

**NEGOTIATING THE GLOBAL: HOW YOUNG WOMEN IN NAIROBI  
SHAPE THEIR LOCAL IDENTITIES IN RESPONSE TO ASPECTS OF THE  
MEXICAN TELENVELA, *CUANDO SEAS MIA***

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of  
**Master of Arts of Rhodes University**

by  
Aamera Hamzaali Jiwaji

September 2010

## ABSTRACT

Latin American telenovelas have been exported to more than a hundred countries across the globe. While they are popular in their country of production because their messages resonate with their audience's everyday experiences, their popularity amongst global audiences with whom they share neither a social nor a cultural history is unexplained. Kenya has been importing and airing Latin American telenovelas since the early 1990s, and telenovelas have permeated many aspects of Kenyan daily life, when compared to other foreign globally-distributed media products that are aired on Kenyan television. As global media products, telenovelas remain open to criticisms from the media imperialism thesis. This research adopts an ethnographic approach to the study of audiences, and looks at the reception of a Mexican telenovela, *Cuando Seas Mia*, by a group of young Kenyan women in Nairobi. It reflects upon the media imperialism thesis from an African perspective by investigating the meanings that these women make from *Cuando Seas Mia*, and how these shape their changing local identities and cultures. The young women in this study, most of whom have moved to the city from the rural areas, are influenced by traditional, patriarchal Kenyan society and by the modern, Western influences of an urban environment. They experience a tension between their evolving rural and urban roles and identities and are drawn to telenovelas because their exploration of rural-urban themes holds a relevance to their own lives. They negotiate their contemporary African youth identities, gender roles and heterosexual relationships in relation to representations in the telenovela, questioning and destabilising African and Western definitions. These women select aspects from their traditional, African cultures and from their modern, Western experiences (and consumption of global media) and reconstruct them into a transitional youth identity which suits their day to day lives as young women living in an urban African environment.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

My thanks go to my supervisor, Priscilla Boshoff, for her support and encouragement.

And to my family.

## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER 2: MEDIA IMPERIALISM AND ETHNOGRAPHIC AUDIENCE STUDIES .....	4
1. Introduction .....	4
2. Media Imperialism .....	4
3. The Kenyan media .....	5
4. Critiques of the media imperialism thesis.....	7
5. The telenovela debate and the Kenyan market .....	9
6. Ethnographic audience studies .....	12
6.1 The ethnographic critique of the media imperialism thesis .....	12
6.2 Ethnographic reception studies .....	14
7. Ethnographic reception studies of global media products .....	15
8. Conclusion .....	18
CHAPTER 3: <i>CUANDO SEAS MIA</i> .....	19
1. Introduction.....	19
2. Mexican telenovelas.....	19
3. <i>Cuando Seas Mia</i> .....	21
4. The telenovela genre .....	22
4.1 Reality and melodrama .....	25
4.2 Entertainment and education .....	29
5. Dualities in <i>Cuando Seas Mia</i> .....	30
5.1 Good and evil .....	31
5.2 Tradition and modernity .....	32
5.3 Femininity and masculinity .....	35
5.4 Race.....	38
6. Conclusion .....	39
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	40
1. Introduction.....	40
2. Designing a research approach .....	40
3. The sample audience .....	42
4. The research methods.....	43

4.1 Focus groups .....	44
4.2 Individual interviews .....	46
4.3 Interview guides .....	47
5. Validity and reliability in qualitative studies .....	48
6. The role of the researcher .....	50
7. Conclusion .....	51
CHAPTER 5: TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF URBAN WOMEN IN KENYA .....	52
1. Introduction .....	52
2. A country in transition .....	53
2.1 Migration .....	54
2.2 Rural-urban migration .....	55
2.3 Urbanisation .....	56
2.4 Nairobi .....	56
3. A society in transition .....	58
4. Kenyan women .....	60
4.1 The place of traditional, patriarchal values in a modernising urban African society .....	60
4.2 The women in this study .....	64
5. Conclusion .....	69
CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH FINDINGS .....	70
1. Introduction .....	70
2. Defining the identities of women .....	70
2.1 Young women .....	72
2.2 Older women .....	81
2.3 Professional women .....	85
3. Defining the identities of men .....	90
3.1 The men in <i>Cuando Seas Mia</i> .....	90
3.2 Kenyan men .....	94
4. Defining romantic relationships .....	97
4.1 The love story .....	98
4.2 The ideal relationship .....	103
5. Conclusion .....	107
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION .....	109

APPENDICES .....	112
Appendix 1: Preliminary Questionnaire .....	112
Appendix 2: Results of the Preliminary Questionnaire .....	114
Appendix 3: Focus Group Guide .....	115
Appendix 4: A comparison of Latin American telenovelas to soap operas (of varying national origin) that are aired on Kenyan television Stations, 2007-2008 .....	116
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	117

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Telenovelas, the Latin American version of soap operas, are distinct for their strong ties to the culture and society of their country of production, from which they draw central themes and concerns (Tufté, 2000:97-98). They are popular amongst Latin American audiences (Tufté, 2000; Straubhaar, 2005; La Pastina, 2005; De Urbina and Lopez 2005; Machado-Borges, 2006; Martin-Barbero, Fox and White, 1993) because they function as a means of cultural expression (Tufté, 2000), and telenovela narratives are circulated, appropriated and reiterated by them within their everyday situations and encounters (Machado-Borges, 2006).

Telenovelas have been exported to more than a hundred countries spanning five continents (Melo, 1988) but their popularity amongst these global audiences with whom they do not share cultural similarities remains unexplained (Melo, 1988; La Pastina, 2005; Pal, 2005). Kenya shares neither a social nor a cultural history with Latin America and yet it has been importing and airing Latin American telenovelas since the early 1990s (Mutunga, 2007:22). Today, telenovelas are broadcast six times a week on four (out of five) national (free to air) television stations in Kenya. These include the state-owned national broadcaster (Kenya Broadcasting Corporation) and three privately owned commercial stations (KTN, Nation Television and Citizen Television). Kenya Television Network (KTN) was the first privately owned commercial station in Kenya to air telenovelas, and in the last couple of years it has aired a range of Mexican telenovelas including *La Usurpadora (The Usurper)*, *La Revancha (The Revenge)*, *La Hija del Jardinero (The Gardener's Daughter)* and *Cuando Seas Mia (When will you be mine)*, which is the subject of this study.

Telenovelas have permeated many aspects of Kenyan daily life, especially in Nairobi, the capital city. Local radio stations have developed on-air call-in competitions structured around the telenovela narrative; street lights on main highways carry advertisements of the latest telenovelas to air on Kenyan television; and Nairobi *matatus*, 14-seater public service vehicles, are painted with the names of telenovela characters. Their popularity continues to grow rapidly, unprecedented when compared to the other foreign globally-distributed media products that are aired on Kenyan television (Wandago, 2003; Mutunga, 2007; Mwaniki, 2008; Muganda, 2008).

In this study, I investigate the meanings that a group of young women living in Nairobi construct from Latin American telenovelas. I engage with the women on an individual level and in a group setting in order to analyse how they understand and make sense of their changing identities within a transitional Kenyan society, and how aspects of the dualities explored within the telenovela inform and shape this negotiation process. The goal is therefore to examine the intricacies of how the local and the global

interact in the specific instance of a group of young Kenyan women watching *Cuando Seas Mia*, a Latin American telenovela.

As a global media product, telenovelas are open to the criticisms posed by the media imperialism thesis which argues that globalisation has facilitated first-world media companies to use media products to “promote the values and structures of the dominating center” (Schiller 1976:9) at the expense of local communities and institutions. According to this perspective, the popularity of telenovelas in Kenya acts as a form of cultural imperialism that has the potential to effectively suppress the expression and development of local Kenyan cultures and initiatives, contributing to a general trend towards global cultural homogenization (Schiller, 1976). However, the media imperialism thesis has been challenged by ethnographic audience studies which look at local reception of global media products. These studies argue that audiences are situated within social and cultural contexts that influence the interpretations that they construct from their reception of global media products (Lovell, 1981; Radway, 1987; Liebes and Katz, 1993; Das, 1995; Parameswaran, 2003). Audience understandings of global media products are not dictated by the media products nor does such consumption necessarily result in cultural homogenisation. Instead, audience interactions with media products are characterised by an active involvement and negotiation.

These earlier research findings on the negotiated reception of global media products by first world audiences have been reinforced by a few recent studies conducted in Africa on African audiences (Miller, 1995; Davis and Davis, 1995; Strelitz, 2005; Boshoff, 2005; Assefa, 2005; and Phiri, 2006 in Trinidad, Morocco, South Africa, Ethiopia and Zambia respectively). These studies show how the particular social and cultural contexts of the audience inflect the ways in which audiences appropriate global media products. They conclude that the local cultures and identities of African audiences are selectively shaped – not dictated – by their interaction with global media products. I discuss these and other critiques that ethnographic research studies pose to the media imperialism thesis in chapter 2, with reference to the Kenyan media context, in an attempt to explore how the young Kenyan women who watch telenovelas engage in a similar negotiation process, drawing upon their cultures and identities as urban women living in Africa.

During my interactions with a variety of telenovela viewers in Kenya, I noticed that young women in Nairobi, most of whom had moved to the city from the rural areas in search of education or employment, related to the core telenovela theme that deals with the tensions between rural and urban lifestyles. In chapter 3, I unpack possible reasons for the global popularity of Latin American telenovelas such as *Cuando Seas Mia*, and suggest that their appeal may be attributed in part to their exploration of such dualities, and negotiation of themes that hold a relevance to the lives of their

audiences.

I trace the methodological approach to this study in chapter 4, and then in chapter 5 locate the women in this study within the social and cultural context of Kenya and its capital city, Nairobi. These young women, a section of whom comprise the participants in this study, are not representative of the Kenyan telenovela audience. They are between 18 to 29 years (the age group that reflects the highest rural-urban migration patterns amongst women in Kenya), live in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, and are either working, studying or pursuing part time studies while engaged in full time employment. They have close links to their rural homesteads but are situated within particular social and cultural contexts in urban Nairobi. I locate them within these contextual frameworks (Strelitz, 2005:60) and analyse the various influences that contribute to shaping their daily lives in order to understand how they interpret their changing personal and communal identities within an urban African environment.

Most audience studies of telenovelas have been limited to Latin American audiences (Tufte, 2000; Straubhaar, 2005; La Pastina, 2005; De Urbina and Lopez 2005; Machado-Borges, 2006; Martin-Barbero, Fox and White, 1993). Research on why they resonate with global audiences, and in particular with African audiences, has not been conducted. I am therefore able in chapter 6, to reflect upon the media imperialism thesis from an African perspective by investigating the meanings that young Kenyan women in an urban centre make from *Cuando Seas Mia*, and how these shape their changing local identities and cultures. I describe how these women use aspects of *Cuando Seas Mia* to reflect upon their local cultures and daily lives, and how they negotiate their own rural-urban identities in response to *Cuando Seas Mia*'s presentations of tradition and modernity (Tomlinson, 1991; Thompson, 1995; Tufte, 2000; Machado-Borges, 2006).

The thesis ends in chapter 7 with concluding remarks about the transitional society that these young Kenyan women occupy, and how they negotiate their identities in response to the dual environments and varying influences that they are subjected to in the course of their daily lives.

## CHAPTER 2: MEDIA IMPERIALISM AND ETHNOGRAPHIC AUDIENCE STUDIES

### 1. Introduction

The media imperialism thesis argues that the global distribution of first-world media products promotes the economic and cultural values of the producing country at the expense of the local cultures and identities of the dominated, receiving country. Media researchers from the ethnographic tradition challenge these tenets of the media imperialism thesis. They argue that global audiences actively participate in their reception of media products, that they understand the different elements within media products in relation to their own social and cultural backgrounds, and that they negotiate and selectively appropriate particular media messages into their own local contexts. What this means for this study is that the Kenyan contexts within which the young women in this study are situated shape the meanings that they construct from *Cuando Seas Mia*, and their appropriations of aspects of the telenovela into their identities, lives and cultures. The telenovela, in turn, may help them to negotiate the various tensions that they experience between tradition and modernity, the rural and the urban. This chapter will critique the media imperialism thesis from an ethnographic approach to audience studies by referring to the consumption of a global media product, a Latin American telenovela, by a particular segment of the urban Kenyan female population. It will discuss a range of audience studies that have been conducted within the ethnographic tradition to highlight the importance of the social and cultural contexts of audiences, and to show how their locally situated negotiations of global media products shape their social roles and identities.

### 2. Media Imperialism

Media imperialism is the term used to describe the ways in which media, through their global spread of mass industry products, dominate people's lived experiences and their cultures. Media imperialism has largely been attributed to globalisation, the "growing interconnectedness of different parts of the world" (Thompson, 1995:149) which gave rise to complex forms of local-global interaction and interdependencies that were often dependent upon the telecommunications infrastructure. One of the results of globalisation, theorists such as Thompson (1999) argue, is that localised activities in different parts of the world begin to be shaped by one another (Thompson, 1995:149-150). This gives rise to a "complex, creative interface between the globalised diffusion of media products and their localised appropriation" (Thompson, 1995:151) and a growing relationship between global cultural forms and locally lived cultures (Strelitz, 2005:30).

Media imperialism has been described in various ways, as communication imperialism (Sui-Nam Lee, 1988), electronic invasion (Thompson, 1995), cultural synchronization (Hamelink, 1983), and ideological/ economic imperialism (Mattleart, 1994), with each alternate phrase emphasising

a particular aspect or effect of global media production, distribution or reception. However, the original media imperialism thesis which was developed by Schiller (1976:9; later Mattleart, 1994 and Thompson, 1995) emphasises its economic foundations and cultural consequences. Media imperialism is defined as “the way in which large multinational corporations, including the media of developed countries dominate developing countries” through the international proliferation of economic and cultural products that “attract, pressure, force and sometimes even bribe ... social institutions to correspond to or even promote the values and structures of the dominating center” (Schiller, 1976:9). Schiller (1979) adds that multi- and transnational corporations operate in a core-periphery model of global power that manipulates global audiences and positions them as consumers of capitalist products. Focus is placed on how the ownership, structure, distribution, and content of the media in a periphery country are subjected to external pressures from the media interests of core countries without a proportionate reciprocation of influence (Boyd-Barrett, 1977 in White, 2001).

Schiller (1979) also underlines the cultural impact of media imperialism, where culture is defined as the particular way of life or the works and practices of a particular group of people (Williams, 1983:60). He argues that the ruling sector’s imposition of their imagery and cultural perspectives upon other cultures, through the monopolisation of international trade, shapes social consciousness throughout the system at large (Schiller in Strelitz, 2005:36). The long-term consequences are a reduction in the diversity of cultures internationally. The values and habits (the culture) of an economically powerful group of people (Tomlinson, 1991:3) thrived at the expense of the less powerful, thereby reducing the variety of global cultures, or “global cultural homogenisation” (Strelitz, 2005:35).

Global cultural homogenisation is where a foreign culture dominates within a receptive country and eventually suppresses and obliterates the domestic and local practices by which local collectivities make sense of their lives (Strelitz, 2005:35). An active role on the part of the producing country and a deleterious effect on the dominated country is assumed (Sui-Nam Lee, 1988:69). Advanced capitalist economies were accused of influencing cultural production and consumption in Third World countries through the flow of global media products (Noh, 2007). Furthermore, because global media products referred to foreign situations and were imbued with values that local audiences did not necessarily share, they were criticised for not serving the interests and needs of other populations (Moran, 1998:170). Local audiences were seen as being influenced by the values of an alien and predominantly capitalist system (Ogan, 1988:94).

### **3. The Kenyan media**

Like Schiller (1976) and other proponents of the media imperialism thesis (Boyd-Barrett, 1977; Smythe, 1981; Tomlinson, 1991; Mattleart, 1994), the post-independence Kenyan government of 1963

was critical of the reliance that Kenyan radio and television stations placed upon British and American programmes. It favoured local programming that would promote African and Kenyan identities and cultures and encouraged the government broadcaster, the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), to air more Swahili programmes and to emphasise African music, dance, traditions and culture – programmes that communicated African as opposed to Western values (Currey, 1995:140; Richardson, 1999b; Collender, 2006).

From 1964 to 1982, while the country operated as a one party state under KANU (Kenya African National Union) (Richardson, 1999b), KBC remained the sole national television and radio network in the country under strict government control. The advent of multiparty politics in 1992 substantially liberalised the Kenyan media. There was an increase in the number of newspapers, and the airwaves were freed. As a result, national and regional newspapers, radio and television stations proliferated. In television, for example, KTN (Kenyan Television Network), the broadcast media arm of the Standard Group, was the first privately owned commercial station to go on the air in 1989. In 1992, STV (Stella Television) owned by Mauritius based TV Africa was launched and in 1999, NTV (Nation Television, owned by the Nation Media Group), Family TV and Citizen TV were launched. These stations added to the range of regional, cable and satellite channels from South Africa, the Middle East and India that now populated the Kenyan airwaves. In 2006, 104 FM and 34 TV frequencies were assigned, while in 2007, nine FM and four TV frequencies were assigned (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2008:233). Today, there are around six television stations broadcasting in Kenya, and more than fifty radio stations (Hedges, 2007:2). With the growth in the number and variety of television stations that Kenyan audiences can access, the monopoly that KBC had held over the Kenyan airwaves has been broken as has the government's control over the type and origin of programs. The range of programming that Kenyan audiences are exposed to has expanded from local programming to foreign programs, mostly from the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Latin America and post-1994, South Africa.

The freeing of the airwaves also prompted the creation of regulatory bodies to monitor the activities of the Kenyan media: the Ministry of Information and Communication, the Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK) which controls broadcasting licences and handles frequency allocation (CCK, 2005); and the Media Owners Association, which brings together the country's newspaper, radio and television groups. This latter organisation, the Media Owners Association, was formed in response to the fear that the increased liberalisation of the airwaves would result in an increased tendency for broadcasters to contravene common codes of decency and security. It self-regulates the industry (NTV, 2009) and mediates in potentially confrontational situations between the media and other stakeholders. None of these three organisations however regulate the amount of foreign content

that may be imported and aired by local television stations in Kenya. Numerous attempts have been made by the CCK to introduce legal quotas to limit the amount of foreign programming that may be imported and aired but they have all met with failure at the hands of the Kenyan Legislature. The most recent attempt was the Miscellaneous Amendment Bill of 2007 (Murungi, 2007). In a bid to promote local and culturally relevant content (Kariuki, 2001:3; Mugonyi, 2003:7), it sought to limit foreign ownership of Kenyan media, give the CCK the power to regulate the content of TV programmes, impose a quota on the amount of foreign media products (as opposed to local media programs) that may be imported and aired by free to air and pay television stations originating both locally and internationally. This Bill however was not passed by Parliament. Unrestricted, Kenyan media continues to dedicate the majority of its airtime to foreign programming. The state-owned and funded public broadcaster remains the largest broadcasting organization in Kenya, and continues to pioneer the production of local dramas, music and cultural programmes for national transmission in both Kiswahili and English. KTN and NTV, the two leading private television stations (Wahome, 2007:10) broadcast mainly imported drama, music, current and locally produced news and current affairs programmes. Recent initiatives have however been made by KTN, NTV and Citizen TV to sponsor, develop and air local productions (Mwaniki, 2008:28) and programs “such as *Papa Shirandula*, *Cobra Squad*, *Tahidi High*, *Inspekta Mwala*, *Mother-in-Law* and *Beba Beba* are becoming household names, thanks to local media houses’ renewed interest in home-grown productions” (Mwaniki, 2008:28; Banda, 2007). The result is that “almost all local stations are aggressively introducing programmes that appeal to the mass market to remain relevant” (Mwaniki, 2008:28; Muganda, 2008).

#### **4. Critiques of the media imperialism thesis**

While acknowledging the economic appeal of importing foreign products to air on local television stations (Mugonyi, 2003:7; Wandago, 2003:3), Kenyan media analysts have criticised the trend to air foreign programmes (Muganda, 2008:2) that are “cheap in content, cultural value and cost” (Wandago, 2003:3) and they have challenged the media’s defence that they are unable to air non-existent local programs (Wandago, 2003:3). These analysts have warned of the effects that foreign content may have on local Kenyan identities and cultures and called for greater financial support of the local media industry:

The media should exist not only to make profit but also to reflect our nation’s culture ...

It is our turn to promote local products (Wandago, 2003:3).

Such arguments are positioned within the media imperialism tradition. They are premised on the negative influences that foreign media products can have on local Kenyan cultures and acknowledge the identity of the media as powerful cultural industries that determine the interpretations and meanings that audiences make from global media products (Strelitz, 2005:7-9).

The media imperialism thesis further argues that media products are imbued with a cultural message that infiltrates and overwhelms the receiving countries' opinions, attitudes and cultures (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955 in Boyd-Barrett and Newbold, 1995:124). An extreme illustration of this is perhaps the complaint by Kenyan men (in local newspapers) that the more Kenyan women get hooked to soap operas, the more their love lives are affected since they are expected to "measur[e] up to the handsome heroes on TV" (George, 2008:11):

It has reached the point where it is not strange to see a man on the streets carrying roses because he has been forced to buy them by his wife or girlfriend. What he may not realise is that giving flowers to a woman is part of Western culture that used to be practised during the winter months (George, 2008:11).

Media imperialism therefore defines audiences as passive subjects (Moore, 1993:6) who are isolated from their contexts and who are mere receivers of media messages rather than readers of them (Moore, 1993:6). For theorists working from a premise of media imperialism the interaction between audiences and media texts is a uni-linear process.

Critics of this thesis counter that the ideological implications of a media text can only be assumed after understanding an audience's engagement with it:

a text does not become culturally significant until it is read ... [R]eading the imperialist text becomes the crucial issue in judging cultural imperialism (Tomlinson, 1991:42).

The researcher must take into account the audience's critical sophistication, together with their location within a particular social and cultural context (Tomlinson, 1991:47). Such an approach is predicated on a diversity of audiences as opposed to a singular audience entity, each of which are rooted within their separate lived cultures (Hall, 1980 in Boyd-Barrett and Newbold, 1995:338), and who experience and interpret media products from the perspective of these particular cultural contexts. In short, such an approach sees audiences as more active and critical, their responses more complex and reflective, and their cultural values more resistant to manipulation and invasion than the media imperialism thesis gives them credit for (Tomlinson, 1991:49-50).

It is also questionable whether global media products are necessarily imposed upon local audience cultures (Tomlinson, 1991:94). This is because media products are no longer regarded as "closed, privileged sites of meaning" (Machado-Borges, 2006) but "dynamic sites of struggle over representation, and complex spaces in which subjectivities are constructed and identities are contested" (Spitulnik, 1993:296). Audiences' interactions with media texts are seen as giving rise to a variety of interpretations, translations and transformations of the foreign culture in relation to more familiar, local experiences (Boyd-Barrett in Tomlinson, 1991:45), thus drawing on the argument that audiences are active participants in the interpretation and decoding of polysemic media messages

(Hall, 1980) and that, during the reading act, the words are given life by the reader (Hall, 1980). Conceived as such, the text structures aspects of meaning; it guides the reader, but it cannot fix the meaning which is the outcome of the oscillations between the text and the imagination of the reader. The text is polysemic, that is to say it has the possibility of a number of different meanings being constructed from it (Barker, 1997:115-6).

