is meant to "attract and titillate young male viewers" (Diamond, 2005, p. 105). Secondly, it works to reinforce notions of sexuality where same-sex sexual practices are a form of experimentation in order to confirm one's "essential heterosexuality" (Diamond, 2005, p. 105). Thirdly and following from the previous two points, "compulsory heterosexuality" (Rich, 1980, as cited in Diamond, 2005, p. 105) is thus left unchallenged.

4.4.3. Lipstick and Glamour

Where films and television programmes attempt to portray an 'authentic' lesbian character (i.e. one that does not return to heterosexuality at the end, or is not merely included in a scene intended to titillate audiences), the type of lesbian being portrayed in contemporary mainstream media has become known as the 'lipstick lesbian' (Ciasullo, 2001; Jenkins, 2005). This lesbian woman is positioned as being as overtly and stereotypically feminine in

that she is beautiful, fashionable, and cannot be told apart from heterosexual women in that no one can tell by looking at her that she is a lesbian woman (Jenkins, 2005). This is in comparison to representations of lesbian women where stereotypes of masculinity are used to portray a lesbian character, as shown earlier.

Jenkins (2005) mentions an argument in defence of this 'lipstick lesbian', namely, that this representation has been a positive step in representing lesbian women in a less stereotypical way, because the 'lipstick lesbian' disrupts the conventional idea of the lesbian as mannish, butch and militant. In other words, it provides a new kind of lesbian identity (subject position) for audiences to accept and/or resist and/or negotiate with. However, Moore (2009) argues that these representations of lesbian sexualities, just as representations of stereotypical heterosexual women, have only served to make the 'lipstick lesbian' more of a commodity for male audience consumption, thereby refuting any potential to disrupt the status quo set up by a heteronormative ideology (Moore, 2009). Lesbian sexualities are positioned as a fantasy, something exotic, and used, not to send a social or cultural message of resistance, but to excite a male audience. Therefore, representations of lesbian sexualities, although positive in the appearance of the characters, still play into heteronormative assumptions of women's (lesbian) sexualities where the sexualizing, appreciative gaze of the heterosexual male audience is central.

An example of an American television programme featuring this representation of lesbian women is *The L Word*. *The L Word* was the first programme on American television to focus on the lives of a group of women who are mostly lesbians (McCabe & Akass, 2006; Sedgwick, 2006; Warn, 2006). It was also the first American television programme to be written and directed by women (Moore & Schilt, 2006). The show centres on lesbian experiences and leaves heterosexual experiences on the periphery; in other words, the lesbian women are the norm. Graham (2006) states that *The L Word* was "a landmark 'first ever'" (p. 15) television programme about lesbian women and that the programme was said to contribute to increasing the visibility of lesbian women in mainstream society (Moore & Schilt, 2006). However, critics of the lesbian-visibility position have argued that even this daring series was only given the go-ahead because of its potential to appeal to straight

audiences since "lesbian sex, girl-on-girl, is a whole cottage industry for heterosexual men" (Sedgwick, 2006, p. xix).

This accentuates that systems of representation are ingrained in heteronormative thinking and that appealing to a wider audience is key to any film or television programme's success (McCabe & Akass, 2006). This new lesbian is attractive according to heteronormative ideas of gender and, therefore, of attractiveness. In other words, this new representation of a slim and beautiful lesbian conforms to heteronormative ideals of femininity and only serves to make this new lesbian more marketable to mainstream (i.e. heterosexual) audiences (Beirne, 2006, as cited in Moore, 2009; Jackson & Gilbertson, 2009; Jenkins, 2005). Furthermore, although *The L Word* includes explicit scenes of lesbian sexualities where lesbian women are positioned as looking for sex, enjoy receiving sex and very often have sex with more than one partner (sometimes at the same time), the inclusion of such scenes and the intention for including such scenes – especially, since the producers and directors of the show admit that drawing in a male heterosexual audience was important in order to keep the programme alive (Sedgwick, 2006) – undermines any challenge that this representation of lesbian women could pose to heteronormative ideology. Drawing on Diamond (2005) again, as mentioned earlier, lesbian sexualities are represented in such a way that will attract a heterosexual male audience reinforcing the notion of lesbian sexualities as there for the pleasure of men, thereby trivialising and depoliticising lesbian and women's sexuality and the ability to perform their sexual freedom for themselves.

4.4.4. Audience Reception of the Heteroflexible Lipstick Lesbian

To demonstrate how audiences receive representations of the lipstick lesbian, Jackson and Gilbertson (2009) conducted a study in New Zealand using a thematic discourse approach which looked at how high school students spoke about lesbian representation in a local television programme called *Shortland Street*. The study was conducted with twenty-five high school students (12 boys and 13 girls) between the ages of sixteen and eighteen years old. The findings from this study confirm some of the ideas mentioned above around lesbian representation in popular film and television. Firstly, the idea of lesbian representation and lesbian desire as being a means of attracting a male audience was apparent in the students' talk. Many of the female students remarked on how their male friends would only ever

watch the programme when they knew (from the constant advertising before a specific episode is aired) that a lesbian scene was to be included. One of the interviewees stated that her male friends make comments such as "I've got to watch *Shortland Street* for the hot lesbians" (Jackson & Gilbertson, 2009, p. 207). It was particularly interesting to note that the idea of an actively desiring lesbian audience was not present in any of the conversations (Jackson & Gilbertson, 2009). In other words, not a single student mentioned that perhaps a lesbian audience might find these representations appealing and desirable.

Only one participant remarked that the 'butch' lesbian is no longer present in most popular film and television programmes while most of the participants questioned whether these 'hot' lesbians were 'real' lesbians. Many claimed that these representations were softening what 'real' lesbian sexuality is. The participants do not state what 'real' lesbian sexuality is, but they argue that the characters seem to be just pretending to be lesbian women (Jackson & Gilbertson, 2009). One of the conclusions that Jackson and Gilbertson (2009) make from this study is the interpretations of these students regarding the contemporary representation of lesbian sexualities constructed male viewing of lesbian sexualities as "a desire for the feminine rather than for the 'lesbian'" (p. 210). In other words, lesbian women are represented in such a way as to gain male approval through portraying lesbian women as stereotypically feminine and, therefore, appearing to be available for a reading as stereotypically heterosexual.

A second defence of this lipstick lesbian representation is that it is exactly because she is not recognisable as a lesbian woman that is a positive step for lesbian representation (Jenkins (2005). In other words, because an audience member cannot tell her apart from stereotypical heterosexual women unless she explicitly states it or is involved in a kissing scene with another woman, for example, this accords her a sense of normalcy. This highlights the next way in which contemporary film and television have begun to position gay and lesbian sexualities: as normal and just like heterosexual people.

4.5. The Normal Lesbian

Although little research has been done on the 'normal' lesbian representation, this is a necessary position to include in this research. Some American films and television programmes featuring lesbian women (although this applies predominantly to gay men) position lesbian women as everyday normal people (Dean, 2007). Seidman (2000, as cited in Dean, 2007) argues that this representation can be seen as "creating new boundaries of gay [and lesbian] representation" (p. 364). This 'normal' homosexual conforms to heteronormative gender prescriptions, only has sex with the one they love, engages in long-term committed relationships, and defends traditional family values. In short, the 'normal' homosexual is positioned as "being fully human; as the psychological and moral equal of the heterosexual" (Dean, 2007, p. 364). Another seemingly positive step in homosexual representation, but the standards associated with heteronormativity are still regarded as the ideal and, therefore, go unchallenged (Dean, 2007). Furthermore, Dean (2007) argues that the gay or lesbian characters are positioned as having "hyper-idealized traits" (p. 367) almost as if being a model citizen, hardworking, successful, good-looking, maintaining healthy relationships and steady jobs can make up for the fact that the character is gay or lesbian. In other words, it is believed that we like this character regardless of the fact that he or she is gay or lesbian.

In addition to this, Dean (2007) argues that one of the major problems within what he terms 'normalizing Hollywood films', is that the gay or lesbian character is very often isolated from any homosexual culture. Dean (2007) uses the example of the film *Philadelphia* (1993) to illustrate his argument where the gay character is never shown as interacting with groups of gay or lesbian characters. It is as if there is no such thing as a gay or lesbian culture or rather that the gay or lesbian character does not need and/or want to be a part of that gay or lesbian culture and would rather integrate into a heteronormative world. What this serves to do is to reinforce heteronormativity and maintains what Dean (2007) refers to as a "residual element of homosexual stigmatization" (p. 367). So, lesbian and gay individuals are positioned as not only having to conform to heteronormative standards of living and being in order to be accepted into mainstream society, but they have to be better than the

'normal' heterosexual person. This implies having to prove that, even though they are gay or lesbian, they are good people.

4.6. The SABC and Lesbian Representation

There is a general scarcity of research done on lesbian representation on South African television and in South African films. However, a Master's thesis conducted by Monamodi (2009) at the University of the Witwatersrand was found which focuses on how lesbian women are represented in two South African television programmes, *Society* and *Hard Copy* which appears to have several close links to this research dissertation. Furthermore, *Society* was one of the South African television programmes that was used in this research. Therefore, Monamodi's (2009) analysis of the representation in this programme provided a foundation from which to work. Monamodi's (2009) research was two-fold in that it involved a qualitative content analysis, semiotic analysis, ideological analysis and thematic analysis of the themes that emerge in representations of lesbian women in *Society* and *Hard Copy* as well as investigated the motivations behind the SABC (Channels 1, 2 and 3) in promoting television programmes featuring lesbian characters. For the purposes of this research dissertation, I feel it is necessary to look at the latter findings first.

4.6.1. The SABC's Motivation in Promoting Lesbian Representation

The SABC's motivation behind programme choices was explored in Monamodi's (2009) research using semi-structured interviews with the Programming Managers of SABC 1, SABC 2 and SABC 3. The purpose of these interviews was to determine the position and motivation of each channel on how lesbian women are represented. SABC 1 and SABC 3 appear to be the more liberal and open-minded stations of the three, according to Monamodi (2009). Clara Nzima (as cited in Monamodi, 2009), programme manager for SABC 1, states that "SABC 1 is very forward thinking in terms of how they assess their programming choices in order to keep themselves relevant to developments taking place within society" (p. 77). This rationale for being forward thinking, relates to a point mentioned in chapter two regarding the 'mirror of society' view in media theory where conventional media theory believes that representations reflect society (Robinson, 2009). Nzima (as cited in Monamodi, 2009) appears to be arguing that, in order to be successful

and in order to attract audiences who can generate meaning from the television programmes shown on SABC 1, the station needs to ensure that it reflects what is happening in society which audiences can identify with. Because SABC 1 is forward thinking, Nzima (as cited in Monamodi, 2009) stresses the importance to represent the diversity of South Africa within the programmes that they choose to air and that the inclusion of a programme that deals with the lives of lesbian women is important in achieving tolerance, acceptance and recognition of lesbians as relevant people in South Africa. This again relates to another point made in chapter two with regards to the potential influence that the media has on audience perception. Nzima (as cited in Monamodi, 2009) appears to be arguing that the media does have an influence on how lesbian women are perceived and that SABC 1 can ensure a positive perception is achieved through the way it represents lesbian women in their programmes. Monamodi (2009) believes that SABC 1 recognises that, because of the current social and cultural climate, it has to be cautious in how lesbian women are represented and, therefore, she argues that SABC 1's aim then is to position lesbian women as normal. As Monamodi (2009) states:

> ...their [SABC 1] objective is guided by the desire to normalise the representation of lesbians by eliminating the fascination and objectification of images of women who love other women while also allowing the depiction of intimacy between lesbian characters. The 'normalisation factor with a formally taboo issue' is the general aim at SABC 1 in relation to these fictional representations in addition to avoiding the perpetuation of stereotypes in this regard (p. 79)

SABC 1 appears to believe that, by positioning lesbian women as normal, and it must be assumed that this 'normal' means conforming to heteronormative understandings of normal, people will begin to see lesbian women as 'normal', as just like heterosexual people, and therefore acceptable.

SABC 3's programme manager, Pat Kelly (as cited in Monamodi, 2009), has similar sentiments, stating that "[t]esting the boundaries and thresholds of their audiences is a function that SABC 3 actively pursues in terms of its programming choices" (p. 80). Here Kelly (as cited in Monamodi, 2009) appears to be advocating for the position of media theory which argues for the active audience, as explored in chapter two. In other words, Kelly (as cited in Monamodi, 2009) appears to be arguing that SABC 3 aims to present its

audiences with new ideas and new representations which will encourage engagement and, therefore, possible change. Kelly (as cited in Monamodi, 2009) also appears to agree that the normalisation of lesbian characters in the programmes that it airs is the way forward, however, the way he does this, gives the impression that he recognises the intersectionality of identity. For example, when discussing the lesbian character in *Hard Copy*, he says that although the programme includes issues around same-sex sexualities in certain episodes, this is not the focus of the programme. Monamodi (2009) sums up his argument, stating that

> ... any given newsroom [the daily running of a newspaper is the focus of *Hard Copy*] might have a member of staff who is lesbian, although it may not be evident or discussed as openly as it is within *Hard Copy*... the aim is not to make a spectacle of the fact that a certain character is a lesbian but to normalise it to the extent that it is somewhat representative of what is taking place within society (p. 81)

It appears then that SABC 3 is aiming to include pertinent issues, such as lesbian sexualities and the prejudices and discriminations in that, but also wants to show that this form of prejudice and discrimination is intertwined with other prejudices and discriminations.

Both SABC 1 and SABC 3 have had a few programmes that have included a gay or lesbian storyline at some point. SABC 1 had *After Nine* (gay male storyline) and now popular soap opera *Generations* has one gay male character and one bisexual male character. A current programme being featured as well includes the controversial *Intersexions* which has featured a number of gay and lesbian storylines to show how people are connected through their sexual partners. SABC 3 has had two gay male characters and featured a gay wedding in the popular soap opera, *Isidingo*. The wedding kiss between the two male characters (literally a peck on the lips) did cause a slight uproar with its regular viewers and Kelly (as cited in Monamodi, 2009) admits that this "forced the channel to be more mindful of how far they push boundaries in terms of taking programming risks" (Monamodi, 2009, p. 82).

SABC 2 appears to be more conservative in what programmes it features. Monamodi (2009) emphasises that, at the time of writing her thesis, SABC 2 does not have a single programme that features a lesbian character (this changed in 2010 with *The Mating Game* being aired which features a lesbian character). There has also not been any gay male character aside

from the one gay male character in the popular Afrikaans soap opera, *7de Laan*. This character, however, did not have a major role and was never depicted in any kind of relationship or expressing any desire to form a romantic relationship with anyone. Ed Worster (as cited in Monamodi, 2009), the programming manager for SABC 2, states that this is because SABC 2 has been positioned as a "family channel" (Monamodi, 2009, p. 75). Worster (as cited in Monamodi, 2009) goes on to explain that they are hesitant to explore any overtly controversial issues because of the amount of complaints they would receive from the predominantly conservative audience which frequent the channel.

These motivations and positions lead into what themes emerged in Monamodi's (2009) analysis of lesbian representations on SABC television and how these compare to what the programme managers argued during their interviews.

4.6.2. Themes of Lesbian Representation in Society and Hard Copy

In her analysis of the representations, Monamodi (2009) identifies six themes that emerged in how lesbian women are represented in these two local programmes. These themes include "Lesbians as closeted" (p. 50); "Lesbians in illicit affairs" (p. 55); "Lesbians as predators" (p. 60); "Lesbians as experimental" (p. 64); "Stigmatisation of lesbianism" (p. 71); and the role of gender used in representing lesbianism. To sum up these themes, Monamodi (2009) deduced that the focus of these two programmes in the storylines featuring the lesbian characters is on the struggles to 'come out' to family, friends and work colleagues (closeted). As a result of this struggle, intimate relationships suffer because the characters feel they have to keep the relationship a 'secret' (illicit affairs) from everyone else to avoid judgement, prejudice and discrimination. Included in this struggle to disclose their sexual identity is the prejudice, stigmatisation and discrimination that these lesbian characters face when they do 'come out' (stigmatisation).

For example, in *Society*, female friends of Beth (the lesbian character) accuse her of lying to and betraying them and one female friend mentions how Beth had an obligation to disclose this information to them especially since she had gotten dressed in front of Beth all throughout college, thereby assuming that Beth was looking at her in a desirous and non-innocent way (predators). Co-workers, friends and family also question the lesbian

characters on how long they have been lesbian, as if this is a new identity that they have developed and that the length of time is important in deciding whether she is a 'real' lesbian or not (experimental). Finally, one of the glaringly obvious ways in which lesbianism is represented in these television programmes is through the use of traditional heterosexual gender roles (Monamodi, 2009). In all the relationships that the lesbian characters form, in both television programmes, each partner takes on different gendered roles according to heterosexual norms. For example, one partner is portrayed as more masculine and the other more feminine. In *Society*, Beth is the more feminine character who has flowers sent to her and who waits patiently at home while her partner, Thuli, goes out drinking with friends.

4.6.3. Visibility and Normalisation on SABC TV

Monamodi (2009) concludes her research arguing that there are two primary themes that appear in both her analysis of the lesbian representations available and the interviews with the programming managers of all three channels. These two themes are "visibility" (p. 85) and "normalisation" (p. 92).

Visibility is one of the goals gay men and lesbian women have fought for and now South Africa is embarking on contributing to the visibility of gay men and lesbian women through various television programmes. This is positive, but this visibility needs to be viewed in a critical way. Monamodi (2009) agrees, arguing that lesbian visibility is made possible, but this visibility is done in limited and problematic ways which include: visibility where the focus is on an identity struggle (i.e. the gay and/or lesbian individual having to come to terms with her/his sexuality and then struggling to 'come out' to others); visibility that is based on stereotypical representations and representations that are based on heteronormative gendered roles (i.e. relationships represented as a kind of heterosexual role-play where one character fulfils the masculine role while the other fulfils the feminine role); visibility through styling (i.e. accessible and in a way that does not offend the dominant – read: heterosexual – culture) and through voyeurism (i.e. putting lesbian characters on display for the dominant culture to watch and learn from, often as an object for male admiration and desire).

Both programming managers of SABC 1 and SABC 3 mentioned the normalisation of lesbian characters in the programmes they select for their stations. As mentioned in the section on 'the normal lesbian' (Waters, 2001, as cited in Dean 2007; Seidman, 2000, as cited in Dean 2007), the normalisation of these characters serves only to make them more palatable and more acceptable to a majority heterosexual audience. To repeat, this 'normalisation' involves portraying gay men and lesbian women as wanting and conforming to traditional heteronormative values and morals. That is, wanting marriage, children, successful careers, and so on. Monamodi (2009) believes that this normalisation in South African television programmes occurs in three ways, all of which are in agreement with international literature mentioned above on the normalising of lesbian characters in mainstream film and television programmes. Firstly, normalising lesbian sexualities through voyeurism whereby the lesbian characters are portrayed in such a way (attractive according to stereotypically feminine norms) that positions the male audience as the "admirer" (p. 93) and the primary group whose approval is needed for commercial success. Secondly, normalisation of the lesbian character through heteronormativity using stereotypes that are defined by the heterosexual dominant culture. For example, the use of gendered roles in depicting lesbian relationships serves to maintain a heteronormative ideal of how intimate relationships should be structured. Lastly, lesbian characters are normalised through desexualisation where there is virtually no intimacy (barely even hand holding) displayed between two lesbian characters in a relationship.

Monamodi's (2009) research provided a foundation on which this research dissertation was based and her research appears to confirm what international research has shown on the representation of lesbian sexualities in international films and television programmes. It appears that how lesbian sexualities are represented in international entertainment media is very similar to how lesbian sexualities are represented in the two South African television programmes analysed by Monamodi (2009). Monamodi's (2009) research provided a valuable textual analysis of how lesbians are represented as well as evidence of the motivations of the SABC for promoting such representations in these television programmes. What this research aimed to do is built on Monamodi's (2009) work and includes the voice of the audience.

CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY

5.1. Research Objectives

Jackson and Gilbertson (2009) argue that very little attention has been paid by researchers to the ways in which representations of lesbian sexualities are read and talked about by audiences. This research aims to discover how these representations position a self-identified lesbian audience and what discursive resources are used in accepting, rejecting and/or negotiating with these representations. In other words, this research aims to build on existing research on audience reception of lesbian representation, however, the focus is on the identities (subject positions) made available by fictional representations of lesbian women in two South African produced and directed television programmes (*Society* and *The Mating Game*) and the discursive resources drawn on by a self-identified lesbian audience in appropriating and/or negotiating and/or resisting with these identities (subject positions).

5.2. Research Questions

In considering how white lesbian sexualities are represented in *The Mating Game* and how black lesbian sexualities are represented in *Society*, the questions to be explored through this discourse analytic study are:

- What subject positions are made available by fictional representations of white lesbian women in South African television programmes?
- What subject positions are made available by fictional representations of black lesbian women in South African television programmes?
- What discursive resources are drawn into the process of appropriating and/or negotiating and/or resisting these subject positions by self-identified lesbian women?
- What ideological dilemmas (if any) occur in this process of appropriating and/or negotiating and/or resisting these subject positions and how does a self-identified lesbian women work to repair the ideological dilemmas that do occur?

5.3. Social Constructionism and Discourse Theory

This research was a qualitative study working within a social constructionist paradigm. Discourse analysis, specifically Wetherell's (1998; Wetherell, 2001b; Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Edley & Wetherell, 2001; Seymour-Smith, Wetherell, & Phoenix, 2002; Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003) critical discursive approach will be used to analyse the focus group discussion material.

5.3.1. Social Constructionism

Although it is difficult to pin down a single definition of the term 'social constructionism', Burr (1995) identifies four features that appear in all social constructionist research.

Firstly, social constructionist research involves the researcher maintaining a critical stance in relation to knowledge that has become regarded as fact and truth or what social constructionist theorists term 'taken-for-granted knowledge'. In terms of this first point, this means that in reviewing the literature and theory a critical stance was maintained. For example, I did not regard the analysis of lesbian representation as fact and, therefore, 'true', but rather used the various works of media analysts to pull out themes (e.g. the butch lesbian) in representations that emerged in an attempt to explore in this research whether these same themes (identities/subject positions) emerge for the participants in relation to South African representations.

Secondly, knowledge can never be objective and unbiased and needs to be viewed according to the historical and cultural context in which it is found. So, what we know now or regard as 'real' and 'true' may (and more than likely is) different to what was regarded as 'real' and 'true' fifty years ago. For example, in looking at representations of lesbian sexualities, one has to also look at the context in which these representations occurred. This was the reason for including a chapter on the South African context and looking at lesbian representation in relation to that context.

Thirdly, versions of knowledge are believed to be constructed through and between the interactions of people. The media provides a kind of representation which they make

available, but the knowledge and/or meaning that is constructed through that representation occurs in the process of interaction with audiences and between audience members.

And, finally, because of this, there are many versions of 'reality' or 'truth' or knowledge that further invites different kinds of actions from people. In other words, constructions of the world allow certain social actions to occur and exclude others. This final point is the foundation of this research dissertation. In other words, the study looks at how representations position lesbian women and what actions are permitted or excluded in this positioning and, furthermore, how lesbian women engage with these positions.

5.3.2. Discourse Theory

Very basically, discourse analysis explores the use of language in the process of meaning-making (Reynolds, 2008). Discourse analysts (like Edley, 2001; Reynolds, 2008; Wetherell, 1998) argue that discourse is not just a representational practice which reflects reality or provides a neutral picture of reality and that people do not just use discourse as a means of describing a person, event or object but rather that "work is involved" (Reynolds, 2008, p. 44). In other words, because the meaning contained within words is not fixed and varies according to the context within which a discourse is being utilised, discourse is one means of constructing the world, people, identities, attitudes, memories and emotions. Wetherell (2001b) argues that discourse is action-oriented and that social realities are created by the discourse which is shared by the dominant culture which that, discourse "constructs a version of social reality" (p. 17). This is evident in how individuals, for example, have different ways in which they describe themselves or events depending on the context or situation.

To elaborate on this example using a more tangible one, as a queer woman, when asked about my sexuality or relationship, I may describe it in a particular way with a group of people that I know well and feel safe with, and differently with a group of strangers I have just met. In this case, discourse analysts would ask why certain 'utterances' were used on these occasions, what their purposes were and what they accomplished in these particular contexts. So, I may be open about my sexuality with a group of friends and use words such

as 'my girlfriend', but use gender neutral words such as 'they' or 'my partner' with a group of strangers out of fear of discrimination. Therefore, discourse has the ability to "tell us about the wider discursive economy or the politics of representation which influence what is available to be social and what can be heard" (Wetherell, 2001b, p. 17).