Media products serve an “identity reinforcement function” (Harwood, 1999:36) since audiences may seek media representations that either strengthen their identification with particular social groups (Harwood, 1999:29) or that give “salience to something important in (their) own life or situation” (Blumler, 1979 in Harwood, 1999:29). Through foreign media products, audiences are also invited to vicariously experience lives in other societies (Appadurai, 1996; Thompson, 1995). This helps them to produce new cultural meanings (Cheng, 2006) and to create “communities [that] cultivate shared and public notions about facts, values and contingencies of human existence” (Gerbner, 1969 in Boyd-Barrett and Newbold, 1995:144). It makes available to them an array of experiences that otherwise would have been unavailable to them and, precisely because such an experience is a vicarious one, allows them to see themselves in a situation that is radically different from their own (Thompson, 1995:119, 189).

There are therefore many approaches that challenge the media imperialism thesis’ argument that global media products have a necessarily obliterating or homogenising effect upon local cultures. These audience based approaches encourage the view that audiences actively engage with global media products and, drawing upon their social and cultural environments, selectively appropriate aspects of them into their lives. In view of this audience centric critique of the media imperialism thesis, the next section will give an overview of the reception of telenovelas amongst Kenyan audiences touching on its debated identity as a media imperialist product.

## **5. The telenovela debate and the Kenyan market**

Telenovelas, the Latin American version of soap opera, have captured global markets and audiences. Their international popularity has been attributed to their economic appeal, increased production, corporate strategy targeting worldwide exports (Biltereyst and Meers, 2000:394) and to the language regions which they target (Biltereyst and Meers, 2000:409). Kenya began importing and airing Latin American telenovelas from Mexico and Brazil in the early 1990s. A country that shares neither a linguistic nor a cultural background with Latin America, telenovelas have “turned the local [Kenyan] TV menu on its head” (Mutunga, 2007:22). In 2007, four out of the five local television stations aired at least one Latin American telenovela serial twice a week in a prime time, late evening slot, either during the weekday or the weekend (see appendix 4), statistics which local media houses argue is

because “broadcasters have recognised the popularity of soap operas and ... are using them to fight for the viewer’s attention” (Wahome, 2007:14). (See appendix 4 for a comparison of the amount of airtime that is dedicated to other soap operas that are produced either locally or in the United States or Australia.)

Telenovelas have also infiltrated other aspects of the daily lives of Kenyans. The streetlights on main highways coming into and out of the Nairobi city centre are mounted with advertisements featuring the latest telenovelas to air on television. The back pages of *Instinct*, the Saturday magazine pull-out in the *Standard*, a local daily newspaper, carry advertisements of the latest telenovelas to air on KTN. *Matatus*, 14 seater public service vehicles, are painted with the names of telenovela characters. Local radio stations have on-air call-in competitions structured around telenovela narratives. Single episodes or entire series of a telenovela are re-screened on the same station owing to public demand, such as *Rubi* (on NTV) and *El Cuerpo del Deseo* (on Citizen TV). Kenyan women also emulate the costumes, hair styles and behaviour of some of the telenovela characters (Rehal, 2007:7). The unprecedented popularity of telenovelas in Kenya therefore continues to grow rapidly.

The growth of telenovelas in the Kenyan market is mirrored by their growth in other global markets, and their international expansion has given rise to an evolving telenovela debate (Biltreyst and Meers, 2000:396). In this debate, telenovelas are considered a form of reverse cultural imperialism (Rogers and Antola, 1985; Barker, 1997; Sousa, 1997 in Straubhaar, 2004:90). As distinctively Latin American products, imbued with a cultural value and authenticity that is deeply rooted in historical forms of local fiction (Straubhaar, 1984; Martin-Barbero, 1993; Trinta, 1997), telenovelas pose a challenge to the status quo established by the North American media and its products, and to the traditional one-way flow of information from north to south, centre to periphery (Barker, 1997:84; Biltreyst and Meers, 2000:393). From this perspective, Latin America may have emerged as a competing centre to North America, a result of shifts in the global balance of power between nation-states and blocs and forged new sets of global interdependencies (Featherstone, 1995:12-13).

The second position within the debate aligns telenovelas with North American media products and sees them as contributing to the validity of the media imperialism thesis since they too carry a distinctively imperialist ideology which has a direct, unmediated impact on audience behaviour (Biltreyst and Meers, 2000) in the receiving countries. Telenovelas are seen as neither an alternative nor a challenge to North American media products in any real sense (Biltreyst and Meers, 2000:399). They either perpetuate the same cultural message as North American media products or initiate their own brand of cultural imperialism (Tomlinson, 1991; Reeves, 1993) by distributing media messages imbued with their own distinct culture. Comparisons have been made between the generic elements of Latin

American telenovelas and North American soap operas, with parallels drawn between the two in terms of structure, style and content (Muraro, 1987; Oliveira, 1990). The real power structures in global communication are therefore seen to remain the same (Biltreyst and Meers, 2000:398) since the Latin American media models are structured upon the US commercial model (Fox and Waisbord, 2002) and US interests retain capital control over these media houses (Sousa, 1998). Latin American telenovelas are simply Hollywood productions with a “brazilianised face” (Oliveira, 1990:129).

Some Kenyan media critics have sided with this latter argument which asserts the culturally imperialist identity of telenovelas and how they invade and manipulate local audiences and cultures (Wandago, 2003:3). They criticise the frequency with which telenovelas are aired as compared to local programming, claiming that this has an adverse effect upon viewers’ routines, values, perceptions of reality and subsequently local cultures, identities and morals (Mutunga, 2007:22). They also question their popularity amongst Kenyan audiences, drawing upon the argument that the ‘cultural discount factor’ of foreign media products reduces its appeal in foreign markets because of the inability of foreign audiences to identify with them (Muganda, 2008; Trepte, 2003; Straubhaar, 1991).

However, the general approach to the recent presence of telenovelas in the Kenyan market is celebratory. According to articles published in the local Kenyan dailies, telenovelas seem to offer Kenyan audiences voyeuristic entertainment, more dramatic story lines and “better and more believable characters” (Mutunga, 2007:22), or as Wahome (2007:14) puts it, Kenyan women need “‘wooie’ programs once in a while” alluding to the melodramatic appeal that they hold. These articles quote a number of young women who watch the Latin American telenovelas. Eunice, a beauty therapist in Nairobi, said that aside from the “welcome relief” that they offer from “predictable, tediously boring routines”, they also allow them to “live their own dreams and feel inspired” through fantasising about the “opulence and luxury” (Rehal, 2007:6-7). 24 year-old Tracy Nyanjiru “would rather miss a dinner date than skip her favourite Mexican soap opera” (Mutunga, 2007:22). 30 year-old Doryne Acol “was so hooked to *Secreto de Amor* that she named her first baby girl Maria Clara Acol after the lead actress whose real name is Scarlet Ortiz” (Mutunga, 2007:22), thereby strengthening the ties between the two cultures through the appropriation of a name from the Latin American culture into the Kenyan culture. Another article narrates how a Kenyan woman proposed to her boyfriend by putting a ring in his cup of tea, having seen a similar proposal on television where the couple got married and lived happily ever after (George, 2008:11).

Mungai (2005) adds:

... women’s conversations included Mexican names and children wrote poems and rhymes using the names of the programmes of their characters. It was not unusual to hear

the most unexpected person singing the signature tunes of the these programmes, though hardly anyone could figure out what the words meant (2005:12-3).

These comments offer a critique of the media imperialism thesis from the perspective of a single viewer's consumption of a particular telenovela and their appropriation of elements of it into their lives.

This section, in accordance with ethnographic approaches to audience studies, localises the reception of Latin American telenovelas within the particular group that this study is concerned with: young Kenyan women living in an urban environment, showing that these women actively respond to telenovelas, its themes, characters and storylines and appropriate elements from it into their own lives. The next section will offer a critique of the ethnographic approach to audience studies, and it will discuss particular ethnographic reception studies of global media products by first world audiences and African audiences.

## **6. Ethnographic audience studies**

### *6.1 The ethnographic critique of the media imperialism thesis*

The ethnographic approach to audience studies supports a contextual study of audiences in order to understand how they engage with a media product, understand it and appropriate elements of it into their own lives. It is an approach that was developed from the social sciences of anthropology and sociology, and it argues that the "localised networks of social relationships, everyday interactions, and class and/ or religious affiliations" (Nightingale, 2003:366) within which audiences are situated influence the interpretations that they make. Ethnographic audience studies encourage a study of audiences that is located within the specific social and cultural contexts that mediate their understandings and interpretations (Cary and Kreiling, 1974:232; Morley, 1986; Thompson, 1995; White, 2001; Nightingale, 2003:365; Boyd-Barrett and Newbold, 2004:3). It describes media products as cultural resources (Fiske, 1989:35; Strelitz, 2005:14), and not merely cultural commodities, from which audiences derive meanings, pleasures and identities.

The ethnographic approach advocates a multi-perspectival examination of audience contexts (Dahlgren, 1998:303; Kellner, 1997:103; Strelitz, 2000:38-39) which moves away from the "expressive individualism that informs much of the work on audiences to a more thorough engagement with the ways that meanings and identities are negotiated socially, and with the ways that these grounded processes are structured together by wider economic and ideological formations" (Murdock in Strelitz, 2005:17-18). It says that audience identities are not just psychological (from the audience's perspective) (Ang, 1990:244) but located within political, social and cultural frames that organise and pattern them (Fiske, 1987:311; Morley in Strelitz, 2005:23). Hence, audiences ought to be viewed

through their participation in wider social relationships (Hall *et al*, 1992:284). This should be the case especially in view of the structural upheaval that modern societies are undergoing where the break between tradition (and the continuity that it offers) and modernity (and the continuous social change that it brings about) has brought about a crisis of identity where the modern individual is fragmented, dislocated and decentered as s/he moves further from the stability of cultural landscapes and closer towards a multiplicity of possible identities (Hall *et al*, 1992:292-311).

Emphasis is placed on sociality (Martin-Barbero, 2006:286): the social construction of subjects within the contexts in which they receive media products, and which impact upon their reception process of media products (Katz and Lazarsfeld in Boyd-Barrett and Newbold, 1995:119). Society is described by words like “honeycomb” (Curran *et al*, 1982:103) and “fabric” (Martin-Barbero, 2006:286) to emphasise its interwoven and interdependent identity, and its ability to both shape social subjects and identities and “affirm, create and re-articulate meanings and social identities” (Martin-Barbero, 2006:287). This socially located approach to audiences studies marks a shift in the terminology of audience research from spectator to viewer which recognises how audiences are agents in the process of message decoding (Machado-Borges, 2006), that they manipulate the mass media in relation to their local contexts (Curran *et al*, 1982:103) and that they actively and selectively engage in constructing meanings and pleasures from media products (Fiske, 1987:17). A ‘dialogic’ (Moore, 1993:6) encounter therefore occurs between media products and audiences where the ‘indeterminacy’ and ‘gaps’ within a media product are filled through a process of meaning construction that is driven by an audience’s social identity.

Schiller (1996) however remains sceptical of the ethnographic approach to audience studies and dismisses its insistence that audiences display cultural power by opposing and resisting the dominant messages encoded in global media products:

I am not saying that everybody is a cultural dope. But I do have to recognize where the cultural power is ... If they are reading women’s books, romances, they are showing their resistance to their way of life... This might be the case, but I don’t regard that as the type of resistance that will take us very far (Schiller, 1996).

Writers within the ethnographic tradition (Das, 1995:149; Thompson, 1995; Strelitz, 2005) respond by saying that audiences localise global media products to their particular social environments, hence the same media product may be very differently received in different parts of the world (Das, 1995:149). Globally distributed media products neither constitute nor construct a homogenous global culture. Precisely because of this dynamic local element, the ethnographic researcher observes how “the relation between events on the tele-screen and domestic life play themselves out in the context of

specific societies” (Das, 1995:149). Understanding is “from the position and point of view of the person who understands” (Gadamer, 1976 in Barker, 1997:115). This critiques the media imperialism thesis for committing a “fallacy of internalism” (Thompson, 1995:171) and assuming that the interaction between global media products and local audiences can be deduced from an examination of the media product and with a total disregard for “the complex, varied and contextually specific ways in which messages are interpreted by individuals and incorporated into their day to day lives”:

Local cultures do not simply kneel down in abject supplication before the onslaughts of global cultures (Das (1995:149).

The reception of media products by audiences, according to the ethnographic approach, is therefore not a “one-way transmission of sense but rather a creative encounter between ... a complex and structural symbolic form and ... individuals who bring certain resources and assumptions to bear on the activity of interpretation” (Thompson, 1995:171) and as media researchers, we can “only comprehend the appeal of the text when we pay attention to the settings in which it is routinely consumed” (Moore, 1993:36-37).

## *6.2 Ethnographic reception studies*

Ethnographic reception studies combine the ethnographic approach with the principles of reception studies. It emphasises the appropriation of media products as a localised phenomenon (Thompson, 1995:174) within the frameworks of domestic and familial relationships (Gallagher, 2003:27) and the “lived experiences of media consumers” (Moore, 1993:32). In addition and in keeping with reception studies, it recommends that the context of use, the text itself and how audiences make texts meaningful also be examined:

... messages are not inherently meaningful, and that which is perceived or understood by media audiences depends largely on the characteristics of the audience, rather than the intentions of communicators or any intrinsic features of media programs (Caldarola, 1990:3-4).

Since “[one] cannot determine in advance which aspect ... will be involved in the reception of a particular symbolic form” (Thompson, 1995:177), such an approach would allow the researcher to access the manner in which media messages are appropriated into the practical contexts of everyday life (Thompson, 1995:178) and show “how people actively and creatively make their own meanings and create their own culture, rather than passively absorb pre-given meanings imposed on them” (Ang in Strelitz, 2005:24). Audience identities can be examined from both individual and group aspects within their day-to-day social settings making it easier to understand how they define themselves, what they do with the cultural products that they consume (Strelitz, 2005:39), and how and why they

appropriate selected elements of media products into their local cultures. Therefore, even though the “circulation of information and communication has become increasingly global ... the process of appropriation remains inherently contextual and hermeneutic” (Thompson, 1995:174).

### **7. Ethnographic reception studies of global media products**

The ethnographic approach to audiences has been met with enthusiasm by first world researchers precisely because it situates the consumption of global media products within local contexts which influence audience appropriation of media messages. In 1993, a reception study of *Dallas* (a North American soap opera) by Israeli viewers (a group of community members who were married couples and their friends) from a range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds was conducted (Katz and Liebes, 1993) which examined whether global programs held a universal appeal because they were understood in the same way in different places or whether they evoked different kinds of “involvement and response” in different places (Katz and Liebes, 1993:3) depending on varied cultural backgrounds. The findings showed that “viewers typically use television fiction as a forum for discussing their own lives” and that “value comes not from the program but from negotiation with it” (1993:154). Furthermore the nature of involvement of the viewer, in relation to understanding, interpretation and involvement was shown to vary in relation to social and cultural background (1993:6, 21).

These findings are reinforced by more recent studies conducted amongst African audiences (Miller, 1995; Davis and Davis, 1995; Strelitz, 2005; Boshoff, 2005; Assefa, 2005; Phiri, 2006). In his study of how a Trinidadian audience received a North American soap opera, Miller (1995 in Barker, 1997:123) drew upon Liebes and Katz’s finding that audience group identity plays a role in the understandings made of a media product. Miller found that Trinidadian audiences had localised *The Young and the Restless* by making sense of it and absorbing it into local meanings and practices of fashion and sex.

A study of adolescents in the semi-rural town of Zawiya, Morocco (another country of Arab origin) and their consumption of a variety of Western, Middle Eastern, and locally produced media (Davis and Davis, 1995) during a period of social change in their community, also revealed a relationship between their exposure to the media and their use of these images to re-imagine many aspects of their lives, particularly in relation to social behavior, choice of mate, and career aspirations. Davis and Davis (1995) found that many of the adolescents in their study were eager to reconcile the tensions between their traditional Islamic values and the more contemporary and modern media-relayed ones. This negotiation served to define their identities as adolescents and young adults, and it is a duality which they capture in their study title “The Mosque and the Satellite” where the mosque represents Islamic culture, and the satellite access to western technology and its products. While Davis and Davis’ study included both male and female adolescents, there was a gendered element to their study

since they differentiated their findings based on gender. They found that the men and women, to some extent, responded differently to American media. For example, while both men and women gained new perspectives especially on heterosexual interactions, the young women, in addition to this, used their media consumption to explore changing gender roles and new male-female dynamics.

The construction by these young Moroccan adolescents of a post-modern brand of cultural identity (Miller 1992) that is rooted within their local lives depicts an element of symbolic distancing. Symbolic distancing is when the media offers audiences new vistas, new lifestyles and new ways of thinking about their lives which allow them to “take some distance from the conditions of their day-to-day lives - not literally but symbolically, imaginatively, vicariously” (Thompson, 1995:175). It is an aspect of the appropriation of globalised media products into localised audience practices. It exposes people to other ways of living and being and allows them to think critically about their own lives and life conditions (Thompson, 1995), and because of this, “More persons in more parts of the world consider a wider set of ‘possible’ lives than they ever did before” (Appadurai, 1991:197).

Strelitz (2001) also encountered elements of symbolic distancing during his interview with Khulani, a male student at Rhodes University in South Africa. Khulani had grown up in a strongly traditional Zulu family and was exposed to western culture for the first time after leaving home through the North American soap opera *The Bold and the Beautiful*. Strelitz found that Khulani adopted a certain number of Western values (picked up in part from the soap opera) which co-existed with his traditional patriarchal Zulu identities, and together influenced his understandings of the relationship between a father and a son, a husband and a wife, and even the roles and identities of a woman. The ‘foreign’ culture portrayed in *The Bold and the Beautiful*, therefore, should not be equated with cultural regression since for Khulani it played a subversive and potentially progressive role, and helped him to think critically about his own life and life conditions, and prompted a world view change from tradition to modernity. Strelitz’s study, like other reception studies of African audiences (Assefa, 2005; Boshoff, 2005; Phiri, 2006) points to the importance of embedding audience viewing practices within the local contexts of understanding and everyday life in order to understand how they influence the ways in which audiences appropriate global media products, and how in turn their local African cultures and identities (Ethiopian, South African and Zambian) are shaped – not dictated - by their interaction with these global media products.

The ability to situate and embed the acts of media consumption and reception within a social setting has also been favoured by feminist researchers. In her study of a British soap opera, Lovell (1981) made a similar finding to Strelitz (2001). She found that *Coronation Street* played a progressive role amongst British women by challenging the values of patriarchal society through a presentation of

the norm as “broken marriages, temporary liaisons” and the interruption as “marriages and ‘happy family’ interludes” (1981:50). Radway (1987) also embedded her female readers of the romance novel within their familial environment to discover how her readers saw themselves first as women and then as mothers (Radway, 1987:7). The act of reading was, to them, a bid for independence which marked an escape from the physical and emotional demands of domestic labour.

Studies of women audiences in the third world have also been conducted under the ethnographic tradition which explore the globalised diffusion and localised appropriation of media products (Thompson, 1995). Parameswaran (2003) found that young urban, middle class Indian women choose to read “sensational, gothic and melodramatic” novels in order to reject both high culture Western modernity and imperialism, and the Indian patriarchal power structure (2003:322). Similarly, Das’ (1995) study of *Hum Log*, a pro-development soap opera in the Mexican entertainment-education tele-documentary tradition, amongst viewers in an Indian village found that audiences appropriated the formulaic or clichéd prescriptions from within the soap opera by altering them and relating them to their own private social situations (1995:165). She also found that audiences identified with the actors and episodes either as a way to participate in the middle class glamour or because they felt that their lives were somehow inexplicably linked to the characters.

Tufte’s (2000) study of the Brazilian telenovela *Living with the Rubbish Queen* points to how audiences use “hybrid spheres of signification” (Tufte, 2000:58) to define their modernity and their cultural citizenship (Nyugen, 2004:439). Martin-Barbero *et al* (1993) also recognise the influence that the urban-rural dynamic has on audience understanding and appropriation of media products. They show that audiences use media products to vicariously experience other situations (Thompson, 1995; Appadurai, 1996). Media texts are therefore “a literary experience open to the reactions, desires and motivations of the public” (Martin-Barbero *et al*, 1993:228) since audiences exchange places with the characters in the narrative and reconfigure their identities and popular cultures in response to them (Tufte, 2000; Das, 1995; Martin Barbero *et al*, 1993). Telenovelas have also been shown to integrate with other media and their messages are circulated, appropriated and reiterated by audiences in their everyday situations and encounters of the audience (Machado-Borges, 2006).

The importance of situating audiences within their varying local contexts before studying their reception of media products has therefore been well established by a number of media researchers working within both first world and third world contexts. Studies of the reception of telenovelas, a Latin American media product, however, have been limited to the Latin American countries (Martin-Barbero, Fox and White, 1993; Tufte, 2000; Straubhaar, 2005; La Pastina, 2005; De Urbina and Lopez 2005; Machado-Borges, 2006). Their reception amongst global audiences or African audiences, the latter of which

this study focuses on, has not been conducted. However, Latin American studies are useful to this study in that they investigate the reception of telenovelas, explore reception predominantly amongst women audiences, and explore the rural-urban theme within telenovelas and how women respond to it. These issues are extremely relevant to this study which focuses on the reception of telenovelas by Kenyan women living in urban contexts, and the tensions that these women experience between their traditional/ rural and modern/ urban identities as young African women.

## **8. Conclusion**

By asking who likes what and why do they like it and relating these responses to audience identities, how they define themselves and what they are interested in (Martin-Barbero, 1999; Straubhaar, 2005), ethnographic reception studies show how audiences are situated within social and cultural context which they draw upon to understand and make sense of global media products, and that their encounters and interactions with these media products are integrated with, and perhaps open avenues for change in their local social roles and identities. Key assumptions of the media imperialism thesis, as they relate to the reception of global media products by global audiences, have therefore been challenged. In the next chapter, I will discuss *Cuando Seas Mia*, drawing upon its identity as a Mexican media product and the core generic and thematic dualities that it explores within its narrative.

## CHAPTER 3: *CUANDO SEAS MIA*

### 1. Introduction

Telenovelas, Latin American soap operas, have attracted huge global audiences that transcend nation, class, culture and gender differences (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003:193). They have been exported from the Latin American market to more than a hundred nations around the world (Melo, 1988) including North America, Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Africa, and have been dubbed and sometimes edited in many different national contexts (Melo, 1988; Allen, 1995; Sinclair, 1996). The popularity of telenovelas in North America has been attributed to its high immigrant population, and in Europe and Asia to a shared cultural and linguistic heritage (Pal, 2005; Sinclair, 2005; Straubhaar, 2007). In these latter countries, television companies also produce their own local version of telenovelas. However their popularity amongst African audiences, with whom they share neither a cultural nor a linguistic heritage, remains unexplained. At the time of writing, seven telenovelas aired in Kenya on four different, national stations. Of the seven, four originated from Latin America. In order to contextualise how the young Kenyan women in this study understand *Cuando Seas Mia* (the Mexican telenovela researched in this study, which was aired on KTN), this chapter will provide an overview of the Mexican media industry and its telenovelas, before providing a brief synopsis of *Cuando Seas Mia*. It will then discuss the generic and thematic dualities that *Cuando Seas Mia* explores, which its audiences may engage with as a way to understand their own roles and identities.

### 2. Mexican telenovelas

In 1973, Televisa (Television Via Satellite, South America), the company that produces *Cuando Seas Mia*, was created. Televisa is the largest and most influential media corporation in the Spanish-speaking world (Sinclair, 2005:198, 202) and a major player in the international entertainment business. Despite competition from TV Azteca, Televisa continues to be the number one producer of telenovelas worldwide. It churns out about a dozen telenovelas a year (Hecht, 2006:1), and is one of the country's strongest exports earning the economy billions of dollars a year (Hecht, 2006). The production and exportation of telenovelas continues to be Televisa's primary and most "powerful" activity (BBC, 2008) and it has even set up websites in Russian and English to serve its foreign telenovela fans (Hawley, 2003).