Discourse is, therefore, functional in that it has a purpose, it is designed to be persuasive and organised according to the context in which it takes place (Wetherell, 2001b). In addition to this and because of this, discourse cannot produce meaning without it existing within a shared cultural context (Reynolds, 2008). In other words, meaning can only be constructed through the discursive interaction between people. Therefore, a co-production of meaning occurs within discursive practices in order for versions of social reality to be constructed. Furthermore, meaning emerges from social and historical contexts and is, generally, conventional and normative (Wetherell, 2001b). We know that certain words or images mean something because the meaning has been produced by the culture and society in which we live.

Furthermore, in order to communicate with the social world, we need to draw on these conventional and normative ways of speaking in order to be understood (Wetherell, 2001b). Therefore, it is through the social interactions of individuals with each other and with the social world that meaning continues to be produced or re-produced. For example, the meanings, positioning and practices (as identity-work) of what it means to be a 'lesbian woman' in South Africa today is different to what it may have been twenty years ago, but there are certain meanings that remain constant because those meanings have been constantly circulated through various institutional frameworks such as psychology, medicine and science. This is not to say that meaning cannot be changed; quite the opposite. Meaning is changeable and this is obvious in how lesbian experience has changed throughout the decades in South Africa, as presented in chapter three where it was shown how lesbian sexualities were virtually invisible in apartheid legislation, the gay liberation movement and the media, yet with the increase in and politicization of 'corrective/curative rape' and the eroticisation of lesbian sexualities, lesbian sexualities have become increasingly visible today.

It is important to note that the field of discourse analysis is not cohesive in that all discourse analysts perform discourse analysis in the same way. Discourse analysis, according to a number of theorists writing within a social psychological disciplinary framework (e.g. Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Puchta & Potter, 2004; Wetherell, 2003; Willig, 2008), can be divided into two main branches: Foucauldian discourse analysis and discursive psychology.

5.3.3. Discursive Psychology

In order to explore how discursive psychology differs from Foucauldian discourse analysis approaches, it is necessary to get a basic idea of what Foucauldian discourse analysis focuses on. Foucauldian discourse analysis asks what kind of object and/or subject is constructed through various discourses and what "ways-of-being" (Willig, 2008, p. 96) are made available to people by these constructions. The aim is to critically explore the "discursive worlds people inhabit" (Willig, 2008, p. 96) and what the implications of occupying a particular discursive world is for one's subjectivity. So, for example, Foucauldian discourse would explore what it means in terms of subjective and societal implications to be positioned as a butch lesbian woman and what kinds of experiences and actions are accepted and/or allowed through this positioning. Foucauldian discourse analysis then is concerned with a wider social and institutional framework which informs the positions and actions people adopt (Willig, 2008).

Discursive psychology, on the other hand, combines aspects of discourse analysis to understand conversation and/or social interaction (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Speer & Potter, 2000). So, firstly, discursive psychology is concerned with the "discursive resources" (Willig, 2008, p. 95) that people draw on in order to accomplish a particular interpersonal goal within a particular social interaction. In other words, discursive psychology will focus on the ways in which an individual uses language in order to manage social interactions in ways which work to achieve certain objectives (Willig, 2008). Therefore, the focus is on the individual use of discourse with a specific context. Drawing from my example earlier, when interacting with a group of (what I assume are) heterosexual strangers who are sharing experiences of their girlfriends or boyfriends, I will use a particular kind of language which leaves my sexuality ambiguous or unidentifiable as queer (e.g. I would use words such as 'they' instead of 'he' or 'she' and 'partner' instead of 'girlfriend' or 'boyfriend') in order to

maintain a positive self-presentation and/or avoid discrimination. Secondly, discursive psychology is particularly interested in discourse which is focused around psychological phenomenon such as feelings, beliefs and attitudes (Antaki, 2003). Discourse is not treated as a way of verbalising one's feelings, thoughts and belief, but is considered "performative of them" (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 40). To explain a little more, discursive psychology is particularly interested in how feelings, thoughts and beliefs are constructed in and for social interaction and what this accomplishes in social interaction (Puchta & Potter, 20004).

Various social psychological discourse researchers argue that there is a distinct difference between the two branches in terms of their aims, methods and critical knowledge about discourse/s (e.g. Parker, 1997), while Potter and Wetherell (1995) and Wetherell (1998) argue that the two branches could be combined for the analysis of discourse that explores both the context-specific nature of discourse "as well as the wider social and institutional framework of meaning, of practices, of social relations, within which these are produced" (Wetherell, 1998, cited in Willig, 2008, p. 110). In other words, the language we draw on in specific contexts is still drawn from wider social, cultural and political frameworks which affect the kind of social reality constructed. So, the language we use in a particular social interaction is not separated from the wider discursive world and individuals have to rely on the shared cultural meanings in order to communicate in certain contexts.

As Wetherell (1995) argues, "words instead are second-hand, already in circulation, already familiar, already there, waiting for the moment of appropriation" (p. 134). Therefore, it is not only necessary to look at what is being constructed and accomplished through discourse in a specific social interaction, but also to examine the wider social, cultural and/or political discourse which is influencing the kind of discourse being used in this social interaction. Extending on the above example used, I may be attempting to achieve the goal of positive self-presentation with this group of heterosexual strangers, but the social and cultural context of heteronormativity influences why I feel I need to reveal my sexuality in a particular way which makes it somewhat less obvious and ambiguous.

In blending the focus of discourse analysis to include both the nature of discourse as well as the broader social, cultural and political institutions which inform the discourse we use in

social interaction, Benwell and Stokoe (2006) argue that one is able to "'research above' the text on the page" (p. 41). Put simply, the researcher is able to explore the broader systems of meaning which individuals draw on in social interaction. Therefore, Wetherell's (1998; 2001a; 2001b; 2003) approach looks at what the individual is trying to accomplish in a specific social interaction while also locating this within the broader social and cultural context in which the individual resides and, therefore, draws meaning from. This approach is termed critical discursive psychology because it recognises that meaning cannot solely be drawn from the transcribed text itself, but also needs to be interpretively situated within the broader context in which it occurred (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). It is because of this focus on the context-specific nature of discourse as well as the social, cultural and political influences and consequences of discourse, that Wetherell's (1998; 2001a; 2001b; 2003) critical discursive approach was used as the method of analysis in this research dissertation. A full discussion and explanation of Wetherell's approach is given later on in this chapter.

5.4. A Discourse Analytic Approach to Gathering Talk

The findings from this research are based on analysis of extracts from three separate focus group discussions with self-identified lesbian women. The next section of this chapter provides a detailed discussion on the process involved in gathering discursive information from these three focus groups. To begin, this section will look at a brief description of the television programme clips used to generate discussion followed by a discussion on the process of putting together the focus groups.

5.4.1. Chosen Clips: 'Society' and 'The Mating Game'

Three clips of about two to three minutes in length, involving scenes of representation of lesbian sexualities, were chosen to generate discussion within the focus groups. One clip was from *Society* which featured representations of black lesbian women and two clips were chosen from *The Mating Game* which features the representation of white lesbian women. All three clips are provided on a compact disk (CD) which accompanies this research dissertation. Both *Society* and *The Mating Game* are SABC produced fictional situation-dramas that ran in serialised daily/weekly episodes. Because lesbian representation is not extensively visible in South African television programmes, these two television

programmes were chosen out of necessity, as the only two programmes featuring lesbian characters at the time this research commenced. Although the media representations themselves were not analysed but rather used as a means of generating discussion, I drew on the advice of various discourse researchers (e.g. Parker, 1997; Puchta & Potter, 2004; Wilbraham, 2006) on choosing texts for analysis in deciding which clips from the two television programmes I used in the focus groups. I needed to choose clips that would include a variety and range of subject positions in order to generate discussion, be interesting for the discussion, and most importantly would aid in answering the research questions of this project.

I assumed that participants probably would not be wholly familiar with the locally produced television programmes and, therefore, before showing the first clip from each series, I provided the participants with an over-arching narrative context in which the clips occur. In terms of *Society*, I told the participants that this particular clip was from the second season where Beth (the main character) is dealing with the repercussions of 'coming out' as a lesbian woman and how she is trying to negotiate this new identity in a context which is still largely heteronormative. With regards to *The Mating Game*, I explained that the clip comes from the first season and is focused on Sara (the main character) who has ended her long-term relationship with her partner and is now trying to have a child on her own.

Because *Society* featured two lesbian characters which were integral to the storyline of the programme and had a specific focus on the experiences of both women within a South African context based on their sexuality, it was fairly easy to find a single clip which represented lesbian sexualities in a variety of ways (i.e. provided a variety of subject positions for the audiences to engage with). This clip featured a group of black lesbian women having a braai at the main character's home before going to a Pride party (a party celebrating LGBTIQ lives, cultures and experiences) taking place that evening. This clip featured a group of black lesbian women and portrayed how the lesbian women interact with each other while also placing a particular emphasis on the relationship between Beth and Thuli (two of the main characters in the show). It was interesting to include a scene that featured a lesbian relationship, because the previously reviewed literature had argued that

lesbian relationships are represented as between a butch lesbian woman and a femme lesbian woman or between two femme lesbian women.

With regards to *The Mating Game* and its representation of white lesbian women, a single clip which provided a variety of subject positions was difficult to find. This was mainly due to the programme focusing solely on Sara's challenge of trying to have a child on her own and not on her lesbian identity. Sara is rarely shown as interacting with other lesbian women and is not shown as being involved in a lesbian relationship except for the first two episodes where she breaks up with long-term partner, Bianca. Therefore, two clips were shown in order to highlight a few representations of lesbian sexualities. The first clip featured the break-up scene between Sara and Bianca. Once again, it was interesting to have a scene which featured a lesbian relationship for the same reasons mentioned above. The second scene involved Sara's inviting of a man (who she met on an internet dating website) to her home, with the intention of having sex with him and falling pregnant. The clip included the sex scene with them in bed together. I felt that this scene was particularly controversial and would generate some interesting discussions within the groups.

The clips were shown one at a time to three focus groups with discussions in between each clip.

5.4.2. Focus Group Discussions

Psychologists have been using focus groups as a means of exploring the interpretations of media images by audiences since the 1990s (Puchta & Potter, 2004). This is largely due to the aim of focus groups being to produce opinions and allow the researcher access to a number of different opinions at one time (Puchta & Potter, 2004). Wilkinson (2004) lists three distinct advantages of utilising focus group discussions which includes the ability to gain information on a topic from a fairly large number of people, focus groups are considered more 'natural' than in-depth interviews because it involves a conversation between participants (although this conversation does occur within 'set up' conditions – see more on this below); and detailed information can be gathered through participants drawing on others' opinions in agreement and/or disagreement. Focus groups are a useful

tool in gathering "opinions, views, attitudes and beliefs" (Puchta & Potter, 2004, p. 19) around a particular topic.

Since this is a discourse focused research dissertation, I was required to view attitudes, opinions, views and beliefs within a discursive approach, following the advice of researchers such as Billig (1991) and Puchta and Potter (2004). These researchers argue that viewing focus group discussions as a means of gathering naturally occurring talk is naïve since the conversation that is occurring is not natural but rather set up by the researcher who has a specific purpose and goal for the conversation (Billig, 1991; Puchta & Potter, 2004). However, Puchta and Potter (2004) add that focus groups do provide a setting within which opinions and attitudes can be observed since it is within group interactions that opinions and attitudes appear. In other words, it is through arguing and engaging with other people's opinions that we are able to form our own opinions and attitudes. However, there are certain principles that a discourse researcher needs to bear in mind when analysing the attitudes and opinions that are formed within a focus group setting (Billig, 1991; Puchta & Potter, 2004).

Firstly, it needs to be remembered that the opinions given are opinions formed within a specific context and, therefore, not attributable to an individual speaker's inherently consistent belief-structure (inside their mind/psyche), and also not necessarily generalisable (Billig, 1991; Puchta & Potter, 2004). What this means is that the views expressed in my three focus groups cannot necessarily be generalised to any individual self-identified lesbian speaker (as her 'real self'), nor the entire lesbian population. Secondly, the opinions expressed and the reasons for having these opinions are often related to another opinion which occurred during the group discussion (Billig, 1991; Puchta & Potter, 2004). In other words, when a participant states what they think about the lesbian representation, this is often done in such a way which responds to another participant's opinion either in agreement, negotiation, and/or disagreement. Thirdly, as mentioned earlier, discourse is functional and action-oriented and, therefore, opinions and attitudes are "*performed* rather than *preformed*" (Puchta & Potter, 2004, p. 21; emphasis theirs). In other words, the participants in the focus group did not necessarily come to the discussion with already formulated opinions on lesbian representation or on who they were/are as lesbian women,

but rather that these opinions (and subject positions) were performed during the discussion in order to achieve some interpersonal objective.

With these principles in mind, a total of three focus group discussions (this includes a pilot focus group) of approximately two hours in duration were conducted for the purposes of this research dissertation. Each focus group consisted of no more than five participants which is suitable for a focus group study. As Wilkinson (2004) states, the "norm is between four and eight" (p. 179). This is also in line with Wetherell's (1998) method of discourse analysis which argues that a discourse study does not need a large sample size because the researcher is interested in the language being used within a particular context and not on generalising the findings to a whole population group. Participants for the focus groups were found through snowball sampling. Babbie (2010) comments that snowball sampling is useful when members of a particular social group are hard to find and, therefore, the researcher locates a few people and asks them to refer other people to take part in the study.

As a self-identifying queer woman in a university context, it was not that self-identified lesbian women were difficult to locate, but rather that snowball sampling in the form of asking self-identified lesbian women whom I knew to participate, and to bring self-identified lesbian friends along, appeared to be the most convenient way of finding participants. Furthermore, because I wanted participants to be well-acquainted and comfortable with each other, snowballing proved effective in ensuring that the people who formed part of the focus groups were friends. This need for the participants in each group to, at the very least, be well-acquainted was important because topics around sexuality can be sensitive and, sometimes, controversial. I felt that the only way a relaxed environment could occur would be if the participants knew each other. This decision was also based on the work of two researchers (i.e. Stephens, 2010; Wetherell, 1998) who often use groups of friends in their own research studies.

For example, Stephens (2010) comments that using participants who knew each other in her study on hate crimes had the advantage of participants already feeling comfortable with each other and, therefore, they felt safe enough to talk about sensitive issues that came up.

Wetherell's (1998) research also concurs with this, arguing that participants who know each other and are comfortable with each other means that a space is made available for (discursive) disagreements and, therefore, different subject positions and positionings of one another to occur in the conversations. Stephens (2010) however states that there are some disadvantages to using friendship networks in that, often, hierarchical structures of power already exist within friendship groups before the focus group commences, and play out within the focus group which results in some participants dominating the discussion. This did happen, particularly in the pilot focus group, even though Stephens' (2010) warning was kept in mind and all efforts were made to ensure that all participants had a chance to speak through asking each participant to voice their opinions in turns, and making various attempts at drawing in participants who appeared to remain quiet throughout much of the discussions. It was also stressed that even though the participants knew each other and were friends, that all discussions still remain confidential within the focus groups and that all opinions/positions be respected and listened to.

Participants were purposively sampled in that they needed to fulfil specific criteria (Babbie, 2010). Firstly, all women had to self-identify as lesbian women since the research dissertation was exploring how a self-identified lesbian audience received the subject positions provided by representations of lesbian women drawn from two South African television programmes. As mentioned in the introduction of this research dissertation, I acknowledge that the term 'lesbian' is a social construct and that sexuality is not static and does not fall neatly within a distinct binary of heterosexual or homosexual. Therefore, when looking for participants, I was careful to explain that by using the word 'lesbian' I am referring to women who are predominantly attracted to other women. Secondly, the participants needed to be over the age eighteen for consent reasons. It is important to add that students were from a university context and that this institutional site offered me a convenient way of gaining access to participants through various social networks. Every attempt was made to ensure that the women came from racially diverse backgrounds however this proved quite difficult in two of the focus groups, reasons for which will follow in the discussion on the composition of the focus groups.

The compositions of the three focus groups were as follows.

5.4.3. Pilot Lesbian Group (PLG)

As someone new to the field of research and, therefore, inexperienced in conducting research with focus groups, it was necessary for a pilot group to be conducted in order to ascertain whether the clips and the questions I wanted to use would generate enough material for the research dissertation and in order to answer the research questions. As Morrison (1998) argues, it is quite common for focus groups to not work and a pilot would help in allowing the researcher to step back and examine what is not working and what could be done differently in the main focus groups. However, discursive studies are not really concerned with whether focus group discussions 'work perfectly', but the intention in using a pilot focus group was rather to ensure that the clips chosen would generate enough discussion to answer the specific research questions of this study.

Because the two television programmes featured representations of white and black lesbian women, I requested that participants from different racial backgrounds take part in the discussion. However, it happened that only self-identified white lesbian women were initially willing to participate. Therefore, the Pilot Lesbian Group (PLG) consisted of five self-identified white lesbian women between the ages of twenty to twenty-six years old who were undergraduate students. What came out strongly in this focus group discussion was the racial differentiation in subject positions made available by these lesbian representations. It, therefore, became vitally important to ensure that the next focus group discussion included black lesbian women in order to explore if there were any differences or similarities in how a black lesbian audience worked with the subject positions made available in both television programmes.

5.4.4. First Lesbian Group (FLG)

Race was a constant and primary theme which appeared in the subject positions made available by the two television programmes as well as in the literature reviewed in chapters three and four. Therefore, in order to explore the subject positions made available by white and black representations of lesbian women and how a racially diverse lesbian audience work with the subject positions made available in these racialised representations, it was necessary to form a focus group which consisted of both white and black lesbian women. I felt that a racially diverse focus group would result in, for example, the white lesbian

women positioning the black lesbian women in the group in particular ways (and vice versa) which would (hopefully) make for some interesting discursive material to work with. Through the help of one of the students, I was able to recruit a number of self-identified black lesbian women to participate in what I will refer to as the First Lesbian Group (FLG). The final composition of the group included two self-identified white lesbian women and three self-identified black lesbian women between the ages of twenty and twenty-eight years old. No Coloured or Indian lesbian women who were willing to participate could be located and this is perhaps due to the university's population which is still skewed towards whiteness.

5.4.5. Second Lesbian Group (SLG)

A third focus group was formed to explore whether any different subject positions or interpretative repertoires and ideological dilemmas would occur. This group comprised of three self-identified white lesbian women and one self-identified black lesbian woman between the ages of nineteen and twenty-seven. Once again, the racial binary was not intentional since I had again requested for participants of all races to take part. I discuss in more detail about my attempts in creating a comfortable environment further on and in the reflexivity sections, but this group consisted of four students whom I had taught a month previously. I believe that this had implications for the dynamic of the group and for the kind of discussion that took place.

For example, I feel that the participants were focused on giving me the kinds of opinions that they thought I wanted rather than what they actually thought. I also found it difficult to separate myself from the role as their lecturer since they were still completing assignments for my course which made it difficult to completely engage in the discussion as an active participant myself. However, as Puchta and Potter (2004) argue, in discursive research, the context shapes the interaction, and really what I was looking for was how and why participants draw on specific discursive resources within specific contexts. In other words, because opinions (and subject positions) are *performed*, within this specific context participants may have worked harder at attempting to maintain a positive self-presentation by drawing on discursive resources which helped them appear critical and I may have drawn

on certain discursive resources which maintained my self-presentation as an open-minded and approachable lecturer-person.

5.4.6. Focus Group Process

One of my primary aims before the first clip was shown to each focus group was to create as much of an informal, comfortable and relaxing environment as possible for the participants. As Puchta and Potter (2004) explain, making sure that people are relaxed and comfortable is essential in conducting a successful focus group. Furthermore, if the environment is informal, a particular kind of interaction is encouraged. Although a focus group is a set up process where the participants are aware that they are there for a specific purpose, there are certain ways in which an informal atmosphere can be created. One of these includes using what Puchta and Potter (2004) refer to as "cover-identities" (p. 33) where the facilitator will use certain words to make the set up *seem* informal. This was especially important since I work in a university context and knew many of these participants as students on campus or students I had taught. Therefore, I needed to (in a sense) hide the power that was afforded to me by this broader context, in order to create the impression that this specific context was an informal setting with a bunch of lesbian women having a discussion about lesbian women in television programmes.

For example, instead of saying "Today we will be discussing lesbian representation", I would rather say "I would like to chat about our thoughts on how lesbian women are represented". Just the use of the word 'chat' instead of 'talk' implies an informal setting where the impression given is that we are just a group of people chatting about a topic (Puchta & Potter, 2004). Although I began with certain rules such as asking participants to be respectful of everyone's opinion, to talk one at a time, and to make sure they do not repeat sensitive information outside of the room, I was careful to also say that I wanted this to be informal and that I wanted them to speak their thoughts and feelings without fear of judgement. To really make this as informal as possible, I supplied pizza and snacks as well cold drinks. I also suggested that participants dish up food, drink and snacks before showing the first clip and beginning the discussion, since I felt food would relax the participants and while eating participants may not focus too much on being cautious in what they say. It appears that, for the most part, this did work.

The way in which the focus groups were conducted was based on the guidelines provided by Puchta and Potter (2004) but differed in some ways in order to achieve specific goals. Vaughn, Schumm, and Sinagub (1996, as cited in Puchta & Potter, 2004) state that a successful focus group includes three aspects: 1) a moderator who is trained to facilitate a discussion; 2) a prepared list of questions; and 3) an objective to elicit participants' feelings, opinions, and thoughts on a particular topic. Wilkinson (2004) extends on the first aspect, arguing that the moderator is responsible for encouraging the participants to engage with each other's ideas and opinions. During the focus groups conducted for this research, my role was as a moderator and facilitator where one of my primary goals was to encourage the participants to give their opinions and thoughts on the clips shown to them.

I did not have a list of questions for them to answer, but rather went in with four general questions to direct the conversation. These questions were: 1) what are your general impressions of this particular clip; 2) how are lesbians represented in this clip; 3) how do you think this representation resists stereotypes of lesbian sexualities; and 4) in what ways do you / don't you identify with the lesbian representation in this clip? One way in which my role within the group differed, however, was that as a queer woman myself, I acted as a participant as well. Although I was not as open as my participants about my own responses to the clips or the discussion that ensued, I often made comments or expressed an opinion with the purpose of generating further debate or discussion.

The focus group discussions were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim almost straight after each focus group was conducted. Permission to tape-record was obtained from all participants (Appendix 1). It was important to transcribe soon after the focus group took place so that the information was still fresh in my mind and so that I could make notes of important moments that came up during the discussion which I thought may be relevant to the analysis. Furthermore, a verbatim transcription, which is as close to an exact word-for-word transcription of the discussion as possible, was important to ensure the quality of the discussion for analysis purposes (Hennink, 2007). Since one of the main focuses of discourse analysis is looking at how people talk and how people's talk is a performance of their opinions (and subject positions) within a specific context and almost always related to other

people's talk and power, as much detail related to the talk was necessary in the transcriptions (Hennink, 2007).

5.5. Wetherell's Critical Discursive Psychology

Wetherell's (1998; 2001a; 2001b; 2003) method of discourse analysis focuses on what people say in particular contexts: the stories that people tell and the ways in which these stories construct identity positions. In other words, when a person talks they create or build identities for themselves and for those who they are speaking to through the discourse they use (Wetherell, 2003). In order to understand this clearly, we need to look at the three aspects of analysis which form the focus of Wetherell's (1998; 2001a; 2001b; 2003) critical discursive psychology approach. These three aspects include: 1) subject positions; 2) interpretative repertoires; and 3) ideological dilemmas.

5.5.1. Subject Positions

As stated, what people talk about and the stories people tell work to construct identity positions and, therefore, the language that people use when talking positions people in certain ways. In addition to this, when we speak we not only speak from a certain position using the discourse made available by that position, but we also position others (Van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). Discourse, therefore, creates what Wetherell (1998; 2001a; 2001b; 2003) refers to as 'subject positions' which "can be thought of as "places to stand" in a particular conversation" (Magnusson & Marecek, 2010, p. 94). This is useful in conversation because positions "provide us with a way of making sense of ourselves, our motives, experiences and reactions" (Wetherell, 2001b, p. 24).

When looking at subject positions, it is important to take note of some of the features of subject positions. Firstly, because subject positions are constructed within a particular social interaction, they are not permanent, fixed or static (Edley, 2001; Magnusson & Marecek, 2010; Wetherell, 1998; 2001a; 2001b; 2003; Wetherell & Edley, 1999). Instead, they are dependent on the context in which the conversation is taking place. So, for example, the subject position constructed in my conversation with a group of heterosexual strangers may be different to that constructed with a group of my closest friends. Secondly, different

positions we construct in conversation are associated with different levels of power and prestige (Magnusson & Marecek, 2010; Wetherell, 1998; 2001a; 2001b; 2003). Thirdly, because we draw on more than one discourse in a specific conversation, this may construct a troubled position (Magnusson & Marecek, 2010; Wetherell, 2001a; 2001b). This troubled position is often a result of an ideological dilemma (which is discussed further on). Finally, as argued in chapter two, people are not passive receptors but are rather active agents and, therefore, although they are invited to occupy a certain subject position, they have the option of resisting and/or negotiating with the subject positions being offered (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Davies & Harré, 1990; Magnusson & Marecek, 2010; Wetherell, 2001a; 2001b). For example, because discourse is a means of achieving an interpersonal objective, people will often occupy a subject position which works for that particular social interaction, which feels comfortable but also ensures a positive self-presentation (Charlebois, 2008; Magnusson & Marecek, 2010). It is important to note that this is not always a conscious choice. As Wetherell (1998) argues, often we use language in specific ways within specific contexts because we have been socially trained to do so without necessarily knowing what we are doing, how or why.

To bring this back a bit to representation and the identities made available in film and television programmes, the image may construct the subject position of its lesbian character as a butch lesbian woman through the way in which the character is dressed and/or behaves. The audience member is being offered the opportunity to recognise and accept this position, but because people are not passive, the audience member may appropriate this subject position, but she may also resist and/or negotiate with it using her own background, experience and/or social and cultural context. It is within this process of appropriation and/or negotiation and/or resistance, the person would use what Wetherell (1998; 2001a; 2001b; 2003) terms 'interpretative repertoires'.

5.5.2. Interpretative Repertoires

Interpretative repertoires must not be confused with discourse even though the two terms are closely related (Magnusson & Marecek, 2010). Interpretative repertoires are distinctive ways of talking about a topic within a specific setting and refer to the ways in which a person attempts to work among the meanings constructed in a specific social interaction

(Magnusson & Marecek, 2010). Discourse, on the other hand, refers to the language of the broader social or cultural context which inform subjectivity and experience (Magnusson & Marecek, 2010). There is a sense of agency in looking at interpretative repertoires as opposed to discourse which makes Wetherell's (1998) approach appealing. In other words, the individual is not passive with regards to the interpretative repertoires s/he uses in talking about a subject, event or person but rather draws from the broader discourse those interpretative repertoires which work for the context in which s/he is interacting.

When individuals attempt to construct their own versions of reality, they draw on concepts, terms and ways of speaking which have been provided to them by their society, culture and history (Charlebois, 2008). Interpretative repertoires then involve the everyday language that people use in arguing, describing and evaluating objects, people and events which make it possible for people to develop versions of the social world and to perform within this social world (Wetherell, 1998). Interpretative repertoires include clichés, anecdotes and collectively shared modes of talking which participants are able to recognise even when the argumentative chain is not completely formulated (Seymour-Smith et al., 2002; Wetherell, 1998). For example, when talking about the subject positions offered by the representation of lesbian women in a film, some participants in this research drew on interpretative repertoires of gender inversion. In other words, in talking about how they knew a lesbian character was being portrayed as butch, they spoke about the clothes she was wearing, the way she walked and the way she talked.

Discourse is highly variable and inconsistent, therefore, different interpretative repertoires construct different kinds of subject positions which are dependent on the demands of the context in which the participant is interacting (Wetherell, 1998). Because of this, different subject positions often result in what Wetherell (1998; 2001b; Edley, 2001, Seymour-Smith et al., 2002; Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003) terms 'ideological dilemmas'.

5.5.3. Ideological Dilemmas

Charlebois (2008), who draws on Wetherell's (1998) critical discursive psychology approach, argues that there are two broad ideologies that exist within the social world: lived ideologies and intellectual ideologies. Intellectual ideologies refer to the coherent set of

beliefs, values and ideas which represent the beliefs, values and ideas of the dominant ruling group (Charlebois, 2008). For example, the intellectual ideology of the majority of societies and cultures is that of heteronormativity since heterosexuality is regarded as the norm and only natural form of sexual practice. Because heteronormativity is so pervasive in almost all cultures and societies, there exists a kind of "roadmap" (Charlebois, 2008, p. 18) for people to refer to. In other words, heteronormativity is a coherent set of values and beliefs and, therefore, individuals are aware of what they are expected to be. Lived ideologies on the other hand are a lot more complicated because they refer to the "beliefs, values and practices of a given society or culture" (Charlebois, 2008, p. 18) and are, therefore, contradictory, fragmented and inconsistent. In other words, in one society or culture there exist a number of lived ideologies for people to draw on in making sense of their own world. Because of this, there is no single roadmap for individuals to refer to. Therefore, when an individual draws on different interpretative repertoires which encompass different contradictory lived ideologies, they are faced with an ideological dilemma which they then need to work on and to repair in a conversational setting.

To put it simply, there is always a variety of discourse within any culture which people can draw from when talking about an object, event or person (Magnusson & Marecek, 2010). However, this variety of discourse often contradicts each other and, therefore, when a person draws on different discourse in trying to make a point, often they are faced with contradictions within their own arguments, which may be embarrassing or offensive. What results is an ideological dilemma which is due to the "tensions and contradictions among the interpretative repertoires" (Willig, 2008, p. 101) that the person is using. An ideological dilemma then occurs when a participant uses interpretative repertoires which contradict each other and can be used to argue against each other. So, when an ideological dilemma occurs, a person finds themselves occupying a troubled position (Wetherell, 1998) which they then need to work to repair.

For example, very often ideological dilemmas occur when trying to negotiate between interpretative repertoires of religion and interpretative repertoires of sexuality. So, if a lesbian woman uses interpretative repertoires from a fundamentalist religion, they will often face an ideological dilemma with regards to negotiating how this fits in with their

lesbian sexuality. Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) refer to 'crisis points', which they draw on from Fairclough (1992), which are similar to ideological dilemmas in that crisis points indicate that a conflict has occurred between the two different types of discourse that an individual is drawing on which s/he now has to work to fix or repair. So, for example, they may repeat something excessively or there will feature a sudden and noticeable change in the way the individual argues their point. Ideological dilemmas are discussed and applied in depth in chapter seven.

5.5.4. Applying Wetherell's Critical Discursive Psychology Approach

Wetherell (1998) does not provide a set of steps on how to do discourse analysis as other discourse theorists do (e.g. Parker, 1997; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Willig, 2008), but she does give a broad set of interrogatory questions from which analysis may proceed. However, the process followed in this research dissertation is drawn from that described by other researchers (cf. Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Edley & Wetherell, 2001; Seymour-Smith et al., 2002; Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003) who have utilised Wetherell's (1998) critical discursive psychology approach in identifying: 1) the subject positions made available in/by the lesbian representations in the three clips as well as in the participants various ways of talking; 2) the interpretative repertoires used by the audience in accepting and/or negotiating and/or resisting these subject positions; and 3) the ideological dilemmas experienced by participants in this process. This process suggested by the researchers (Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Edley & Wetherell, 2001; Seymour-Smith et al., 2002; Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003) utilising Wetherell's (1998) approach involves reading and re-reading the transcribed focus group discussions numerous times in order to extract and create a separate document containing all of the conversations relevant to answering the research questions. This document is then read and re-read numerous times to identify the three aspects above considered paramount in Wetherell's (1998) approach. In my own application of this approach, I followed these guidelines to a certain extent but my approach followed four steps.

Firstly, once I had transcribed the focus group discussions, I read the transcripts numerous times in order to identify the subject positions that occurred throughout all three focus

groups. One of the most prominent subject positions made available throughout all three focus groups, for example, was that of the idea of a butch lesbian.

Secondly, I read through the extracts some more in order to pick out the kinds of clichés, metaphors and tropes (Wetherell, 1998) that were used in describing the subject positions made available. For example, participants tended to draw on interpretative repertoires of gender inversion when talking about the subject positions made available in the media representations. In other words, when talking about the butch lesbian subject position, one way in which the lesbian characters were identified as lesbian women according to participants talk is through gender inversion such as wearing stereotypically masculine attire and behaving in stereotypically masculine ways.

Thirdly, in order to bring in the active audience element of this research dissertation, I looked at how the participants worked with the subject positions and the kinds of interpretative repertoires they used in this process. In other words, I looked at whether the participants appropriated and/or negotiated and/or resisted these subject positions and what interpretative repertoires they draw on in doing this. For example, in negotiating with the subject position of the butch lesbian, participants draw on interpretative repertoires of gender performance arguing that being a butch lesbian is not necessarily what you look like on the outside, but rather an element of one's personality.

Finally, I looked for the ideological dilemmas that occurred in participants' negotiation with the various subject positions that were made available and how they worked to repair the troubled positions that these ideological dilemmas caused. For example, when talking about the differences between white and black lesbian representations and/or women, participants often found themselves on risky ground where they could potentially be seen as making racist slurs. This resulted in participants having to repair their position in order to establish a positive self-presentation in front of the other participants in the group.

5.6. Ethical Considerations

All attempts were made to ensure that ethics were considered throughout the research process. The ethical guidelines followed were those provided by Willig (2008) and Babbie (2010).

One of the first issues that the researcher needs to address with all participants is that of informed consent and voluntary participation (Babbie, 2010; Willig, 2008). Informed consent involves ensuring that the participants are fully aware of what the research involves and what their responsibilities are during the research process before the focus group discussion takes place (Babbie, 2010; Willig, 2008). Participants also need to be assured that they do not have to participate and that this is a voluntary process (Babbie, 2010; Willig, 2008). When participants were referred to me via contacts I knew, I asked for email addresses so that I could send the participants the full informed consent form. The informed consent form (Appendix 2) details what the research is about, what the individual participant's involvement is, what will be expected from the participants, and assurance that participation is voluntary and they can withdraw if needs be. It was important to send this before the focus groups took place so that participants would be agreeing to participate knowing what was involved and, therefore, the hope was that there would be minimal withdrawal from the actual focus group discussions once these were in process.

Babbie (2010) and Willig (2008) both comment that deception should be avoided as much as possible and that the only reason for deception occurring in research is when there is no other method the researcher can use to answer the research questions. Furthermore, if deception is going to be used, the benefits of conducting the research need to far exceed any potential risks (Babbie, 2010; Willig, 2008). Because there was no reason to deceive the participants, full disclosure was given to them through the informed consent form as well as at the beginning of each focus group. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and to clarify any points they were concerned about, which I addressed as openly and honestly as possible. Furthermore, although I did not foresee any risk of harm to the participants through the research, I did inform them that if they were feeling unsettled

about anything that occurred in the focus group discussions, we could talk about it or I could refer them to a professional counsellor.

Finally, anonymity and confidentiality on my part was assured. Babbie (2010) states that a researcher should not confuse anonymity and confidentiality and that a clear distinction must be made about what each means. Anonymity refers to the assurance that the researcher and the readers of the research dissertation will not be able to identify who the participants are (Babbie, 2010). Confidentiality is different in that, if the researcher can identify who a participant is through the tape-recording, for example, this information must not be published or made available to the public (Babbie, 2010). On my part, I assured the participants that all identifiable information, from their own and others' names mentioned to the cities which they refer to in the discussion would be removed to ensure their identities remained anonymous. Furthermore, because I knew the participants and would be able to identify them through their voices on the recordings, I assured all the participants that I would not make this information known in formal and informal public settings. Since this was a focus group discussion and information would be exchanged not just with me but with other members within the group, I also requested that participants remain respectful to the other participants in the group in ensuring that their anonymity is guaranteed and that any sensitive information discussed within the focus group remains confidential.

5.7. Validation of Discourse Analytic Research

All research, whether it is quantitative and/or qualitative, needs to adhere to certain standards to ensure the validity and reliability of its findings. Because of its orientation around truthfulness and generalisability not being the focus of the research, discourse analysis research does not accept the kinds of validity and reliability standards traditionally associated with scientific and objectivist research paradigms (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). However, this does not imply that discourse research dismisses validity altogether. Rather, discourse theorists such as Jørgensen and Phillips (2002), Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Wetherell (2001c) have developed four core aspects that can be used to demonstrate a discourse research study as a valid form of research. These include: 1) coherence; 2) fruitfulness; 3) transparency; and 4) reflexivity.

5.7.1. Coherence

A discourse research dissertation as a whole should form a coherent narrative (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002) in that the analysis should not contain any "loose ends" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 169) and should be able to show the reader how discourse functions to produce effects. Potter and Wetherell (1987) argue that if there are parts within the analysis which do not fit with the explanation, the reader is less likely to accept the research as legitimate and valid. While I cannot claim that my analysis is perfect and fool-proof, I have attempted to ground the analysis of the participants talk in both the actual words used by the participants (i.e. with extracts and direct quotes) as well as drawing on previous research and/or theory on the effects of various discursive positions. Furthermore, all attempts have been made to ensure discursive principles have been carried out throughout the research dissertation. For example, when reviewing the literature and theory, this was done with a critical eye and drew on contextual and historical factors in understanding the theory and literature. Also, no one theory or research argument was considered as 'truth' but rather used to show the different voices within the field of media and representation.

5.7.2. Fruitfulness

As with any research conducted, the research should have the potential to add new explanations and this is known as 'fruitfulness' (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). While this research recognises that discourse occurs within situated contexts, I do believe that this research contributes to explanations around the experiences of lesbian women in South Africa as well as to the field of media, representation and active audience theory. Furthermore, the research sought fruitfulness by ensuring that the research yielded findings that could be put to use in finding solutions to the problems posed in the research and for further research to be done on new problems that arise (Taylor, 2001).

5.7.3. Transparency

It is critical that the research findings are presented with complete transparency (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). For example, in the analyses comprehensive extracts need to be included and specific phrases or words within the extracts drawn on which connects the analysis to empirical evidence. This helps the reader see the analysis from your point of view as well as

allows them to evaluate the analysis and discussion from their own impression. In order to ensure transparency, every effort has been made to show how patterns identified and claims made are grounded in the transcribed focus group discussions and previous empirical literature. Furthermore, a CD (the same CD which contains the media clips) is provided with this research dissertation containing complete transcriptions of all three focus group discussions should the reader wish to view the full context of these conversations.

5.7.4. Reflexivity

Babbie (2010) defines reflexivity as the researcher's own awareness of the ways in which the researcher's characteristics can affect how the information gathered in qualitative research is collected, analysed and interpreted. Since this was a discursive study within a social constructionist paradigm, reflexivity is particularly important since my own study is merely one "possible representation of the world" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 116). In other words, my position needs to be made clear to the reader since, through my own position in the world (whether I am positioned by my own accord or by society itself), could and often does affect how the focus group discussions were analysed and interpreted. As Wetherell (1995) argues, the discourse analyst needs to make their positions known and they need to reflect critically on how this position effects their role in the research process and in the analysis of the discussions. Recognising the roles I played within the research process (from planning the research design to analysing the material), I made sure that throughout the research I acknowledged that my positions and the ways in which they could/have affected the research process. This was particularly relevant in the analysis chapters where I needed to recognise that my analysis and my own account was just another story that is not separate from those of my participants but one that needs to be included in the analysis. Therefore, where applicable, my own discourse was analysed along with those of participants. Furthermore, my own positions need to be made explicit.

I do not identify with any particular racial category (my mother would be regarded as white and my biological father – who I do not know – would be regarded Indian but I feel I cannot claim either racial identity as my own). As someone who looks Indian, however, I have experienced racial prejudice and discrimination. I am therefore sensitive to even the most subtle of racist slurs spoken by people I come into contact with. I also identify as a queer

woman who seems to have a preference for women, but is not averse to men. This position is faced with prejudice and discrimination; firstly, because I am in a relationship with a woman and, therefore, am sensitive to my position as an outsider within a largely heteronormative world and, secondly, because I do not wish to be boxed into the category of 'lesbian' I am sensitive to the need of most people to label individuals in order to understand and make sense of those who are different from them. In addition to these two identities, I consider myself first and foremost an activist who wants to produce value-rich scholarly work which will ultimately work to contribute to the broader struggle of LGBTIQ people in South Africa.

All of these three intersecting positions no doubt affected how I designed the study, reviewed the literature, posed research questions, collected discursive materials and analysed the focus group discussions. I do hope, however, that the effects of my subjectivity were for the better of the analysis, rather than the worse. Since I am sensitive to more than one form of prejudice and discrimination as well as been actively involved in the broader struggle for social and cultural equality, I hope that this has given me a sharpened critical eye for the kinds of discourse that produce unequal power relations and, therefore, oppression.

CHAPTER SIX: GENDER, CLASS, AND RACIAL POSITIONING OF LESBIAN WOMEN

6.1. Introduction

Just to reiterate that three focus group discussions took place with groups of self-identified lesbian women; a pilot lesbian group (PLG), the first lesbian group (FLG) and a second lesbian group (SLG). The focus of the research was on how these self-identified lesbian women talked about the representations of lesbian women in two South Africa produced television programmes and the subject positions made available in this talk. In the group discussions around how both these television programmes portray lesbian women, all three groups interpreted these representations as positioning lesbian women as 'butch'. Participants commented that, even when the media attempted to depict a feminine lesbian woman, the character still displayed stereotypical masculine characteristics either in her appearance or in her behaviour. While there was much negotiation, and in some cases a hint of resistance to this representation, this resistance and negotiation altered when the talk turned to how *Society* portrays black lesbian women as 'butch'.

In terms of the structure of this section, each subject position (e.g. the lumberjack) will be presented and the interpretative repertoires used in describing (e.g. interpretative repertoires of gender inversion) the subject position under discussion. Once the subject positions have been introduced and the interpretative repertoires used in the talk around the available subject positions, I will look at how the participants worked with the subject positions in terms of what kinds of interpretative repertoires the participants draw on in negotiating and/or appropriating and/or resisting the available subject positions (e.g. interpretative repertoires of gender performance). To begin with, I will look at subject positions made available in *The Mating Game* (i.e. 'white' lesbian representation) and the interpretive repertoires used in resisting, appropriating and/or negotiating with these subject positions. After that, I will explore how this resistance, appropriation and/or negotiation altered when talking about the subject positions of lesbian women made available in *Society* (i.e. 'black' lesbian representation).

6.2. The Lumberjack and Tomboy (The Butch Lesbian)

All three groups interpreted the media representations of lesbian women in *The Mating Game* as positioning lesbian women as the stereotypical 'butch' lesbian; as lumberjacks and tomboys. The following extract will be used to analyse the interpretive repertoires of gender inversion (Lugowski, 1999; Weiss, 1992) that participants drew on in their talk around the lumberjack and tomboy subject position.

Extract 1 (PLG, Lines 60-85):

Jessica : The first thing I saw when I looked at that was typical (0.1) butch outfit with the
Stephanie : = khaki pants
Jessica : khaki pants and the
Researcher : = chequered shirts
Jessica : even her {referring to Sara}, I mean, she was the more femmey one in the relationship and she was just, you know, pictured as, you know, wearing slack pants and not dolled up and
Marie : just more masculine in appearance
Jessica : ja.
Marie : Kind of be like "I'm a lesbian"
Jessica : And also just, like, the lack of effort in the first character {Sara}, she didn't have any make-up on or didn't really, I don't know, not the greatest hair style
Researcher : the the pig-tails
Jessica : Ja, didn't really suit her. I just, ja, just felt like (0.3) just the picture that often lesbians get especially more butchy ones or overweight lesbians. It's always, oh she must be a lesbian because she doesn't take care of herself or because she's, you know, dressed like a guy or has short hair or just looks different compared to other women, that she must be gay.
Researcher : Alright. Stephanie?
Stephanie : Ja. Wow. I actually don't have words because it was like a stereotype fully and I don't enjoy that at all(!) like you don't have to look lesbian to be lesbian and all the rest kind of thing and, like (clears throat), khaki pants, belt, tank top, baggy shirt over that
Jessica : driving a bakkie
Stephanie : driving a bakkie nogal! Lifting the boxes by yourself

6.2.1. Interpretive Repertoires of Gender Inversion

Edley (2001) discusses how discourse "encompasses a whole range of different symbolic activities, including styles of dress, patterns of consumption, ways of moving, as well as talking" (p. 191) and how these are often "understood as normative forms of behaviour, the sum total of the practices and characteristics which [we] conventionally associate" (p. 191; Edley's emphases excluded) with certain groups of people. While Edley's (2001) work focuses on men and masculinity, how discourse works in creating normative forms of

behaviour when it comes to understanding lesbian sexualities and lesbian women can be seen in the above extract. The lesbian characters in *The Mating Game* are positioned by the participants as being butch lesbians and, in this subject positioning, the participants use interpretive repertoires of gender inversion. Butchness is equated with stereotypical masculine characteristics and behaviours indexed both by appearance and behaviour. The lesbian characters are described as wearing "typical butch outfit[s]", consisting of "khaki pants" and "chequered shirts".

As argued in chapter four, positioning lesbian women as butch has the potential to disrupt the notion of gender being biologically linked to one's sex, however, often butch representations (and, therefore, subject positions) appear within a heteronormative laden culture where the subject positioning of lesbian women as butch (i.e. lacking a stereotypically feminine appearance) works to position lesbian women as not real women, as lacking in some way (Eves, 2004; Innes & Lloyd, 1995). This is echoed in the extract above by the participants in their descriptions of the characters as not putting make-up on ("not dolled up"), having bad hair ("the pig-tails") and driving stereotypically masculine cars such as a "bakkie" (i.e. a pickup truck). In other words, the participants draw on interpretative repertoires of gender inversion in the ways they decode and describe the lesbian characters.

In using interpretative repertoires of gender inversion, the participants acknowledge that lesbian women in this clip from a television programme are recognised through a failed feminine gender performance. In other words, participants position these lesbian characters as being recognisable as lesbian women because of how the characters do not conform to the heteronormative ideal of being a woman. As Jessica argues, the characters are "dressed like a guy or has short hair or just looks different compared to other women". The media, therefore, according to the participants talk, have positioned lesbian women as conforming to the stereotypes associated with 'butch' lesbian sexualities. In relation to this, the participants talk concurs with Innes and Lloyd's (1995) argument that representations presenting a butch lesbian subject position, position lesbian women as "different compared to other women" since lesbian women comes across as "more masculine in appearance" and therefore not real women according to heteronormative standards. The participants also argue that, through the way these women have been represented in the clip from *The*

Mating Game, the preferred meaning that is being offered to the audiences is "oh she must be a lesbian" and "she must be gay".

6.2.2. Interpretative Repertoires of Gender Performance

These heteronormative standards were also found in the way lesbian relationships were positioned in the clips. While participants used interpretative repertoires of gender inversion in talking about the physical appearance of the lesbian characters, they turn to using interpretative repertoires of gender performance (how the characters behave) in talking about how *The Mating Game* positions lesbian relationships as conforming to heteronormative gender roles. As Shiloh states in the extract below, "you have to watch and observe their behaviour to see what they're doing". In other words, through the characters behaviours (performance), the more feminine lesbian partner (woman) is differentiated from the more butch lesbian partner (man). This is illustrated in the following extract.

Extract 2 (SLG, Lines 779-805):

Fran	: you have, like, the wifey standing in the driveway crying
Lisa	: =Aren't they both, the feminine one is running after the masculine one, you know
Shiloh	: I think that, but I think in terms of their behaviour, in terms of their looks, they're both so tomboy, one's a lumberjack and the other one's like, so I think in terms of looks they're both, they look versatile in terms, like the, first glance, but then from the behaviour, no no you can't leave, and then like, I think that's when you can tell
Lisa	: Ja, ja, look at their actions, you know, the, the, the woman one is running off to the, you know, flinging herself at the man, the one who's ending the relationship
Shiloh	: =and, of course it's the man who is jumping into another woman's car
Lisa	: you know, and and, he's the ins, so-called insensitive one, you know, ja
Fran	: And the woman wants the baby
Shiloh	: Hmmm
Lisa	: Hmmm
Miranda	: Hmmm
Fran	: And there's like this idea of settling, this is like oh we don't have to have a kid anymore, forget about my hopes and dreams, as long as you don't leave me, you know, like, that's ridiculous
Shiloh	: I think, I think the difference is, is with the first clip, is that you could tell ok look here a guy, girl, relationship, I think with this one, you have to watch and observe their behaviour to see what they're doing. But, I think it's also, I don't know, I thought it was a very dick thing was how she didn't even tell her we're over, it was shit, you're home early, this is awkward, I planned to leave before you got home, kind of thing

Participants interpreted the relationship between Sara and Bianca in *The Mating Game* as being positioned to conform to the stereotypical feminine and masculine roles taken up in heterosexual relationships. In other words, because there is always a man and a woman in a heterosexual relationship and because heterosexuality is regarded as natural and privileged, the underlying assumption within a heteronormative culture is that, even within a relationship between two women (or two men), one woman must take the part of the 'woman' (more feminine behaving) while the other will take the part of the 'man' (more masculine behaving). This is illustrated in the above extract where Fran, Lisa and Shiloh use the terms "feminine one", "woman", "masculine one" and "man" to demonstrate how the two lesbian characters in *The Mating Game* are conforming to heteronormative gender roles.