These telenovelas, or "television novels" (Schlefer, 2004) have a worldwide audience surpassing 120 countries (TVMasNovelas, 2005) and two billion people (Schlefer, 2004), and "novela-mania [is] spreading like wildfire" (Hecht, 2006). The viewing of telenovelas is not limited to Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking territories but is spreading to regions such as Malaysia, Namibia and Turkey (Hecht, 2006). Telenovelas have also reached European audiences, where they are viewed

by audiences in Portugal, France and Italy (TVMasNovelas, 2005). They have also gained increasing popularity amongst African audiences, of whom the Lusophone are one of the most enthusiastic, followed by the Francophone.

There are many ‘common sense’ explanations for the popularity of the telenovela amongst global audiences, such as the low cost of purchasing the product for local television stations and the lack of local programming which makes cheap telenovela imports a convenient alternative to expensive North American media products and local productions (TVMasNovelas, 2005; Schlefer, 2004). Others attribute the international success of telenovelas to the ways in which they engage with social issues. Mexico, like many developing countries, has been described as a nation “where affluence, poverty, natural splendour and urban blight rub shoulders”: its rural areas are neglected and its cities ringed by shantytowns (BBC, 2008). Contemporary Mexican telenovelas discuss these topics and their effects on Mexican society, giving rise to narratives that touch on unemployment, migration, poverty, prostitution, AIDS, drugs, egotistical passions and personal aspirations, and which, as a result, are full of conflict and contradiction between the rural and the urban, the traditional and the modern, the good and the bad (Clenton, 2005).

Marcos Santana, CEO of Tepuy International (a global television distributor headquartered in Miami with offices in South America and Europe), attributes the global audience appeal of telenovelas to their reliance on a traditional love story in which the poor, Cinderella-like girl falls in love with an upper-class man. “Once it hooks you in the beginning, you want to see it through to the end,” he says (Hecht, 2006). Tom Urbina, regional manager for Una Vez Ms (Azteca America’s affiliate) adds that their success also draws upon their “stories of rich and poor, love stories, triumphant stories”.

Angelica Aragon, novela and stage actress (in Schlefer, 2004) says that telenovelas are aspirational since the main plot continues to be about an impossible love where the driving protagonist is the Cinderella character, and alongside her search for love and justice is a search for lost identity (Schlefer, 2004). She endures unimaginable suffering before finally overcoming the impossible and therefore “we’re talking about women’s issues” (Schlefer, 2004). Eventually, the protagonist is rewarded not just with marriage and fortune but a self-discovery that provides “just reparation” for the unimaginable suffering (Schlefer, 2004) she has had to endure. The global appeal of telenovelas has therefore also been popularly attributed to how they offer hope since they suggest that ethical conduct will be rewarded on earth (Schlefer, 2004):

If I see Veronica Castro in *The Rich Also Cry*, she could be Mexican, French, or African ... But she suffers during her whole life, and in the end she becomes the *senora* of the household, respected, loved. And I want to believe in that. I have to

believe in that, because tomorrow I must get out of bed and get on with life, no matter how hard it is (Cuauhtemoc Blanco in Schlefer, 2004).

### 3. *Cuando Seas Mia*

*Cuando Seas Mia* is a Mexican telenovela that was produced in 2001 by Televisa (Internet Movie Database, 2001). It is a love story located within the Mexican coffee industry, and captures both the rural and the urban sceneries of the industry from the coffee haciendas in the countryside through to the export offices in Mexico City. It revolves around the love story of Paloma and Diego. Paloma is a coffee collector, a migrant worker who travels around the Mexican countryside with her mother, Soledad, harvesting coffee berries on different plantations. Paloma is set apart from the rest of the collectors because she is often seen studying, reading or dreaming about a better life.

Diego is one of the three grandsons of the coffee baron, Lorenzo Sanchez-Serrano. Diego and his sisters, Diana and Daniella, were orphaned at a young age when their parents died in a car accident, and they were raised by their grandparents. When the narrative begins, Diego is studying in London with his cousin Fabian, and is forced to return suddenly to Mexico with Fabian and Diana when his grandfather dies. While Diego is at the family hacienda in Mexico, Hacienda Casa Blanca, he hears a woman singing in the coffee fields, and traces the sound to Paloma. They secretly fall in love and spend time together, talking and drinking tequila. A few weeks later, Diego has to return to London to finish his studies but he promises Paloma that he will return to Mexico in exactly one year and marry her. It is a period of time that is romanticised, idealised and often flashed back to in the course of the narrative. Shortly after Diego leaves, Paloma realizes that she is pregnant with his child. She has no way of reaching him but, in her naivete, she assumes that if she goes to London, she will be able to find him. So when a fashion photographer, who is actually part of a prostitution cartel in Europe, approaches her she agrees to his offer to go to Europe, seeing it as her chance to find Diego.

Paloma leaves Mexico for Europe and a few weeks later, Diego returns to the Hacienda Casa Blanca unable to live without her. But he cannot find her or anyone that can give him news of where she, her mother or the other collectors could be. Some months pass; he becomes despondent, consumes too much tequila and loses faith in their love for each other. His family introduces him to Berenice, a friend of Barbara (Fabian's wife); Diego agrees to date her and shortly after he proposes. Paloma meanwhile returns to Mexico. She tells her mother how upon arrival in Europe, she realized she had been duped and brought to Europe as a prostitute and not as a model; how she escaped the clutches of the cartel and made her way to London, and that she lost her baby and never managed to find Diego. Paloma waits for the pre-determined date that she and Diego had agreed upon to meet and goes to the hacienda to meet him. Instead, she sees the remnants of a wedding celebration which was Diego's

marriage to Berenice. Heart broken, she moves to the city with her mother anxious for a new start, and convinced by her experiences abroad that she does not want to return to the life of a collector. She changes her name from Paloma to Elena Olivares (the name of a successful business woman that she had heard while in Europe), tries to find a job as a business executive and secures a job at El Cafatelero, the export company belonging to Diego's family, the Sanchez-Serranos.

Subsequent plot developments include Paloma's professional growth within El Cafatelero and later at the Mexican Export Council; the development of a professional relationship between Diego and Paloma when she refuses to enter into a relationship with him as a married man; their collaboration in the development of a gourmet coffee for Hacienda Casa Blanca; and the sub-romances that each of them enter into with other characters during the narrative.

The Sanchez-Serrano family offers a backdrop to the development of the romance between Diego and Paloma, influenced in most part by issues of inheritance (pursuant to the death of Don Lorenzo, and as per his will, Hacienda Casa Blanca is left to Diego and his sisters, while El Cafatelero and the shipping industry are left to Juan Francisco and his sons, Fabian and Barnardo) and the family feud that ensues. The rift created by the division of property is replicated in the attitudes towards the developing romance between Diego and Paloma. One section of the family (the grandmother Ines, Diana, Daniella, Daniella's boyfriend Harold, the family lawyer Jorge, Fabian's father Juan Francisco) accepts Paloma and her place in Diego's life while the other section (Fabian, his wife Barbara, Diego's wife Berenice, Fabian's mother Angela) is offended by her lower class, "collector" background and threatened by her relationship with Diego which could produce a male heir and damage their claim to the family fortune. Tensions escalate towards the end of the serial. Diego is arrested, jailed and tried for the fraudulent and corrupt activities that Fabian committed at El Cafatelero. Ines suffers a stroke from the shock at her family's deterioration and her part in the downfall of her husband Lorenzo's legacy. Eventually, Ines recovers, Fabian is revealed as the true culprit of the fraud and arrested, Diego is released and in the last episode of the series, all the loose ends are tied together and Diego and Paloma marry.

#### **4. The telenovela genre**

The word telenovela is composed of "the Portuguese word novela attached to the abbreviation used for television" (Pal, 2005). Derived from the radionovelas of the 1940s (Soong, 1999), the initial "objective of the telenovela ... was to make popular national literature available to the masses in countries where as a result of great distances and the level of illiteracy, books were not for the common man" (Pal, 2005). Telenovelas have been described as the novels of the future, as the means through which to provide the masses with intellectual nutrition because of the manner in which they build up

a daily or weekly viewing system similar to a person's bed time reading patterns (Pal, 2005).

Their historical origin and motivation to create audience loyalty is important because it explains their use of particular generic characteristics and thematic dualities, which in turn offers insight into their popularity amongst large and diverse women audiences and amongst a specific instance of audience interpretation in Nairobi. Three major periods depict the historic development of the telenovela. The first, the Romantic period between the 1950s and the 1960s, focused on the love story and distanced itself from reality. The second, the realist period between the 1960s and the mid 1980s, was more grounded in contemporary social and cultural issues and incorporated the greater use of local dialect and colloquialisms. The third, the post Elitist phase which began in the mid 1980s, was born out of the spirit of democratisation and freedom of speech. All three of these sub-genres exist today and some contemporary telenovelas combine all three strands (Tufte, 2001:98).

*Cuando Seas Mia* is one such telenovela. It centres on the romance that blossoms between characters of different backgrounds (Kaminsky and Mahan, 1985:103): Diego, the owner of Hacienda Casa Blanca and Paloma, a coffee collector who works seasonally at the hacienda. It is located within the country's coffee industry and draws upon the traditional challenges faced by Mexican society: the rural-urban divide, class conflict and social mobility (Mazziotti, 1993 in La Pastina *et al*, 2001). *Cuando Seas Mia*, like other telenovelas, has strong roots in its surrounding society and culture, emphasises class dynamics, and is oriented towards family viewing (Tufte, 2000:97-98). Through its focus on a leading couple, it encourages the development of intimacy between the central characters and audiences (Nariman, 1993:15).

The plot lines, narratives and characters of the telenovela *Cuando Seas Mia* are constructed within the soap opera genre. Characteristic of this genre is a rich history of feuds and alliances which, establish a deep "back-story" (Creeber, 2001:47) that readers must be aware of if they are to follow the developing narrative. These extra-textual competencies facilitate audience knowledge of a particular serial's characters and its history, and signify an ability and willingness, on the audience's part, to engage emotionally in the moral conduct of the characters (Moore, 1993:39).

There are two main soap opera styles: the closed soap opera and the open, a distinction which is based upon the finite or infinite structure of their narratives (Allen, 2006). In Latin America, the closed soap opera style - or telenovela - is more common. Telenovelas, in addition, exist in both a day time and a night time (also known as prime time) format, a distinction based on the amount of times that it is aired in a week (either daily or once a week), longevity (finite or infinite structure) and production styles (night time is shot on film giving it a more professional feel whereas day time is shot

on videotape and locations are limited by budget constraints) (Tworek, 2009). The telenovela that is studied by this thesis, *Cuando Seas Mia*, is a night time telenovela.

*Cuando Seas Mia* is a Mexican telenovela and like other telenovelas that originate in Mexico, it is “typically more romantic and less political, and more appealing for traditional audiences, particularly among the working class and poor” (Straubhaar, 2004:92) than the Brazilian telenovela, which is racier and more culture-specific (Soon, 1999). Mexican telenovelas deal with the more universal topics of love, betrayal, jealousy, seduction, violence, revenge, passion, oppression, sexism, corruption and incest (Soon, 1999). They are more reliant upon classic melodramatic topics and contain “weepy, heartbreaking and highly improbable characters, coincidences and twists of events” (Soong, 1990).

To their critics, telenovelas and soap operas are a form of low art, a less meaningful and a less complex form of art (Kaminsky and Mahan, 1985:12) which hold purely entertainment and emotional value and which do not appeal to the mind (Kaminsky and Mahan, 1985:10). The very use of the word “soap” is a value-laden description as “soap” alludes to the sponsorship of such programs by manufacturers of household cleaning products while “opera” suggests an ironic incongruity between its domestic narrative concerns and its subject matter (Allen, 2006). They are defined both culturally and aesthetically as inconsequential, unworthy, tawdry, sensational, and undignified (Allen, 2006).

This criticism, which is directed at its content, is often extended to its audiences, women, with the assumption that since soap operas cater for audiences that have “simple tastes and limited capacities”, women’s audiences are simple and limited. Women are therefore stereotyped, parodied and criticised for viewing a television genre that is not “good” television, that seduces their minds and that contains morally questionable content (Kaminsky and Mahan, 1985:10). From such a perspective, ‘feminine’ television products are seen to embrace the commonalities of an audience’s experiences, and neglect the profound differences between women in terms of class, age, sexuality, religion, race and nation (Gallagher, 2003:21).

In keeping with contemporary approaches to audience studies, this study challenges these assumptions and recognises that women audiences are not uniform in composition:

(W)omen do not in themselves constitute a social group; rather they are a category that cuts across social class, ethnic groupings, communities and nations (Jelin, 1990:6).

Like all audiences, women audiences are defined by their social and cultural environments which shape their identities, roles and values, and which in turn influence the meanings that they make from global media products. The young women in Nairobi, who comprise the participants in this study, are

a product of the various influences that they are subjected to in their daily lives: on the one hand, a traditional, rural upbringing and exposure to local African customs and traditions, and on the other, contemporary lives in the urban, modern, westernised environment of an African capital city.

Contemporary audience theory, therefore, attributes the popularity of global media products, in due part, to their ability to be negotiated and selectively appropriated by audiences either as a way “to make sense of their own lives and their own community” (Gitlin in Strelitz, 2005:13), because they give a voice to previously mocked or silenced social pleasures (Moore, 1993:8), or simply because audiences find in them “channels of desire, pleasure, initiative, freedom” (Gitlin in Strelitz, 2005:13). Global media products are seen as offering a source of ritual meaning to audiences, a way of metaphorically dealing with issues (Kaminsky and Mahan, 1985:10) which have been subordinated by existing hegemonic structures and their ideologies.

#### *4.1 Reality and melodrama*

The soap opera is commonly judged in terms of its lack of realism (Liebes and Katz, 1993:16) and its use of melodrama is seen as proof that it does not incorporate any realistic elements. It has been argued, however, that since any construction or interpretation of the real is a situated one, soap opera audiences have particular expectations concerning realism, giving rise to concepts of realism rather than *a* realism (Ellis, 1982).

One of these concepts is empiricist realism where “a literal resemblance is sought between the fictional world of the text and the ‘real’ world as experienced by the viewer” (Strelitz, 2005:131). Here, the real world depicted for the audience is not necessarily limited to denotative representations of local material and symbolic resources, but encompasses what is considered authentic and what resonates with their individual identities. Hence, if the text reflects an aspect of the viewers’ lived reality (Strelitz, 2005:131) and if audience expectations of what ought to happen in a particular scenario are met, then the fictional media text is judged as being realistic and audiences develop a strong preference for it (Lemish *et al*, 1998).

Some aspects of the telenovela narrative intertwine melodrama and this form of realism. For example, a realistic story line exploring existent social issues such as migration, adaptation to urban life, rural nostalgia, social mobility, and coping with and aspiring to modern consumer culture (Tuft, 2001) would be enacted by stereotypical characters with an exaggerated and melodramatic script. This has given rise to the criticism by the media effects paradigm that the use of melodrama within realistic social settings causes audiences to lose the ability to separate fictional television shows from what is real, thus blurring the line in the minds of the audiences between fiction and reality (Baym,

2000:36).

However, this criticism, and the inference that it has a detrimental effect upon audiences, has been challenged by those who argue that the “extensive stylization of human emotional experience” (Kaminsky and Mahan, 1985:86) through melodrama is a generic trait that caters to the needs of audiences for whom emotional negotiation is a central concern. The telenovela intertwines its compelling narrative with “interesting [and] believable characters with which audiences can personally identify or emotionally empathise” (Ang, 1990:75; Baym, 2000:5) thus giving rise to an emotional involvement with the characters.

Throughout the world, soap operas are viewed in almost every country and often aired in several regional languages with the sole purpose of drawing female attention, due to women’s love of scintillating melodrama ... Every detail is discussed - the expressions, clothes, hair ... It’s amazing. One would think that they are describing real-life scenes and people (Rehal, 2007:5-6)

Such “emotional realism” (Ellis, 1982; Ang, 1985; Strelitz, 2005) is characteristic of many media texts (Hobson, 1982; Ang, 1985; Katz and Liebes, 1993:151-154; Moores, 1993; McCarthy, 2001:50). Emotional realism refers to the emotional frame of audience understanding or their recognition of ‘the real’ at a connotative level (Strelitz, 2005:131; Moores, 1993:44). It draws upon the polysemic nature of media texts and the socially situated identity of audiences (Strelitz, 2005:134) and is where audiences construct a range of meanings and pleasures by engaging with the soap opera storyline and its characters. For example, audiences can choose to interact with the characters as if they are real people while recognising their fictitious identity, described as the establishment of “intimacy at a distance” (Horton and Wahl, 1976:212 in Pitout, 1988:70). Or they emotionally engage with the over-exaggerated emotions and overly dramatic (Ang, 1990; La Pastina, 2001; De Urbina and Lopez, 2005) soap opera dialogues and situations since they attest to “forces, desires, fears” (Gledhill, 1987:31) which they themselves experience and which, in their lives, “appear to operate in human life independently of rational explanation” (Gledhill, 1987:31). Audiences can therefore emotionally participate in “a set of fictitious powers that play with elemental human questions: honor, goodness, love, badness, treason, life, death, virtue and sin” (Mazziotti, 1993 in La Pastina, Rego and Straubhaar, 2003) while inviting them “to speculate on outcomes or to pass judgment on moral and emotional dilemmas” (Moores, 1993:40).

Emotional realism is said to arouse a “certain structure of feeling” that allows audiences to create an “imagined social reality” (Barker, 1997:147) in which they can share “a repertoire that expresses their intentions and theories about their own lives” (Hamburger, 2001:27), understand, value and relate to

the text (Hermes, 2003:386), and in so doing “actively manipulate the boundary between fiction and reality for pleasurable purposes” (McCarthy, 2001:50). An audience’s interaction with a media product like a telenovela therefore involves “more than simple enjoyment” (Mumford, 1998:89). It offers “a complex kind of satisfaction that occurs at both the conscious and unconscious levels” (Mumford, 1998:89) and offers audiences the ability to “organize their experience, and to make coherent sense out of their lives” (Rajagopal, 1996) in relation to the media narratives and events, and in so doing explore their own relationships and build insights about their own situations in comparison to the ones portrayed (Baym, 2000:67; Vink, 1990:220).

The genre attracts audiences for whom emotional negotiation is a central concern and at times, the emotional realism of the genre becomes more important than “the quality of the writing and the believability of the actual storyline” (McCarthy, 2001:52; Hermes, 2003:386). Women audiences, in particular, have been shown to use telenovelas “to explore emotional reality” (Blumenthal, 1997 in Baym, 2000:56) and its characters as “emotional representatives” (Geraghty, 1991 in Baym, 2000:55) to satisfy particular emotional needs. This approach proposes the notion of an active audience by recognising that audiences actively engage with media products (Strelitz, 2005:13). It suggests that an audience’s local identity is constructed from the symbolic resources at hand, including those from foreign media products, and that these are then subjected to a process of indigenisation (Strelitz, 2005:138-9). Audiences therefore use foreign media products like telenovelas to “capture, express and constitute the means through which [they] might mobilize some of their multiple social identities, as citizens, as consumers, as men or women, as belonging to a certain social class, or generation cohort” (Barker, 1997:73). They respond to the telenovela narrative as if they consider it to be real, and actively identify with some of the characters and situations (Press, 1990:178), finding them to be “authentic” (Strelitz, 2005:139), regardless of their own cultural background (Unesco, 2004).

*Cuando Seas Mia* intertwines empiricist realism and emotional realism within its narratives. Paloma’s romantic involvement with Diego is set within Mexico’s coffee industry and the challenges that are posed by the country’s class structure and its rural-urban migration patterns. *Cuando Seas Mia* therefore examines a contemporary economic issue that is relevant to the lives of global audiences for whom rural-urban migration patterns are a central concern. This reflects the rootedness of the telenovela genre (Kaminsky and Mahan, 1985; Boyd-Barrett and Newbold, 1995:81), and its presentation of shared “conceptions and problems” making “the appeal or meaning ... inherent in our community as human beings” (Kaminsky and Mahan, 1985:12). The social aspects of rural-urban migration are therefore individualised and personalised thereby offering “dramas of recognition and re-cognition by locating social and political issues in personal and familial terms and thus making sense of an increasingly complex world” (Lopez in Soong, 2001).

Telenovelas are also set in a community (Barker, 1997:76-84), such as a town or a family (Creeber, 2001:47), within which all the actions and events take place. They have an established sense of geographical space within a specific city and within standard sets. *Cuando Seas Mia* has three main sets: Hacienda Casa Blanca (the hacienda, the coffee fields and the town), El Cafatelerero and the Mexican Export Council offices in Mexico City (mostly Paloma's, Fabian's and Mariano's offices, but still a setting for personal and not professional discussions), and the homes of Diego, Paloma and Ines in Mexico City. These familiar sets help to define the moments in the telenovela and, because they represent a particular location (rural or urban Mexico, professional or home environment), constitute an important part of the realism (Ford, 2008) such that even when outlandish plots are taking place they are within locations that are familiar to audiences and therefore more acceptable.

The emphasis is, however, on the indoor world, the personal sphere and the family (Martin Barbero, 1995 in Barker, 1997:81) which directs the focus of the narrative onto the sphere of interpersonal relationships. It is a focus that gives audiences the "illusion of looking in on a private world" (Mulvey, 1977:416). The focus on the private sphere carries the added ideological implication that "personal and family relationships are deemed more important than wider social and structural issues" (Barker, 1997:83). The central focus is on the characters and the dialogue they engage in, rather than on action, and even what action there is, is "emotionally and not physically centered" (Modleski, 1983 in Baym, 2000:57). The characters meet mostly in "closed indoor environments, with limited space for movement, ... visual elements serve no more than illustrative purposes and depict atmospheres and epochs" (Pal, 2005). Each set, therefore, serves a metaphorical function within the narrative (Kaminsky and Mahan, 1985:93), to which it imaginatively but not literally applies. For example, the red architecture of the hacienda, green coffee fields and tequila represent the Mexican countryside, and serve to emotionally locate characters, even if the physical surroundings are unfamiliar.

Characters also perform a metaphorical role. Paloma is very different in the country from how she is in the city. She is more relaxed and informal, both in behaviour and in style of dressing (long skirts, dresses etc), when surrounded by the natural surroundings of the coffee plantations. She is also more responsive to Diego's romantic attentions. In the city, on the other hand, she is withdrawn, serious and very aware of her personal ambitions. She is dressed in suits and ties her hair back. She is also more suspicious of and aggressive around Diego. Diego's incarceration in a Mexican prison is another metaphorical set, one which contrasts good and evil through the placing of an innocent and victimised Diego in the dark, cold environment of the prison with grey benches and shackled prisoners. During this particular narrative, Diego is often shown dressed in the orange prison jumpsuit, standing behind bars or with his hands and ankles heavily cuffed by chains; a portrayal which enhances the unfairness

of his situation, and encourages audiences to pity him. However, this narrative is ultimately one in which good triumphs over evil since Diego is released from prison while Fabian is arrested, and his conniving, manipulative character is presented as being more suited to the prison environment.

Particular social issues are also individualised within a particular character, such as romantic relationships between individuals from different social classes through Diego and Paloma, corruption and underhanded business practices through Fabian, the social importance of motherhood through Barbara's attempts to have Fabian's child, or the seasonal patterns of the Mexican coffee industry through the lives of the coffee collectors, especially those of Soledad (Paloma's mother) and Paloma. Audiences are encouraged to engage with and explore their own social issues and social behaviour in relation to the various representations in the telenovela.