Shiloh states that, through the characters appearances (i.e. "looks"), the lesbian representation is making available a "lumberjack" or "tomboy" (i.e. butch lesbian) subject position. However, it is through their behaviour "when you can tell" who is being positioned as the 'woman' and who is being positioned as the 'man'. Here participants argue that Sara is being positioned as the "wifey" and the "woman" through behaviours such as "running off... flinging herself at the man [more masculine character]" (i.e. over-emotional is a stereotypical feminine trait) and being portrayed as "the woman [the more feminine character who] wants the baby" (i.e. nurturance is a stereotypical feminine trait) while Bianca is being positioned as the man through her behaviour. As Shiloh states, "of course it's the man [the more masculine character] who is jumping into another woman's car" (i.e. infidelity is a stereotypical masculine trait). Shiloh even uses the word "dick" to describe the way in which the more masculine character chooses to end the relationship; she says, "it was a very dick thing" to do. "Dick" is a colloquial word used to refer to a man's genitals and here Shiloh is using it in a derogatory way to describe Bianca's infidelity and how she was planning to leave without an explanation. This use of the word "dick", therefore, emphasises that infidelity and insensitivity are stereotypically masculine traits associated with men and how this clip was applying this stereotypically masculine behaviour to a lesbian woman.

From extracts one and two, the participants resist these subject positions of lesbian women as butch lumberjacks and tomboys and appear to regard this stereotyping as a negative and false representation of lesbian women. This resistance is particularly evident in extract one where Stephanie argues that "you don't have to look lesbian to be lesbian". This argument that appearance does not make a woman lesbian is reiterated in the following extract.

Extract 3 (PLG, Lines 166-188):

Stephanie : Well, {name omitted} asked us about who would be, like, we were dancing in the kitchen and {name omitted} was like "No, I'm used to dancing as the female" and Jessica and I looked at each other

Jessica : ='Cause I was dancing with {name omitted} and {name omitted} was dancing really nicely with me in the kitchen

Stephanie : ='Cause Jessica was leading so I was like, ja, Jessica and I would have a problem because we're both leaders, like, because we're both like the man in the relationships but then {name omitted} was like well neither of you look like the man and I suppose, so another thing, like, you don't have to look like the man to be the man kind of thing. Ja, so I was like, ja, someone in my relationship might wear the pants but I choose the colour. Like, it's that sort of thing because, ja, we were just saying that, like, there's a masculine and a feminine but it doesn't necessarily mean that you have to look masculine and look feminine. I mean, Jessica and I are anything(!) but feminine, anything but masculine, but our attitudes and our personality are that doesn't mean we have to look like it

Jessica : We're both like the leaders, you know, so (0.2) say Stephanie was with a very butch person or like my ex-girlfriend for instance, she was very, she looked just like a guy, she was very butch, but I was always in control and I was the leader in the situation and she was, she just sat back and went along with the relationship. So, even though I was the woman and when I walk around a lot of people think I'm straight because of the way I dress or take care of myself or just my mannerisms, they don't think that I'm this typical lesbian and I say no I am, I'm lesbian and I've been lesbian my entire life, you know, like, there's no other option for me. Um, and when they're with us and {name omitted} they'll be like oh does she wear the pants and {name omitted} would honestly say to them no she doesn't, Jessica wears the pants, you know

6.2.3. 'You don't have to look like the man to be the man'

In the above extract, Jessica and Stephanie resist the subject position made available by *The Mating Game* of the butch lesbian as looking masculine. In resisting this subject position that appearance makes you butch ("you don't have to look like the man to be the man"), Stephanie relates a conversation she had with her roommate earlier that day around gender roles in lesbian relationships and Jessica uses her own personal story to strengthen this resistance. Personal narratives and experiences are often employed by individuals in order to dismiss any critique and/or questioning against the underlying claim being made (Barnes,

Palmar, & Durrheim, 2001; Edwards & Potter, 1992). In other words, in recounting a story based on one's personal experience, the experience is regarded as authentic since the group members cannot verify the experience and, therefore, the underlying claim cannot be dismissed as false. In the above extract, Stephanie and Jessica not only recount their own personal experiences, but both use each other as extra validation and proof. This is evident in Stephanie recounting an experience that included both her and Jessica. Jessica also uses phrases such as "we both" and includes the example of Stephanie's relationship with a "very butch person" in her own argument. In drawing in another member in the group, the claim that one does not have to look butch in order to be butch is given more credence and authority since it is not just a personal opinion but one that someone else in the group shares.

In her resistance of the butch lesbian subject position, Stephanie uses the same line of argument used in extract one ("you don't have to look lesbian to be lesbian") here with the phrase "you don't have to look like the man to be the man". Once again using interpretive repertoires of gender inversion, both Stephanie and Jessica describe their attitudes and personalities as being 'butch' while their appearance is 'femme'. In describing their personalities, both Jessica and Stephanie draw on stereotypically masculine personality traits such as "leaders", "in control" and "wear[ing] the pants". In arguing that butchness is more a matter of personality rather than appearance, both Stephanie and Jessica vehemently resist this subject position of the butch lesbian woman. In resisting the subject position of the butch lesbian, Stephanie and Jessica also resist the notion of binary genders. In other words, both participants argue in the above extract and in extract four which follows that they possess both masculine and feminine traits.

Extract 4 (PLG, Lines 871-879):

Jessica : I'm a tomboy and I will always be one but I like to dress up, I like to feel like a woman and not feel too much like, you know, I wear a sports bra and like run around and be all dirty, I like to also look good and be, like, I'm a woman, I can be soft and smell good and be pretty. There's lots of perks to being a woman

Stephanie : I'm like her but I'm like in more of a sense my attitude is more butch and my personality is more butch like there's this kind of like a pretty sugar coating kind of thing because I do get very violent and I am like very forceful

Stephanie and Jessica, therefore, resist the position of butchness being related to one's appearance and resist the heteronormative assumption that women exhibit only feminine traits and men exhibit only masculine traits. Here, as women, they identify as exhibiting both masculine traits (in terms of their behaviour) and feminine traits (in terms of appearance). In reiterating that they possess both masculine and feminine traits, they utilise interpretative repertoires of heteronormative gender roles in ascribing certain behaviour as masculine (butch) and other behaviour as feminine (femme). In other words, both draw on a discourse made available by a heteronormative culture in understanding behaviour and personality along gendered lines.

For example, Stephanie and Jessica buy into the heteronormative argument that maleness (and, therefore, butchness) is equated with control and power (i.e. "control" and "forceful"). Wagner and Wodak (2006) argue that the use of metaphors in conversation is a strategy used by individuals in order to "reduce complexity and offer coherence" (p. 403). Here Stephanie attempts to make her argument clear and coherent through the use of a common metaphor around who "wears the pants" in a relationship. This metaphor is significant because it is a common metaphor used to signify who holds the power and control in a relationship. Specifically, it is a phrase used to demean a man and emphasise a man's weakness when a woman (i.e. wife or girlfriend) is perceived as having control over him. In other words, when someone comments "she wears the pants in the relationship" what they are actually making reference to, in a somewhat insulting way, is the man's *lack* of power and control.

In extract three, Stephanie extends the metaphor saying that her partner may literally wear the pants in the relationship (therefore, seen as more butch), but that she actually has the control and power since she "choose[s] the colour". In extending the metaphor to signify that she does not literally wear pants, Stephanie demonstrates that she resists the notion that masculinity is equated with power and control (i.e. she doesn't wear the metaphorical pants, but rather has a "pretty sugar coating" yet still has control and power). However, she still refers to herself as being "the man in the relationships" thereby conforming to the heteronormative assumption that all relationships have a masculine counterpart and a feminine counterpart. Jessica also uses the pants metaphor at the end of extract two in

order to emphasise her point but she argues that she wears the metaphorical pants and, therefore, is the "man" and the more "butch" lesbian.

6.2.4. Interpretative Repertoires of Gender Conformity

Stephanie and Jessica, in their resistance to the butch lesbian subject position, work to position themselves as in a position of power. This is done literally through their use of the words "control" and "forceful", for example, and through the use of metaphors and descriptive words around masculinity to describe their personalities. In addition to this, Jessica and Stephanie employ another strategy to position themselves as in a powerful space. In extract three and four, Stephanie and Jessica argue that they are feminine in the way that they look, arguing that they do not conform to the stereotypical idea of what a lesbian should be. This works to resist the subject position of the butch lesbian as made available in *The Mating Game*, but also works to allow the space for Stephanie and Jessica to have the best of both worlds.

In other words, in performing masculine personalities, they are in a position of power and control within their intimate relationships, but also in displaying feminine characteristics in terms of their appearances, they are in a position of power and control within their culture and society. As Jessica comments, she has been a lesbian woman her "entire life", but the way she dresses and takes care of herself conceals this. She goes on to give examples of reactions to her sexuality and says that people think she is straight because "they don't think that I'm this typical lesbian" because she looks "soft and smell[s] good and [is] pretty". Stephanie also argues that she does not look like a butch lesbian woman since she has a "pretty sugar coating". The inclusion of the phrases "people think I'm straight" and "they don't think that I'm this typical lesbian", indicate that Jessica and Stephanie, because of their feminine outer appearance, are able to stay under the radar and remain undetected as "typical lesbian" women. In being able to do this, Jessica and Stephanie can be in control and be lesbian, but at the same time avoid the risk involved that comes with being detected as a lesbian woman within a heteronormative culture. As Jessica ends off, "there are lots of perks to being a woman".

6.3. The Atypical Lesbian

In her work on 'butch'/'femme' lesbian identities and how lesbian women use heteronormative discourses in their performances of gender, Eves (2004) comments that gendered behaviour performed by lesbian women is often described as 'butch' or 'femme' and that these are often understood "as derivatives of heterosexuality" (p. 404). Lesbian sexualities operate within a heteronormative culture where there is an absence of language available to explain or describe the gender performances of lesbian women and, because of this lack of language, it is "difficult to create styles, fashions and practices that are genuinely independent, or which will be read as such" (Eves, 2004, p. 404). This sentiment is echoed by Innes and Lloyd (1995) in their paper on the positioning of the butch lesbian. They remark that equating butch lesbian women with being men is not just a view held by the heteronormative society, but also by the homosexual world as well.

This is simply because 'butch' is used within a "larger cultural discourse" (p. 9) which views that a biologically born female will become a woman who will adopt feminine traits and characteristics. Furthermore, this discourse implies that a woman and a man "are exclusive opposites" (Innes &Lloyd, 1995, p. 9). Therefore, because the 'butch' lesbian does not adopt stereotypical feminine traits or characteristics, she is "disqualified from the category" (Innes & Lloyd, 1995, p. 9) of being a woman. Because no other category exists but man and woman, the 'butch' lesbian must be a man. This struggle with attempting to find language other than that provided by a heteronormative world is evident in how the participants in the above extracts often oscillate between referring to themselves and the characters on screen as the "woman" and/or the "man" when discussing the subject positions being made available. What is interesting from the above extracts and the discussions around gender roles in lesbian sexualities and relationships is that, even though participants draw on heteronormative gender roles in making their points clear, they do work to destabilise what is conventionally understood as 'butch' or 'femme' lesbian identity by constructing the subject position of the atypical lesbian woman who exhibits both masculine and feminine characteristics.

Eves (2004) argues that 'butch' performances trouble heteronormative understandings of gender not only through their visibility, but also by creating a troubled position between gender identity and biological sex. She further goes on to argue, however, that, while doing this, it also works to reinforce the naturalisation of heterosexuality by maintaining a connection between a masculine gender identity and a desire for feminine women. However, in the above extracts, the disconnect between how the participants position their personalities as being 'butch' and their appearance as being 'femme' works to trouble the position of 'butch' lesbian women being the 'men' and 'femme' lesbian women being the 'women'. To explain this further, because the gendered position given to their appearance (i.e. 'femme' therefore feminine) does not match with the gendered position given to their personality (i.e. 'butch' therefore masculine), their gendered identities do not equate to the heteronormative understanding of gender where a female adopts feminine traits. This troubles the heteronormative understanding of lesbian sexualities, where 'butch' lesbians must occupy solely masculine positions and 'femme' lesbians must occupy solely feminine positions. Participants destabilise these heteronormative understandings by occupying the position of being both 'butch' and 'femme' simultaneously.

In her summary of Foucault's work on power and resistance, Spargo (1999) argues that power does not exist without resistance and that resistances are only effective because "they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised" (p. 21). What this means is that resistance is created through the discourse it wants to challenge in the sense that individuals cannot resist power without adopting the discourse on which that power is formulated. To use the focus group discussions to explain this, both Stephanie and Jessica draw on the discourse of heteronormativity in order to resist heteronormative assumptions on lesbian sexualities and lesbian relationships. In other words, in order to demonstrate that they do not conform to heteronormative standards of the butch lesbian or femme lesbian, they have to utilise the discourse around butch and femme identities in order to show how they incorporate *both* identities. In other words, they cannot completely resist the butch discourse or the femme discourse but rather use both discourse in order to create a new subject position, the atypical lesbian.

Furthermore, McGhee (2001) draws on de Certeau's (1984, as cited in McGhee, 2001) work on 'tactics' and comments that passing as heterosexual is a form of resistance against heteronormativity and a culture which discriminates against same-sex sexualities. While his work focuses on military men, the theory of McGhee (2001) can be used to illustrate how Stephanie's and Jessica's subject position of the atypical lesbian is a form of resistance. By taking on the stereotypical attributes of feminine appearance, Jessica and Stephanie are able to resist heteronormativity through a "tactical use of power" (McGhee, 2001, p. 40). Jessica and Stephanie avoid detection by appearing as women who look heterosexual and, therefore, are able to take advantage of the identity privileges associated with attractive (to men), heterosexual-looking women. In addition to this, as lesbian-identified women who transgress both stereotypical lesbian characteristics (i.e. butch lesbian) as well as stereotypical heterosexual feminine characteristics (i.e. passive and submissive), Stephanie and Jessica have successfully resisted the butch lesbian subject position as well as the gender norms that heterosexual women are expected to adhere to.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, discussion around the subject positions provided by the clips from *The Mating Game*, which depicted white lesbian women, was different to the discussion around the subject positions provided by the clips from *Society*, which depicted black lesbian women. As shown above, participants resisted the butch lesbian subject position being offered by *The Mating Game* (i.e. the white lesbian representation). This resistance and/or negotiation with the butch lesbian subject position disappeared when participants were asked to discuss the representation of black lesbian women. The black lesbian women portrayed in *Society* were positioned by all participants in all three groups to be lesbians from a 'township' – where 'townships' refers to areas on the outskirts of towns and cities within South Africa which, as a result of forced removals during the apartheid regime, are occupied predominantly by poor black South Africans (Binns & Nel, 2002; Gibson, 2003). This was surprising since the clip featured a group of black women having a braai at the main character, Beth's, house and there was no indication from the clip shown that these lesbian women were from the township. It is relevant at this point to mention again that the pilot lesbian group (PLG) consisted of self-identified white lesbian women while the first lesbian group (FLG) consisted of three self-identified black lesbian women and the second lesbian group (SLG) consisted of one self-identified black lesbian

women. This is necessary to mention since all three groups and all participants, regardless of race, positioned the lesbian women in *Society* as being from the township. How this subject positions was appropriated and/or negotiated, however, was different in each group.

6.4. The Township Lesbian

As with *The Mating Game*, participants identified representations of lesbian women within clips from *Society* as positioning lesbian women as 'butch'. The following extract is an example of how this subject position was identified and how similar interpretative repertoires of gender inversion were drawn in talking about this subject position.

Extract 5 (SLG, Lines 214-221):

Lisa	: the way some of those people were dressed, no, I'm sorry, this is a TV show, but why, why are you dressing, like, the one chick is very stereotypical lesbian, it's
Researcher	: How is it stereotypical?
Lisa	: Like, you know the baggy three-quarter pants, the army print that only guys wear with the golf t-shirt look, um, and they also she's the aggressive one, she's the one pressurising people to come out, you know, that just gives, very dodgy impression

From the above extract, the participants agree that *Society* has also portrayed lesbian women as conforming to the 'butch' lesbian stereotype. Once again, the same kinds of interpretive repertoires of gender inversion are used in talking about the lesbian characters. Furthermore, the focus is also on how the characters' dress (e.g. "baggy three-quarter pants, the army print that only guys wear with the golf t-shirt look") as well as how the characters behave (e.g. "aggressive" and "pressuring"). Participants begin by resisting this position, arguing that it gives a "very dodgy impression" about lesbian women. However, in the discussion that followed contradictions began to emerge in the participants talk and interpretative repertoires of othering and otherness were used to create racial distinctions in subject positioning South African lesbian women as either 'upper suburban lesbians' or 'township lesbians' (these two subject positions are discussed in detail next). Furthermore, interpretative repertoires of survival were used in conjunction with interpretive repertoires of othering and otherness in distinguishing the participants' experiences from that of 'township lesbians'.

The following extract will be used in the analysis of the subject position of the 'township lesbian' and the interpretive repertoires of othering and otherness as well as the interpretative repertoires of survival used to manoeuvre around this positioning.

Extract 6 (PLG, Lines 569-625; *Bold is my emphasis*):

Stephanie : Can I also just say (clears throat) **we** are coming from a very upper suburban kind of vibe, of like lesbians. I went to a ... conference in ... and I met a whole lot of (...) I went to a conference in ... and I met a whole bunch of, like, lesbians from the townships and stuff (clears throat) and **their** lesbian lifestyle is completely different to **ours**. It is so(!) completely different. Like, when I was hanging out with **them**, when we went clubbing and all the rest, **they** are like that! So that was like very true of that, **them**

Researcher : What does "that" mean though? What do you mean by "that"?

Stephanie : Well, like, here baby here's a bottle of beer for you whatever whatever and she's like I don't drink from the bottle kind of thing. That's exactly how **they** speak to each other! **They** are(!) like that. Like, like it's hectic, but that's exactly how **they** are! and, like, the more butchy black lesbians tend to be more portrayed like that because that's the way that **they** are. Like, I did, I met a whole bunch of **them** and, like, because I was like the femmey white girl kind of thing **they** were very(!) protective of me and very, like, all up in everyone else's faces and all the rest and making sure that everyone knew that like I was with **them** and like no one must fuck with me and all the rest kind of thing because, I think that being a black(!) lesbian in South Africa is a very scary thing and a very very dangerous thing. So, the more hardcore that **they** look, the less people will give **them** shit for it, whereas us in our little we're gonna live The L Word kind of vibe, like we don't really have that much threat. And, I like really I hate it because I, I hate it when like us, when I go to (*name of nightclub*) or whatever whatever, you have the Shanes and the Bettes and Tinas {*characters from The L Word}* and you have me who's in my hippie skirt and like I don't look the vibe like Marie as well, like none of us go to a club looking the vibe and we all get skeefed out because we're not part of the crowd kind of thing. So, like, it's safe for us in a sense, whereas if you go to the township kind of gay clubs and all the rest it's scary(!) because at any moment you could get a whole bunch of people coming up 'cause it's against your culture, you've got the zulu black males saying I, I will make you straight, all you need is my dick in your vagina, like that kind of stuff and like when I went to the conference that was one of the main topics, is that how difficult it is to actually be a black(!) hom- homosexual and in South Africa

Jessica : =and be feminine and not be as you say, not stereotypical. So like for me it would, there's no way I'd survive, I couldn't be just baggy pants and like shave my hair off and be butch all the time

Stephanie : But it's like, it's not even that, it's just in the in like the townships and being a black South African lesbian or gay man, it's, you have your family at you the entire time because **they're** not as accepting as white people's families are and, like, ok, I could be very politically incorrect at the moment but I was at the conference, I was there, and people were talking about every single day there's like ten deaths in locations for gay people. Like, there's men raping women left right and centre to make them straight. Even if you were holding your girlfriend's hand, like, not even your girlfriend girlfriend but you're walking down the street holding your friend's hand because they having a bad day or something, next minute at night time you're in your bed being raped by six men

because they think you're gay. Like, it's very different and I think that that was the most realistic clip.

Marie : Ja, definitely.

It is important to remember that the PLG (from which this extract was selected) consisted of only self-identified white lesbian women. This is relevant for two reasons.

Firstly, when Stephanie distinguishes their (she says "we are") experiences as coming from a "very upper suburban kind of vibe", she is positioning all the white lesbian women in the group as middle to upper class lesbian women. Edwards and Potter (1992) argue that when individuals position themselves and others within a specific social category (in this case "upper suburban"), they are not merely providing a neutral description of members who fit within this group. In using the social category of "upper suburban" to position herself and everyone else in the group, Stephanie is using a social category which is rich in insinuations (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Therefore, the insinuation in the use of "upper suburban" is that Stephanie is positioning everyone in the group as coming from an upper class background and upper socio-economic setting. When she first mentions this it appears as if she is referring to socio-economic status rather than race, however, her use of the words "township lesbians" and "black lesbians" interchangeably in her monologue which follows make it clear that she is including race in her definition of "upper suburban". In other words, "upper suburban" and "township" become spatial markers not only for classed living arrangements but also racialised living arrangements where middle to upper-class status is associated with whiteness while working to lower-class is associated with blackness.

Secondly, Stephanie goes on to speak about how she met a bunch of "lesbians from the townships" which implies that she has positioned the representations of 'black' lesbian women in the clip from *Society* as lesbian women from the township. As mentioned earlier, no indication is made in the clip that this particular scene is set in a township, yet the participants have assumed that these lesbians are being depicted in a township setting. In using the phrases "lesbians from the township" and "black lesbians" interchangeably, Stephanie positions all black lesbian women in South Africa as coming from a township background. What this suggests is that black lesbian women in South Africa are positioned as being at a lower socio-economic position (with a lower level of education and access to

resources) than white lesbian women. It is almost as if the concept of "upper [class] suburban" black lesbian women in South Africa is not considered plausible.

6.4.1. Interpretative Repertoires of Othering and Otherness

In talking about the township lesbian subject position, Stephanie uses interpretative repertoires of othering and otherness. In his discursive work on how people talk about race, Buttny (2003) comments that one finding that continues to arise is that, when white people talk about race, they often draw on a rhetoric which emphasises difference rather than similarity. For example, white people will often talk about how black people are different to them rather than how black people are similar. Stephanie, in accepting the subject position of the township lesbian as presented in the clip from *Society*, draws on this rhetoric of difference and this is evident in her constant use of the terms "they" or "them" and "us" and "we". Stephanie's acceptance of this subject position is also evident in her repetition of phrases of recognition of the authenticity and truthfulness of the representations, such as "They are(!) like that", even exclaiming that "it's hectic, but that's exactly how they are!". Her use of the term "hectic" implies that this idea of lesbian women being this way is shocking for her and potentially offensive to others and this is used to position herself as different to black lesbian women because of her "upper suburban" white upbringing ("their lesbian lifestyle is completely different to ours").

As someone who has experienced racism first-hand and is therefore attuned to potential racial slurs about to occur, I did not want to challenge Stephanie too much on this appropriation of the township lesbian subject position because I felt that some interesting discursive material was about to happen. Instead, I asked her what exactly she meant by "They are(!) like that" in order to see how she works around making her point clear while at the same time ensuring that she does not come across as potentially racist. Stephanie does not answer the question directly, and she merely repeated that the "butchy black lesbians tend to be more portrayed like that because that's the way that they are". Here it appears that Stephanie is equating characteristics such as behaviour ("That's exactly how they speak to each other") and dress with essential and inherent traits. She positioned this media representation of lesbian women as a true reflection of reality. This is somewhat reminiscent of the typical racist discourse used during the Apartheid era in justifying why

'black' people could be treated badly. It appears that Stephanie realised that what she has said may be construed as being racist and so then used various strategies which allowed her to say something that could be perceived as inoffensive.

6.4.2. Race Talk and Truth Effects

Edwards and Potter (1992) argue that people do not just describe things in a neutral way but rather they *do* description in order to achieve a specific interpersonal goal. Therefore, when analysing people's description the researcher needs to look at the rhetorical devices a person draws on in constructing their description in such a way that makes their version appear more credible, true and real (Abell & Stokoe, 1999; Edwards & Potter, 1992). The researcher then needs to look at why the person constructs their version this way at this particular time. In other words, asking what this construction at this point achieves for the person giving the description (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Barnes et al. (2001) agree, stating that "when people express opinions about sensitive topics such as race, the use of rhetorical devices is unavoidable" (p. 324).

At the crux of Stephanie's argument in the above extract is that Stephanie believed that this clip from *Society* "was the most realistic clip" in the depiction of lesbian women. As argued already, this is indicated in her use of the phrase "they are like that!" a number of times throughout the extract. However, because this representation now depicted black lesbian women and race is still an extremely contentious issue for the majority of South Africans and possibly because of my questioning around what she means by "that", it appears that Stephanie experienced an ideological dilemma in that she becomes aware that her comments put her on risky ground which she needed to work on or to repair. This is evident in how she admits that she might be coming across as "politically incorrect at the moment".