#### *4.2 Entertainment and education*

A generic characteristic of the telenovela which builds on reality and melodrama, in that it attempts to convert behaviours and attitudes from a television program into a reality that is practised by audiences, is entertainment-education. Entertainment-education is the "process of designing and implementing media messages to both entertain and educate, thereby increasing the audience's knowledge about educational issues ... creating favourable attitudes and changing overt behaviour" (Singhal and Everett in Soong, 1999). It is based on the premise that audiences incorporate elements within the media product into their lives (Silverstone, 1990:183), and that if these elements have an educative quality to them, then audiences will learn about social issues from these media, apply the lessons to their own lives and experience social changes.

An entertainment-education soap opera, also called a pro-development soap opera (Das, 1995:150), is "a melodramatic serial that is broadcast in order to both entertain and convey subtly an educational theme to promote some aspect of development" (Singhal and Rogers, 1989 in Nariman, 1993:2). The educational theme within the soap opera is communicated through the presentation of socially desirable goals and characters that act as role models (Das, 1995:150) hence eliciting "audience approval of characters that model pro-social behaviours and disapproval of characters that model antisocial behaviour" (Nariman, 1993:7). Miguel Sabido, a leading Mexican producer and playwright and arguably the most influential modern-day practitioner and theorist in the field (Singhal and Rogers, 1999:47), argues that such character portrayals not only reinforce attitudes about acceptable social behaviour but even stimulate behavioural effects which is the goal of entertainment-education program. Audiences in their own lives practise the values and the behaviours defined in the social objectives of the soap opera (Nariman, 1993:20).

In their study of *Simplemente Maria*, a Peruvian telenovela within the entertainment-education approach, Singhal and Rogers (1999) explore how the protagonist character's (a seamstress) rise to personal and financial success boosted sales of the Singer sewing machine in the country broadcasting the telenovela. Soong (1999), with reference to this study, argues that telenovelas are unjustly dismissed as "crass commercial opiates that are designed to reach the largest possible audiences with the most mind-numbing content for the financial benefits of their corporate advertisers" when in fact they have "served significant social functions by raising awareness and participation in adult literacy improvement, family planning, environmental protection, minority rights, feminist issues ..." (Soong, 1999).

[T]he process of social transformation is one of struggle from below in which subordinate social sectors redefine their identities and their rights in an attempt to widen their space for action and extend the boundaries of their social and political citizenship (Jelin, 1990:5)

Paloma's professional growth may prompt similar responses from global audiences. From being a coffee collector, Paloma becomes a business executive who works in the capital city and is given the opportunity to tour her home country and to travel overseas, a dream that many women from poor and struggling backgrounds aspire to. Within the narrative, Paloma does many things to better herself: for example, she changes her name to one that sounds more international (Elena Olivares), takes evening classes to strengthen her computer and business skills, and invests a lot of free time into business projects. The incorporation of elements such as these into contemporary television genres, which intertwine educational lessons in an entertaining narrative, may also therefore be responsible for attracting global audiences.

In the next section, I discuss the narrative dualities that co-exist within the telenovela genre with reference to particular narrative instances. I will discuss the popularity of telenovelas amongst women audiences from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, and lay a theoretical foundation for examining a specific instance of audience interpretation in Nairobi. This will facilitate the discussion in my Findings chapter of the different identities that a section of young women in Nairobi inhabit, and how their consumption of *Cuando Seas Mia* facilitates their negotiation of the daily tensions that they encounter in their roles and behaviour as African women.

## 5. Dualities in *Cuando Seas Mia*

The "world (of the soap opera) is one of perpetual disturbance and threat" (Fiske, 1987:181). Telenovelas explore these disturbances and threats through the examination of polarities within their narratives which either disrupt the status quo of the narrative or introduce a disequilibrium. They

function as a socialising agent since they contribute to shaping audience attitudes to social issues. Their narratives “call attention to actual conflicts and mobilize public opinions for social change” (La Pastina *et al*, 2003) and this allows people to appropriate the products of a popularly legitimated cultural capital into their local lives, communities and cultures (Fiske, 1989) and make them their own. Telenovelas do not only deal with social issues that audiences are already familiar with or that are already relevant to their lives, but introduces novel concepts such as women’s liberation, corruption, homosexuality, modernity, and race, and accustomises audiences to new lifestyles and cultural identities rather than merely reinforcing pre-existent ones. In so doing, they act as a “vehicle of innovative, provocative and politically emancipatory popular culture rather than a mere instrument for the reproduction of capitalist ideology and consumer desires” (Vink in La Pastina *et al*, 2003). Four of the polarities in *Cuando Seas Mia* which are central to the narrative of *Cuando Seas Mia* will be discussed in this section.

### 5.1 Good and evil

Standard telenovela plots deal with a love that is confronted by obstacles, a sudden and unexpected death or illness, family relationships, career strivings and the romantic and sexual adventures of the characters (Kaminsky and Mahan, 1985:101-104; Nariman, 1993:14) with continual deferment being incurred “by placing ever more obstacles between desire and fulfillment” (Fiske, 1987:182). Audiences are gripped by this tension and suspense (Barker, 1997:76-84) and as a result, their attention to the unfolding of the narrative is retained. The discord of values, especially that of good and evil, is threaded through the episodes until the finale when “morality and goodness triumph and the bad guys get punished in a happy ending where everyone is reconciled” (De Urbina and Lopez, 2005) and where “affectionate and tender devotion always wins a victory over evil” (Trinta, 1998 in Tufte, 2001:57). In *Cuando Seas Mia*, this is seen in the love story which faces all sorts of obstacles right until the end when Fabian and his henchmen are revealed as the true culprits of the misappropriation of funds at El Cafatelerero and Diego is absolved of all accusations, allowing him to finally marry Paloma. Telenovelas therefore follow the “traditionally structured plot, where a character is embroiled in a conflict that leads to an integrated series of crises and one concluding climax” (Kaminsky and Mahan, 1985:88). This central adversity is also reflected in the title of the telenovela: *Cuando Seas Mia* (*When will you be mine*) which points to the romantic storyline, the inevitable obstacles to be faced and the happy ending.

Trinta (1998 in Tufte, 2001:57) discusses how the emotional entanglements in a traditional telenovela romance plot, with true love eventually triumphing over adversity, subordinate characterization to plot. In other words all the narrative developments, including character development, are aimed at the culmination of the love story and the characters are used to explore the disequilibrium within the

narrative and the eventual triumph of true love. This is done predominantly through the personalisation of an issue in an individual (Das, 1995). Characters are identified early in the narrative as either ‘good’ or ‘evil’, a trait that is retained until the end of the narrative. So, Soledad (Paloma’s mother) and Ines (the matriarch of the Sanchez-Serrano family and Diego’s paternal grandmother) are together the steady and predictable maternal figures who are steeped in traditional and good family values while Fabian and his mother Angela, who abandon the rural traditional life for the city, are conniving, manipulative, greedy for power and money, and bad.

Some characters change sides in the good-evil divide from evil to good, in a reinforcement of the ultimate victory of good over evil. It is a transition that occurs after a traumatising but defining moment in the character’s life and it often happens gradually, culminating towards the end of the narrative. In *Cuando Seas Mia*, this character development is most clearly seen in Diana, Diego’s sister, who after her awkward marriage to and divorce from Miguel, changes her opinion of the Diego-Paloma romance and instead of sabotaging their relationship (in cahoots with Barbara and Berenice) because of Paloma’s lower class collector background, begins to support it. Fabian’s father, Juan Francisco, also undergoes a remarkable transition by the end of the serial. He distances himself from his son Fabian and his wife Angela and their criminal activities in the city, embraces a healthy lifestyle by going on a diet and visiting the gym, and gradually re-enters the fold of the Sanchez-Serrano family.

### 5.2 Tradition and modernity

Another duality that *Cuando Seas Mia* explores is that between tradition and modernity, where tradition is closely associated with the rural and modernity with the urban. Modernity is simply the sense or the idea that the present is discontinuous with the past, that through a process of social and cultural change (either through improvement, that is, progress, or through decline) life in the present is fundamentally different from life in the past (Hooker, 1996:1). Modernity has been defined as a process (modernisation), a condition (modernity) and as an attitude (modernism) (Fornas, 1995:4). However, its characteristics stem from a cultural condition that is shaped by constant change in the pursuit of progress and the unending resultant transitions from relatively isolated local communities to more integrated large-scale global societies (Lyotard, 1984), which is the definition that this study will adopt.

Modernity is seen by some theorists (Boyd-Barrett, 1977; Schiller, 1979; Smythe, 1981; Tomlinson, 1991; Mattleart, 1994; Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994:56) as a threat to traditional ways of life. They see tradition as “the sense that the present is continuous with the past, that the present in some way repeats the forms, behavior, and events of the past” (Hooker, 1996:1). On the one hand, tradition is the “purest and most innocent mode of social reproduction in which people act ... because such action

is authorised by repetition across generations and tied to consensually held moral and existential beliefs within a community” (Tomlinson, 1991:87). On the other hand, modernity “break[s] the spell of traditional beliefs and practices” (Tomlinson, 1991:164) and debilitates local cultures. While “traditional cultures see themselves as repeating a finite number of alternatives in the present; in modern cultures, the future opens up a vast field of historical and lifestyle choices” (Hooker, 1996:1). Tradition offers consistency and sustains routine practices; modernity offers alternatives and this “alters the terms of human self-understanding” (Tomlinson, 1991:151). This condition is described as a crisis of modernity where modernity is seen as a dangerous condition that liberates the free spirit from the reservations of tradition (Tomlinson, 1991:149), destabilises social groups and identities and is furthermore inescapable since once chosen, it implies a self development and self awareness that throws all other cultures and traditions into a state of flux and instability. The structural upheaval that modern societies are undergoing, where a break between tradition (and the continuity that it offers) and modernity (and the continuous social change that it brings about) occurs, is also seen as bringing about a crisis of identity where the modern individual is fragmented, dislocated and decentered as s/he moves further away from the stability of cultural landscapes and closer towards a multiplicity of possible identities (Hall *et al*, 1992:292-311).

Media ethnographers (Thompson, 2005; Strelitz, 2005) question the finality of such an approach which asserts modernity’s destruction of local traditions and its fragmentation of social and cultural identities. They argue that urbanisation, globalisation and the move to a “city-space” (Haferkamp and Smelser, 1992:21-22; Martin-Barbero, 2006:292) open up new symbolic spaces for local audiences to negotiate, and that rather than destroying local traditions and identities in favour of modern, westernised ways of life, audiences turn to their traditions as a way of “nourishing” their sense of identity and providing them with “a sense of belonging, a sense of being part of a community” that has “similar beliefs... , a common history and a collective fate” (Thompson, 1995:194). Audiences react to the imbalance of urbanisation, the cultural transformations and the new socialities (Martin-Barbero, 2006:292) by reinventing their traditional collective bonds and satisfying their need for a sense of belonging and local roots (Martin-Barbero, 2006:292). The result is that traditions are “reshaped, transformed, perhaps even strengthened and reinvigorated through the encounter with other ways of life” (Thompson, 1995:194). They are uprooted and detached from their locales, encroached upon by modernity (Nyairo and Ogude, 2003) and “remoored” (Thompson, 1995:194) in a new setting.

This does not equate to the decline of the role of traditions in social life since tradition remains an “integral part of the present” (Thompson, 1995:183) and retains its significance in the modern lives of audiences especially as a “means of making sense of the world ... and as [a] way of creating a sense of belonging” (Thompson, 1995:187). Modern societies embrace non-conventional behaviour

and “summon” (Ray, 2007:59) elements of their traditional identities into their “new styles of living” (Thompson, 1995:192). The post-colonial identities of audiences are therefore defined by their negotiations of the “spaces between the past and the present” (Hofmeyr, Nyairo and Ogude, 2003:378), between the old and the new, between the rural and the urban. “Quite apart from being ... [identities are] a matter of becoming (Hofmeyr, Nyairo and Ogude, 2003:378).

*Cuando Seas Mia* is populated with themes and images of rural and urban life, movement to the city, adjustment to city life and economic change (Straubhaar, 2007:202). Tradition is represented by the Hacienda Casa Blanca which is located in the Mexican countryside and surrounded by coffee fields. Modernity is represented by the offices of El Cafatelero and the Mexican Export Council. Hacienda Casa Blanca and El Cafatelero are simultaneously a microcosm for the Mexican economy, which after the onset of industrialisation was reoriented away from the hacienda and domestic markets towards exports and foreign markets (Pino, 1997).

Particular characters are also identified with either the rural or the urban, agriculture or industry, and by extension with tradition or modernity. In fact, every character in the serial is, in some way, identified with either the rural or the urban. The starkest comparison, however, is between the two cousins, Diego and Fabian. The contrast is established right at the start of the serial through Diego’s inheritance of Hacienda Casa Blanca in the country and Fabian’s inheritance of El Cafatelero, the export company in Mexico City. Diego is therefore associated with the Hacienda; Fabian with the export company. Their individual characteristics are also associated with either tradition or modernity. Diego is portrayed as a gentle and sensitive man, and his caring nature is affiliated with and partly attributed to his connection with the land. Fabian, on the other hand, is a ruthless, conniving, manipulative business man and womaniser and this is ascribed to his city lifestyle. Fabian’s desire and greed for greater monetary success is shown to corrupt him and lead him into dishonest activities while Diego’s obsession with the land, the fields and the coffee crop keeps him grounded and honest. The serene life of the countryside and the man who describes himself as a farmer, as personified in Diego, is preferred to the corporate ambitions and the city millionaire with his trappings of wealth, Fabian. Similarly, the rural life is romanticised in comparison to the urban.

Diego and Fabian’s choices in women represent this same dichotomy. Paloma, a collector, embraces her rural roots and identifies closely with the lives of coffee collectors, having been one, while Barbara is a woman of the city. Rich and always dressed immaculately, Barbara prefers her apartment in the city to the hacienda and is very conscious of money, power, influence and the need to maintain a prestigious, class based aloofness. The irony is that, in spite of her best attempts, at being superior, she comes off as uncultured and is often reprimanded for her unsophisticated behaviour by Ines,

the matriarchal head of the Sanchez-Serrano family who exudes Mexican tradition and the rural lifestyle.

At the same time as these contrasts are established, there is also a suggestion that there may be a dynamic element to these representations and that the rural cannot be defined as good while the urban is bad. At its most basic level as a telenovela, *Cuando Seas Mia* represents modernity but it promotes some traditional, patriarchal elements by integrating them into the narrative. This may be one of the reasons why the young women in this study respond to *Cuando Seas Mia* the way that they do, because it opens up possibilities for them to embrace aspects of modernity while leaving certain fundamentals of their African culture and traditions unchallenged. There are therefore elements where the two overlap and this is explored through the storyline and through character development. What is clear however is that audiences use *Cuando Seas Mia* to explore tradition and modernity in relation to their own lives, as will be seen in the Findings chapter. In the next sub-section, I will discuss the portrayal of Paloma's character as a woman who straddles both the rural and the urban, and who negotiates her transitional identity as a woman who has a traditional upbringing but a modern lifestyle.

### 5.3 Femininity and masculinity

As discussed above, telenovelas feature archetypal or stereotypical characters: Diego is associated with tradition and Fabian with modernity. The importance of these "character types" (Kaminsky and Mahan, 1985:104) or "social types" (Das, 1995:153) lies in how they represent certain roles or particular positions within the narrative (Barker, 1997:76-84) rather than in their individuality. Characters are differentiated by their level of involvement in the narrative (involved and uninvolved) (Kaminsky and Mahan, 1985:104-107) and by their gender roles. This latter differentiation has attracted a lot of debate because of the relationship between "the representations of gender that occur on television and the way that gender operates in viewers' lives" (Mumford, 1998:87).

The role of the leading male character in this genre, in addition to being representative of power, is "the active one of forwarding the story, making things happen" (Mulvey, 1977:420). The beautiful woman, on the other hand, is "isolated, glamorous, on display, sexualized" (Mulvey, 1977:421). Women are further invalidated by being portrayed in a stereotypical manner which subjects them to less role differentiation and which depicts them in relation to male narcissism (Johnston, 1977:407-411). Recent studies however suggest that new gender roles have emerged within this genre: a "new man who is sensitive and gentle and a modern woman who is independent and assertive" (Gallagher, 1995), which challenge the major structure of power relations where men dominate over women and their socially and historically constituted roles of what is and is not appropriate (Connell, 1987). Not only are a higher percentage of female characters involved in recent narratives, but the new-age

woman is representative of an evolving feminist ideology where women define not only their rights, but also “themselves and their lifestyles – politically, professionally and personally” (Caffrey, 1993:3). She popularises the image of a woman who is empowered by her anger and who uses it to “negotiate, argue, discuss - in order to resolve” (Caffrey, 1993:4). In *Cuando Seas Mia*, there are many instances of Paloma losing her temper with men (in different instances, she slaps Diego, Mariano and Fabian in public) and women (she physically attacks Barbara in a public restroom).

Gallagher (2003) emphasises how “media representations and gender discourses take shape within particular, and changing socio-economic formations which must themselves be analysed and understood” (Gallagher, 2003:30). Drawing upon the work of media researchers such as Bas (2001), Malhotra and Rogers (2000) and Munshi (1998), Gallagher argues that the changing portrayal of women in this genre represents a “new woman” who is affected by the changing social and economic demands made of her, but whose “femaleness” nevertheless remains the core issue. Faced by such tensions, this new woman is forced to negotiate her modern identity as a working woman in a capitalist environment with her traditional roles as a woman, a mother and a care giver.

Traditional family systems are (also) becoming transformed, or are under strain, in many parts of the world, particularly as women stake claim to greater equality (Giddens, 1999a:3).

Gender roles and stereotypes are therefore one of the aspects that are being reshaped in line with changing social developments, a transformation that is “affecting almost every aspect of what we do” (Giddens, 1999a:1; La Pastina, 2005:143).

This tension is explored in *Cuando Seas Mia* through the characters of Paloma, Barbara, Soledad and Ines. Paloma is a coffee collector from a working class background who becomes a successful executive that works at El Cafatelerero, the company owned by the Sanchez-Serrano family in Mexico City and then later for the Mexican Export Council. She represents the professional woman in today’s society. However, Paloma’s character is imbued with the qualities of a modern woman without compromising her traditional values since she aspires to simultaneously being a professional and a wife and mother. In spite of this, her behaviour and decisions in some instances reinforce the patriarchal culture. For example, she is prepared to give up a lucrative position at the London offices of the Mexican Export Council in order to stay in Mexico with Diego, thus prioritising her relationship with Diego over her professional advancement. Her relationships with other men are also imbued with patriarchal undertones. Giancarlo, a stranger who she met while in Europe, was responsible for rescuing her from the prostitution cartel in Europe. Mariano, her boss at the Mexican Export Council, is first threatened by her, and then falls in love with her. The Head of the Mexican Export Council is a sort of godfather to her, and protects her from the schemes of the Sanchez-Serrano family, much like the Sanchez-

Serrano family lawyer, Jorge.

Paloma is contrasted with the strong, matriarchal figures of Soledad and Ines who embrace their traditional roles as women, and make their domestic environments and families a central concern. At the same time, these maternal figures adopt a leadership position in their respective families, since neither of them has a husband, they hold their families together by resolving disputes, and they offer guidance on how to behave and how to live. Both sets of women challenge different aspects of gender and social stereotypes: Paloma by being a business executive working in the city, and Soledad and Ines by being the figures of leadership in their families. However, it is Paloma, as the protagonist, who stands out as being the one who has to negotiate the place of tradition and modernity in her life. Her story captures the tensions that young women face in balancing a traditional upbringing and a modern professional environment. There are, however, aspects about Soledad and Ines which Paloma admires and tries to adopt, such as their strength of character when faced with difficulty, the respect they command from members of their family and society, and their strong values which they refuse to compromise on.

Ethnographic studies of women's experiences (and the constraints that they experience as women in a masculine corporate culture, Kanter, 1977; as police officers, Zimmer, 1988; in public sector management, Maile, 1999) have shown that "in entering a masculine institution ... women are faced with the dilemma of embracing or denying conventional images of femininity in order to secure an identity" (Dent and Whitehead, 2002:160). This is the same dilemma that Paloma faces. She is defined by a combination of compliance, resistance and cooperation with women's subordination (Cornell, 1987) since at times she is willing to subordinate herself to the men in her life at times but at other times, she resists aggressive masculinity (such as when she ends her relationship with Diego in order to break the cycle of pain that they have been perpetuating). However, rather than changing the discourse on femininity, Paloma's growth as a character in *Cuando Seas Mia* seems to suggest that she is not a conventional stereotype and that she is trying to incorporate elements of both tradition and modernity into her identity as a woman. This negotiation of femininity, in response to the varying expectations that are made of African women by their peers, their men and their society, is something that the participants explore in depth during the focus groups, and how they redefine themselves as women will be discussed in the Findings chapter.

Diego also breaks the gender stereotype of a man, although on more of a personal than a professional level. He is ruggedly handsome with long hair and a muscular physique, but surprisingly sensitive. He cries, is defeated by circumstances, resorts to emotional outbursts, and makes rash emotionally driven decisions. His heterosexuality and close connection with the institution of marriage (Connell,

1987), however, dispel any suggestion of the homosexuality which may be prompted by his display of ‘feminine’ traits. Diego also often turns to the women in his life for the strength to carry on, whether it is Paloma, his grandmother Ines or the psychiatrist that he dates briefly. The women in Diego’s life rescue him from a number of situations and in fact the finale revolves around his attempts to keep his arrest and imprisonment a secret from Paloma. She eventually finds out and assists his release through her testimony to the court.

#### 5.4 Race

The other discourse that *Cuando Seas Mia* explores, albeit briefly, is that of race. Race is a controversial social issue in Latin America (Tufte, 2001). It is entangled in every major issue of politics, religion, gender, economics, and culture in Latin America for the past 500 years (Pino, 1997), and is often affiliated with class and caste (Soong, 1999). Thirty percent of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean is of indigenous or African descent (Quesada, 2001:1), a percentage that is often not reflected in national censuses. The social and economic difficulties that this group faces has been attributed to this under representation, lack of acknowledgment and, in effect, invisibility to the authorities.

*Cuando Seas Mia* introduces and personalises the race dimension through the character of Harold who is Daniella’s (Diego’s youngest sister) boyfriend. Harold is a black man of Haitian origin - Daniella fondly refers to him as her “chocolate muffin” – while Daniella and her entire family are of European origin. Harold’s colour, and his mannerisms shock the Sanchez-Serrano family and they mock and reject him, openly making fun of him and excluding him from family meetings. As the narrative proceeds and tensions within the family escalate, Harold builds a relationship with Diego and Ines, Daniella’s grandmother, and he is gradually accepted by them as they realise that he can be trusted and relied upon for advice and assistance. His difference is what sets him apart from the Sanchez-Serrano family and it makes them suspicious of him so he is excluded initially and seen as inferior. As the family becomes familiar and comfortable with him, they are more willing to accept him in spite of his differences and he and his relationship with Daniella are included in the family circle. Interestingly, however, he is only accepted by the members of the family who are depicted as ‘good’ by the narrative, that is Ines, Diego, Diana and Juan Francisco. As a single character who gradually wins partial acceptance from a white family, his inclusion in the narrative may suggest however that he is just a token depiction of a black character in an attempt to neutralise the negative perceptions of the black population in Latin American society.

## 6. Conclusion

Telenovelas' capture of 80 percent of audience shares in Indonesia, the nation with the largest Muslim population in the world (Schlefer, 2004) in spite of the ever-present Christian symbols in telenovelas such as the Virgin of Guadalupe, speaks of the appeal that telenovelas hold for international audiences. It is an appeal that surpasses culture and religion and brings together "a chaotic world" divided by languages, cultures and religions (Schlefer, 2004) showing that "[p]eople may look across national boundaries for ideological or historical content that fits their own values and beliefs" (Straubhaar, 2007:199). It also suggests that "the 'clash of civilizations' may not go nearly so deep as supposed" (Schlefer, 2004). This is one of the explanations that has been put forward for the global popularity of telenovelas: their ability to identify a commonality amongst all local cultures and unite them in spite of their differences.

This chapter has suggested another explanation. It has proposed that the global popularity of *Cuando Seas Mia* may also be attributed to the ways in which it explores dualities within its narratives and through its characters, and that this negotiation of themes and issues holds an appeal for the group of young women in this study. In the next chapter I will outline and justify the research methods that this study adopts. They are methods which examine how audiences are actively involved in understanding and appropriating aspects of media products into their own daily lives, and negotiating their own roles and identities in response. Such an approach will allow me in my Findings chapter to access the situated meanings and understandings that young Kenyan women, who live in Nairobi, construct from *Cuando Seas Mia* and to understand what aspects of this telenovela they engage with and how.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 1. Introduction

The way in which a research study is conducted in the qualitative research approach is determined predominantly by the needs of the study, and the questions that it seeks to answer. In this chapter, I discuss why the reception of *Cuando Seas Mia* by a group of young Kenyan women who live in Nairobi, an urban African environment, requires a research approach that situates them and their reception processes within their local contexts. I outline the research design and the methods employed, identify how a sample audience is selected, and discuss how their reception activities are situated within their local surroundings and daily lives.

### 2. Designing a research approach

This study challenges the media imperialism thesis and its assumptions that global media products, such as telenovelas, have a detrimental effect upon audiences by suppressing their local cultures and imposing upon them foreign cultures and influences. It seeks to explore the analyses that a group of Kenyan women make of the telenovela *Cuando Seas Mia*. How do these women watch and understand the telenovela? What elements of the telenovela do they interact with? How do their domestic and communal contexts of reception affect their interpretation of the media product, as individuals and as groups of women? And how does their interaction with *Cuando Seas Mia* shape their local cultures, day-to-day lives and identities?

These are questions that draw upon the understandings and meanings that these women make during their reception of *Cuando Seas Mia*, and it necessitates an understanding of first, the social, historical and cultural contexts within which they live; second, the ways in which they watch and engage with elements of the telenovela; and third, how this viewing experience contributes to the ways in which they attempt to make sense of their day to day lives, identities and cultures as young women within a dynamic African urban environment. In order to reach these understandings, a qualitative research study was conducted that draws upon ethnographic research practices in order to access the meanings that these women make of their own viewing experiences.

Since “(t)he problem under investigation properly dictates the methods of investigation” (Trow, 1957 in Bryman, 1984:106) and the research design (Jensen, 1982; Becker in Jessor, 1996), this study conducted individual interviews with each of the participants in the study and supplemented it with a broad contextual overview of the traditional way of life in Kenya, and a more specific picture of contemporary urban culture in Nairobi in order to access the social environment in which these young women live. It also conducted a number of focus group sessions with these women to access their

telenovela viewing experience and to engage them in a discussion on their responses to it.

Qualitative research emphasises the diversity of audience responses to media products and to a large extent attributes the variety of audience responses to the unique social surroundings within which they are located. Unlike quantitative research, it is not premised on the existence of a single truth, “a ‘real’, independent reality” (Strelitz, 2005:61) that can be observed through facts (Bryman, 1988:15). Instead, it argues that each audience is uniquely situated within “underlying social and cultural formations” (Deacon, 1999:10) that structure their everyday lives, actions and behaviour in a distinct manner. Audiences therefore respond differently to media products depending on the social and cultural formations within which they live. Emphasis is placed upon the “lived” and the “social” aspects of an audience’s interaction with media products, an approach which draws upon the disciplines of sociology and anthropology (Gray, 2003:15) and which has been defined as the “ethnographic turn” (Moores, 1993:1) within audience studies. This approach argues that in order to understand the diversity of audience responses to media products and the subjective nature of the meanings that they construct, researchers must conduct an “inquiry from the inside” (Evered and Louis, 1981 in Bryman, 1988:3) that accesses how viewers “make sense of their social worlds ... how they express these understandings ... [and] how they see the world and themselves” (Deacon, 1999:6).

Accordingly, the ethnographic approach challenges the assumption that a single audience grouping exists, and rather understands a diversity of audiences, each of which is defined by the complex social and cultural practices within which it is embedded (Moores, 1993:2; Ang, 1995:165 in Nightingale, 2003:367). It emphasises that audiencehood ought to be seen as a space in which the meanings created from television viewing are “created, challenged, negotiated, reassessed, resisted or accepted” (Nightingale, 2003:368) by audiences depending upon the particular social contexts in which they are located when they engage with media products. To this end, I use the term “audience” to distinguish my sample Kenyan audience as an actual grouping located in a particular social, cultural and historical context within the larger group of audiences.

The ethnographic turn in audience studies also encourages the researcher to actively engage and interact with audiences (Nightingale and Ross, 2003:107) and to interpret their responses to media products in relation to their daily routines and lived experiences:

If the central aim of reception ethnography is to understand the lived experiences of media consumers, then it has to engage with the situational contexts – primarily the everyday micro-settings of reception – within which the media are used and interpreted (Strelitz, 2005:22).

Such an approach, they argue, results in a more nuanced understanding of how the consumption of media products by audiences shapes their identities, social relations and lived experiences.

### **3. The sample audience**

From my readings on the reception of telenovelas, I learnt that gender was a defining characteristic of the telenovela audience (Machado-Borges, 2006) so I began speaking to women from different areas of the country, such as Nairobi, Mombasa and Lamu, who watched telenovelas in order to gather their responses to them and in particular to *Cuando Seas Mia*. From these preliminary conversations, I found that women in Nairobi, in particular, discussed how telenovelas explored the rural-urban divide and romanticised life in the countryside as opposed to life in the city. Further conversations with these women revealed that they, like the heroines in the telenovelas, had moved to the urban centres from the rural areas in search of education or employment; that they felt confused about the apparent contradictions posed by their traditional African upbringing and the demands posed by a modern city life; and that they felt reassured by the telenovela heroines who seemed to be undergoing the same challenges.

A search at the Kenyan Central Bureau for Statistics showed that in the last ten years, there had been a surge in the number of women that migrated to the urban centres from the rural areas:

The size of female rural-urban migration has been on the increase, a result that corroborates earlier findings that attributed it to increasing female education, women's desire to seek urban employment and their tendency to stay with their relatives or to join their husbands (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2000:56)

and that the highest levels of urban migration were experienced by women in the ages between 18 to 29. I therefore chose to focus on women within this age range.

I chose to locate the study in Nairobi because, as the capital city of Kenya, it is the largest urban centre in the country. Along with the other Kenyan cities of Mombasa and Kisumu, Nairobi experiences the highest rate of urban migration in the country. Since I was interested in exploring how Kenyan women negotiated their own rural-urban identities in response to the ways in which telenovela characters did, Nairobi was a good choice of location.

I selected the participants for this study through the purposive method of snowball sampling. A convenience sampling method (Jensen, 1982:239) that allows researchers to choose participants based on the characteristics required for the study, snowball sampling is often used to gain access to closed or informal social groupings that do not have a list that can be used as a basis (Deacon, 1999:53). Its greatest advantages are that it enables access to naturally pre-existent viewing communities, allows

the researcher to tap into communal understandings and meanings and “[b]y allowing the individual interviewees to recruit their own friends for the focus groups” (Suter, 2000:8) enhances the naturalistic element of the focus groups.

I initiated snowball sampling through two key contact people, both of whom were professional female colleagues who fitted the demographics of the sample audience: one at the organisation where I worked and the second at another Nairobi-based organisation. I asked them whether they knew anybody who watched *Cuando Seas Mia* and other Latin American telenovelas, narrowed their suggestions down to women who fit the demographic profile of my sample audience and then contacted the women and confirmed whether they would be willing to attend a focus group session to discuss *Cuando Seas Mia*. In such a manner, I was able to reach people with similar dispositions and backgrounds (Deacon, 1999:53) and access pre-constituted telenovela viewing groups since some of the women that I approached recommended friends who could also attend the sessions.

#### **4. The research methods**

An examination of the daily lives and routines of a group of Kenyan women was of central importance for this study. This is because the women in this study live in Nairobi, the capital city of an African country that had little if any interaction with South America until the introduction of telenovelas to local television screens. Most of these women moved to the city from rural towns in different parts of the country in search of education or employment. In the city, they were exposed to a modern way of life that was different to the traditional lifestyle they were accustomed to. Therefore, in order to appreciate how they responded to *Cuando Seas Mia*, it was crucial to examine them within the social and cultural environments of Kenya and Nairobi, as this shed light on how their identities as African women in an urban environment were being re-formed in response to a Latin American telenovela.

I did this by examining how these women watched and reacted to *Cuando Seas Mia*, in relation to their local interpretational contexts. However I chose not to situate the participants within their natural viewing environments, their homes, for a number of reasons: it would have constituted an unnecessary invasion of their personal living space which was shared with other family members; a neutral environment would encourage the women to express themselves more openly; and I was reluctant to impose the burden of hosting a group session on any of the participants. I was also confident that a contextual background study combined with individual interviews with the participants would provide sufficient information to access the local society and cultures within which these women lived and watched telenovelas.

#### 4.1 Focus groups

Focus groups are a specialised form of interviewing (Lindlof, 1995:5) that give the researcher access to the “respondent’s conscious opinions and statements [and to] ... the linguistic terms and categories ... through which respondents construct their worlds and their own understanding of their activities” (Morley (1992:147). They combine the strengths of naturalistic observation and interviewing and encourage group interaction on a topic. Because they provide thick descriptions of observations (Suter, 2000), they offer a unique occasion to collectively interview participants as well as observe them interacting. They are therefore ideally suited to examining “how audiences interpret, make sense of, use, interact with and create meaning” (Hansen *et al*, 1998b:259) from *Cuando Seas Mia*.

Focus groups are often used for exploratory purposes (Hansen *et al*, 1998b:260) in research studies, but after conducting preliminary focus group sessions to investigate the central issues of this study, I chose to adopt them as a primary research tool because of their ability to access and explore a range of issues and opinions in a conducive manner. With this in mind, I deliberately structured my groups to contain fewer participants and to extend for a longer period than traditionally structured sessions. I therefore conducted four focus group sessions, each of which was composed of between two to three participants amounting to a total of ten participants, and each session ranged between three to four hours in length.

Smaller research groups have been recommended for women audience members (Hermes, 2003:394), for groups that are homogeneous in terms of age, race, and location (Morgan, 1988:2 in Hansen, 1998:269) and for situations where the social viewing dynamic of the audience group needs to be reproduced. In this study, it allowed me to monitor the group dynamics and encourage the interaction of each participant (Hansen *et al*, 1992:263 and Lunt, 1996:93), prevent particular participants from dominating the flow of the discussion, and witness each of the participants’ responses to the trigger episode and the manner in which they interacted amongst themselves. Interestingly the groups that were composed of two women, as opposed to those that were composed of three, interacted for longer periods and brought out a deeper discussion of issues – perhaps because it took less time for them to build a rapport with each other.

Focus groups also assist in examining the collective nature of social viewing and identity formation (Lunt, 1996:87; Hansen *et al*, 1998:261). By gathering together a group of women who originated from different parts of Kenya in the session, I was able to understand Kenyan society as a whole rather than as an aggregation of individuals (Bryman, 1988). At the same time, the participants were able to discuss the varying social and cultural roles they occupy (Jensen, 1982:240) in relation to their daily lives in Nairobi and therefore engage with the interplay between the urban and the rural,

the traditional and the modern, the foreign and the local, the individual and the social. In each of the sessions I attempted to simulate a familiar and comfortable viewing and discussion environment in order to access the “everyday ways in which [the participants] make sense of television” (Lunt and Livingstone, 1996:85) and how they understand media messages in relation to their cultural experiences (Strelitz, 2005:76).

The focus group sessions were initially held in the common room of the organisation where I worked because it was a convenient and central location within the city of Nairobi. But when the logistics of organising audio-visuals for the sessions became complicated, I moved them to my home in the Pangani residential area. This was more convenient for the participants, because they preferred not to visit the city and its environs during the weekends, and because Pangani was in close proximity to other residential areas in Nairobi. Changing the location of the sessions to my home had a positive effect on the interaction between the participants. Being closer to their homes, they were less anxious about having to leave quickly and felt more comfortable, which translated into their spending more time talking to each other. Even though I had decided to hold the focus group sessions over the weekends since my participants either worked or attended classes during the week, I encountered difficulty in finding a mutually agreeable time since many of them either worked on Saturday or attended classes. I experienced last minute cancellations or delays in starting the sessions. Sometimes, however, one participant would bring a friend, which countered the effects of cancellation by another participant.

Accessing pre-constituted viewing groups created a more relaxed discussion environment. The participants knew each other in a social capacity before the constitution of the groups and so a level of camaraderie had been established that increased their comfort levels in the focus group environment, encouraged dialogue between them and even a more analytical response to issues during the sessions (Lunt and Livingstone, 1996:92). The participants were comfortable discussing *Cuando Seas Mia* in a group setting having discussed telenovela episodes with complete strangers whom they had met on *matatus* and with the online communities of telenovela audiences in chat rooms and websites. A high level of interaction was therefore experienced which may be attributed either to the pre-existent familiarity between participants, the relatively informal semi-structured interview style, the small size of the groups or simply the need to interact face-to-face with friends (Thompson, 1996:218). The participants turned to each other to seek clarification on a narrative thread that they did not understand, and asked pointed questions to each other about their thoughts on particular issues. I found this to be a good indicator of the neutral role that I played as moderator in the sessions. While all of the sessions were structured around the same key themes, each of them developed at a different pace and in a different style and direction owing to the personality dynamics of the participants.

Each focus group session was conducted in English, a language in which all of the participants were fluent (although there were brief moments when the participants slipped into Swahili or *Sheng*). The sessions began with a brief introduction: of myself; of the research study, which included a request to make an audio recording of the proceedings; and of each of the participants. The airing of a five-minute clip of *Cuando Seas Mia* followed the introductions and it triggered the discussions that followed.

The use of a “media stimuli” (Hansen *et al*, 1998b:276) or a “shared experience” (Wimmer and Dominick, 1991:147) at the beginning of the focus group session has many purposes. It serves to direct the thoughts of the participants to the chosen telenovela, acts as an ice-breaker for participants thus building familiarity between them through their shared viewing experience (Wimmer and Dominick, 1991:147) and it prompts a narration in their own words of what they watched and what they thought the main story line of the telenovela was. This allows the researcher to access the participants’ meaning-making process (Katz and Liebes, 1993), what Hansen *et al* (1998b:262) refer to as “latent” thoughts. It also allowed me to observe the participants’ contextual use of language (Gamson, 1992 in Hansen *et al*, 1998b:263; Morley, 1992:181) providing access to how they perceived and discussed social and cultural elements of their lives.

#### 4.2 Individual interviews

Focus group interviews have been criticised as being insufficiently ethnographic in approach (Jenkins, 2000) since they engage with the reception of media products by audiences but fail to locate audiences within the social and cultural contexts that define their identities. In order to understand the hybrid social and cultural identities and interdependencies of the participants in this study, I supplemented the use of focus groups sessions with individual in-depth interviews. The interviews explored the local, organizational and cultural configurations (McAnany and La Pastina, 1994 in Barker, 1997:124) that mediated the participants’ understandings of *Cuando Seas Mia* and were conducted subsequent to the focus group sessions. I chose to conduct them after the focus groups in order to build on the rapport that I had established with the participants, since I would have to ask them personal questions about their lives and identities.

I needed to be aware of three aspects of these women’s lives: their material resources, that is their command over money, time and space; their social resources, that is their social conventions, practices and beliefs and their access to social networks (Bryman, 1988:60); and their cultural resources, that is their competence in negotiating systems of language, representation and self presentation (Bryman, 1988:60; Deacon: 1999:11). I therefore chose to conduct one-on-one interviews with each of them, supplementing the information provided with a general overview of daily life and contemporary

culture in Kenya and in the city of Nairobi.

First, I conducted a study of the social, cultural and economic environment within which the participants lived through reference to secondary sources of information such as encyclopaedia, newspaper clippings and books. I then asked the participants to fill a brief self-completion “screener” (Wimmer and Dominick, 1991:147) questionnaire (appendix 1) prior to the focus group sessions which asked attribute-related questions on issues such as tribe, social class, education and family backgrounds (tabulation in appendix 2). Armed with a general understanding of the place my respondents occupied within the contemporary social and cultural milieu of Kenya and Nairobi, I embarked upon examining the particular social and cultural backgrounds of each of the participants through the interviews. This was motivated by a need to socially contextualise their individual readings of *Cuando Seas Mia* (Curran, 1990). Since meaning making is not an individual process (Barker, 1997:136-7), I needed to examine the “relational web of porous social formations” that the participants belonged to (Parameswaran, 2003:316) and the cultural and socio-economic contexts within which they used and interpreted the telenovela.

#### 4.3 Interview guides

For the focus group sessions, I prepared an interview guide (appendix 3) that identified the key thematic areas that needed to be addressed. It was composed of a combination of behavioural, belief and attitude-based questions that progressed from general to more specific. The thematic areas focused on the creative role that the audience played in decoding the text: how they viewed *Cuando Seas Mia*, why they watched it, what their domestic viewing context was, interpretations that they made and how these interpretations were incorporated into their daily actions and attitudes (Strelitz, 2005; Barker, 1997:136). It allowed me to access how the participants understood *Cuando Seas Mia*, how they appropriated elements of it into their lives and how their attitudes, identities and cultural roles changed as a result.

I relied upon the questions merely as a guide and after introducing a key theme allowed the participants to steer the discussion, ask questions and interact with each other. An unstructured, open response interview technique is often adopted in focus groups. It provides minimal guidance (Bryman, 1988) from the moderator, encourages a relatively unrestricted flow of dialogue between the moderator and the participants, limits the effect of the moderator’s power dynamics on the group discussion and allows participants to converse comfortably and address topics that are important to them (thus providing insight into their viewing processes). This results in richer, more sensitive insights (Deacon, 1999) from the participants. This approach also let me observe and analyse the statements that the participants made in relation to their everyday lives through their own “talk, gesture and other social

action” (Lindlof, 1995:21),

The personal nature of the questions being asked in the follow-up interviews necessitated a more sensitive approach and so they were conducted individually and they adopted a semi-structured interview format. This was to allow a conversational style that would put the participants at ease, while letting the interviewer fill uncomfortable silences with a question that changed direction. The semi-structured format also catered for modifications or deviations in topic that would arise as the interview progressed, depending on the responses of each of the participants. Each interview was therefore customised to a large extent to the individual (Wimmer and Dominick, 1991:148).

After each of the focus group sessions and the individual interviews, I transcribed the audio recordings of the session, supplementing them with hand written observational notes illustrative of the tenor of the proceedings. After transcribing, I went through the interviews a second time adding reflexive notes under thematic sub-headings (Jensen, 1982:243), and pointers to other sessions, interviews or background research that would help in the analytical process. This assisted me in drawing up the structure of my Kenyan context chapter and my Findings chapter.

## **5. Validity and reliability in qualitative studies**

Qualitative research methods include unstructured interviews, participant observation, life history, and group discussion (Bryman, 1988) and they have been found valuable especially when applied to the “younger generation’s cultural trajectories” (Martin Barbero, 2006:270). These methods encourage researchers to immerse themselves into the lives of their participants (Bryman, 1988) in order to observe their behaviour and their responses to media products within their natural settings, everyday lives, social conventions and identities (Flick, 1988; Bryman, 1988; Moores, 1993). However, qualitative methodologies and research approaches have been criticised for an over reliance upon the social as opposed to the natural sciences, and for placing too much reliance on “imprecise, value laden and particularistic” (Lindlof, 1995:9-10) methods. The main criticisms centre on the issues of validity, reliability and reflexivity, which challenge the quality of data that is collected, the authenticity of the findings and role of the researcher.

Validity refers to the representativeness of an audience sample and the ability to generalise the research findings of a sample group to a larger population (Gray, 2003:15). Since qualitative research draws upon a limited number of participants and situates its findings firmly within a particular social group, it does not claim that its findings are either representative or generalisable to different or larger populations. It does not make “large claims from small matters” (Lindlof, 1995:6). Nor does it claim that the results of its studies may be replicated under precisely the same conditions (Bryman,

1988:37) or made applicable to an entire social unit. Instead, it challenges the entire definition of validity proposed by quantitative researchers and defines the generalisability of a study in relation to theoretical propositions rather than to populations (Bryman, 1988:123).

The women who constitute the sample audience in this study do not represent “the” Kenyan telenovela audience nor do they represent female viewers of telenovelas in other African urban centres. The findings of this study provide specific understandings and insights into the lives of a group of young women as they negotiate relationships within their rural and urban cultural environments, via their viewing and assimilation of *Cuando Seas Mia*.

Qualitative research studies have also been criticised because of the subjective involvement of the researcher in the data gathering process, and the reliance placed upon intuitive (based on feelings rather than facts) rather than authoritative (information received from sources) knowledge (Henrichsen *et al*, 1997) – issues that raise questions about the reliability of such information. This criticism has been challenged by those that argue that a thickness of description (Geertz, 1973) enhances the professionalism, quality and validity (Maxwell, 1992) of the findings and that the presentation of the multidimensional context of the participants’ environment allows the researcher to more accurately map the social conditions and make sense of the ways that other people make sense of the world (Lindlof, 1995:10). The breadth of description in qualitative studies has however been counter challenged for being overly reliant upon words and numbers and leaving out “those aspects of reality that use other senses, what can be seen and heard and smelled” (Becker, 1996:64).

The reliability of qualitative research has also been defended methodologically. Researchers (Deacon, 1999:3; Maxwell, 1992:281-4) argue that since each study adopts “competing definitions of what counts as a legitimate and worthwhile approach to the investigation of social and cultural life” (Deacon, 1999: 3), validity ought to be judged on a case-by-case basis relative to the purposes and circumstances of each study and is not inherent in technique. The same methods may produce valid data in one circumstance and invalid data in another.

I addressed concerns about the reliability of this study’s findings by adopting a research approach that would reinforce the findings of each individual method. I conducted a contextual study of Kenya and Nairobi through reference to a range of contemporary publications and authors. This supplemented the data that I collected during the individual interviews with each of the participants. The individual interviews in turn supplemented the information that I gathered about the viewing experiences of the participants during the focus group sessions. By using different sources to collect and collate information, I ensured a breadth of information on the participants’ understandings of *Cuando Seas*

*Mia* and on the contexts within which they engaged in the viewing and discussion cluster.

## **6. The role of the researcher**

The third main criticism that is directed at qualitative research studies is that of the reflexivity of the research findings. It touches upon the role that the researcher plays within the research process not only through their physical presence in the research environment:

Clearly, whenever a social scientist is present, the situation is not just what it would have been without the social scientist (Becker, 1996:61),

but also because of their subjective involvement in analysing and interpreting the research findings. The qualitative researcher's observations have therefore been criticised for being partial truths, more a product of the researcher's imagination than of the actual social and cultural practices of audiences (Atkinson, 1990). By extension, qualitative research data has been described as "collected" or "produced" (Gough, 2002:7).