In stating that this clip was the most realistic (when previously she had resisted the subject position of the butch lesbian), Stephanie goes through a process of using various strategies in justifying her appropriation of this butch township lesbian subject position. By seemingly admitting that she may be coming across as "politically incorrect at the moment", Stephanie manages to ward off any criticism that she may be racist. Barnes et al. (2001) comment that disclaimer phrases such as 'I am not a racist, but' are often used to manage the potential for

the comments made to be perceived as racist. In other words, by admitting that she might be coming across as "politically incorrect", Stephanie is able to give the impression that she is not racist because she is aware that what she might be saying is not the correct way of saying it, but she is trying to make an argument and has no other way of saying it.

Stephanie also uses her own personal experience to justify her statement that black lesbian women are "like that". Stephanie argues that she met 'township lesbians' at a conference she went to and, therefore, she experienced first-hand that 'township lesbians' "are(!) like that". This use of personal experience serves at least two functions here. Firstly, Stephanie's use of personal experience means that her account cannot be verified because we were not at this conference and we did not meet these 'township lesbians'. Secondly, she argues that it was these 'township lesbian' women who told her what life was like in the township. In drawing on conversations she witnessed personally, Stephanie is able to "deflect personal attributions of racism" (Barnes et al., 2001, p. 332). In theorising around personal experience and personal knowledge, Wilson and Stapleton (2010) remark that the type of evidence provided for one's interpretation of events has the potential to make the account more or less credible and believable. Sensory evidence, evidence which relies on the senses such as hearing and seeing, is considered to be the most reliable and most believable evidence (Wilson & Stapleton, 2010). In other words, because Stephanie saw 'township lesbian', she spoke to 'township lesbians' and heard what 'township lesbians' had to say, she has constructed an account which is believable.

Furthermore, since Stephanie has already positioned her group's white participants as coming from an "upper suburban" setting, we are positioned as not being able to understand what life is like in the township. Therefore, because Stephanie has actually met 'township lesbians', no-one can challenge her account when this was her experience of the lesbian women she met. Also, nobody recounts her description using their own experiences of lesbian women from the township (implying that none of them have), therefore, making her version the only available and credible version. Another way in which Stephanie justifies her appropriation of the butch township lesbian subject position is to explain why township lesbians are "like that" and she does this by drawing on interpretative repertoires of survival.

6.4.3. Interpretative Repertoires of Survival

Speer and Potter (2000) argue that studies on racist talk have concluded that participants work at trying not to come across as racist. In attempting to do this, speakers will construct an account based on "mere factual descriptions, unmotivated by an inner psychology of threat or hatred" (p. 546). If a speaker is able to convince the audience that their view is rationally and logically arrived at, s/he avoids being labelled or perceived as racist (Speer & Potter, 2000). In order to really convince us that 'township lesbians' are "like that" and that she is not purposefully being "politically incorrect", Stephanie employs interpretive repertoires of survival and positions black lesbian women as being in a vulnerable position in South Africa. In doing this, she also positions white lesbian women as not having to live with as much danger or risk. This is evident in statements such as "being a black(!) lesbian in South Africa is a very scary thing and a very very dangerous thing" and "we don't really have that much threat". This lack of threat for her (and the other group members) is reiterated in her use of the phrase "me who's in my hippie skirt". This is a further reference to the "you don't have to look lesbian to be lesbian" discourse mentioned earlier in this chapter. Stephanie says "me who's in my hippies skirt" in almost a mocking way as if to point out the irony in how she, as a white lesbian woman, is able to get away with wearing a "hippie skirt" while black lesbian women are not. This reference to her "hippie skirt" also works to exclude her from this particular kind of lesbian scene and emphasises the difference between her and the "township lesbians".

Stephanie explains that the threat to black lesbian women comes from having to live in the townships and the increase in violent homophobia and rape perpetrated against black lesbian women. To really get her point across, Stephanie uses inflated and intensified examples of what life is like in the township. In other words, Stephanie doesn't merely state that the majority of reports of 'corrective rape' come from township settings, but uses graphic phrases in an attempt to get her point across. These graphic intensified examples include black men coming up to lesbian women and stating "I will make you straight, all you need is my dick in your vagina", "you have your family at you the entire time", "every single day there's like ten deaths in locations for gay people", "there's men raping women left right and centre" and "being raped by six men". This kind of sensationalised way of referring to gender-based violence against black lesbian women is similar to the way in which news

media report incidents of 'corrective/curative rape'. Mkhize et al. (2010) comment that 'corrective/curative rape' cases are reported in graphic detail in attempts to sensationalise the occurrence and create a news-worthy story. Gender-based violence and rape is such a common occurrence in South Africa that only rape cases which fall outside 'normal' cases of rape received significant press coverage (Mkhize et al., 2010).

Edwards and Potter (1992) refer to 'extreme case formulations' where vivid descriptions are used in order to increase the truthfulness and validity of the account. In relation to this concept, Antaki (2003) refers to 'extremity' which is when the speaker draws on extreme examples and extreme language in order to get their point across. This kind of extreme language and examples, where the speaker is saying "more than would be factually necessary to say" (Speer & Potter, 2000, p. 553) serves to disguise the speaker's own interests (e.g. to not look racist) and to construct a more believable and truthful account which the other members in the group will accept (Antaki, 2003; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Speer & Potter 2000). In this extract, Stephanie could have just said there is a high rate of rape and murder in townships, but she uses graphic and exaggerated examples in order to stun us into silence and, therefore, avoids us challenging her. Also, for a group of "upper suburban" women who have never lived in the township, this serves to show the group just how dangerous it is to be a black lesbian and who are we to argue especially since she met black lesbian women at the conference she attended.

What is striking in this extract compared to the extracts previously used in this chapter is that racial differentiation is a key tool used in working with the positioning of lesbian women in the clip from *Society*. What I mean is that, when engaging with the clip from *The Mating Game*, race was not mentioned once. Even in this long extract, there is only one instance where Stephanie makes reference to her own race by positioning herself as "the femmey white girl" in relation to the "butchy black lesbians". Furthermore, she talks about how the black lesbian women she met were "very(!) protective" of her and how the black lesbian women were "very, like, all up in everyone else's faces and all the rest and making sure that everyone knew that like I was with them and like no one must fuck with me" when she went to a nightclub with them. This positions her as being protected by the black lesbian women but also needing protection from the black lesbian women in the nightclub thereby

positioning black lesbian women as not only needing protection from danger but also that black lesbian women themselves are dangerous.

In other references to herself, she uses terms such as "upper suburban" and "me who's in my hippie skirt" in positioning herself not only as a white lesbian woman but also as more feminine than black lesbian women. Mazzei (2003; 2004; 2008) refers to what she terms 'silent words' and argues that, in analysing discourse and how people position themselves and others, one also needs to analyse "that which was unspoken" (Mazzei, 2004, p. 26). In her own research on white teachers teaching in a predominantly black school, Mazzei (2003; 2004; 2008) found that very often the participants in her group discussions did not seem to see themselves as having a racial identity. Instead, they often saw their racial identity as "in relation to others" (Mazzei, 2004, p. 27). When speakers focus on the 'other' when defining their own identities, it means that they see their 'whiteness' as the norm. Mazzei (2004) argues that, when 'whiteness' continues to be seen as the standard for what normal is and when participants talk in ways that perpetuate this, the distinction between 'white' and 'black' will continue to be polarized resulting in 'blackness' continuing to be the 'other', the 'exotic', the identity that is not the 'norm'. In the above extract, Stephanie positions white lesbian women as different from black lesbian women by referring not to how *she* differs when compared to the representation but rather focusing on the ways in which black lesbian women are different to "upper suburban" lesbian women and the ways these 'township lesbians' have to be different because of "their" culture ("Zulu black males") and where they live.

This racial distinction and/or divide between South African lesbian women was not only evident in the talk of the group of self-identified white lesbian women but also within the first lesbian group which consisted predominantly of self-identified black lesbian women. The subject position of the 'township lesbian' was also made available in the participants talk, but this subject position was termed the 'hoodrat lesbian'.

6.5. The Hardcore Hoodrat

From the previous section on the butch lumberjack and tomboy lesbian, participants resisted the subject position of the butch lumberjack tomboy by arguing that 'butchness' is not necessarily what you look like or how you dress but rather a part of one's personality or one's attitude. In trying to make sense of why black lesbian women conform to the depiction provided by the clip from *Society* of black butch lesbian women, participants in the first lesbian group also use similar interpretive repertoires of survival of those used by the pilot lesbian group. To refresh, Stephanie argues that being a black lesbian in South Africa is a dangerous thing and that the more "hardcore that they look, the less people will give them shit for it". Here Stephanie is positioning 'black' lesbian women as having to be "hardcore", as having to be 'butch', in order to ensure that a violent homophobic culture and society does not try to cause harm through abusive intimidation, physical attacks and/or 'corrective/curative rape'. This position is reinforced in the following extract from the first lesbian discussion group, which comprised of predominantly self-identified black lesbian women.

Extract 7 (FLG, Lines 891-912):

Dana : Don't you wanna know why though, like, like why they, like, so upfront about it coz, if you're a hoodrat, like, excuse my terminology here, if you're a hoodrat lesbian, you

(laughter)

Researcher : =What is a hoodrat lesbian?

(laughter)

Cassandra : Dana

(Laughter)

Dana : No! (laughs)

Nomusa : =You're like a proper hoodrat!

Anele : =That's a hoodrat!

Researcher : Like Ayanda, ja?

Dana : You have, you have to sort of very very quickly buff up and you have to very very quickly be able to prepare yourself. I mean, I remember when I came out to my family and my cousins, you know, the first things they used to do is put me in fights, because they're like we're not going to be around to protect you if someone attacks you, you need to beat the crap out of them, you need to hold your own, you know what I mean? So, like, you, you do need to buff up and you need to be like that aggressive and so that people don't, before they step up to you, they need to think twice and be like damn ok, she might just do something to me, you know what I mean? So I think that that's why it's like why township lesbians push it to that level. Ja, so, ja

6.5.1. Interpretative Repertoires of Survival

Dana realises that the participants in the group are positioning 'black' lesbian women in ways that could be seen as offensive. Perhaps Dana herself is offended (she later narrates a personal story which gives the impression that she herself is or can, at least, identity with being a 'township lesbian') by the way in which the participants talk about 'township lesbians' and feels she needs to explain and justify why they are butch and "so upfront about it". This need to justify why 'township lesbians' are "hoodrats" is evident in Dana's question to the group, "Don't you wanna know why though". With this question, Dana positions the other members in the group as judging 'township lesbians' without knowing why they are the way they are. In a way, Dana's question positions her friends in the group as being potentially racist.

This creates an ideological dilemma in the group which only passes when Dana mentions the word "hoodrat". Everybody starts laughing and, since I do not know what a "hoodrat" is, I ask for clarification whereupon everyone laughs again. Cassandra immediately positions Dana as a "hoodrat" and everyone starts talking over everyone else agreeing that Dana is the "hoodrat" in the group. Dana laughs while resisting this position. The ideological dilemma that arose with Dana's question is repaired through humour and friendly banter. Barnes et al. (2001) refer to the use of humour as a rhetorical strategy when a threatening subject comes up in conversation. By turning the topic into a joke, the heaviness of the topic is replaced with a jovial context where everyone can laugh together and mock each other. What this serves to do is allow the participants to deflect any racist undertones away from themselves even though their mockery actually works to reproduce racist stereotypes (Barnes et al., 2001).

As mentioned, Dana initially resists this position but then goes on to narrate a story about how she, when she came out to her family, was forced to "buff up". "Buff up" seems to be equated with toughening up in order to protect oneself against danger. Dana draws on interpretative repertoires of survival in her appropriation of the 'township lesbian' and/or "hoodrat lesbian" as she argues that 'township lesbians' have to "very quickly buff up" and "prepare" themselves if they are going to be identified as lesbian in their communities. She uses an example of her own family and how her cousins put her in "fights" in an attempt to

make sure she could protect herself, because she, as a black lesbian woman, is going to "need to beat the crap out of" people who will try to attack her for being lesbian.

'Township lesbians', therefore, are positioned as having to be "aggressive", as having to "buff up" in order to survive. In her account of her personal narrative of coming out and having to "buff up", Dana uses different pronouns at different points in the conversation. In other words, she starts off by talking about "you" then moves to talking about "me" and "I" and then back to "you" and then back again to "me". Gastil (1992, as cited in Abell & Stokoe, 1999) theorises around the use of pronouns as a rhetorical device and what it means when a person shifts from using one pronoun to using a different pronoun in the same conversation. According to Gastil (1992, as cited in Abell & Stokoe, 1999), the use of pronouns serves four functions: 1) indicates a speaker's own ideological position in relation to what they are talking about; 2) indicates the distance of the person from the words they are using in the conversation; 3) some pronouns work to allow the speaker to identify with the audience they are speaking to; and 4) some pronouns are used as a way of distributing responsibility.

In beginning with using the pronoun "you", Dana manages to keep a safe distance from her own words. In other words, she wants to explain why 'township lesbians' are "hoodrats" but she also wants to make her explanation more credible by not making it too personal and just about her own experiences. The pronoun "you" implies a generalisation as if Dana is trying to help the audience identify with what she is saying. Dana then uses the pronoun "I" in order to use a tangible example (Barnes et al., 2001) to make her point. At this point using a personal experience as an example is strategic as it helps to strengthen the argument she has made for the need of "hoodrats" to "buff up". Since she has personal experience of living in a dangerous setting, we cannot challenge her because personal experience is not verifiable unless her family was there in the room with us.

In her story, Dana also uses the pronoun "you" in a different way by referring to what her family said to her when she came out to them. Potter (1996, as cited in Abell & Stokoe, 1999) refers to the practice of 'focalization' which refers to the "point of view which a narrative presents" (p. 309). In this case, Dana is narrating her story from the point of view

of her family and what her family said to her when she came out to them. Furthermore, she narrates these events from "a position of 'external focalization'" (Abell & Stokoe, 1999, p. 309) since she does not attach her own feelings to the story she is telling. In other words, she narrates the story matter-of-factly, as something normal that just happened because of where she lived. She returns to her use of the word "you" in a general sense in order to include the other members in the room and to return to her original argument around why "township lesbians push it to that level"; that level being "hoodrats" who are aggressive and butch.

6.5.2. Interpretative Repertoires of Othering and Otherness

In the first lesbian group, interpretative repertoires of othering and otherness were also employed in appropriating the 'township lesbian' and 'hoodrat lesbian' subject position. These interpretative repertoires, however, were utilised by Nomusa, Cassandra and Anele who position 'hoodrat lesbians' as being different from their own lived experiences. This positioning of "hoodrats" as other appears in an exchange where Nomusa is relating her experiences of 'township lesbians' when she goes partying in a township nearby.

Extract 8 (FLG, Lines 945-970; *bold is my emphasis*):

Nomusa	: Definitely, definitely. When you go, er, for instance, just to here in (*name of township*), and like, I mean, I party there every weekend, like, the lesbians there are like
Cassandra	: **They** stick together
Nomusa	: They are
Anele	: **They**'re rough!
Nomusa	: men, like, **they**'re men, the way they speak, the way they walk and it's because like kind of things **they** go through, so they I don't know, like
Cassandra	: =**They** look scary!
Researcher	: So, like Dana was saying, **they** have to buff up
Nomusa	: Ja
Dana	: **You** have to be tough, you have to be tough, if **you**'re not, it's like over for **you**. Like, for **me**, I remember the first time that I got back. Like, after the first time I came from here, coz (*name of University*) sort of softens you, you have this whole, you know, hoodrat thing, ey, and you being tough, like, calm the fuck down, coz I had activists as my friend, you know, and just like what is this, this whole gender thing, what is going on with you, and all of that, so, like, you know, all this liberal stuff, in my head, the words, the language, you know, all that stuff and then I went back home and, here I was wearing skirts and, like, I was literally like the group of lesbians that I was friends with, my family, like, they were just like we're not drinking with you, they were like fuck that shit, we're not hanging out with you and, I'm like, why guys? And they were like, first of all you're wearing a skirt, if you get attacked you're fucked(!) and you forget

> that you're a dyke, so, it's not even like one of those no, I don't want your advances as far as oh you're a dyke, that's why you don't want me, so they're going to prove a point, you know, like they'd rather not take part in that, like, no, so you have to sort of buff up coz otherwise, you know, it's over for you

Nomusa, Anele and Cassandra position 'township lesbians' as different from them in terms of behaviour with their constant use of the word "they" and "they're". It is important to note that Nomusa and Anele are self-identified black lesbian women and Cassandra is a self-identified white lesbian woman. This is relevant because, through their interpretative repertoires of othering and otherness, Nomusa and Anele have made a distinction between black lesbian women from township settings and their own black lesbian experiences. This is different to the pilot lesbian group where 'township lesbians' were interchangeably referred to as 'black lesbians' by the self-identified white lesbian women.

Nomusa positions herself as different to 'township lesbians' by explaining that 'township lesbians' are "men" because of the "kind of things they go through". Dana, however, positions herself as either being a 'township lesbian' or at least being able to identify with 'township lesbians' with her constant use of the word "you", "me", "my" and "I" when she is talking about the township and experiences in that setting. She once again, in this extract, uses interpretive repertoires of survival in justifying why 'township lesbians' are "rough" or "like men". This is evident in her explanation of how being at University filled her head with "liberal stuff" and how her "activist" friends challenged her regarding how she performs her gender and would constantly tell her to "calm the fuck down" with the "hoodrat thing". This "liberal stuff" which she also equates with "wearing skirts" (i.e. being feminine) therefore affected how she was perceived when she returned home one vacation. Her 'township lesbian' friends did not want to hang out with her because the way she was dressed and talked made it dangerous not only for her, but for her friends as well.

It appears then that Dana takes on a liberal, dare we say "upper suburban", position when in a certain context (i.e. university context), but is forced to change her position when she returns home. This position imitates the gender performative theory posed by Judith Butler (1990) who argues that gender and/or sexualities and how these identities are performed are dependent on the context in which they occur. Therefore, in a certain context, the way

we perform our gender and/or sexualities differ from how we perform them in a different context. If we relate this to the talk in the pilot lesbian group it appears that for Dana there is only a choice in how her sexuality and gender is performed when she is within a "liberal" context. To put it another way, even when Stephanie went to a club with a group of black lesbian women from the township, she felt like she could still go wearing her "hippie skirt". For Dana, her choices are limited in that she can only choose to wear skirts when at university; when she returns home, in order to not stand out and be visible and, therefore, open to danger, she needs to be a "hoodrat" because, if she does not do this, then it is "over for you". This demonstrates that being aggressive and butch and a "hoodrat" is necessary for survival if you are a lesbian in a township. In addition, it works to demonstrate the racial divide between white lesbian women and black lesbian women in South Africa where identity choices are limited for black lesbian women.

6.6. Conclusion

Interpretive repertoires of othering and otherness are used to position black lesbian women as different from white lesbian women and the reason for this is often related to socio-economic positions. This can be seen in extracts three and four where Jessica and Stephanie use "personality" and "attitude" to explain 'butchness' in themselves as 'upper suburban lesbians' (i.e. white lesbian women) while 'butchness' is seen as a necessary tool for survival in the majority of 'township lesbians' (i.e. black lesbian women) in extracts six, seven and eight. Participants throughout all three groups agree that 'township lesbians' "buff up" and look "hardcore" and learn to "protect" themselves and "prepare" for violence since it is believed to be an expected occurrence for black lesbian women. In addition to this, black lesbian women are positioned as being better able to protect themselves if they are attacked because they have "buff[ed] up" and "prepare[d]" whereas "upper suburban" (i.e. white) lesbian women can be more femme because they are positioned as not having as much "threat" or risk. Through the use of these interpretative repertoires of survival, 'township lesbians' are, therefore, positioned as 'butch' out of necessity rather than choice or personality. The irony, however, and something that did not come up in the conversations is that, in South Africa, being 'butch' in appearance is often equated with being or coming across as lesbian (Nel & Judge, 2008). Therefore, being more masculine in

appearance or coming across as 'butch' in the township would set one apart and increase the likelihood that one will be attacked for being different from the conventional female gender stereotype (i.e. the 'unAfrican' argument against same-sex sexualities).

The question to ask, however, is not whether the participants have given a reliable account of the South African context in relation to lesbian lived experiences, but rather why references to heteronormative violence were used by all three groups as a discursive strategy in appropriating the subject position of the butch black township hoodrat lesbian. The three clips presented to the three focus groups did not feature an explicit scene or reference to homophobia or violence. However, as South African lesbian women we live in a context which is wrought with violent heteronormativity and, as argued in chapter two, an audience is never devoid of their own contexts, histories and backgrounds when making meaning from media representations. Therefore, the participants own knowledge around violence and 'corrective/curative rape' appears to be one of the primary means of appropriating and/or negotiating and/or resisting the subject positions made available in the three clips.

CHAPTER SEVEN: IDEOLOGICAL DILEMMAS IN THE SUBJECT POSITIONING OF LESBIAN WOMEN

7.1. Introduction

In the negotiation of the media clips' representations of lesbian women and the subject positions made available in these representations, talk within all three focus groups moved to discussing having children, heterosexism and homophobia and sexual practices among lesbian women. Through a close reading and re-reading of the transcribed discussion, it became clear that the majority of ideological dilemmas occurred during these discussions. Reynolds and Wetherell (2003) argue that ideological dilemmas are a common occurrence in discursive research. Returning back to the nature of discourse mentioned in chapter five, the interpretative repertoires drawn on depend on the context and the demands of that immediate context. Therefore, depending on what the person is attempting to achieve at any point in a conversation, the interpretative repertoires drawn on vary (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003). Furthermore, the different kinds of interpretative repertoires drawn on in a particular conversation are, more often than not, contradictory in nature resulting in an ideological dilemma. When ideological dilemmas occur in conversation, people have to work (consciously and/or unconsciously) to repair the troubled position that occurs to save face and avoid embarrassment or offensiveness (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003). In other words, the contradictory nature of different interpretative repertoires drawn on to make a point creates inconsistencies in the account's meaning and the individual has to work to 'fix' or repair these inconsistencies in order to ensure that their account is still regarded as valid and reliable (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003; Reynolds, Wetherell & Taylor, 2007).

Wetherell (1996) comments that ideology is linked with interpretative repertoires since interpretative repertoires always have a "broader social significance" (p. 39). Edley and Wetherell (2001) argue that, moments of inconsistency and contradiction (which occur when using contradictory interpretative repertoires) have the ability to present moments for renegotiation and transformation, but they also have the ability to reinforce and maintain power relations. In other words, the ideologies within the interpretative

repertoires drawn on are linked to the position of certain groups of people in society. Thus, it is the positioning of the self and others through these ideologically laden interpretative repertoires that consequences for social relations are produced (Edley & Wetherell, 2001). Furthermore, when an individual is trying to make sense of a particular political, social or cultural issue, they "move between different ideological perspectives" (Wetherell, 1996, p. 36), which is tied into the ways in which identity is constructed. For example, Reynolds and Wetherell (2003) state that when an individual from a marginalised group (e.g. based on race, gender and/or sexualities), is trying to make sense of their own experiences, very often they find themselves having to manage both "denigrated and idealized categorizations simultaneously" (p. 12).

In her work around masculinities, Wetherell (1998) comments that a focus on heteronormativity is something that needs to be considered in looking at how men make sense of their own experiences. I would like to argue in this chapter, that heteronormativity also impacts on how self-identified lesbian women make sense of their own experiences and identities. Within the discussions of sex, children and heteronormativity that occurred, the ideological dilemmas that occurred were intimately interlinked to heteronormative assumptions around same-sex sexualities. It appeared that, in some instances, heteronormative discourse was appropriated by these groups of lesbian women when talking about lesbian communities of practice and themselves as lesbian women. In some cases, the myths (i.e. interpretative repertoires) that heterosexual individuals and organisations often use against LGBTIQ communities, identities and sexualities were used in their talk.

These interpretative repertoires include: using religious interpretative repertoires to position procreation as only natural if occurring within the context of heterosexual sexual relations; using different forms of essentialist interpretative repertoires to position lesbian sexual activities as unnatural; positioning lesbian women as promiscuous; and othering interpretative repertoires used to position lesbian women as different from the norm and, therefore, the ones who should compromise in order to fit into the heterosexual world. This chapter will focus on these interpretative repertoires, the ideological dilemmas that occurred in managing these interpretative repertoires which had consequences for how the

women negotiated their own lesbian identities and the subject positions made available in this process. These subject positions include: the unnatural amoral lesbian, the promiscuous lesbian, and the value-less and compromising other.