Qualitative research defends this criticism by arguing, first, that every act of communication in social reality is already a kind of "performance" (Lindlof, 1995:13-18), and that rather than distorting the social reality presented, the researcher's presence offers insight into social understandings and processes; second, that in both research traditions, researchers are "part and parcel of the world they want to investigate" (Denscombe, 2002:19-20) and that therefore "[a]ll types of social research are in a sense artificial because they necessarily involve an intervention into the lives of those being monitored" (Moore, 1993:33); and third, that researchers often choose to investigate cultures that they inhabit themselves thus making them "participant observers" in their own studies (Gray, 2003:17). Any distortion that the researcher introduces to the study is therefore minimal and does not have a detrimental effect.

The involvement of the researcher within their research studies has however raised its own ethical concerns such as the power dynamics that are developed during the study and the ability of the researcher to maintain an "evenly suspended attention" (Flick, 1998:42) towards their research groups and carry out the functions of the study. In response to issues of power, qualitative researchers say that they resist treating their participants as merely subjects (Clifford, 1986 in Moore, 1993:63) and that they adopt more flexible and less structured research methods (Becker, 1996) that shift the power balance back to them. They also encourage the use of unstructured or semi-structured interview guides as a way to limit their authorial function.

Taking heed of Hermes' (2003:391) advice that researchers need to recognise what binds the researcher to her informants in order not to get caught up in the dangers of over- or under-identification I was

quick to identify the similarities and differences that I shared with the participants in this study. I shared with my participants my advantage in being able to understand age, gender and location-based identity. Like them, I too was a telenovela viewer between the ages of 18 to 29, female and living in Nairobi. These similarities allowed me a certain sympathetic insight into their life experiences.

Female media researchers have argued that sharing identities with their participants adds to the quality of conversations they have with them (Gray, 1992:34 in Gallagher, 2003:24; Hermes, 2003:394) and I agree with them. Because of these similarities, I was able to follow a creative interviewing (Fontana and Frey, 1994:368) technique where I interacted with the participants in a more subjective manner, encouraging dialogue between them and at the same time acknowledging my membership within the group (Fontana and Frey, 1994:370). However, my identity as a Kenyan of Asian origin raised some cross-cultural issues during the focus group sessions and the individual interviews. But rather than hindering participants' responses, I felt that my ignorance about a particular social or cultural issue prompted them to clarify and explain in detail the more unique traditional practices that they had been brought up with (Fontana and Frey, 1994:366). In addition, this crucial difference gave me a certain distance or space necessary for interpretation.

The main challenge that this posed was in relation to the need to balance my position of authority as a researcher with my membership within the group. The way in which I did this during the sessions was by not becoming involved in any of the discussions that took place, by deflecting the questions that were addressed to me onto another participant, and at the same time acting as a listener more than a moderator – an approach that I feel worked well in eliciting responses and stimulating discussions. I supplemented my own note taking with an audio recording of the sessions that I later transcribed and analysed in relation to the interviews and the textual background study.

## **7. Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the research approach that was employed for this study. It has justified why a qualitative research approach was best suited to the needs of this study, discussed the composition of the sample audience and talked about the use of focus groups and individual interviews to collect data for this study. The next chapter will situate this study within the particular local context that informs this research work, urban Kenya. It will examine some of the social and cultural identities of Kenya, its urban and rural lifestyles, and the lives of women within its largest urban centre, the capital city of Nairobi, in order to offer an understanding of the young, urban women that are the participants in this study.

## CHAPTER 5: TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF URBAN WOMEN IN KENYA

### 1. Introduction

The young women who comprise the participants in this study are between 18 to 29 years. They live in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, and are either working, studying or pursuing part time studies while engaged in full time employment. Three dimensions of their identity are of particular relevance to this study: their gender, their location and their age. A gendered audience was chosen because of the emphasis that has been placed upon women as viewers of the soap opera and telenovela genre; women in an urban African environment were focused on because the rural-urban dynamic is a central theme explored by telenovelas; and an age group of 18 to 29 was identified because it is the age bracket that experiences the highest amount of rural-urban migration amongst women in Kenya.

The previous chapter outlined how an ethnographic reception study was conducted, through the use of focus groups and individual interviews, in order to understand the ways in which these women engage with *Cuando Seas Mia*, and how their interaction with this global media product shapes and influences their local cultures and identities. This chapter will offer an understanding of the various environments that these women inhabit, and of the social and cultural identities that they both contribute to and are shaped by, in order to better understand the specifics of the situation in which they are viewing *Cuando Seas Mia*. This is because the contexts within which audiences live play a crucial role in shaping the ways that they appropriate media products and incorporate them into their lives (Thompson, 1996:231).

This chapter will show how parts of Kenyan society continue to be in a state of transition from a traditional, rural lifestyle to a modernised, urban one. It will examine the different aspects of these women's identities through a discussion of the urbanisation of Kenya and more especially Nairobi, the traditional options of masculinity and femininity that Kenyan patriarchal society ascribes to, the tensions between these traditions and the modern influences that these women are subject to in Nairobi, and how they re-negotiate their roles, identities and attitudes in response to these global influences. These urban women can therefore be seen as representative members of a transitional society as they strive to make sense of their modern identities in relation to their traditional upbringing. In this chapter, I will provide an overview of the main periods that the country and its capital city Nairobi have undergone, which will develop into a discussion of contemporary Kenyan society as experienced by the women in this study.

## **2. A country in transition**

Kenya is located on the east coast of Africa. It shares borders with Somalia to the east, Uganda to the west, Tanzania to the south, Ethiopia to the north and Sudan to the northwest. It has a national population of approximately 40 million people (most recent population census in 2009) which comprises of seven major ethnic groups, the main ones of which are the Kikuyu, Luhya, Luo and Kamba (Owuor, 2006:39; Rheault and Tortora, 2008:1).

Kenyan society has a rich historical heritage. It was a focus of migration for centuries and long before European explorers set foot in it, was an important source of trade for Arabia, India and China. After the first millennium AD, Nilotic and Bantu peoples moved into the region, and the latter now comprise two thirds of Kenya's population. Swahili, a Bantu language with significant Arabic vocabulary, and initially a coastal patois, developed as a trade language for the entire region. Arab dominance was succeeded by the Portuguese, which two centuries later was replaced by the Arabs until the end of the 18th century, when British exploration of East Africa led to the establishment of Britain's East African Protectorate in 1895. Kenya attained its independence from Britain in 1963, and still remains in the Commonwealth. British rule initiated the transitions that contemporary Kenyan society is still experiencing, a transition that altered the structure of Kenyan society from a traditional one that had its roots in rural villages, to a modernised one that was driven and increasingly dominated by the needs of its urban centres.

Traces of British heritage remain evident in contemporary Kenyan society, especially in religion, language, and education. The dominant religion is Christianity, with about 80% of Kenyans being Christian. The other major religious groups, indigenous ethnic religious traditions, Islam and foreign ethnic religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Zoroastrism etc) account for 20% of the population (Ingman, Ollendick and Akande, 1999; Encyclopaedia of the Nations, 2008; United States Department of State, 2008). In spite of forty ethnic languages from the Bantu, Nilotic, and Cushitic linguistic groups, the official languages in Kenya are English and Swahili. This has met with resistance from some who have argued that English is a language entirely alien to their cultural heritage and that it represents foreign oppression but English, nevertheless, continues to be the language of government, employment and trade in Kenya (Kanyoro, 1991:404; Githiora, 2008:241-242).

The education system in Kenya reflects the same influences as religion and language. In pre-colonial days, education was dominated by the traditional, informal system of education aimed at conserving a group's cultural heritage. This form of education was seen as offering no room for change or adaptation (Otiende in Ochieng', 1990:146). It was replaced by religious schools, predominantly of the Christian faith, which gradually grew to be accepted by community elders who realised that they offered an

education that could enhance social status. “Africans came to see the white man’s education as a means of leaving the villages and acquiring the latter’s material gains which accompanied urban life” (Otiende in Ochieng’, 1990:148). Independence ushered in a second period of transition in the Kenyan education system. The 8-4-4 system (Appleton, Bigsten and Manda, 1999:2) was introduced to give education a practical and technical bias relevant to the needs of national development and to groom Africans into taking important leadership positions in the country’s changing social, economic and political affairs. The government introduced the free primary education programme in 2003, as part of its efforts to achieve the second Millennium Development Goal on Universal Primary Education (Wangalachi, 2003; Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2007:33), and enrollment numbers in schools increased tremendously. In primary school, enrolment increased by 7.8% from 7,632 thousand pupils in 2006 to 8,229 thousand in 2007; and in secondary schools by 14.6% from 1,030 thousand in 2006 to 1,180 thousand in 2007 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2008:2). The government also invested heavily in the establishment of national educational institutions and in a ten year period (1999 to 2009), nine universities and nine constituent colleges of public universities emerged on the higher education scene (Juma, 2009:2). Direct enrolment in public universities alone increased from 10,000 students to about 20,000 students (Juma, 2009:2), and in the adult education section, female learners constituted 69% of the total enrolment figures (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2008:63).

The British ushered in a process of urbanisation, which spawned a number of important consequences. Motivated by economic factors, a large rural-urban migration prompted a fracturing of Kenyan society, and a challenge to traditional gender roles, forcing its people into a state of transition, one that they have not as yet emerged from.

### *2.1 Migration*

The history of the African continent is one of the continuous migrations of people, a concept that involves a change in the locality of the usual residence of a person (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004:3). Kenyan history is filled with the migration of ethnic groups to new areas and the subsequent emergence of new societies. A number of major migrations took place within the present boundaries of Kenya, and each group evolved their cultures and traditions in response to the local cultures they encountered, and in accordance with the characteristics of the new land that they now inhabited. As a result, the different tribes in Kenya have become related, although they are rooted in different languages, cultures and traditions (Ochieng’, 1990; Hayes, 2000:280). These traditional migration patterns in Kenya have a historic origin and involve the movement of entire communities.

Modern migration, defined as “the geographical displacement of people, for a considerable time and over a considerable distance ... between sectors of a social field that are structurally different from

one another” (Binsbergen and Meilink, 1978:10), is described as having a detrimental effect on the fabric of society. It has been attributed predominantly to colonialism’s transformation of agriculture patterns, the introduction of taxes and forced labour, the phenomenon of forced migrations, and the legacy of dependence that it developed between the urban and the rural sectors.

## *2.2 Rural-urban migration*

In the early 1900s the British attempted to maximise the flow of African labour to the settler estates (Swainson, 1978:361; Overton, 1987; Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004) and in the process, displaced traditional communities from their homelands and superimposed a thin Western infrastructure of communication and administration. The development of towns was a modern feature, and the urban centres developed in a segregated manner along the lines of race and social class.

Since independence, the migration of people from rural to urban areas in Kenya has accelerated (Appleton, Bigsten and Manda, 1999:3) spurred by economic development in the urban areas and growing poverty in the rural areas (Haan, 2000:3). The share of the country’s population living in the urban areas (as a percentage of the total population) has increased from 13.4% in 1980 to 20.1% in 1990 and 30.3% in 2003 (World Bank, 2005:311). Rural-urban migration, as a form of voluntary or economic migration (De Haan, 2000:3), is more individualistic and has been attributed to economic factors such as the search for employment, the desire to maximise incomes, access to modern facilities (Bardhan, 1979; Hamermesh, 1987; Agesa and Agesa, 1999:39), and to non-economic factors such as prestige, and a desire to escape the social and cultural imprisonment of the village (Meilink in Binsbergen and Meilink, 1978:59): “[u]rban areas are a source of attraction for many rural dwellers” (Agesa and Agesa, 1999:39).

Migrant populations are predominantly made up of young men and women for whom the exertions of migration are more easily bearable and the challenges adaptable. A higher proportion of migrants are also educated because they would have a better probability of earning higher wages than the uneducated (Agesa and Agesa, 1999:40). In the colonial period, the administration encouraged the recruitment of “workers from the local labour force which was dominated by men migrating from rural to urban areas as their wives who were not allowed to accompany them, remained in the rural areas” (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004:38). While this trend has persisted, today, there are declining proportions of males migrating, and increasing numbers of females moving to urban areas (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004:38). Female participation in the urban labour market has also increased substantially (Appleton, Bigsten and Manda, 1999:3; De Haan, 2000:9), perhaps as a result of economic crisis (De Haan, 2000:9) or as an indication of how Kenyan women are pursuing higher education opportunities and therefore securing higher paying jobs in urban areas. A national

study on migration and urbanisation showed that there was a marked rise in the proportion of the urban population aged 15-64 in virtually all urban centres in the country (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004:36).

### *2.3 Urbanisation*

One of the direct results of greater rural-urban migration is urbanisation, where an increasing proportion of the population lives in urban centres (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004:32). Urbanisation encompasses the “process by which people are attracted to settlements of large human concentration”, the way in which they are incorporated into its “conspicuously different systems of life” and “the cumulative accentuation of ... behaviour patterns” that are distinctive of life within large human settlements (Aseka in Ochieng’, 1990:45-6).

Pre-colonial urbanisation in Kenya was driven along the coast and within the interior by the growth of trade (Aseka in Ochieng’, 1990:53). The regional hub for trade and finance in East Africa, Kenya experienced rapid post-colonial urbanization at an estimated rate of 7.3 percent per annum, reflected in the high rates of rural to urban migration (Owuor, 2006:41). Kenya’s urban residents represent nearly 35% of the country’s overall population (WDI, 2002; DFID, 2004:iii), and is projected to reach 44.5% by 2015 (DFID, 2004:iii). Urbanisation moved people out of their homelands, increased cross-ethnic contacts and developed areas that are no longer the domain of a single group but that contain mixtures of people from all over Kenya (Aseka in Ochieng, 1990). Kenya’s urban centres are melting pots of races, tribes and cultures, home to “myriad institutions and personalities” (Ochieng, 1990:46).

### *2.4 Nairobi*

Nairobi, as the capital city, and Mombasa, as the chief port for the East African hinterland, evolved as the primary urban centres and became major catchment areas of the rural to urban migration flow (Aseka in Ochieng’, 1990:56). Nairobi is the largest urban market in East Africa and home to more tribes than those by whom these lands are traditionally owned. It began as the commercial and business hub of the then British East Africa protectorate (Situma, 1992:167), and assumed its urban identity during the two world wars when larger buildings began to be erected in local stone, replacing its ‘wild west’ appearance from the early years of the century. By the time of independence, Nairobi had developed and expanded into a city that had overwhelming importance for every aspect of East African life. Today Nairobi is the most modernised part of Kenya. It is the seat of the government of Kenya, local government headquarters, regional headquarters of international banks, non-governmental organisations and transnational corporations (Spronk, 2007:7). It is Kenya’s principal economic, administrative, and cultural centre and its sphere of influence expands over the whole of

East Africa.

Nairobi is home to the wealthiest, most literate and best-educated sub-population in Kenya (Spronk, 2007:7). It is the largest of Kenya's four metropolitan centres (the other three being Mombasa, Kisumu and Nakuru). It accounts for 64% of the country's urban population and its labour market participation rates are increasing with particularly high increases for women (DFID, 2004:iv). Net population gains are in the age groups of 10-29 years for women and 10-39 years for men (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004:21).

In 1963 (at independence), the population of Nairobi stood at about 342,764; in 2001, it was at 2.14 million people (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2008:9). But the rapid growth in population was unmatched by planning and a major burden was placed on the provision of services such as education, health and sanitation, water, and electricity. Too much pressure on the provision of housing and basic infrastructure has given rise to congestion, unemployment, poverty, slums, crime and corruption (Owuor, 2006:41). The large influx of migrants to the urban centres, each of whom brought with them their rural tribal traditions and established ways of doing things, resulted in the development of an urbanism which tore apart the feeble urban structures and its social fabrics (Aseka in Ochieng', 1990:56). As the populations within the urban centres have grown, the challenges have multiplied and the quality of life has deteriorated.

The city of Nairobi is therefore a study in contrasts: modern skyscrapers looking out over vast slums; the older, more prosperous neighbourhoods with grand streets, avenues, and ample gardens well served by utilities and other amenities, while the hastily assembled shacks that ring the city and in some areas neighbour the more wealthy residential areas, are lacking in the most basic infrastructure. Such slum areas are characterised by utmost material and moral squalor (Turkstar and Raitelhuber, 2004:1). Land within the city centre is expensive, and so locations outside the city boundaries but within a convenient distance are attractive for industrial establishments; hence a variety of urban settlements have begun to cluster around the Central Business District as industrial satellites, such as Thika, Machakos, Ruaraka and Kiambu.

The majority of the urban employed are engaged in administration, commerce, communications, transportation and domestic services. The share of urban employment in the informal, or *jua kali*, sector is estimated at around 75% (DFID, 2004:5). This sector comprises of a variety of small scale industrial enterprises involved in motor vehicle repairs and metalwork (DFID, 2004:6), giving rise to the description of Nairobi as a self-help city (Hake, 1977) since through informal activities and social organisation, these regions are generating their own internal economy (Granqvist, 2006:384).

In the rural areas there is still a heavy reliance upon agriculture (DFID, 2004:10; Owuor, 2006:39) which accounts for 25% of the country's Gross Domestic Product and provides employment to an estimated 70% of the country's labour force (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2007:iv).

### **3. A society in transition**

Nairobi has been described as a place for the appreciation of a multitude of contemporary identities, or modes of being, based on a mix of local and global qualities (Nyairo, 2005). Fashionable dressing, going out and progressive attitudes are markers of this modernity and sophistication (Spronk, 2007:8). Nairobi's nightlife, for instance, caters to its youth, and their interest in music and entertainment, and its suburbs are filled with cinemas, theatres, nightclubs, restaurants and cultural centres. For all its modernization and urbanization, however, traditional practices remain important. The modern and the traditional live side-by-side and both the new and the old influence Nairobi's culture. It is not uncommon to see herdsmen crossing the busy Mombasa Road highway with their cattle, or to see families roasting goat meat on an outdoor barbecue during the weekends, a traditional rural style of feast called *nyama choma*. Nairobi is therefore characterised by its cosmopolitan population whose tastes reflect practices that combine the local with the global, the traditional with the modern, the rural with the urban.

This may be attributed to Nairobi's population being composed of a high percentage of rural-urban migrants. These migrants move to the city, primarily for economic reasons, but their migration is of a circular nature and they continue to maintain close links with their rural homes, customs and traditional patterns of life (Frederiksen, in Kaarsholm, 1991:230; De Haan, 2000:13; Agesa and Kim, 2001:60; Frayne, 2004:500; Owuor, 2006:172). While the city is a place of work and temporary residence, their rural homes, *shambas*, represent the first home, their family home, where close family members, particularly of the grandparents' generation continue to live. They send remittances home (DFID, 2004:v, 9), and return annually or upon retirement. The rural life represents one that is less complicated than the city life. Its cleaner surroundings and tightly knit social structures are idealised compared to their urban homes, which are plagued by high costs of living, inadequate housing, crime, unemployment, poverty and filth. Rural-urban migrants therefore do not make permanent moves to the cities and almost always maintain ties with their rural homes (Agesa and Agesa, 1999:44; De Haan, 2000:5; Agesa and Kim, 2001; Frayne, 2004; Owuor, 2006).

This duality of existence, where these migrants live in between two homes has an economic effect on the society. In addition, the two environments (the traditional and the modern), the two communities (the home and the host), also affect the social fabric of the community (Lerner, 1958:60; Salcedo,

1971:627-8, De Haan, 2000:5) and the identities of its people:

The Kenyan of today finds himself/ herself trapped between three worlds: one based on traditional lifestyle, another on Western values and a third on values adopted from both cultures. These lifestyles are so diametrically opposed that they create a dilemma within Kenyan society (where individuals either) risk alienation from a fastly increasing urban society or from ancestral lineage and traditional practices. (Azevedo, 1993:30).

They are in a “space of engagement” (Robins and Aksoy, 2005:24-25) which offers social and cultural possibilities that are in between the new and the old, and so they engage in a social and cultural renegotiation in response to the new realities they are experiencing. Nairobi’s social and cultural character has emerged as a result of the interaction and counter-poising of these factors. This ambivalence is a vivid representation of the conflict between the indigenous and the foreign, the modern and the traditional. It is a conflict that has limited the ability to reshape the urban systems to meet the local needs (Aseka in Ochieng’, 1990:66).

Rural-urban migration, therefore, influences the social structures and norms of a community and this process of change from a traditional to a modern way of life creates “‘transitional societies’ within urban centres, or those ‘in transit’ between traditional and modern ways of life” (Soja, 1968:1), since modern systems are superimposed on a mosaic of traditional societies and have triggered a series of processes that are working to reconcile the old with the new, the traditional with the modern. This either weakens traditional forms of organisation and behaviour, “unravel[s] the social fabric” (De Haan, 2000:22), and leads to isolation and loss of social networks (Aseka in Ochieng’, 1990:66; De Haan, 2000:18; Robins and Aksoy, 2005:27); or is less socially disruptive for communities and their social structures than popularly thought to be. It may instead strengthen the identities of these transitional societies by regrouping and restructuring them within modern frameworks since “migrants are agents of change, economically, technologically, but also socially and politically” and hence the process of migration may reinforce traditional structures, ideologies and support networks while creating new identities (De Haan, 2000:5). Tradition and customs become an amorphous and evolving part of everyday life, and they are adapted to fit new cultural and social influences.

The migration process may therefore be more constructive than destructive of social networks and systems through the migrant’s experiences, contacts and participation in different social relations (2000:18). Migrants contribute to changing social structures by creating new identities and reinforcing old ones (De Haan, 2000:22), and by transforming their societies at home and in their host community:

... heterogeneous groups of people, newly in contact with each other, create new identities within the ebb and flow of urban living, hence transcending existing boundaries of ethnic

group, regional/ rural orientation, and class, to embrace over arching visions of social belonging (Kaarsholm, Preben and James, 2000:6-7).

These dynamic processes have given rise to a variety of identities amongst the urban youth, as they combine their traditional rural origins with their modern urban selves, and adapt their identities and their social relations to their urban surroundings. There is, therefore, a multiplicity of experiences that the urban Kenyan youth live with and within (Nyairo and Ogude, 2003:397):

“... cultural identities are emerging which are not fixed, but poised, *in transition*, between different positions: which draw on different cultural traditions at the same time; and which are the product of those complicated cross-overs and cultural mixes which are increasingly common in a globalised world (Hall, 1992:310, original italics).

#### **4. Kenyan women**

##### *4.1 The place of traditional, patriarchal values in a modernising urban African society*

[T]radition always incorporates power (Giddens, 1999b:2).

The majority of Kenyan ethnias are patrilineal, patriarchal and polygamous (Granqvist, 2006:380). African men have traditionally occupied the machismo of warriors (Maasai), hunters (Kikuyu), livestock rearers and farmers (Kikuyu). These are roles which enhance their manhood, and celebrate their glory and prestige.

Kenyan women are traditionally responsible for the home, the children and the land. Their access to education, ownership of wealth and property remains curtailed (Human Rights Watch, 2003:1; Muteshi, 2009:7). Kenyan women are forced to undergo female genital mutilation at a young age in several tribes, are married off at young ages in rural areas, in the Western region of Kenya are required to marry their husband's brother when widowed (a practice called wife inheritance), and are treated disadvantageously in the instance of failing to produce a male heir (Human Rights Watch, 2003:1; Azevedo, 1993:7). Their decision making abilities are restricted largely to women's affairs while men's decisions are binding to both men and women (Shaw, 1995). Village elders (who almost always only consist of men) are tasked with arbitrating conflicts and making decisions pertaining to all the members in the village (Human Rights Watch, 2003:7):

The effect is to create a social-power hierarchy, in the context of which women are, by-and-large, reduced to powerlessness, economic marginalisation, social vulnerability, and cultural inferiority, without any regard to their actual level of contribution to the processes of social production and development (Report of the Task Force for the Review of Laws Relating to Women, Nairobi, 1998).