7.2. The Unnatural Amoral Lesbian

The second clip from *The Mating Game* featured a lesbian woman trying to fall pregnant by having sex with a man. In this scene, the man is unaware that she is a lesbian and unaware that she is 'using him' for his sperm. This clip generated much discussion and heated debate (i.e. ideological dilemmas) within the pilot lesbian group (PLG). The PLG began by resisting this representation with exclamations of utter shock that *The Mating Game* was positioning lesbian women as dishonest, deceitful, and as the stereotypical lesbian predator. However, when asked to relate this to their own experience or to lesbian women they knew, their resistance moved towards a negotiation with this representation. In this negotiation, the PLG used various interpretative repertoires which have been used to discriminate against and oppress LGBTIQ individuals. The predominant subject position made available in the following extract is that of lesbian women – who have children through 'alternative' means other than heterosexual sex – "playing God" and, therefore, as unnatural and amoral.

Extract 9: (PLG, Lines 409-450):

Tarryn	: she was heartbroken and desperate and all she wants is a family. I don't know. I guess she has the money, she could've done it other ways, I guess, but
Jessica	: =Maybe she wants natural conception though, not everybody
Stephanie	: =Ja, but what lesbian in their right mind would, wants a guy to give her natural conception!
Jessica	: Because, not everyone, not all lesbians believe in being insemin-, being artificially inseminated
Marie	: =Ja, maybe it's not about the actual act
Jessica	: I, I always thought my whole life that I, I was gonna get artificial insemination and now I'm like but can you play God? Is that ok to play God? Like, I don't know, God created or whoever or whatever created the fact that people have sex, that's our natural thing, that man and a woman have sex, we're designed that way, to have sex to have a baby, that's how we were made. Two women can't make a baby
Stephanie	: =That's because then all women would be lesbians
Jessica	: But (laughs) ja, I just feel that if I wanted to have, if I honestly wanted to have a baby, I would sleep with a guy, perhaps like the same way as like Tina and Bette {referring to The L Word} wanted to, have a threesome, make it about all of us creating a baby together. Personally, that is my opinion, like, I wouldn't, I

	always thought that I'd go the other way, but I, I don't think that I actually would, like, I don't wanna tell my kids how I created them
Tarryn	: =Ok, but then also, what about straight couples who can't(!) have children and they have artificial insemination, then is it the same argument you playing God, is it
Jessica	: =I'm not saying it's an argument, I'm just saying some people, some lesbians(!) could have the same idea that it's not right to, to say ok now I'm gonna have a baby, I'm gonna have artificial insemination. Some might say, be like, yes I don't want to sleep with a man, I don't, you know what I mean, but I wanna have bab-, a baby, and I agree with natural conception. It's not about lesbians in the right mind, it's just, when it comes to your child, what's the best thing to do?
Marie	: My aunt's been a lesbian for her whole life, like, she's never slept with a guy, but she still said that, when she was still with her girlfriend, she said why must I go and spend like two thousand pounds for artificial insemination and all of that. I'd rather just have sex with a man even if it's her first time just so that she can have a baby. It was not that she was all like I want it to be natural, she was just like why(!) go through all(!) of that effort
Jessica	: =There we go, that's another thing
Marie	: =just for a baby
Stephanie	: Ok, I suppose, I retract my previous statement. Can I have my face back?
Jessica	: Ja.

From the above extract, the ideological dilemma that occurs within the group is around reproduction, parenting and lesbian sexualities. It appears in this extract that Jessica struggles to reconcile heteronormative understandings of reproduction and parenting with her lesbian sexuality. The ideological dilemma occurs in relation to trying to understand why Sara (from *The Mating Game*) would voluntarily have sex with a man in order to conceive a child when there are alternative options available to her as a wealthy (white) woman. Tarryn attempts to use emotive language ("heartbroken and desperate") to demonstrate an understanding and empathic approach to Sara's actions but her use of the word "I guess" demonstrates that she is struggling to make sense of why a lesbian woman with money (for various assisted reproductive technologies) would have sex with a man.

Jessica attempts to provide a solution to this confusion and, in so doing, creates the ideological dilemma in the group. This ideological dilemma around reproduction and lesbian sexualities begins with Jessica arguing that maybe Sara wanted to have a baby through "natural conception" which Stephanie immediately challenges by arguing "what lesbian in their right mind would, wants a guy to give her natural conception!" With this statement, Stephanie has positioned lesbian sexualities as essentialised, static and fixed where lesbian women who do sleep with men are considered insane and not "in their right mind". Regardless of how this positions lesbian women, Jessica is suddenly met with a situation

where she is forced to justify her comment and repair a troubled position and ideological dilemma which her comment has created. Jessica does this in two ways: Firstly, by using interpretive repertoires of nature and religion and, secondly, by using interpretative repertoires of the good mother.

7.2.1. Interpretative Repertoires of Nature and Religion

Jessica's first strategy of adding credence to her point of view is by drawing on interpretative repertoires of nature. This involves her questioning the group around the ethics and morals of what she terms "artificial" insemination. The interpretative repertoires of nature are inherent in Jessica's use of the word "artificial" in referring to a form of assisted reproductive technology (ART). Farquhar (1996) argues that the word "artificial" in relation to reproductive technology has a "naturalizing effect" (p. 45) in that it implies that heterosexual sex is positioned as the only natural means of conceiving a child. Jessica explicitly positions heterosexual sex as natural in her continuous use of the phrase "natural conception" and arguing that men and women are "designed" to "have sex to have a baby" and that "two women can't make a baby".

By heterosexual sex being positioned as natural it is also positioned as normal thereby implying that any other way of conceiving a child – including heterosexual women who cannot get pregnant without ART – is abnormal, deviant and bad (Farquhar, 1996). Jessica includes interpretative repertoires of religion into her argument through her repetitive question around whether it is acceptable to "play God". These are rhetorical questions and it seems that Jessica is not expecting the group to answer the questions since the answer to the question is implicit in the question itself. In assimilating interpretative repertoires of nature with interpretative repertoires of religion (i.e. using "God" as the benchmark for morality), Jessica draws on two powerful rhetorical strategies which work to not only make her argument valid and logical, but also work to place Jessica in a position of moral authority over what is considered 'right' and 'wrong' (Peck, 1994).

It is interesting that Jessica would employ these interpretative repertoires which serve to oppress and discriminate against a community or social group which she is a part of. However, Helminiak (1986, 1995, as cited in Buchanan, Dzelme, Harris, & Hecker, 2001)

argues that religious and/or spiritual challenges are "at the heart of the gay or lesbian experience" (p. 436). One of the primary challenges faced by gay and lesbian individuals who also consider themselves religious and/or spiritual is the deep internal struggle that occurs in attempting to reconcile their faith with their sexualities. Many gay or lesbian individuals reject their religious faith in order to be able to accept their same-sex sexualities while others suppress or deny their same-sex sexualities in order to sustain their faith (Buchanan et al., 2001). Jessica is clearly dealing with an ideological dilemma in trying to negotiate with two powerful ideologies around religion, nature and her own sexuality. Lesbian sexualities go against many fundamentalist religious teachings and, therefore, in choosing "natural conception" she is able to make a kind of compromise whereby she gets to be lesbian, but can also allay some possible feelings of guilt and shame by having "natural conception" when she decides to have a child. In a culture or society where Christian religious beliefs are considered paramount, an individual will often use these religious beliefs to "achieve acceptance, societal status, or personal desires for security" (Buchanan et al., 2001, p. 437). Here it seems as if Jessica is employing interpretative repertoires of nature and religion in order to achieve some form of social acceptance or normalcy.

Stephanie, in response to Jessica's interpretative repertoires of nature, attempts to use humour as a means of re-establishing a light-hearted context (Barnes et al., 2001) by joking that if two women could make a baby all women would be lesbians but, although Jessica laughs at this, it is mostly ignored. This comment by Stephanie is potentially brushed off by Jessica because she has not yet finished trying to repair a troubled position which she has created for herself in using religion and positioning lesbian sexualities as unnatural. She, therefore, continues to try and repair this ideological dilemma but instead succeeds in creating a more complex one by arguing how she envisions her method of conception would be.

The ideological dilemma that further develops in Jessica's personal plan for conception is due to her positioning a "threesome" as being more "natural" than "artificial" insemination. Her religious and natural argument would then not hold in this statement since many religions would not condone a "threesome" since it is sex with someone other than the person you are in a committed relationship with. However, in choosing a "threesome" as

her means of conception, Jessica is able to reach a compromise between her religious views and her sexuality. In other words, she satisfies her need for "natural conception" while ensuring that her lesbian partner is with her during the process of conception making it as if they are all "creating a baby together". However, heteronormativity still seems to be a benchmark for normality and naturalness since, in using this argument, Jessica is implying that since there is still a man involved where the man will impregnate one and/or both of the women, this is still deemed "natural" and therefore acceptable.

Tarryn explicitly challenges Jessica's argument by removing lesbian sexualities from the argument (which Jessica has already positioned as unnatural, as mentioned earlier) and relating this to heterosexual couples who have "artificial insemination". Before Tarryn can finish her sentence, Jessica cuts her off replying that she is "not saying it's an argument". Since these were women who were students within a university context, academic discourse and the university context itself could have affected how Jessica interpreted Tarryn's use of the word "argument". Therefore, Jessica stating that what she is saying is not an "argument" is a way of getting out of an academic argument (or a conversational quarrel) around conception.

However, realising that she has created some tension in the group and in her own argument, by stating that this is not an argument, Jessica is also attempting to repair any tension that has been caused. In pointing out that this is her opinion and that "some people, some lesbians" might think this way too, it is difficult for her friends to challenge her since personal experience and opinion is a common rhetorical strategy used in ensuring that you cannot be criticised since people are entitled to their own opinions. Furthermore, Edwards and Potter (1992) argue that using the phrase "some people" (in this case "some lesbians") works to create a rhetorical distance for the speaker and the utterances. Therefore, in arguing that "some lesbians" might prefer "natural conception", Jessica works to depersonalise her statement, making it a general argument. Jessica, in using this strategy, has recovered and repaired this moment of tension well and this is evident in how Tarryn does not try to challenge her opinion again. However, Jessica clearly still feels that she has not quite repaired her troubled position and the ideological dilemmas she has created in her use of interpretative repertoires of nature and religion and then her example of a

"threesome" and then moves to trying a different strategy; interpretative repertoires of the good mother.

7.2.2. Interpretive Repertoires of the Good Mother

Jessica's use of interpretative repertoires of the good mother is demonstrated in her use of the phrase "when it comes to your child, what's the best thing to do?" Once again, this is a rhetorical question which Jessica does not expect an answer for since the answer is implicit in the question itself. In asking this question, Jessica uses the potential psychological and/or emotional effects that the method of conception (she seems to believe) would have on a child to justify her position of wanting "natural conception". In doing this, she works to fix the troubled position and ideological dilemma that was created in her previous justifications. Once again, this is evident in how no one in the group challenges her or attempts to answer the question. In drawing on interpretative repertoires of the good mother, however, Jessica positions women (not just lesbian women) as needing to put aside their own desires in order to meet the needs of their children even before they exist. These interpretative repertoires of the 'good mother' are part of a typical self-sacrificial discourse that is condoned and promoted in many religious texts about women and the traditional stereotypical gender roles of a 'good mother' who must put her own needs aside for the well-being of her child and family.

Furthermore, Lawler (1999) argues that 'needs talk' "carries tremendous authority" (p. 67) since Psychology, as an authoritative profession and powerful source of expertise, has constructed the needs of children as a necessity for stable psychological and emotional health. It, therefore, "assumes the status of 'truth' through its apparent basis in scientific discovery" (p. 67). In addition to this, "'needs' invokes a moral/ethical compulsion" (Lawler, 1999, p. 67) since the word 'need' (unlike the word 'want' or 'desire') implies that something must be met or negative consequences will result. In addition to this moral and ethical authority within 'needs talk', 'needs talk' also derives from a wealth of psychological literature which focuses on 'good mothering' techniques with the underlying argument that if a child's needs are not met this will result in negative consequences (Wilbraham, 2008). It is also seen as the mother's sole responsibility for meeting these needs. Therefore, if the 'needs' of the child are not met, the consequences are the fault of the mother because she

is seen as the one who is responsible for the child and has let the child down (Wilbraham, 2008).

Jessica has then employed interpretative repertoires of the good mother in order to strengthen her interpretative repertoires of nature and religion and to give further validity and truthfulness to her argument that "natural conception" (i.e. sexual intercourse between a man and woman to produce a child) is the right and moral way to have a child, and to attend to the child's future psychological and emotional needs. In drawing on the ideas derived from popular psychological literature, where psychology is deemed the expert and therefore trusted as 'truth' (Wilbraham 2008), Jessica's argument is given credibility, reliability and validity. In addition to this, by advocating the position of wanting to do what is best for her future child, Jessica is once again able to make a compromise with the ideological dilemmas she faces with regards to her sexuality and religion. In other words, in making every attempt to ensure she has "natural conception" which she deems the best choice for her child, Jessica can position herself as belonging to a group of good, natural, sacrificial mothers while at the same time avoiding being marked with the stigma of selfishness and/or sexual deviance.

As mentioned, Jessica's use of psychological expertise in the form of interpretative repertoires of the good mother work to repair the ideological dilemmas created in reconciling her lesbian sexualities with her need for "natural conception". Marie, who argues that having sex with a man is not necessarily just about wanting "natural conception", adds a different dimension to the argument on lesbian sexualities and reproduction by relating a personal story using interpretative repertoires of convenience, pragmatism and thrift as justification for having sex with a man in order to conceive a child.

7.2.3. Interpretative Repertoires of Convenience, Pragmatism and Thrift

Marie recounts a comment made by her lesbian aunt in her justification for a lesbian woman wanting "natural conception". As already mentioned, personal experience and using concrete examples is a strong rhetorical strategy which individuals use in order to make their argument credible and persuasive (Barnes et al., 2001). No one in the group can criticise Marie because what she recounts is not her personal opinion but rather the opinion

of someone who is not part of the focus group discussion. Therefore, Marie is able to add an opinion to the discussion without it coming across as her own opinion which could be criticised by her friends.

Using interpretative repertoires of convenience, pragmatism and thrift, Marie first argues that finances are the reason her aunt would not choose ART. Marie emphasises how expensive ARTs are in using the currency "pounds" instead of 'rands'. This could be a form of extremity (Antaki, 2003) or extreme case formulation (Edwards & Potter, 1992) which, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is used by individuals in an attempt to increase the validity and truth within an opinion or claim. "Pounds" are considered, economically, a much stronger currency than the rand and, by using the term "pounds", Marie is able to prove just how expensive ARTs are. Marie also comments that her aunt believes that having sex with a man is less "effort" thereby positioning "natural conception" as convenient, cheap and easier to go through than ART. In response to Marie's story, Jessica states "There we go, that's another thing" as if to emphasise how right her position and argument is. In other words, by adding that there is another reason to justify "natural conception", Jessica aims to show how her argument is credible and valid.

This statement by Jessica implying how there are so many reasons for wanting "natural conception" results in Stephanie exclaiming "Ok, I suppose I retract my previous statement. Can I have my face back?!" Van den Berg (2003) argues that how a person thinks they are perceived by others (i.e. one's 'self-presentation') is an important part of everyday conversation as well as conversations within a research setting. Van den Berg (2003) believes that this conversational self-monitoring is based on various norms and expectations attributed to the person and/or group with whom the person is conversing. Bamberg (2004) adds to this idea arguing that when individuals are faced with "interaction-trouble" (p. 221) they have to work to manage this trouble in such a way that they are able to align themselves back within the group in order to meet "interpersonal demands" (p. 221). In other words, individuals have to work to save face (from the work of Goffman, 1967, as cited in Bamberg, 2004) in front of those with whom they are conversing and re-establish a comfortable and relaxed environment.

Stephanie's exclamation of "I suppose, I retract my previous statement. Can I have my face back?!" seems to serve a number of purposes at this point in the conversation. Firstly, it helps her to save face in front of her friends who seem to all disagree with her comment about "what lesbian in their right mind" would choose "natural conception". Stephanie explicitly states that her "face" has been lost and now wants it back. She is asking her friends in the focus group to help her save face. Secondly, it is clear that Stephanie is merely retracting her statement to save face and bring the conversation to a halt. The conversation needs to end in order for her to regain a sense of positive self-presentation in the group, but she also wants the group to know she is doing this only to alleviate the tension that arose in the discussion. This is evident in the inclusion of the "I suppose" in her sentence "I suppose, I retract my previous statement". Thirdly, by accusing the other members of the group as stealing or taking away her "face" (i.e. positive self-presentation), she has accused them of being unfair, domineering and not respecting of her personal opinion. Through this, Stephanie achieves the interpersonal demands at that moment. She brings the conversation to a halt and Jessica gives her "face back" with her reply of a simple "Ja".

7.3. The Promiscuous Lesbian

The topic of reproduction and lesbian sexualities also came up in relation to the clip from *The Mating Game* where Sara is having sex with a man in order to get pregnant. The discussion, however, was slightly different to that of the PLG as the first lesbian group (FLG) focused not on how they would go about conceiving a child, but rather on lesbian relationships and the stability of these relationships in relation to heterosexual relationships. The predominant subject position in the following extract causing an ideological dilemma within the group was that of the promiscuous lesbian.

Extract 10: (FLG, Lines 228-259):

Anele	: The baby thing is a big thing for me as well. I mean, personally, I want kids, um, I want to give birth to my own and I wanna adopt and, like, I'm not entirely sure how that's gonna happen here (laughs)
Nomusa	: I could relate to that
Anele	: I don't know how I'm gonna do that like and also, um, the (0.4) okay, my friends and my friend's friends and I just look at the relationships they've had and it, I'm waiting for a couple that's stable like

Nomusa : =and stays together until they get married
Anele : that's, completely, and stays together until, like, if you could just stay together for five years then then I'd be like wow(!)
Nomusa : =There's hope
Anele : Because I don't know if I wanna have a baby with someone and then I don't know next month whether they're going to be here or there or there or there because like, okay, now I'm going to go off on a tangent because
Researcher : =No, go ahead
Anele : even within the lesbian community I've picked up that we tend to be a bit promiscuous, um, even if I just look at here at (name of University), and I look at
Dana : =especially at (name of University)
Anele : ja, especially at (name of University), everybody has been with somebody who has been with somebody else and we technically all interlinked and it's kinda like that Alice thing from The L Word and it's like
Cassandra : =It's gross actually
Anele : Okay, I can't even say it's gross because, you know, even when I was in high school I had a group of friends, it was the six of us and I dated that one who dated that one who dated that one who dated within that little six of us, just that tight little group and now I can imagine, I get here and it's like this pool of, it's just like all these beautiful women and they're like women so you kinda like you kinda get frazzled and you go crazy basically, so I'm waiting for, I don't know, lesbians need to calm down or if it's just particularly here or our mentality needs to change 'cause it seems like everybody wants to, you know, a piece of the
Cassandra : =It's the same in (name of city) as well, it's exactly
Researcher : =I've also heard it's the same in (name of city)?

In working with this ideological dilemma, the FLG employ a couple of interpretative repertoires in justifying the appropriation of the subject position of lesbian women as promiscuous. These include interpretative repertoires of instability, interpretative repertoires of uncontrollable sexuality, and interpretative repertoires of social support and difference.

7.3.1. Interpretative Repertoires of Instability

Anele begins the conversation around lesbian relationships and stability by talking about how she wants a child and that she wants to adopt and give birth to her own child, but she adds that she is "not entirely sure how that's gonna happen". Using interpretative repertoires of instability, Anele argues that she does not know a (heterosexual or same-sex) couple who has a stable, committed, long-term relationship. Nomusa agrees with this. These interpretative repertoires of instability are further emphasised when she argues that she is not sure if her current partner is going to be "here or there or there or there". The use of the words "next month" implies that people change their minds very quickly, their emotional attachments are fleeting, and that their commitment to their partners is unstable

and could change within an instant. Furthermore, her repetition of the phrase "here or there or there or there" works to position people as often pursuing (sexual) relationships with a number of people concurrently or consecutively.

It becomes clear that both Anele and Nomusa voice the opinion that single-parenting (by choice) is not an option and that children should only be conceived within committed (i.e. Nomusa includes talk about marriage) and stable relationships. This suggests that a desire for a child is something that is dependent and/or negotiated within the context of stable partnerships and, preferably, within a "married" partnership. Bock (2000) argues that, because of the increase in single parent households and the increase in women *choosing* to be single parents, the predominant discourse on single-parenting revolves around "whether the single-parent family constitutes a legitimate family form" (Bock, 2000, p. 63). Heteronormative discourse argues that a single parent family is not a legitimate family structure and that a nuclear family unit where a child has two parents (preferably a mother and a father) is the best option (Lubbe, 2007). Anele and Nomusa's talk corresponds with this heteronormative discourse as they argue that they are "waiting" to form a stable relationship of their own, as well as "waiting" to find a couple who would stand as a role model for them and give them "hope" before they would consider having a child. Therefore, having a child on their own without a partner is not even considered or mentioned as an option. In other words, a single-parent household and family is not considered a legitimate family structure for Anele and Nomusa.

In addition to being a single-mother not being an option or a consideration for Anele or Nomusa, the language that they use marks stability as the primary foundation for raising a child. Clarke (2002), writing within the United Kingdom, draws on a feminist constructionist approach in looking at the various strategies used in defending and portraying gay and lesbian parenting in a positive way. She argues that emphasising love, security and stability is one of the most powerful and common ways of talking about gay and lesbian parenting. This discourse is powerful because not only does it work to counter arguments that gay and lesbian parenting is deviant but it also works as a strong rhetorical strategy in debates and conversation (Clarke, 2002). In other words, it is difficult for anyone to suggest that love, security and stability are not the kinds of qualities that all family structures should strive for

because of the wealth of psychological expert information which says that it is. In the above extract, Anele and Nomusa have equated stability with a heteronormative, nuclear two-parent household even though, as suggested by Lubbe (2007), new research as well as "advances and changes in globalised culture" (p. 260) have forced cultures, societies and individuals to re-define what is meant by the term 'family'. In other words, different kinds of family formations (e.g. single-parent families, double-generational families, same-sex parent families, etc.) have become 'normal' and have, therefore, meant that the term 'family' no longer refers only to the nuclear family structure in modern society. However, Anele and Nomusa's argument that they need to have a stable relationship goes unchallenged and the option of being a single-parent by choice is not introduced by anyone else in the group. Wilbraham (2008) argues that it is difficult in group discussions to critique others' views on parenting and, very often, individuals back down in order to avoid conflict and 'save face'. Furthermore, as students, this group of women have very little (possibly no) experience of parenting and, therefore, little authority from which to speak from in order to counter this position that Anele and Nomusa are advocating for.

When Anele starts talking about children and the instability of relationships, it appears she is talking about relationships in general and not just lesbian relationships. In other words, Anele makes no distinction about whether she is referring to heterosexual, gay or lesbian relationships but she then jumps to talking specifically about the promiscuity of lesbian women. Anele seems to be aware of her own discourse and realises that she is going to digress quite a lot from the topic with her apologetically reflexive disclaimer, "okay, now I'm going to go off on a tangent". In doing this she draws attention to what she is about to say and almost seeks permission (which I give with a "No, go ahead") to get to the core of the matter. According to Anele, the reason (lesbian) relationships are so unstable is because "we tend to be a bit promiscuous". Dana agrees, arguing that this promiscuity is especially evident in the current university context in which they all live. Her collective pronoun "we" implicates herself and her discussants in this promiscuity. It is important to note that Anele is not just positioning lesbian women as promiscuous. By stating that "even in the lesbian community", the "even" implies that this is something that is not just applicable to lesbian women but something that applies to all kinds of relationships. However, it appears that positioning lesbian women as promiscuous creates an ideological dilemma within the group.

Recent research suggests that it is usually gay men (e.g. Felmlee, Orzechowicz, & Fortes, 2010) and bisexual men and women (e.g. de Bruin & Arndt, 2010) who are labelled as promiscuous and incapable of maintaining committed and long-term relationships, and this negative stereotype is often one which is used as a justification for discrimination against gay men and bisexual men and women. Anele has now implicated lesbian women and, because 'promiscuity' carries with it multiple negative connotations, Anele goes through a process of providing evidence to prove that lesbian women are promiscuous and justifying why lesbian women are promiscuous.

Her evidence for positioning lesbian women as promiscuous is drawn from her own experience of lesbian communities. Because she is drawing from her own experience, her positioning goes unchallenged. Anele also draws on a discourse which occurs frequently where lesbian women comment that lesbian communities are very 'incestuous' (Johnston & Valentine, 1995; Valentine, 1993; Valentine & Skelton, 2003). As Valentine (1993) remarks, "because of the limited opportunities lesbians have to meet others in non-gay environments who are therefore unknown to other members of their networks, the community is very incestuous" (p. 114). In other words, within lesbian communities there is this perception that lesbian women within lesbian communities are all connected in some way through their romantic and/or sexual relationships. As Anele explains, "everybody has been with somebody who has been with somebody else and we technically all interlinked".