Pre-colonial Kenyan society was characterised by small units that are ethnically circumscribed and

inwardly focused. Communications within these societies were informal, personal, oral and guided by the patriarchal social hierarchy. Colonialism however forced these traditional societies to change through increasing contact with contemporary cultures. It created larger units of organisation, questioned African traditions and presented Westernised alternatives to African customs, traditions and religions, which gave rise to what has euphemistically been called a “culture clash”. This has been conveyed in early post independence Kenyan theatre pieces which presented a young man torn between going to live in the city (the symbol of modernity and civilisation) and the rural areas (the bush) where his clansmen still adhered to ‘primitivism’. Rural Africa was depicted as traditional and backward (the *washenzi*), while the urban areas were civilised, modern, sophisticated and associated with Western values.

By the late 1960s, the colonially influenced concept of traditional Africa and its negative associations was increasingly questioned and the traditional dances, rituals and festivals that had been denigrated post independence, began to make a popular come back. Kenyan traditions were reinvented (Giddens, 1999b:3). Contemporary theatre productions began to explore cultural roots through dance, music and costuming of actresses (for example, as a representation of patriarchal Kenyan society, women on the stage were to wear a *lesso* that covered them from shoulders to ankles). Kenyan writers also embraced their African identity. Ngugi wa Thiong’o, a Kenyan novelist, stopped writing his short stories in English, a language that he perceived to be divorced from his mother-tongue and oral traditions, and instead began writing in Kikuyu, the dialect of the Agikuyu people, as a challenge to the presumed superiority of the English language.

Today, Kenyan urban society stands somewhere between African tradition and westernised modernity. A tension exists between modern values and local meanings, and in this scenario the sense of self is changing, and self-identity in relation to tradition and life-style choices is being “created and recreated on a more active basis than before” (Giddens, 1999b:6). Yet patriarchy continues to dominate as a generic structure of subordination (Granqvist, 2006:380), drawing upon the patrilineal, patriarchal customs of Kenyan traditions; and contemporary society has an immense amount of pride in local tribal and traditional cultures. It continues to “entrench ethnic identities and consolidate conservative values” (Kaarsholm, Preben and James, 2000:7). Men dominate institutions such as the courts, legislature, executive, police, clergy, industry and trade unions (Muteshi, 2009:7) and women continue to be “burdened with unequal gender relations, discrimination, the lack of political will” (Muteshi, 2009:7). At the same time, life in the urban centres yearns for the “freedom and emancipation of modern ... youth culture [from the] ... more parochial and conservative values of Kenyan patriarchy” (Kaarsholm, Preben and James, 2000:8).

The 1999 population census (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004) showed that an increasing number of women were involved in rural-urban migration (2004:38), and that Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, had received the greatest influx of women of all the urban centres in the country (2004:5). In the urban areas, women, many of whom are single mothers, constitute a substantial part of the Kenyan urban workforce. They have increasingly gained access to senior management positions in government and private sector, and their achievements are celebrated by the local media (such as through initiatives like *Top 40 under 40* which celebrates the achievements of women under 40 in Kenyan business). There is a proliferation of magazines that cater to the urban woman (*Eve, True Love, African Woman, Business Woman* and *Parents*). In 2006, the government established the Women Enterprise Fund as a move to addressing poverty through their socio-economic empowerment (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2008:64). The number of registered women groups increased from 136,972 in 2006 to 138,753 in 2007, and membership of these groups also increased in the same period (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2008:64). The public role and status of women in Kenya has therefore altered considerably. Instead of being male dominated, submissive to patriarchal authority and generally conforming to conventional behaviour expectations, Kenyan women have defied conventional norms, challenged expectations of 'acceptable' behaviour and effected profound changes in African gender relations (Ekechi, 2003:130).

Unfortunately, Kenyan men seem to be threatened by the independence and professional development of urban Kenyan women and argue that "the gender roles of the past have been replaced with what can only be described as gender servitude" (Pala, 2009:8), and that the "must-have-it-all competitiveness of younger women is taking this society down a very dangerous curve" (Pala, 2009:8) where few good attributes of manhood are publicly recognised and continual implications are being made that there is "something fundamentally wrong with the male gene" (Pala, 2009:8). In the face of these criticisms, Kenyan women continue to negotiate their identities as modern African women. They hold positions of political leadership and constitute part of the Cabinet (Ohito, 2009:17). In 1997, for the first time in Kenyan history, a female politician, Charity Ngilu, the Member of Parliament for the Kitui constituency indicated her candidacy for the presidential elections (Sullivan, 1999:1) while in 2009, a Kenyan woman judge was unanimously elected to sit on the International Criminal Court at the Hague (Anyangu, 2009:19). Women drive cars, own businesses, own homes and comprise a large percentage of the study programs at universities, both in the full time and part time stream (Juma, 2009:2). The Standard Chartered Bank even customised its banking services for the professional Kenyan woman through the Diva account which targeted the "changing lifestyle and needs" of women (Standard Chartered, 2008).

In addition to the economic incentives and alternative sources of income that have been opened up

for them, the city life has given women a newly-found independence. Some of the ways of the past, they see as inferior, outmoded and insufficient for success in today's world and so they invoke their own power of agency to shape their individual lives and direction. They are no longer dependent upon the male members of their family for subsistence or support. The city offers them an escape from the material conditions of village life, traditional kinship, marital obligations and other restrictions of rural community life. For example, urban women's clothing styles are dictated by Western fashion and catered to by upper class boutiques located in shopping centres and malls in the city centre and suburbs. Contrary to traditional practice (which insists upon women wearing long skirts, and has been enforced in some areas of the city by the extremist vigilante group, the *Mungiki* (Walsh, 2000)), urban women wear trousers in their daily lives, whether it is tailored suits (a "traditionally male business uniform that masks and suppresses the gender, ethnicity, and class of the wearer" (Gilpin, 2008:2)) in the workplace or jeans over the weekend. An even more relaxed and open dressing style is common with younger urban Kenyan women, especially university students.

Even so, women in the urban areas retain strong ties to their rural homes and lives. They send a part of their monthly salary home to family members for payment of school fees, and other daily expenses (estimated at between 13% and 22% of their average income by De Haan, 2000:22). They visit their homes and their families regularly for functions or holidays, and when they do, slip seamlessly into the village life: fetching water from the river, farming, tending to the livestock, cooking, and going to church. They alter their style of dress and behaviour to one that suits the village environment. They stop wearing the trousers and short skirts of the city, replacing them with long skirts or dresses, and tie a *lesso* over the lower half of their body. They behave differently when in the company of men or elders of the society, treating them with greater respect and deference, as is the traditional practice.

These urban women live in a transitional society, in between tradition and modernity. They live in the city and experience urban life with its modern influences, practices and behaviours. At the same time, they are attached to their rural lives, its customs and practices such that upon returning to the village, they naturally re-adopt rural practices. They are unwilling "to accept all the elements they perceive as modern into their lives" as well as reluctant "to abandon those (traditional) cultural values that they consider worthwhile and preferable to their Western options" (Prazak, 1999:97). They therefore co-exist between a rural and an urban life, a traditional and a modern one, and constitute one of the groups that is continually re-negotiating their roles and identities in relation to traditional patriarchal Kenyan society and in response to the modern influences of an urban environment, giving rise to identities and roles where tradition and modernity overlap. Their social uprooting and transition makes obsolete certain ways of life and closes certain opportunities. At the same time, it opens up others and encourages new forms of social relations. This tension is explored by Frederiksen (2000:211) in

his study of how young Kenyan men and women from a poor Nairobi neighbourhood appropriate local and global popular culture, and how they respond to the challenges that westernised, feminist attitudes pose to patriarchal Kenyan society and African culture.

While the inequality of men and women is intrinsic to the traditional family (Giddens, 1999:2), in the Kenyan context there is also the additional unequal separation of functions and powers between generations and genders (Frederiksen, 2000:209). Young Kenyan women are therefore doubly disadvantaged by the societies that they live in, since they are held back by both their youth and their gender. They frequently articulate and discuss the family problems and conflicts (Frederiksen, 2000:221), and the tensions and differences (Nyairo and Ogude, 2003:385) that they face between older and new forms of socialization where, for example, talk or observation of sexual matters is avoided in the joint presence of adjacent generations (2000:220). However, at the same time as being socially disadvantaged, these young Kenyans are a globally aware, style-conscious audience (Hofmeyr, Nyairo and Ogude, 2003:376) as a result of their exposure to the urban lifestyle and global media. They negotiate their multiple identities and, in spite of their rural-urban dichotomy where they “move back and forth between the village and the city both physically and psychologically” (Ogola, 2005:148), they identify themselves as urbanites (Frederiksen, 2002:58; Githinji, 2006:453), forging a borderless youth culture (Grixti, 2006:106) for themselves and in this way dealing with their postcolonial predicament (Nyairo and Ogude, 2003:394).

#### *4.2 The women in this study*

This study spoke to a group of women between the ages of 18 to 29 who live in Nairobi. They come from different tribal and cultural backgrounds, and consequently from different parts of the country but they have all lived in Nairobi for a minimum of five years. (I have deliberately chosen not to engage with the tribal identities that the women in this study belong to, focussing instead on their common Kenyan identities. My selection of participants was therefore made without regard to tribal groups.) While some of these women moved to Nairobi individually and may be described as first generation city dwellers, others are more conversant with urban Kenyan centres having lived in a range of them, with their families, over the years. This age bracket of 18 to 29 years is the one that experiences the highest rate of rural-urban migration for women in the country (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004).

Evelyn, one of the women in this study, is a daughter from a polygamous home and so she has grown up in and is accustomed to living with a large family. Evelyn is originally from western Kenya, and her rural home borders Uganda. She has a number of close relatives who are Ugandan and their respective cultures share many similarities. She lives in the Ngong area of Nairobi and shares a house

with two of her sisters, both of whom are also working in the city. She initially started as a receptionist in a government organisation and gradually progressed to being the Personal Assistant to the CEO while pursuing a degree course (in Public Relations) at a public university on a part time basis. Every month she sends a percentage of her pay cheque to her family.

Faith is the daughter of a single mother. She completed her bachelor's degree at a local university, with her mother's financial support. She has been working in Nairobi for the past five years at a state corporation where she marks-up documents in html formatting for a government website, while pursuing her Masters in Information Technology at the Nairobi campus of an international university. Faith's story is similar to that of many Kenyan youth in that her career path changed drastically after completion of her first degree and her arrival in Nairobi. While her undergraduate degree was in the natural and biological sciences, she is now pursuing a Masters in Information Sciences. She visits her maternal home in Eldoret at least once a month, and takes money home for her mother and her maternal grandparents, whose home she calls her own. The eldest of three children, Faith lives in a house in Pangani, a lower-middle class residential area of Nairobi which is bordered by the Mathare slums and Eastleigh, a residential area densely populated by Somalis. She lives with one of her two brothers whom she convinced to move to the city to pursue certificate courses and secure formal employment, and a female cousin from Eldoret.

Evelyn and Faith are first generation city dwellers who have strong ties to their rural homes and families. They visit their rural homes regularly, and although they have siblings with them in the city, their parents do not live with them. Their rural homes continue to represent their first home. Other women in this study are second generation city dwellers since their parents moved to the city from the rural areas before they were born or shortly after. They were therefore born and brought up in an urban environment from a young age and the city is the home that they know. Interestingly, while some families moved directly to Nairobi, such as Joanne's (Meru to Nairobi) and Liz's (Kisii to Nairobi), Florence's family progressed gradually across the urban centres in Kenya, ending up in the capital city (Kisumu to Mombasa to Nairobi).

The parents of these women, the second generation city dwellers, are professionals in the fields of business, accounting, law, and education; and they themselves are pursuing undergraduate degrees at the Nairobi campus of a public or private university in a combination of arts, law and international relations fields. They live with their parents in upper-middle class residential areas such as Westlands, Lavington, Kileleshwa and most of them also work part time at non-governmental organisations or other private businesses. Each of their families originates from a different part of Kenya such as Maralal, Kisii, Machakos and Western Kenya. Joanne, Liz and Florence live with their parents and

siblings while Caroline and Maureen share their homes with members of their extended family, such as cousins, uncles and aunts.

Each of the women has a different relationship with and therefore a different understanding of their rural home (*shags* as it is referred to in *sheng*, a Swahili-based patois) and family since they have visited, experienced and become attached to the traditional rural practices to differing extents. Joanne, who is completing law school while interning at an NGO, was born in the city to educated parents but brought up in Maralal, a small town, by her maternal grandmother. She feels a strong link to her grandparents and uncles and often visits them. “When it’s time to go rural, I forget about the urban part,” she says. She enjoys the opportunities to immerse herself in the more traditional, culturally rich life in Maralal and finds that it centres her. “I find it a big change from the hustles of life. It’s more relaxing; it’s a bit slower than urban life.” She particularly enjoys the people friendly environment in Maralal where “someone is always around” and you are not limited to the compound of a city estate, for security reasons. Wairu, Nyambura, Evelyn, Faith and Joanne visit their rural homes regularly, send money and gifts to their relatives, and their parents are still actively involved in village affairs and leadership structures.

Others, like Liz and Florence, have grown apart from their rural homes and practices and over the years, have detached themselves from the rural life and from the family members that remain there. They neither visit regularly (perhaps for funerals and religious events) nor do they interact with the extended family members who live in their rural homes. They are more connected to their immediate family who live in Nairobi. Liz is not close to her family in the rural areas, nor do she or her parents and siblings visit them often, perhaps only once every two years. She speaks disparagingly of the “isolated” village set up, with its lack of electricity, television and running water. Instead she associates herself with the city and its modern comforts where she has the freedom to make her own decisions, pursue her education and not feel the pressure of getting married. “I am a city girl,” she says. “I do away with most traditions.” Florence has also distanced herself from her large extended family in Migori, Western Kenya. This weaker bond between the rural and the urban home may be attributed to decreasing efforts by the parents to incorporate their children into activities at the rural home, an inability to communicate with rural relatives when unable to speak an ethnic language and an increasing focus on the city life (Spronk, 2007:6-7). Susan also defines herself as a city dweller and describes the rural life as “boring” and as one that “doesn’t apply to me”.

Wairu and Nyambura, sisters, were born and brought up in Thika, one of the satellite towns that were constructed around the capital city, and both their educational and professional lives revolve closely around the city because of its geographical proximity. Their father is a teacher and their mother is an

advocate. Wairu was recently admitted to the bar and is working at a non-governmental human rights organisation while Nyambura is completing her Bachelor of Arts degree at a private university in Nairobi, majoring in Journalism. Both of them live in Nairobi and although they visit their parents in Thika, they enjoy going to their rural home in Nyeri which they find offers an escape from city life.

These varying levels of attachment and detachment to the rural homes cannot encapsulate the role that tradition and culture play in each of their lives. Some of the women return to their rural homes more often and for them, a more pronounced distinction can be seen between their behaviour in Nairobi and in their rural home. Evelyn mentions how she dresses and behaves differently when she returns to Tesoland, Western Kenya especially when she is around elders or seniors because that is the role of the women in her culture: “to be respectful ... it is something to be valued”. So western clothing is discarded in favour of the traditional full-length *kitenge* which according to her culture “symbolises the African woman”. Different chores also occupy her days when she visits her rural home, a pattern of life that is starkly different to her life in Nairobi.

Joanne and Liz speak of how they wear dresses or long skirts in Maralal or Kisii (respectively) and how they wear long sleeved shirts to cover their arms. “You can’t wear trousers or spaghetti straps,” says Joanne, “but it’s more attitude than tradition”, she adds. They help out more around the house and in the kitchen with household chores, “regardless of the fact that we have degrees,” says Liz. There are no recreational facilities to occupy their time, and as women, they are excluded from any decision-making processes.

Even those who have lived in the city for a longer time discuss how their parents, through particular cultural influences, try to moderate their behaviour and identities as Kenyan women living in the city. “My parents believe that before children learn any other language they should know their mother tongue”, and so Florence at the insistence of her parents speaks fluent Jalu, her ethnic language. Joanne, Susan, Maureen and Liz speak of the emphasis placed by their parents upon dressing, church attendance, social behaviour as it relates to dating, sexual (what the women referred to as “serious”) relationships and staying out past a certain hour of night. Their parents restrict the kinds of television programs that they are allowed to watch. “Romance and kissing – my dad won’t allow ... and the way women are dressed. If it’s scanty, it’s scandalous,” Joanne tells me. “Sex, love and romance is also not talked about openly.”

“We have different beliefs to those that we had in the past,” reflects Susan, “but there are some that we hold onto that we can’t throw away.” Joanne, for example, has a traditional view of relationships, that is “no sex before marriage” and she refuses to get involved in a “come we stay” kind of living

situation. At the same time, she is committed to being a legal professional, having a career and to being financially independent before she gets married, in spite of her grandmother's fears that this will make her hard headed and that it will frighten off potential husbands. Joanne is determined to marry for love which implies a more personal, and not collective approach to partner choice (Spronk, 2007:27), and that she is redefining her identity to include more than just being a daughter, wife and mother. Therefore at the same time as she follows traditional practices and holds onto particular beliefs, she has modern views about how she wants to live her life.

Despite her strong level of attachment to Maralal, her grandmother and the rural style of life, Joanne admits that the urban life has changed her, and influenced her attitudes:

I still go back to *shags* but it's a bit different from when we were young. At my age, people expect me to be married by now, maybe two or three kids. My age mates in *shags* are married, they have gone through female circumcision and that brings about some form of a difference ... You can't relate at the same level.

and that there are some traditions, like circumcision, that she will not "indulge in":

Where I come from, society expects you to be circumcised and the men there are socialised into believing that circumcised women are the right ones for them. So if you're not circumcised you're like shunned or you're treated badly by men and no one is willing to get married to an uncircumcised woman because they think they're promiscuous.

Similarly, for Susan:

Most of my life I've been in the city – so it is hard to function in the rural areas.

The women in this study share an uncompromising dedication to career before marriage. "I want a good job first. Men are not reliable. I don't want to depend on them". They have a very different attitude towards men, compared to the one that Kenyan women are traditionally supposed to have. Liz laughs as she describes Kisii men as wife beaters, dictators and having terrible tempers. "Ai", she exclaims, and although she is ready to admit that all Kenyan men may not necessarily be like that, she prefers to "search elsewhere" for a husband. Joanne also has a negative view of Kenyan men. Having been brought up in a family environment of domestic violence, she acknowledges that she is confused about relationships; about what family is supposed to be and that she finds it hard to trust people. Florence is also wary when it comes to relationships with Luo men whom she describes as smooth players who she neither appreciates nor is comfortable with. Maureen speaks to the crux of the issue when she talks of how modernism and feminism have confused the issue. "Women and men had their roles then", she says referring to her grandparents' generation. "Life was easier than it is now. Feminism says men are bad; tradition says follow your culture. So you are caught in between. Do you hate men or just be a soft woman?"

While admitting to the ways in which they have balanced tradition and modernity, the women are still hesitant at being described as city girls because of the stigma that is associated with city living and modern women who are stereotyped as prostitutes, promiscuous, “rotten” and unattractive as future wives. They therefore reject the negative representations of modern women as immoral, wayward and essentially wicked and react defensively when defined as modern or westernised:

Susan: City girls are spoilt brats but I am very conservative.

Other similarities that these women share include a lack of exposure to life outside of Kenya since they have not travelled outside of the country, although they have travelled extensively within the county and experienced different cultures through travel and through schooling systems. Hence their experiences are limited to Kenyan ones, albeit ones from different areas of the country.

These young women co-exist between traditional identities as women in a patriarchal Kenyan society and urban professionals exploring a modern and sophisticated lifestyle in Nairobi. While they critique and challenge aspects of conventional gender roles, they are vulnerable to negative accusations of being ‘modernised’ and choose rather to embrace certain socially valued aspects of their cultural identity. Their identities as young Kenyan women living in an urban environment are entrenched within a post-colonial transition within which they are negotiating their Kenyanness, their femininity, their relationships and their values in response to their experiences and understandings of tradition and modernity. They each engage with the rural-urban, traditional-modern elements of their identities on a daily basis and these negotiations fundamentally influence the identities that they inhabit, the roles that they engage in, their social behaviour and future aspirations.

## 5. Conclusion

The participants in this study occupy a range of subject positions. In addition to being young, African women, they are members of a transitional society which influences their professional and personal roles and identities. This in turn shapes the ways in which they engage with *Cuando Seas Mia*, how they interpret it, respond to it and appropriate aspects of it into their daily lives. In the next chapter, I will further explore the transitional identities of these women, in relation to the findings of the focus group sessions conducted. I will discuss the ways in which these women shape their local Kenyan roles and identities in response to their understandings of a telenovela that explores the transitional, rural-urban identities of Mexican society.

## CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 1. Introduction

The participants in this study are a group of women who live in Nairobi, an urban African centre, but who maintain close ties to their rural homes. They have moved to the city in search of education, work, and financial stability. In the process, they have been exposed to the influences and resources that modernisation makes available - including the media - and these have challenged aspects of their traditional upbringing, local practices and family values and forced them to question their identities. They ultimately aspire to live more fulfilling lives professionally and personally, and because they have lived in and have an understanding of both the rural life and the urban life, they attempt to incorporate elements of both tradition and modernity into their lives. However, these women feel simultaneously alienated from their traditional roots and from their modern city surroundings. As members of a transitional Kenyan society, they are engaged in a continual process of self-definition and identity construction. They question what it means to be a woman. What is acceptable behaviour for them as urban African women? Should they embrace the familiarity of the traditional role of African women or should they question the place of tradition in their modern lives and adopt westernised characteristics and attitudes? The tensions that they experience in defining themselves as women feeds into their behaviours and attitudes towards men and relationships. What kind of men should they prefer? The typical African man who is dominant and overbearing or the sensitive, romantic modern man popularised by global media?

Their consumption of *Cuando Seas Mia* is structured around their need to answer these questions in a way which incorporates elements of their urban environment into their lives without sacrificing their traditional upbringing. This study therefore refutes some of the tenets of the media imperialism thesis and its claim that global media products have a detrimental effect on local cultures and identities, since it shows that local audiences (in this study, a group of young Kenyan women) negotiate media products to shape their local roles and identities. This chapter will discuss the meanings that these young women construct from *Cuando Seas Mia* and how these meanings intersect with their local lives, social roles and identities, values and beliefs as women. It is structured into three sections which explore their understandings of the different femininities, masculinities and romantic relationships in relation to, on the one hand, their African traditions, and on the other, the Western influences that urbanisation and the media have made available to them.

### 2. Defining the identities of women

The women in this study are caught between tradition and modernity. They come from a strong traditional African culture which dictates a particular way to dress, behave, communicate and live

as women, but by living in the city of Nairobi, they are exposed to a modern Western culture which advocates a contrary appearance and behaviour. Their identities as women are undergoing changes in response to their move to a “city-space” (Martin-Barbero, 2006:292; Janer, 2000:33). They are therefore caught in between two cultures and uncertain of which one to subscribe to with respect to their identities and their behaviour.

*Cuando Seas Mia* explores this dichotomy of identity from a Mexican perspective. Its central narrative traces the life of a female character, Paloma, who moves between a rural society and an urban one, who has strong ties to her culture, her religion and her tradition but who has to adapt to the modern lifestyle of Mexico City. Like the participants in this study, Paloma moves to the city with dreams of furthering her professional skills and pursuing her career aspirations whilst aspiring to a romantic relationship. The parallels between her and the women in this study are evident, and during the focus groups, the participants recognise these similarities, and to an extent, attribute their involvement with the narrative to these reasons:

Faith: In your setting, something like that can happen.