To strengthen her argument about lesbian women all being connected, Anele draws on narrative resources from other media – from *The L Word*, the American television drama series which revolves around the lives of a group of predominantly lesbian women and '*The Chart*'. One of the key themes in *The L Word* series is the presupposition that lesbian women are connected through their sexual encounters. So, for example, a lesbian woman is connected to other lesbian women either directly through her own sexual encounters or indirectly through the sexual encounters of her partners. This idea corresponds with the empirical research on lesbian communities and how lesbian women talk about the 'incestuous' nature of lesbian communities (Johnston & Valentine, 1995; Valentine, 1993; Valentine & Skelton, 2003). The reason Anele uses *The L Word* is to provide evidence for her claim that everyone in the lesbian community is "interlinked". In other words, by drawing on

something that has been included in a popular lesbian television series, Anele's argument that lesbian women are interlinked cannot be challenged; it must be true because it was even shown on American TV. However, when Cassandra issues a moral judgement on this sexual networking practice, "it's gross actually", Anele realises she is on risky ground and attempts to repair the ideological dilemma within this positioning of lesbian women and the lesbian community as "gross". In doing this, she draws on interpretative repertoires of uncontrollable sexuality.

7.3.2. Interpretative Repertoires of Uncontrollable Sexuality

Anele's interpretative repertoires of uncontrollable sexuality work to repair the ideological dilemma caused in positioning lesbian women as promiscuous in that their purpose is to justify why lesbian women are this way. These interpretative repertoires include phrases such as "you kinda get frazzled" and "you go crazy" and the reason for this almost temporary insanity is due to coming to a small university context where there is "this pool of... all these beautiful women". In Edley's (2001) discursive work around masculinity, he talks about his participants drawing on interpretative repertoires of sexuality as a "more basic, instinctive mode of expression" (p. 223) which serves to justify sexual practices with more than one person at any one time. Anele is drawing on similar interpretative repertoires as she positions lesbian women's sexual practices as a result of them being unable to control themselves when they are confronted with a "pool" of "beautiful women".

Drawing on interpretative repertoires of uncontrollable sexuality is useful in this context since it provides an excuse and a justification for why lesbian women have sex with a lot of women and it works to ensure that Anele's comment that lesbian women are promiscuous remains unopposed. These kinds of interpretative repertoires of sexuality being uncontrollable draws from a heteronormative discourse in which men are allowed (encouraged) to exhibit their sexual freedom because sexuality is considered a biological drive for men while women are expected to only exhibit sexual freedom within the confines of a committed relationship, preferably marriage. As Charlebois (2008) argues, "women's sexuality is very much constructed around monogamy and family life" (p. 16). This idea is supported by Jackson and Cram (2003) who make reference to the "madonna-whore sexual

dichotomy" (p. 121), whereby sexual desire for women is only permitted and considered valid within a committed relationship. If a woman acts on her sexual desires outside of a committed relationship, she is labelled "promiscuous" and a whore. Therefore, in using words such as "crazy" and "frazzled", Anele is reproducing a heteronormative discourse which argues that women who do take advantage of their sexual freedom and choice outside of committed relationships are "crazy" and abnormal.

Anele's shifting between different pronouns in the above extract is also necessary to unpack. As mentioned previously, the use of pronouns works to indicate the distance the speaker is trying to create between herself and the words she is using, they are used to distribute responsibility, and they work to allow the speaker to identify with whom they are speaking to or referring to (Gastill, 1992, as cited in Abell & Stokoe, 1999). When talking about having a child of her own, Anele uses the pronoun "I" to indicate that this is her personal opinion and what she desires and wants. This shifts, however, when she starts talking about lesbian women as promiscuous. Her shift to the words "we", "our" and "us" serves to allow Anele to keep a safe distance from her own words because she is not admitting that she herself is "promiscuous", but is implicating all lesbian women in this "promiscuous" sexual behaviour. This strategy distributes the accountability for the reputation that lesbian women have among all the participants in the focus group and all the lesbian women they know, thereby absolving Anele from taking full responsibility for her own behaviour which may or may not be regarded as "promiscuous". Therefore, it is not just Anele who is behaving in a promiscuous way, but all lesbian women and, therefore, it is not her fault. Promiscuity is thus constructed as normative and taken-for-granted among lesbian women.

From the above, the significant aspect to take note of is that her use of "we" and "us" implicates *all* lesbian women as displaying "promiscuous" behaviour. Furthermore, although she began by talking about relationships in general and then arguing that "even" lesbian women tend to be promiscuous, her use of the words "we" and "us" function to create an othering or difference between lesbian women and the broader heteronormative culture. Farquar (2000) argues that the words 'we' and 'us' are "often productive of, or found within, personal narratives of being positioned as 'other'" (p. 222). These two terms are also used

to position all lesbian women "within a common identity" (Farquar, 2000, p. 221) which serves to "erase lesbian diversity and difference" (p. 221). Therefore, in using the words "we" and "us", Anele has singled out lesbian women as 'other', different to the heterosexual norm, and as all the same and "promiscuous".

Anele concludes by going back to her original statement of not knowing how she will have a child by repeating the phrase "so I'm waiting for" and then providing a solution to her issue of promiscuity in the lesbian community by stating that "lesbians need to calm down" and "our mentality needs to change". Anele, through this, repairs the ideological dilemma created by arguing that what she really wants is a committed relationship and that lesbian women are promiscuous out of choice but that the lesbian community as it is made up (in the university student-life context) currently makes it difficult to be in a committed relationship. This is a repair because the "promiscuous" behaviour of lesbian women is positioned as being a result of the environment (e.g. coming to university and having access to a more concentrated lesbian community) rather than an innate or inherent deficit in lesbian women themselves. She has gone back to positioning herself as wanting a committed relationship with a child and, therefore, also positions other lesbian women as not all necessarily inherently "promiscuous".

Cassandra and I, however, re-create the ideological dilemma that all lesbian women are promiscuous by arguing that this "mentality" does not just occur where we currently are, but also in various cities. Our two examples of where else this happens means that all the repair work Anele did in trying to show how "promiscuous" behaviour is a result of context is undone by us arguing that it is not just here that "promiscuous" lesbian behaviour occurs, but also in other bigger cities. This results in Dana attempting to repair the ideological dilemma in the following extract.

Extract 11: (FLG, Lines 262-286):

Dana	: It's just context though, I think ja, for us and, and I'll keep saying this though, lesbians don't have a model to work from, you know
Researcher	: What do you mean by that?
Dana	: What you see when you grow up are your parents so you know sort of what works in a heterosexual relationships, what, what works to keep it together, you know, your parents will tell you okay this is the compromising and, and you

can try the general stuff, there's the compromising, there's the listening to each other, all of that stuff which is fine but lesbians sort of, well most lesbians, like practically here and now, like, most people don't have that(!) to sort of okay, we've been for, the thing is if you're in a lesbian relationship and you're passed two years you're on your own, you kinda have to figure it out yourself, you know what I mean, there's no, whereas if you're heterosexual and you know it's just that time and you're thinking maybe I should marry this person, there's always people you go and talk to and will be like are you sure you want to do this because this is what you'll come across, this is what you'll come across. It's not necessarily that lesbian relationships are so different, I think the dynamics change, so it's difficult for any heterosexual person to give you advice even though they'll give you the general stuff like, you know, compromise and all of that but at the same it's like, yeah, we're two women, you might want to strangle each other someday and that's fine, it's us, you know, so I don't know, I think it's one of, like, one of those reasons why people are promiscuous and I think it's contextual, like right now, we're at varsity, you know, no one's monogamous

Researcher : Ja, I think context is important, we are at university and this where, you know, I know I went a little bit mad, well not in my undergrad, I still thought I was straight in my undergrad, um, but from my Honours when I kinda came out the closet

In her attempt to repair the ideological dilemma re-created by Cassandra and I, Dana uses context again to justify why lesbian women are "promiscuous". However, she uses a different strategy and employs interpretative repertoires of social support and difference in her argument.

7.3.3. Interpretative Repertoires of Social Support and Difference

Within extract 10 and 11 there appears to be an intersection between gender ideologies and same-sex sexualities. In other words, in terms of gender, lesbian women are still women and, therefore, Dana and Anele draw on heteronormativity in positioning heteronormative values and behaviours as the standard by which (lesbian) women should be measured. If (lesbian) women do not abide by these heteronormative standards, they are positioned as "promiscuous" and, therefore, deviant which means that they cannot just be incorporated into heteronormative society. The sexualities of lesbian women create a double-bind since in a contemporary world an integral part of sexual agency is to eradicate the label of a perverse sexual object (Farquar, 2000). Same-sex sexualities are still considered by the heterosexual majority to be a perverse (or non-normative) form of sexuality and, therefore, in order to rescue lesbian sexualities from this position of perversion, many lesbian women will behave in ways which draw attention to the similarities between themselves and heteronormative values in order to maintain a positive self-esteem (Farquar, 2000). In doing

so, an attempt can be made to "undermine the discursive construction of lesbian behaviour as 'other'" (Farquar, 2000, p. 224). In extract 11, Dana does not position lesbian women as similar to heterosexual people, but rather attempts to explain *why* lesbian women are *not* similar to heterosexual people.

In using interpretative repertoires of social support Dana positions heterosexual relationships as being monogamous, stable and functional because heterosexual people have had role models who could give them advice on marriage and children and relationships. Dana argues that the reason lesbian women are "promiscuous" is because they "don't have a model to work from" in the sense that lesbian women do not have a wealth of lesbian couples who can provide advice and support in their own relationships. In other words, lesbian women do not have the kinds of resources to draw on that heterosexual people do. It appears that Dana is using a similar strategy to Anele in the above section where Anele was attempting to show that the "promiscuous" behaviour of lesbian women was due to circumstances and, therefore, not the fault of lesbian women per se. By arguing that lesbian women are promiscuous because they do not have "a model to work from" she is able to shift blame away from lesbian women themselves. It, therefore, is not the fault of lesbian women that they do not have stable and long-term relationships, but rather the way the world is. Simply, she is constructing a dystopian kind of us-and-them situation where lesbian women are disadvantaged and, therefore, cannot be blamed for their behaviour since they do not know how to be in committed relationships because they do not have the same kinds of resources which heterosexual people appear to have an abundance of. In using this strategy, Dana provides an excuse and a justification for promiscuity thereby releasing all the lesbian women in the group from any responsibility for their own potential "promiscuous" behaviour.

It seems that Dana realises she is going into risky territory (i.e. an ideological dilemma is occurring) by creating this distinction between lesbian relationships and heterosexual relationships with the words "It's not necessarily that lesbian relationships are so different". She then works to repair this position by drawing on interpretative repertoires of difference, specifically gender and sex differences. Dana argues that "the dynamics change" when a romantic relationship consists of two women and that this is something that no

heterosexual person could understand. She appears to draw on gendered stereotypes of women as being over-emotional with her comment that "you might want to strangle each other someday", but this is also a form of extremity (Antaki, 2003) and/or extreme case formulation (Edwards & Potter, 1992) which works to get her point across to the group. The use of the word "people" instead of "lesbians" works to take the spotlight off of lesbian people and onto a broader focus of people in general. This works to repair the ideological dilemma and this repair is solidified in her next comment where she goes back to her contextual argument about how we are young people at university where "no one's monogamous". The "no one" in her last comment once again includes heterosexual people into the position of "promiscuity" thereby displacing the negativity that comes with the word "promiscuous" just being associated with lesbian women and the lesbian community.

The successfulness of Dana's repair is evident in my response to her where I agree that "context is important" and I recount my own experience of the lesbian community at a small university when I "came out of the closet". I appear to agree with both Anele and Dana and become complicit in drawing on similar heteronormative interpretative repertoires of uncontrollable sexuality. In order to emphasise my point that this madness is only associated with my early lesbian experience, I add that this 'madness' did not occur in my undergraduate years since "I still thought I was straight in my undergrad", thereby positioning heterosexual identity as devoid of 'madness' and uncontrollable sexual desires.

Padfield (2007), as part of her Master's dissertation at the University of Stellenbosch, explored the underlying discourses in current literature (international and local) on same-sex marriage using discourse analysis. She mentions that heteronormative discourse argues that same-sex intimate relationships are different from heterosexual relationships, are not monogamous, and do not last very long. A number of international quantitative research studies – predominantly from the USA and the UK – suggest that this assumption is incorrect and that, in many ways, married heterosexual couples are actually more similar than different to that of co-habiting or married gay and/or lesbian couples (e.g. Kurdek, 1998; 2005; Julien, Chartrand, Simard, Bouthillier, & Bégin, 2003). Furthermore, this research has shown that individuals in lesbian relationships report higher intimacy, more equality, and better problem solving strategies among partners. Padfield (2007), however, argues that

this kind of research perpetuates the othering of gay and lesbian relationships. These research studies continue to compare same-sex relationships to a heterosexist norm as if in an attempt to "assuage heterosexist fears by showing that lesbian relationships are not different (i.e. deviant) in any fundamental way, yet in so doing the heteronormative standard is inevitably reinforced" (Padfield, 2007, p. 32-33).

In the same way, Dana, in the above extract, is comparing lesbian relationships to heterosexual relationships. She is positioning lesbian relationships as different, yes, but at the same time she is positioning lesbian relationships as needing to be more like heterosexual relationships by arguing that lesbian relationships would be more like heterosexual relationships if there were the same kinds of role models and support for lesbian individuals as those available for heterosexual individuals. The norms and values associated with normative heterosexuality are positioned, however, as a goal to strive for and what many lesbian women aim to achieve. This goal and aim is also evident in Anele's argument where she appears to want a committed relationship so that she can have a child. This idea of lesbian women as needing to exhibit heteronormative behaviours and values came up again later on in the discussion of the FLG. This time, however, Dana positions lesbian women explicitly as the 'other' as she argues that it is because lesbian women are the 'other' that they have to compromise and conform to heteronormative standards and values.

7.4. The Value-less and Compromising 'Other'

The next extract (extract 12) forms part of what became a heated conversation around the stereotypical representation of lesbian women in the three media clips, and how these compare to 'real-life' lesbian women. The FLG diverged quite a bit from this topic fairly quickly with Dana talking about the values that lesbian women have and the values that heterosexual people have, how these compare and what gay and lesbian people need to do in order to be more accepted.

Extract 12: (FLG, Lines 1160-1185):

Dana	: It's like there's no formulation of our own values, our own rules, and that's why straight people will never take us seriously, because we're not coming to them with the sort of same
Researcher	: Why must we? Why must we have the same values as straight people?
Dana	: No no no no, the same
Nomusa	: Because we're not straight!
Dana	: Wait, wait, wait, you didn't let me finish! The same sort of value of, the same values as this, we're, we're trying to say that we're individuals and as individuals we should have choices and we should treat each other like individuals, but we don't treat each other like individuals. We class each other, we put ourselves in boxes, we, like like, the whole baby thing and the marriage thing, we keep on restricting, we want this but we want to share that, we want, you know it's like you can't have both of, you, best of both worlds. You, you either going this way in terms of family life and what we think of it or we're going the other way
Anele	: No, Dana, I think, um, what you're saying about us grouping and classing everyone that happens in every other community. Like, you, we're not just saying it happens here, I mean, I've been put in my little group as well when I got to (name of University), people didn't even know me and they were that one, ja ne, player, sleeps around, parties, they don't know me, but this is, the fact that I'm wearing jeans and a t-shirt and my dreads are hanging low, that's what they got from me. So, that happens everywhere. The point is that it happens everywhere and those groupings don't, they don't come from outta nowhere, like there are a certain type that are a certain way, that, you know, you'll have your little cliques that will go out to the club and they will be like ja sho baby one two three take you home and that's just how it is. Like, and then you'll have your(!) type of people that wanna have kids

Dana begins by arguing that the reason gay and lesbian people have not been accepted (into/by heteronormative societies) is because there is "no formulation of our own values, our own rules". However, as the discussion progressed and Anele and I attempted to gain a clearer understanding of what she was suggesting, it appeared that Dana was advocating that gay and lesbian individuals need to decide what they want before they will be accepted into predominantly heterosexual societies. This argument of Dana's works to position lesbian women in a somewhat negative way in that it positions lesbian women as value-less (i.e. lacking in values) which insinuates that lesbian women do not have a moral code which, by implication, perpetuates the heterosexist discourse that gay and lesbian individuals are amoral. Furthermore, she appears to be positioning heterosexism/homophobia as the fault of gay and lesbian people.

In other words, because lesbian women do not have a set of values and rules figured out for themselves, it becomes their fault when they are not taken "seriously" by heterosexual communities. Because of this negative positioning, her argument almost immediately

creates an ideological dilemma (as is evident in my question of "Why must we?"). Wetherell (1998; 2001a; 2001b) argues that ideological dilemmas are evident in talk when participants interrupt each other, start talking all at once, and when misunderstandings occur resulting in efforts to clarify positions and arguments. All of these characteristics are occurring in the above extract as Dana attempts to repair the ideological dilemma by drawing on interpretative repertoires of responsibility and empowerment.

7.4.1. Interpretative Repertoires of Responsibility and Empowerment

My questioning around why lesbian women must display the same "values" as heterosexual people makes Dana realise that she is treading on risky ground and that an ideological dilemma is occurring which she now needs to repair. Dana begins her attempt at repair by accusing me of interrupting her and not letting her finish her argument. This works to position me as being confrontational and quick to jump to conclusions about what she is trying to say and not giving her the space to make her point. Dana also, cleverly, reminds me of one of the 'rules' I made at the beginning of the focus group discussion which was that everyone should be allowed to speak and that we all need to give each other the space to air our views. In telling me that I did not let her finish, Dana reminded me (and the group) of the 'rules' of the focus group discussion and that these were being breached. By making this accusation and positioning me (and the group) in this way, Dana is able to take command of the floor, silencing me and the rest of the group, since it appears that we are misunderstanding her only because we are not allowing her the space to voice and formulate her argument coherently and clearly. Her strategy works and she is able to complete her argument with little interruption.

Dana continues trying to repair the ideological dilemma using interpretative repertoires of responsibility as she argues that the reason heterosexual people do not take the lesbian community "seriously" is because we expect to be treated as "individuals" yet we do not "treat each other like individuals" since lesbian women also "put ourselves in boxes". In other words, if we do not want heterosexual people to put us "in boxes" then we should not be doing it ourselves. Dana also appears to argue that lesbian women restrict themselves and that it is not necessarily heterosexual communities which place restrictions on lesbian women. In other words, she argues that we give ourselves two options which we have to

choose from: having a "family life" or "going the other way" which I assume is being "promiscuous" (as seen from extract 10 and 11). She says that lesbian communities make it impossible to have the "best of both worlds". In doing this, Dana works to position the responsibility to create change and overcome heteronormativity with gay and lesbian communities. While this may come across as victim-blaming in the sense that the repercussions imply that it is the fault of gay and lesbian people for their own oppression and victimisation, Dana appears to rather be drawing on a rhetorical strategy that emphasises empowerment and active agency. In other words, Dana is trying to repair the ideological dilemma by arguing that lesbian women can create change and that the change needs to begin within lesbian communities. She is attempting to rid lesbian women – as a whole category, or box – of a kind of collective victim label which implies powerlessness to change one's situation.

Deveaux (1994), in writing about feminist responses to women's active agency against male domination, argues that assuming a victim mentality works to position "women as robotic receptacles of culture rather than as active agents who are both constituted by, and reflective of, their social and cultural contexts" (p. 227). In positioning lesbian women as active agents in their own subordination and marginalisation, Dana positions lesbian women as also being active agents with the power to resist domination. In other words, she attempts to repair her ideological dilemma by positioning lesbian women in a seemingly positive way (i.e. empowered and able to change their oppression) rather than positioning lesbian women as passive receptacles of domination without any power to resist heteronormative cultures.

Dana, however, is drawing on heteronormativity as the standard which lesbian women should adhere to. In other words, heteronormativity (as a dominant ideology) demands that individuals of a group need to display and conform to the same set of values and morals. Furthermore, in positioning the responsibility for social change as a result of lesbian women not treating each other "like individuals", the implication is that lesbian women cannot blame the heterosexual communities for not taking them "seriously". In other words, Dana is arguing that, in order for gay and lesbian people and/or relationships to be considered legitimate and acceptable, there needs to be a code or value system regulating behaviour.

According to her, the absence of a code or value system contributes to the exclusion and unacceptability of gay and lesbian individuals and/or relationships. Therefore she positions the responsibility for larger societal change squarely with lesbian and gay people.

Robinson and Ferfolja (2002) argue that heterosexism often comes in the form of victim-blaming when the person experiencing harassment or violence is blamed for the harassment or violence because of their behaviour and/or appearance. When this happens, a gay or lesbian person's behaviour (which could potentially be attributed to their same-sex sexualities) is positioned as the cause of harassment and/or violence that is perpetuated against them and the responsibility for change is moved away from the dominant society or culture within which the violence occurs to being the responsibility of the gay or lesbian individual. This kind of 'victim-blaming' discourse, where the 'victim' is expected to take agency in effecting change, occur often in public and mental health campaigns. For example, Lehrner and Allen (2008), in their analysis of social change campaigners' narratives of domestic violence in the USA, argue that a common narrative is that women need to set firmer boundaries and be "better educated about abuse" (p. 226) emphasising that the problem is inherent in women's lack of education rather than the socio-cultural context which works to allow domestic violence. A further example is around HIV/AIDS, where many campaigns argue that individuals with HIV/AIDS should take control of their physical health and ensure that they take their medication and so on, with little regard (once again) for the socio-cultural context which may prevent HIV+ positive individuals from being able to do this (de Souza, 2011).

In other words, in Dana's argument, lesbian communities experience harassment and discrimination and are not taken "seriously" because they themselves do not have a set of coherent values and morals to display to the heterosexual communities within which they live. Therefore, while Dana is using interpretative repertoires of responsibility and empowerment in an attempt to repair the ideological dilemma created, she works to create a bigger ideological dilemma in that she is positioning the sole responsibility for social change on gay and lesbian communities and not the heteronormative cultures.

In addition to this, Dana's use of the pronoun "we" implicates *all* lesbian women in their own oppression while also emphasising that *all* lesbian women have the power to create change. However, drawing on Farquar's (2000) understanding of the terms "we" and "us" which serves to differentiate one group of people from another group, Dana's use of the "we" implies that it is only lesbian women "who do not treat each other like individuals". Anele picks up on this with her reply that categorisations and "boxes" "happen in every other community" and, therefore, it becomes clear that Dana has failed to repair the ideological dilemma, because her categorisations of lesbian women's categorical thinking leaks out more generally into wider communities of practice.

In Anele's resistance to Dana's argument, Anele uses two strategies to make her argument that putting people into "boxes" do not just occur in the lesbian community. Firstly, she uses her own experience of being boxed by everyone when she first came to university. As mentioned already, personal experience is difficult to refute and this works to make her argument valid and credible. Anele's second strategy is to argue that boxing and categorising is just the way the world works. In Anele's own words, "that's just how it is". Potter (1996) argues that normalising something and minimising its effect is one way of constructing an account as factual. In other words, if something is argued as having an obvious element of normalisation, the account appears more credible and believable. Anele uses this strategy by arguing that putting people into boxes is just the way the world works and how all people in the world operate. She positions this kind of discrimination as "just the way it is", as something obvious, normal, and somewhat acceptable because it is just the way the world is.

7.5. Conclusion

The ideological dilemmas which occurred within the focus groups discussions were often around heteronormative stereotypes and assumptions about same-sex sexualities. For example, heteronormative assumptions subject position gay and lesbian individuals as amoral, promiscuous and value-less and these are often used to justify discrimination and prejudice against same-sex sexualities. Participants acknowledged that some of the subject positions being made available in the three media clips were playing into these negative

stereotypes of lesbian women and they attempted to resist these. However, in further discussions around these subject positions, participants moved from resisting the subject positions to negotiating with them, and drew on heteronormative interpretative repertoires (such as religion, nature, and uncontrollable sexualities) in this negotiation process.

What this demonstrates is similar to the argument made by Eves (2004) and Wetherell (1998) regarding heteronormativity and how the discourse of dominant cultures and/or societies is often appropriated by individuals in making sense of their own experiences. In other words, heteronormative discourse around morals, conception, marriage and sexualities was used by this group of lesbian women in negotiating with these problematic subject positions, as well as in making sense of their own opinions and experiences. This heteronormative discourse, however, was not left unchallenged by some of the members in the group and this is evident in the ideological dilemmas which occurred. However, in attempting to repair these ideological dilemmas, further heteronormative interpretative repertoires were drawn on, which cemented heteronormativity rather than challenge or transform it. It appeared that, in order to make one's argument valid and credible, it was merely a question of finding the right kind of heteronormative interpretative repertoire to use. For example, in the case of the subject position of the amoral lesbian, Jessica had to go through a process of using at least three interpretative repertoires before her argument was accepted by the majority of participants in the PLG.

To conclude then, in a society or culture which is dominated by ideologies grounded in heteronormative values and standards, these participants who form part of a marginalised group were faced with dilemmas and troubled positions when attempting to make sense of their own experiences within this dominant culture of heteronormativity. Participants appeared to struggle with reconciling their same-sex sexualities with the values and morals dictated by heteronormativity as well as attempting to maintain a positive self-presentation in front of the other participants in the focus groups.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This chapter aims to pull the threads of this research dissertation together by summarising the main findings. In addition to this, this chapter will look at the limitations of the current research and make recommendations for future research.

8.1. Summary of Findings

The research objectives and research questions were developed in order to add to the body of existing research on active audience reception, as well as explore the subject positions made available in three clips from two South African (SABC) produced television dramas, *Society* and *The Mating Game,* for a white and black audience of self-identified lesbian women. In addition to this, the research dissertation aimed to look at how a self-identified lesbian audience engaged with the subject positions made available in the clips, and explore the discursive resources in the form of interpretative repertoires that this audience used in appropriating and/or negotiating and/or resisting these subject positions. Finally, the research aimed to look at the ideological dilemmas that may or may not have occurred for this audience of discussants in drawing on various contradictory interpretative repertoires, and how they worked to repair these ideological dilemmas.

This section will begin by first looking at how the politicization of lesbian sexualities played out in the participants' negotiation of the subject positions made available in the three clips from *Society* and *The Mating Game.* Secondly, I will discuss the subject positions made available in the three clips and in the participants' engagement with these, and how these positions and engagements compare with those reviewed in the literature and previous research in chapter four. Thirdly, how the participants engaged with the subject positions made available will be looked at in terms of the theory on active audiences discussed in chapter two. In other words, an argument will be made about the extent to which this audience actively engaged with the media subject positions made available. Finally, this summary of findings will look at heteronormative ideologies as the dominant discourse drawn on in engaging with the media subject positions, and how this worked to create

various ideological dilemmas for the participants in their attempt to make meaning and sense of the subject positions made available by *Society* and *The Mating Game*.

8.1.1. Politicization of Lesbian Sexualities and Audience Negotiation

Chapter three focused on how sexualities have become politicised in post-Apartheid South Africa in terms of sexualities becoming a visible issue which government is expected to constantly address (Posel, 2004, 2005b; Reid & Walker, 2005). This visibility extended to the way in which academic scholarship represents social problems and experiences related to lesbian sexualities, as well as media representations of lesbian sexualities where white lesbian sexualities are rendered invisible while black lesbian sexualities were positioned as hyper-visible because of the extensive coverage in news media on their vulnerability to gender-based violence in the form of 'corrective/curative rape' (Mkhize et al., 2010). This politicization of black lesbian sexualities appears to have been one of the dominant resources which participants drew on in negotiating with the subject positions of lesbian representations in the three clips from *Society* and *The Mating Game*.

The participants' negotiation with the subject positions made available by the representation of white lesbian women in *The Mating Game* worked to position white lesbian sexualities as invisible and "safe" in contemporary South Africa. According to the participants, this safety was in relation to white lesbian women having little risk when it comes to harm and discrimination. White lesbian women were positioned as being from middle-to-upper class backgrounds, and able to make active choices in how they performed their genders and their sexualities. Furthermore, participants' talk focused more on what was happening in the storylines of the clips than on how the character's lesbian sexuality was being positioned. For example, while some discussion was around the butch lesbian subject position and how white lesbian women were not always butch, most of the discussion around the white lesbian subject positions centred on conception, children, relationships and marriage; the kind of 'normal' everyday issues that are somewhat neglected in current South African academic research (Lubbe, 2007), and non-fictional representations (e.g. news, documentaries, etc.) of lesbian sexualities (Mkhize et al., 2010).

The subject positions of black lesbian representation in the clip from *Society*, however, were negotiated with on a different level, and in slightly different ways depending on the raced and classed position of the participant/s doing the negotiation. All three groups appropriated the subject position of the butch black lesbian using interpretative repertoires of survival. However, how these were used differed from group to group.

The PLG, which consisted of white lesbian women and who were positioned by Stephanie as coming from middle-to-upper class, suburban backgrounds, positioned black lesbian sexualities in the clip from *Society* as victims and vulnerable to abuse much in the same way that non-fictional media representations have. Black lesbian women, therefore, had no choice but to be "butch" and "aggressive", because they were targets and victims of violent hate crimes. Sensational descriptions were used in these discussions which worked to position gender-based violence against black lesbian women as extensive, inevitable and existing predominantly within township settings. These kinds of sensational descriptions were used in an attempt to justify the appropriation of the subject position of black lesbian women as "aggressive" and "butch", while at the same time avoiding any accusation of racism or 'political incorrectness'.

The appropriation of the butch black lesbian women was slightly different in the FLG, where the black lesbian women in the discussion groups appropriated the butch black lesbian subject position, but the appropriation worked to position black lesbian women as empowered and able to actively protect themselves against harm. The black lesbian women in the focus group discussions, therefore, tended to resist this politicised victim-position and instead positioned black lesbian women as somewhat resilient and in control of protecting themselves through the decisions black lesbian women take to "buff up". The use of the "hoodrat" subject position became a clever and skillful manoeuvre (used particularly by Dana who appeared to identify with the "township lesbian" label) in avoiding all the victimology that has been attached to black lesbian women from township settings.

This politicization of black lesbian sexualities was the dominant resource used in engaging with the fictional representations of black lesbian women in the clip from *Society*. As already mentioned, there was no indication that the black lesbian women figured in the clip were

from a township, yet *all* participants interpreted the scene as being one within a township setting. This politicization of black lesbian sexualities in post-1994 South Africa, therefore, has become so pervasive that, even with little evidence to confirm it, black and white lesbian sexualities are almost automatically raced and, by association, classed by their positioning of them in demarcated urban spaces.

8.1.2. Subject Positions and Lesbian Representation

Chapter four of this research dissertation reflected on the subject positions made available in past and current representations of lesbian sexualities in mainstream (local and international) film and television programmes for audience members to accept and/or negotiate with and/or resist. These subject positions included the 'butch lesbian' (Lugowski, 1999; Monamodi, 2009; Weiss, 1992), the 'heteroflexible lipstick lesbian' (Diamond, 2005; Jackson & Gilbertson, 2009; Jenkins, 2005), and the 'normal lesbian' (Dean, 2007). The dominant subject position found in the interpretations of the lesbian women represented in the three clips from *Society* and *The Mating Game* was that of the 'butch lesbian'. While the participants described these lesbian subject positions as 'butch', the terms they used were more colloquially negotiated, for example, the 'lumberjack' and 'tomboy' lesbian when talking about the white lesbian subject positions, and the 'township' and 'hoodrat' lesbian when referring to the black lesbian subject positions. Predictably, according to the international film-studies literature (Lugowski, 1999; Miller, 1991; Weiss, 1992) participants recognised that the characters were lesbian through the 'connotation' within the representations; in other words, through the characters' gendered performances of dress (e.g. "khaki pants") and mannerisms (e.g. "aggressive").

What was interesting in this South African study, however, was the racial differentiation that occurred when working with the butch lesbian subject position. The white butch lesbian subject position was negotiable and manoeuvrable, with participants arguing that (white) lesbian women are not necessarily always butch. For example, white participants recognised a kind of split in their own lesbian identities, arguing that they did not have to "look lesbian to be lesbian". In other words, this introduced an identity (off the screen, negotiated in real life) that would be considered butch on the inside and femme on the outside, and could be different in different contexts. There was recognition that (white)

lesbian sexualities are diverse, and fluid, in terms of how one looks and how one behaves and that a (white) lesbian woman does not have to conform to the heteronormative stereotypes of the kind of lesbian sexuality where lesbian women display stereotypically masculine traits.

International (mostly American) literature on white lesbian representation argues that lesbian women are now being represented in mainstream film and television as 'lipstick lesbians' or 'heteroflexible lesbians' who can pass as heterosexual (Diamond, 2005; Jackson & Gilbertson, 2009; Jenkins, 2005). In this study, participants recognised that the lesbian characters in the three clips were being represented as butch which is out of step with the global/American trend on lesbian representations which, as mentioned, leans more towards the 'lipstick' and/or 'heteroflexible' lesbian representation. Participants (predominantly the white participants) in this study, however, resisted this subject position and recognised that this butch lesbian was not like them and used their own performance of heteroflexibility in this resistance. In positioning themselves as being able to pass for heterosexual (where their sexualities as lesbian women are often questioned by friends and acquaintances), white participants positioned themselves within these global trends of lesbian representation; in other words, as 'lipstick lesbian' women or as potentially 'heteroflexible lesbian' women.

In contrast, the subject position of the butch black lesbian figured in the clip from *Society* was wholly accepted by all participants, with participants arguing that this was exactly how all black lesbian women from the township really are. No diversity appeared. This black lesbian woman (the "township lesbian" and "hoodrat") is in line with Tung's (2004) argument regarding international (i.e. American) fictional representations of black lesbian women as strong, hypersexual and aggressive (stereotypically masculine traits). All the participants in all three groups recognised that the black lesbian women appearing in the clip from *Society* adheres to this international trend of black lesbian representation. However, this adherence to stereotypically masculine traits is not due to a believed inherent trait of black (lesbian) women – as suggested by Tung (2004) – but rather (according to the participants) as a survival mechanism within a violently heteronormative socio-cultural context.

From this, the conclusion drawn was that participants in these three focus groups, in using interpretative repertoires of othering and interpretative repertoires of survival, positioned performances of gender as a choice for white lesbian women while, for black lesbian women in South Africa, butchness was positioned as a necessity. White lesbian women were positioned as occupying safe spaces in South Africa because, in appearing stereotypically feminine (heterosexual), they are able to avoid discrimination and prejudice since their lesbian sexualities are not obvious, unless they verbally announced them. Black lesbian women, on the other hand, were positioned as not having the same luxury of choice because, if they performed a stereotypically feminine gender and their lesbian sexualities were discovered, they would face violent reactions from men and would be harmed. In this sense, black lesbian women have to be butch since butchness was equated with stereotypical masculine traits such as strength and the ability to ward off unwanted sexualized attention from men and to protect themselves from harm. Therefore, in South Africa where 'corrective/curative rape' and violent heterosexism (especially against black lesbian women) is increasingly becoming commonplace as well as sensationalised and politicised, black lesbian women need to be butch in order to survive in a culture and setting where same-sex sexualities are considered 'unAfrican'. Participants recognised, as Mkhize et al. (2010), Swarr and Nagar (2003) and Wells (2006) do, that attacks against black lesbian women are largely due to a lack of resources which contribute to the lack of safety for black lesbian women in social spaces within South Africa. Therefore, "buffing up" and being butch, is something black lesbian can use to protect themselves when they have very little else.

The irony is that, according to Nel and Judge (2008), transgressing stereotypically feminine traits and behaviours (i.e. looking butch) makes black lesbian women in township settings more vulnerable to attack and discrimination. However, this was something not mentioned or considered by participants in this particular South African study. Instead, a more agentic identity was mooted in the negotiation with butchness: that black lesbian women, by "buffing up", would be able to protect themselves from potential harm, even though coverage of 'corrective/curative rape' incidences have noted that the women attacked were women who transgressed their socially expected feminine role and appearance (Mkhize et al., 2010).

8.1.3. Lesbian Audience Reception and Representation of Lesbian Sexualities

From chapter two, the argument regarding media representation and audience reception was that audiences are not passive receptors who accept the representations and/or subject positions made available to them (Buckingham, 1998; Hall, 1982, as cited in Gamson et al., 1992; Fairclough, 1995; Hall, 1997a; 1997b; 1997c). Instead, audiences actively engage with media representations and the subject positions on offer by using their own interpretive resources such as their own histories, cultures and personal experiences. The findings from this research agree with this literature to a certain extent.

This particular audience – self-identified lesbian women as students at a small town university within a set-up research context – did engage with the subject positions made available in the three clips from *Society* and *The Mating Game*. However, as Wilbraham (2008) found in her research on parents' negotiation with experts' advice on childrearing (discussed in chapter two), this engagement with media representations involved a "partial, piecemeal, negotiated process" (p. 96) of parents' resistances, appropriations and complicated manoeuvring around taken-for-granted, ideological assumptions. In other words, in my study, participants began by resisting the subject positions provided, but as they related it to their own experiences and knowledge, they began to negotiate with these subject positions by taking bits and pieces of the subject positions provided and discarding others. This is in line with Hall's (1980, as cited in Wood, 2007) notion of a negotiated position (as discussed in chapter two), where audience members accept some of the 'preferred meaning' but, in using their own personal experiences and/or contexts, do not accept the 'preferred meaning' as a whole. This acceptance of certain aspects of these subject positions, however, seemed to aid in the participants' need for identities that would help them fit in and integrate within a predominantly heteronormative social world.

In talking about the lesbian representation from *The Mating Game*, participants began by resisting the butch lesbian subject position made available. However, when the participants began referring to their own identities and experiences, this representation acted as a resource (particularly in the PLG) for explaining how lesbian women may "look" feminine in their appearance, but that their personalities might be regarded as butch. This powerfully constructs a lesbian identity which is able to manoeuvre through same-sexed and

heteronormative contexts. In taking on the bits of butchness provided in the lesbian character's butch representation, the participants were able to construct themselves as in control of their own intimate relationships. But, displaying stereotypically feminine appearances, they could simultaneously avoid the prejudice and discrimination perpetrated against lesbian women who "look lesbian". In other words, the display of a feminine appearance enables the avoidance of detection of lesbian women.

With regards to the subject position of the butch black lesbian, as already mentioned, all participants in the group appropriated this subject position. However, the appropriation of this subject position served different purposes for different participants. For example, the PLG appropriated this subject position, but used it to position black lesbian women as victims of their hostile socio-cultural contexts. In appropriating the black butch lesbian subject position, but allocating this butchness as a necessary response to a context of violence, white participants were able to avoid accusations of racism while still positioning black lesbian women as different and 'other'. Wetherell (1998) argues, however, that subject positions are often raced and, therefore, can also be used and/or spoken about in different ways by differently raced speakers. In other words, black lesbian women can and/or are able to speak about 'township lesbians' in a different way.

This was particularly salient in Dana's negotiation with the butch black lesbian subject position. Dana, a self-identified black lesbian woman, appropriated the butch black lesbian subject position but termed it the "hoodrat lesbian" who exhibited characteristics of strength and power. When participants in the group began talking about the butch black lesbian, Dana felt like she needed to justify why black lesbian women from township settings were like this, because she identified as a black lesbian woman and possibly as a "township" or "hoodrat" lesbian. Furthermore, the other participants (friends of hers) in the FLG had positioned her as the epitome of a "hoodrat lesbian" in a kind of mocking way. Therefore, in appropriating the "hoodrat lesbian" subject position, but interpreting it as a lesbian woman who is not a victim but is rather able to protect herself from harm, Dana is able to appropriate the "hoodrat" subject position, but on her own terms; in a way which positions her and "township" lesbian women in a more positive light.

Puchta and Potter (2004) argued that discourse in the form of taking on certain subject positions is action-oriented and functional in that it is "*performed* rather than *preformed*" (p. 21; emphasis theirs). Therefore, the participant's engagements and piecemeal negotiations with the subject positions provided appear to have been context specific in that the positions appropriated by the participants were *performed* for the purposes and the objectives set by the context. Not only were participants expected to voice their opinions within an academic setting (i.e. this research context) but they were also expected to voice their opinions within a group of friends and acquaintances (in one group, with their lecturer). Within these kinds of contexts, individuals work to meet the interpersonal demands of the context such as maintaining a positive self-presentation, and 'saving face' (Bamberg, 2004).

8.1.4. Heteronormativity as the Primary Discursive Resource

In working with the subject positions made available by the three clips provided for discussion, participants often drew on interpretative repertoires which implicate heteronormative ideologies, such as religion, nature, the good mother and uncontrollable sexuality. As discussed in chapter seven, in using these heteronormative interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas occurred in the discussions which participants had to work to repair since, when used in relation to same-sex sexualities, these ideologies presented contradictions that appeared irreconcilable with same-sex sexualities. Ideological dilemmas present moments of crisis and instability in meaning which could reproduce these heteronormative ideologies and power relations, or they could work to unsettle, undermine, resist and transform these ideologies and power relations (Edley, 2001; Edley & Wetherell, 2001). However, the way in which the participants in my study utilised these heteronormative interpretative repertoires in negotiating with the troubled subject positions, very little undermining and resistance was found. In other words, the way in which these interpretative repertoires were used worked to reinforce heteronormative assumptions of same-sex sexualities.

Eves (2004) and Wetherell (1998) both argue that heteronormative ideologies are so pervasive that individuals do not have alternative discursive resources to draw from in talking about their own identities and experiences. Therefore, it can be argued that, even in

attempts to resist the heteronormative stereotypes of lesbian women they encountered in the television clips, the lesbian women in the group discussions still had to use a heteronormative discourse in their negotiation with these stereotypes. In other words, the participants had no other words but binary categorical opposites, such as 'lesbian' or 'straight', 'masculine' or 'feminine', or 'butch' or 'femme', to use when talking about gender identities and lesbian sexualities. Heteronormativity, therefore, is the discursive resource which all individuals have to use even in their resistance of heteronormative stereotypes. The use of heteronormativity as a base from which to work on, however, appears to have served another purpose in these discussion groups; to regain and/or maintain a positive self-presentation and to achieve some sense of 'normality' within the focus group discussion context and within the broader heteronormative societies and cultures within which participants live.

Two examples of these uses (or functions) of heteronormativity will be given here. Firstly, Jessica (in the PLG) used interpretative repertoires of religion and nature and the good mother in trying to reconcile her sexuality with how she planned to conceive children. In this construction, ideas around mothering and religion were heteronormative in that penetrative heterosexual sex was the only natural and acceptable means of conceiving a child. Any other way (i.e. ARTs) was considered an attempt to "play God" and, therefore, wrong and immoral. Buchanan et al. (2001) argued that when struggling with religion and same-sex sexualities, gay and/or lesbian individuals would either reject their religion or deny their sexualities. In appropriating certain elements of heteronormativity, individuals are able to find a compromise where they do not have to deal with this either/or choice. In other words, in adopting certain heteronormative values and morals, a compromise can be found between what is considered an 'abnormal' sexuality and the standards and norms by which heteronormativity expects individuals to conform to. In appropriating elements of and compromising with heteronormativity, individuals are able to regain a sense of 'normality' in their own perception of themselves and through the way in which a predominantly heteronormative world would view them.

Secondly, Anele (in the FLG) attempts to understand and justify the subject position of the 'promiscuous lesbian' by using interpretative repertoires of uncontrollable sexuality. This

strategy worked to position (lesbian) women's active display of sexuality as "promiscuous" and "uncontrollable", which echoes the heteronormative "madonna-whore sexual dichotomy" (Jackson & Cram, 2003, p. 121), and which places women who have sex outside of committed relationships as promiscuous, abnormal and dangerous. Repairing this troubled position of being seen (by an audience of discussants in the group) as promiscuous involved interpretative repertoires of stable monogamous relationships, allegedly to emulate and assimilate these values within heteronormative societies; and to, thereby, avoid being seen as promiscuous. Once again, a compromise with heteronormative values and morals was used to achieve a sense of 'normality', where same-sex sexualities were positioned as needing and/or wanting to be more in line with the dominant heteronormative ideology.

8.2. Recommendations for Future Research

The three clips chosen in my study presented subject positions related to black lesbian women and white lesbian women, which created not only a racial and classed dichotomy but also a dichotomy between lesbian sexuality (as a single category) and heterosexuality (as its oppositional category). This dichotomy was reinforced by the make-up of the focus groups, with black and white participants and me as the only participant who did not fall in either category. This dichotomous polarisation was further evident in how participants did not talk about the diversity of lesbian sexualities that exist within other racial categories, such as within Indian and Coloured populations, which also form a significant part of South African society. Therefore, one suggestion for further research is to include different categories of identities.

However, it appears that this represents a wider problem within South Africa, where the focus is predominantly on black and/or white, as well as heterosexual and/or same-sex sexualities. Although there is a growing body of research on bisexuality, mostly international research, there is very little research which works to break down and challenge not only these dichotomies but the labels associated with race, class and sexualities. As various South African researchers argue (e.g. Matebeni, 2011; Mkhize et al., 2010; Reddy, 2002; Roberts & Reddy, 2008), research needs to be focusing on the intersectionality of race, sex, gender,

class and sexuality as such research would work to challenge the notion that lesbian and gay identities and/or communities are unitary. Furthermore, future research might include independently-produced, transgressive or explicitly queer media and film representations, alongside mainstream representations on same-sex sexualities and even heterosexualities, in order to open up more critical positions and alternatives to those offered by SABC-produced television programming like *Society* and *The Mating Game*.

Finally, since discursive analytic research focuses on the context and how the context shapes the interaction, it is possible that the context within which this research took place – young, self-identified lesbian women, who came from a particular socio-economic background, and were students at a small South African university – played a large role in how subject positions offered by the clips were negotiated. In other words, this audience drew on particular resources available to them as students on a fairly liberal campus. While this research engaged to some extent with the context and how this context shaped the interaction, this research provides an opportunity to engage with this kind of audience to a fuller extent. Furthermore, in order to look at how this context shaped the talk that emerged, research could also include participants from lower socio-economic backgrounds/communities, who do not necessarily have a tertiary education in order to explore the ways in which these women interpret and engage with the subject positions made available in these two television programmes (and others).

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APPENDICES

Appendix One: Tape-recording Consent Form

Rhodes University – Department of Psychology

USE OF TAPE RECORDINGS FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES

–

PERMISSION AND RELEASE FORM

Participant name & contacts (address, phone etc)	
Name of researcher & level of research (Honours/Masters/PhD)	
Brief title of project	
Supervisor	

Declaration

(Please initial/tick blocks next to the relevant statements)

1.	*The nature of the research and the nature of my participation have been explained to me*	verbally	
		in writing	
2.	*I agree to be interviewed and to allow tape-recordings to be made of the interviews*	audiotape	
		videotape	
3.	*I agree to take part in and to allow tape-recordings to be made.*	audiotape	
		videotape	
4.	*The tape recordings may be transcribed*	without conditions	
		only by the researcher	
		by one or more nominated third parties:	
5.1	*I have been informed by the researcher that the tape recordings will be erased once the study is complete and the report has been written.*		
5.2	*OR I give permission for the tape recordings to be retained after the study and for them to utilised for the following purposes and under the following conditions:*		

Signatures

Signature of participant		Date
Witnessed by researcher		

Appendix Two: Informed Consent Form

RHODES UNIVERSITY

RHODES UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

AGREEMENT BETWEEN STUDENT RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I (participant's name) _____ agree to participate in the research dissertation of **NATALIE DONALDSON** on: Negotiating subject positions of lesbian representations in popular films and television programmes.

Biographical Information:

(This information is needed only to demonstrate the diversity of participants.)

Age: _____

Sex: _____

Race: _____

Occupation / Field of study: _____

As a participant in this research dissertation, I understand that:

1. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for a **MASTER'S-BY-THESIS DEGREE IN PSYCHOLOGY** at Rhodes University;
2. The researcher may be contacted on **046 603 8508/071 680 2772** or N.Donaldson@ru.ac.za;
3. The research dissertation has been approved by the Research dissertations and Ethics Review Committee as well as the Faculty of Humanities Higher Degrees Committee, and is under the supervision of **PROF. LINDY WILBRAHAM** in the Psychology Department at Rhodes University, who may be contacted on **046 603 8500** or L.Wilbraham@ru.ac.za;

4. The researcher is interested in exploring how film/media representations that address individuals – as available subject positions – have a subjective effect on both heterosexual and lesbian audiences;

5. My participation will involve taking part in a **90 minute focus group discussion** where I will be asked to watch clips from various local and international television programmes and asked to answer certain questions on these clips. These questions include, but are not limited to:
    a. What are your general impressions of this particular clip?
    b. How are lesbians represented in this clip?
    c. How do you think this representation resists stereotypes of lesbian sexualities?
    d. In what ways do you / don't you identify with the lesbian representation in this clip?
6. I will be asked to respond to questions or comments made by the researcher or the other participants that are of a personal nature, but I can choose not to answer any questions about aspects of my life which I am not willing to disclose;
7. I will be expected to respect the opinions and views of other participants as well as respect their need for privacy, confidentiality and anonymity;
8. I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study and to have these addressed to my satisfaction;
9. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time – However, I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate;
10. The report on the project may contain information about my personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours, but that the report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible to be identified by the general reader.

Signed on (date): _____

Participant: _____

Researcher: _____

Thank you for your time and participation in this research study!

Appendix Three: Transcription Key

[] overlapping speech
(( )) non-spoken action/information changed for anonymity
(0.1) signify pauses. 0.1 – 1 second, etc.
(...) inaudible
(!) emphasis on the word
= run-on line
{} researcher's additions/explanations
... Information purposefully omitted