The incorporation of a city lifestyle in the narrative, aside from its glamour, appeals to these women because it is similar to the urban environment of Nairobi which they are struggling to understand and adapt to, and because it does not take them back to a rural environment which they feel they have outgrown and developed away from:

Maureen: I chose *Cuando Seas Mia* because of its modern aspect. The characters are beautiful, handsome ... the lighting ...

Some [telenovelas] are in the rural areas and you know they are going to be boring. [They don't] apply to my life. The one in the mansion with the furniture, family, clothes. Yes. That applies.

Susan: [In] The rural ones, you meet in a farm. I live in the city. That doesn't apply to me. ... The fast paced city applies also in soaps. Something that relates to your life.

They discuss certain female characters from *Cuando Seas Mia* to explore what behoves proper conduct for women and their disagreement, at times, over a particular character's behaviour, highlights their confusion about the roles and identities that they as, contemporary women, are supposed to adopt. Sometimes they endorse an outright challenge to traditional female stereotypes and criticise characters who uphold these roles, while at other times, they find the ultra modern behaviour of some of the characters unsettling. But rather than discussing the reasons why particular kinds of behaviour make them uncomfortable, the participants poke fun at certain of the *Cuando Seas Mia* characters, indicating their discomfort with the adoption of particular roles by these women. For example, Martia, Fabian's

girlfriend, is a character that the participants cannot understand. They call her “stupid”, “exaggerated” and doubt whether “there’s any kind of human being in the world” like her because she is prepared to commit suicide in order to secure Fabian’s love.

Their negotiation of the social acceptability of different kinds of feminine behaviour suggests that they are unable to successfully challenge patriarchy and the expectations that it places on the appearance and behaviour of African women. This is a theme that recurs in their discussions of masculinity (and in particular masculinity for an African man), relationships and, overall, their ambiguous feelings about rural life.

As a result, the participants do not identify with a single character but have multiple identifications with certain kinds of figures (Mumford, 1998:93) showing that “[N]one of us is just one thing, belongs to just one group and has just one identity” (Karner, 2007:2). Through a discussion of various female characters in *Cuando Seas Mia*, some of which are closer to their age group and others that occupy more of a maternal position within the narrative, the participants negotiate their own changing identities as women. Their discussions are made in relation to the conservative social expectations that are made of them, the demands of a contemporary Westernised urban lifestyle, and the compromises that each of them makes in their own lives. The telenovela characters are cultural archetypes, shared by certain segments of Mexican and Kenyan culture, and they help the participants to engage with the narrative and its themes. Discussing them becomes an outlet for exploring, amongst peers who experience the same challenges, what is and what is not acceptable social behaviour for modern African women.

### *2.1 Young women*

The participants discuss three young female characters in *Cuando Seas Mia* at length, critiquing various aspects of their natures: Paloma, Barbara and Daniella. Each of the three women represents different qualities, and as they engage with each one, they negotiate aspects of the character’s identities in relation to their own social and identity transitions. Paloma and Daniella are described as “good”; Barbara is “evil”. However while Daniella has a more formed character, Paloma’s and Barbara’s are still being formed and are still evolving. It is no coincidence therefore that the participants engage with and negotiate most actively with Paloma’s and Barbara’s characters. This section will discuss each of these women, highlighting aspects of their characters which the participants engage with and possible reasons for it.

#### Paloma

Paloma, the female protagonist, is a favourite amongst all the participants. They identify with her rural

background as a coffee collector and, for some participants, that she is raised by a single parent. They admire her ambitious nature, her desire to achieve great things professionally and her relationship with a man who is above her own social class, in both of which she eventually succeeds. The fact that neither of these is easy to come by and that she experiences challenges each step of the way (which are narrated by them step by step), endears her to them more. They discuss the hurdles she faces when she is pregnant and alone in a strange city in Europe with “no money, no job, no nothing”, her strength in overcoming these difficulties (“Women are very strong characters”), in “making ends meet for herself”, and in not succumbing to the demands of a prostitution cartel.

Paloma was therefore exploited by a patriarchal society and subjected to male superiority and strength. However, instead of being destroyed by it she transforms into a stronger character and the participants celebrate her professional successes and what it implies about being a woman in today’s society:

Wairu: She kind of revolutionised and she learnt some skills that enabled her to be an executive so she’s kind of come up the ranks.

and:

Susan: Paloma, she came from nowhere, became an executive, got her degree, worked hard. There’s always this aspect of women. You have to be strong and smart, don’t fall for anything.

and:

Florence: Paloma teaches that we can uplift ourselves and make something through hard work. She went to a foreign country and she never surrendered to prostitution. In fact by the end of the program she was a CEO.

Joanne: She is a good example of determination.

Paloma epitomises the achievements that the participants admire and aspire to:

Maureen: Girls are getting more independent, educated, self assured, outgoing. Formerly they were naïve. Programmed to think only in the kitchen.

Susan: Right now women are independent in that they don’t want to get married and depend on the husband for everything.

Maureen: Women are becoming corporate.

In addition to her reinvention of herself from a collector to a business executive, her commitment and prioritisation of a career over a romantic relationship appeals to them:

Wairu: One of the things that I really like is the fact that Paloma is unlike all the others who give up their dreams to achieve things. But Paloma still goes for London. She follows her dreams first so she can follow her love ... I like that. She’s ambitious and she moved

up. Her reputation is good. She's very professional.

They admire how she puts her career before her relationship, a character trait that they equate with being a modern woman since she is not willing to sacrifice her professional development for her personal relationship. Paloma wants to be independent and defined outside the context of men.

Paloma also personifies the class dynamic in the narrative, and in Mexican society. She is described as “this girl who's a collector” who works on a hacienda, a coffee plantation. Diego, the man she falls in love with, is from this “rich family” of land owners who owns the hacienda and the acres of coffee fields upon which Paloma and her mother, Soledad, work. After her return from Europe, however, she is seen as having improved her social status and overcome her working class roots possibly because of her experiences abroad or because of the training courses that she takes in the city. But even after joining the coffee export business as an executive, Paloma faces discrimination because of her working class background. Her professional growth and social advancement is challenged, mostly by the Sanchez-Serrano family who continue to see her as a collector who is trying to marry into their land owning, upper class family. Class therefore is closely interlinked with Paloma's character and with the central love story in the narrative, the Diego-Paloma romance, and the participants discuss it and the unnecessary social barriers that it erects at length.

They begin by affirming that they have learnt a lot from watching *Cuando Seas Mia*, especially in relation to “love, honesty, family, values” and then add that one should not “look at where a person is coming from, like Paloma and the coffee picking class” but that the determining factor in judging someone should be their character. This sentiment to look beyond class is a modern outlook that the participants have learnt from their city lives, their consumption of foreign media products and perhaps, most importantly, their personal experiences in Nairobi where they or their friends, rural Kenyans that have moved to an urban environment, may have been judged by their class identity (Azevedo, 1993:17).

The participants identify closely with Paloma. Like her, they come from a rural background, have moved to the city for work, have prioritised professional growth, and are actively pursuing further studies as a way to achieve this. Like Paloma's mother, Soledad who longs to return to the simple days of being coffee collectors, they idealise aspects of their rural lives. They speak nostalgically of their simple rural “home” where “No one is judging you, against you. They always trust you, they believe”, and of the routines of life in the rural area: “seeing people, going to the *shamba*, harvesting, the village, seeing how things grow because that is what I used to do when I was young”.

When they describe Paloma as a collector, it is not a derisive class-based term but a description

whose meaning they have renegotiated to celebrate this aspect of her identity. They laugh about how the “collector” in her is never far from the surface and how, without warning, it manifests itself in a business environment. They commend her ability to have an emotional outburst and respond physically when she is angry or upset because it means that she can hold her own against the men in her life (Diego) and against those who are trying to undermine her, such as Barbara and Fabian:

Nyambura: What I like about Paloma is she’s not afraid of getting physical. [Roar.] Like jungle. *Ati*, she slapped Fabian and Diego. She ripped Barbara. It was amazing ... she’s not afraid to express herself physically

Wairu: [laugh] And then she can be ... such a paradox. So professional and then, you know ... she jumped out. I mean the collector comes out. You can take the girl out of the village but you can never take the village out of the girl. I mean, the collector type just chucks.

Even her inconsistencies in behaviour, the fact that she is not perfect and that sometimes she does not know what she wants, appeals to them as it makes her more realistic as a character, endears her to them and allows them to relate to her more closely. They exult in her ability to break out of the staid, composed demeanour imposed by the business environment in Mexico City, justifying the need for women to get physical at times and to lose all inhibitions when the need arises. They become excited when describing how she expresses herself physically and aggressively – ripping Barbara and slapping Diego:

Wairu: She’s different from the other women. I like her because she’s aggressive. I think she’s the only one that can handle Diego. And she really portrays how chicks are. She’s executive, then she gets emotional. And then at times she tells Diego maybe this is not right. She’s very indecisive actually but then women are indecisive. She portrays how women are.

She really wants to go for her career but she loves Diego and then when she’s with him she’s so *woye*. One minute she’s so in love with Diego and next minute she’s shouting at Mariano.

Her violent behaviour, although decidedly unfeminine, is rationalised by the participants as an acceptable physical expression of her anger, and Paloma is not criticised for it despite its association with masculinity. Her physicality is actually approved of, and by attributing it to her collector identity (thus associating it with rural life and the positive energies of the rural-urban binary), validated further as acceptable. When faced with a difficult situation in the city, Paloma is neither composed, nor does she think through her actions methodically (and robotically). Instead she reacts instinctively, with a feral energy and a complete lack of inhibition, and her momentary loss of control is discussed by the

participants without censure.

The participants even rely upon this aspect of her character to “save” Diego and to resolve his “mess” at various parts in the narrative, such as with the mildew at the hacienda and the threats from Miguel, suggesting a swap in traditional gender roles and male physical dominance since the woman is coming to the rescue of her man.

The participants therefore use Paloma’s character “to talk about, explore and test out the boundaries of moral and social life in a cultural context which does not share some of the central assumptions of the text itself” (Gillespie, 1995 in Barker, 1997:122). Their discussion of her character is also praise for her ability to reach an uneasy truce between her two identities, the collector and the executive, the rural and the urban, and in so doing continue being true to her real self since this is a challenge that the participants also face by being “in between two cultures”, unable to describe themselves as “a rural person” nor being able to identify with “industry” and the “production” driven capital city.

Faith: I’ve not gotten to the point where I see myself as a real woman in the city, a professional. I’m a young person struggling to achieve a standard.

### Barbara

Where Paloma is the good, caring and tortured character who solicits their sympathy and who they are drawn to because she is undergoing a similar transition to their own, Barbara, Fabian’s wife, is the villainous character that they love to hate. Barbara is strongly identified with the urban environment of Mexico city. She is described as scheming, over-demanding, bitchy, conniving and jealous; criticised for the way that she dresses, behaves, walks and talks, and they see in all of it a representation of her dishonest, manipulative character:

Faith: Barbara had the wrong motives, and you can always tell when someone has the wrong motives from the word go. They have fake plans, and plans, and are covering so it’s like an eye opener. You look at people and you can always tell that someone is covering up. Someone is covering up another lie which at the end of the day reveals itself to you.

Even the fact that she smokes helps them to identify her as a villainous character.

The antagonism that exists between Paloma and Barbara is highlighted by the participants as one of the main themes of the telenovela which emphasises the ways in which the two characters are pitted against each other in the narrative and how the story line is threaded with attempts by Barbara to undermine Paloma’s achievements:

Wairu: I don’t like Barbara because she’s too conniving. She’s just always devising a plan to make, do something and I think even Fabian wouldn’t be so bad but Barbara just makes

him worse.

Nyambura: She's always fuelling. Fuelling, Evil. Evil, you know. Always fuelling evil.

Barbara's "hatred for Paloma" and her repeated attempts to turn all the women of the Sanchez-Serrano against Paloma makes the participants criticise her more, since her behaviour sets her at odds with both Paloma and the Sanchez-Serrano family, both of whom the participants relate to closely. Strangely, even her husband's actions are attributed to the influence of Barbara: "even Fabian wouldn't be so bad but Barbara just makes him worse", suggesting that they dislike her more because she seems to be putting Fabian up to a lot of his schemes. Many of their comments about her are left unfinished in an exclamatory manner, displaying their total exasperation with her character. They even try to undermine her character further by suggesting that like Paloma, she comes from a lower class and has married into the Sanchez-Serrano family, undetected, as a way to improve her social status. Her status within the narrative, her airs of superiority and her unfounded arrogance are therefore criticised at length:

Wairu: Instead of concentrating on her own issues ... she's still in everyone's business you know. And I can't even explain. I mean what has Paloma ever done to her.

...

I mean she has such hatred for Paloma, you know ... I just don't understand that. You know she makes it like Sanchez-Serrano family ... that kind of thing. And I mean you're thinking please you're only there because you are married to one of the sons.

Nyambura: And I have a feeling even her background isn't all that.

Wairu: Ya not all that.

Nyambura: We don't even know her family, where she's from and all that. So, Barbara ... ugh!

At the same time as voicing all these suspicions about her and acknowledging that she is the character that they "love to hate", the participants admire Barbara's strength (in a different way to Paloma's):

Susan: She's the person you love to hate.

Maureen: But you can't because she was really getting what she wanted. She was the woman.

Susan: In Kenya we say the go-getter. I must have, I will have no matter what.

She is also criticised for the desperate way in which she behaves in her relationship with Fabian:

Maureen: Like Barbara. She went too far to be sure. That I don't want to do.

At times being desperate too much doesn't help. You have to look for solutions but not some measures that make you lose friends.

Barbara's desperate pursuit of Fabian is described as a desperate and pointless act that demeans her position in society, makes her unsafe or unstable in the relationship and condemns her to a lifetime of pursuit:

Faith: Ok, if a man does not like you, you cannot chase him. You can't get him even if you ... you can't. If he doesn't like you, that's it. Barbara, even if you chased him like how, there is no way, there is no way you can until he is the one who loves you

Catherine: It has to come from both sides but the man must love you,

Faith: Both sides yes but the man must love you. Hey the man must love you unless you chase the man for the rest of your life.

Catherine: Its true.

Faith: *Hebu* just think about it.

Evelyn: Look at it this way, a man can chase a woman.

Faith: But that is their position in society. But with a woman you're safe if a man is chasing, and not you. You're safe that way.

Evelyn: What are you trying to say in short? Barbara never loved Fabian?

Faith: The focus of her love was wrong, yes, the fact that she was chasing after a man.

Catherine: She was so desperate

They find Barbara's behaviour to be unfeminine since the correct "position in society" is for a man to chase a woman, a scenario which makes the woman "safe" since her behaviour is within societal dictates.

However, the participants grudgingly admit that the Fabian-Barbara relationship is a realistic portrayal.

Liz: The most believable characters are Barbara and Fabian. You can find them in reality. A couple who stays together because of their ambitions. And Barbara represents women today. Driven by ambition, success, and she goes to any lengths to keep her marriage. And also the challenges women face nowadays being childless. She'll go to any lengths to have a baby. I think it's more believable.

While criticising her for her desperation, Barbara is admired for going after what she wants, and defended for her desperate actions:

Faith: If he doesn't love you, he doesn't love you. That's it.

and

Maureen: Desperate times call for desperate measures.

Her “gold digging” behaviour is also defended as being a common and realistic phenomenon in their lives where poor women are assumed to be, and condemned for, pursuing men for their wealth:

Susan: They think that since you’re poor and you’re getting married to this rich guy, the only thing you’re targeting is the money and the wealth ... Even in local magazines, local papers. The art of gold digging. There’s so much negativity on women.

Maureen: Like if you date someone who’s rich you’re automatically termed, *aish*, she’s a gold digger ... So as a woman you need to work hard, actually you need to work harder to prove yourself.

The participants’ ambiguous and contradictory response to Barbara reflects their internalised confusions about what constitutes acceptable feminine behaviour in their society. Through their critical and complementary discussions of her character, they engage with definitions of feminine and unfeminine behaviour and question what is and what is not acceptable. They see her as a typical contemporary woman, while at the same time rejecting her because she does not represent a character that they want to emulate, in spite of aspects of her modern identity:

“The woman viewer loves and hates the villainess, sides with her, and desires her downfall.

The contradictions in the text and its reading position reflect the contradictions inherent in the attempt to assert feminine values within and against a patriarchal society” (Fiske, 1987:156).

The frustration (as the flip side to pleasure) which they express towards her character suggests that they engage with her in a complex manner, at both the conscious and unconscious levels (Mumford, 1998; Cohen and Ribak, 2003):

Nyambura: [Y]ou know something that gets to you, that makes you disgusted about something also means that it interested you, that it’s a good story line, that it’s important to you.

Barbara is a character that is neither marginalised nor caricaturised within the narrative, and she influences their construction of their own identities as women, and even though they reject aspects of her behaviour and are repulsed by it, their sense of disgust tells us a good deal about the social identity of the participants (Bourdieu, 1984 in Moores, 1993:38).

So at the same time as admitting that elements of Barbara’s behaviour appeal to them, they criticise her conduct as being improper for women, suggesting that they are unsure of what to make of her and how to relate to or engage with her character. They choose aspects of her character that they have in common and interact with these from the context of their individual and group situated identities, and express disgust and anger towards those that they are not comfortable with, and in so doing they

debate what behoves proper conduct for a modern woman in today's society and how the demands of contemporary society make some women, such as Barbara, behave in an "improper" manner.

### Daniella

Barbara's conniving, manipulative and desperate behaviour as a woman makes her a contemporary and realistic figure for the participants. Daniella, Diego's youngest sister, also appeals to them as a contemporary woman although for different reasons:

Wairu: She's not conventional. And she kinda brings sanity to everyone. I mean, she came back [from Europe] and she's like what is wrong with all these people. Why can't they see? So she's always telling Diego, You're very stupid. And she's telling her sister. What's wrong with you. And then she's very sarcastic. [laugh] No one seems to like her but she just does her own thing. It's like she's kind of, she's made to look like the irresponsible one but she's actually the one who has the most common sense in the family.

The participants admire how Daniella challenges the "traditional way of looking at a woman, and the role of a woman and what a relationship should be". However, this admiration comes at a price, as Daniella's strength of character is only achieved at the cost of the social emasculation and infantilisation of her black partner, Harold. Daniella's relationship with Harold is "a bit out of the norm". She doesn't "bow to pressure, has her own dreams of career [and is] not tied to the company or the inheritance" which are issues that consume the other members of the Sanchez-Serrano family.

The race issue in *Cuando Seas Mia* is personified in Harold. He is the only character in *Cuando Seas Mia* who is of African descent. Harold is set apart from the rest of the characters in *Cuando Seas Mia* because of his different racial background and he is treated as an outsider to the Sanchez-Serrano family. However his racial identity is something that the participants feel they can relate to, although they suspect that within the narrative, it is a marker of his lower class and therefore an indication of racial power dynamics (Straubhaar, 2007:239). They deliberately challenge this by suggesting that "that chocolate guy is actually royalty" and that his presence in the serial is empowering for black people.

The participants oscillate between being drawn to Harold's character for the comic relief he provides in contrast to the "too serious, too tense" behaviour of the other characters, to taking him seriously and legitimating his position in the narrative (although the use of his nickname "chocolate" to refer to him, shortened from Daniella's nickname for him of "chocolate muffin" negates the seriousness of the role that they attribute to him), to criticising the undignified, subservient role that he, as a black man, is relegated to by the other characters. He is not presented as a positive, well-rounded image of

a black man and even though the participants are superficially drawn to him, they do not interact with his character either as a black character or as a man.

Harold is therefore only viewed in relation to Daniella, and she is described as a rebel for challenging the societal norms through her relationship with him. However the participants are uncertain of how to respond to this relationship, wavering between laughter and indignation:

Wairu: To Daniella, he's a little pet. I mean more like a pet than a boyfriend. She sends him around for her errands. She tells him, You go away as we talk serious things. She tells him, You go away and have coffee as we talk serious things. Ok, Harold, come here. Ok, Harold, you can go. Ok, Harold ... ugh! He's more of a pet.

Some of the resentment that they feel towards her treatment of him is diffused because she continues to be in a relationship with him in defiance of the attitudes of the rest of her family (and of Mexican society. In addition, she represents an ideal, since she is the one who "showed that racism not supposed to be, loved everybody, protected Ines, kept the family together". She is therefore a character that they feel they can relate to more closely because she challenges the status quo of how a woman is supposed to behave, as seen in her relationship with Harold, while in others she fights to maintain the status quo, as seen in her protective treatment of her grandmother and her insistence that all the members of the family accord her the respect that she deserves as the head of the family.

Diego's second sister, Diana, is also discussed briefly by the participants for the positive transition that her character makes in the narrative. Diana used to spend time with Angela and Barbara, and plot against Paloma with them, but after she goes through a difficult experience in her marriage to Miguel, she changes her opinion of Paloma and begins to support her relationship with Diego. Diana becomes acceptable once she has been suitably punished for her betrayal, a moral tale:

Wairu: She used to be so cold and heartless and you know not caring about herself. She's really been humbled ... I think she's a good person essentially. She just used to hang out with the wrong crowd. And she just had to learn the hard way.

## 2.2 Older women

While the participants are drawn to Paloma, Barbara and Daniella because they can identify with in terms of age, shared experiences and challenges, they admire the older, more conservative characters of Ines (Diego's grandmother and the matriarchal head of the Sanchez-Serrano family) and Soledad (Paloma's mother). These women represent solid and uncomplicated maternal figures who are closely associated with rural life and tradition, and who offer words of wisdom to the characters in *Cuando Seas Mia* and to the participants.

The participants look up to both of these characters for their strength as single women who are holding their families together, and whose behaviour they hope to emulate at a later stage in their lives. They identify closely with these older generational female characters who hold the respected positions of *materfamilias*, who represent “solidarity, parents you can always count on, reliable characters”, and who remind them not just of their mothers but also of their grandparents, to whom they turn to for advice and who “bring the family closer together”. This suggests that they place great importance upon the feminine and maternal value of caring for others (Trepte, 2003) which is represented by these characters.

### Soledad

The women admire Soledad for being a single mother, and for being able to balance her role as a parent with that of a friend to her daughter.

Wairu: I like the way she’s friends with Paloma. But it reached that point, she’s the mother and she’s like, you know what, you better sort yourself out. At times you can think Paloma is the one who pushes her around but it has reached a point in the program where her mother put her foot down and she’s like, you know what, I want the hacienda I want it and I don’t care what they say. I want it, you know. And I’m not going to tell you what happened between me and Lorenzo because I think it’s a secret and he told me to keep it so whatever you think, you’re my daughter and you can think that of me. She kinda changed and I liked that because she was getting a bit boring.

### Ines

The participants have similar feelings of respect for Ines, the matriarchal head of the Sanchez-Serrano family whom they fondly refer to as “Grandmother” mimicking the name by which her grandchildren in the telenovela call her, thus signifying the closeness with which they identify with her grandchildren and how they are drawn to Ines’ maternal role:

Wairu: There was something that Grandmother said that really caught me, that thing of you always have to hold your own and carry yourself with dignity ... She was telling *akina* Barbara about her husband. Her husband. She thought her husband was having an affair with the lady who lived in the hacienda. She could have reacted like that but no she said, I couldn’t do that. That thing of, you know, you don’t become catty and trashy. You hold your own and you carry yourself with dignity, no matter what you do, no matter the situation that you’re from. Especially when it evokes an emotion and you just want to act in such a way. I like that.

I like that about the grandmother. She holds herself with such dignity and that’s the reason

why she can tell Barbara and Angela some things and they just can't fight back ... She's very wise and she's nice. And she's old and everything but she's also very clever.

The participants are drawn to Ines because of her “wise” and “clever” character. She fights for her position of respect and leadership in the Sanchez-Serrano family, and they admire her strenuous attempts to keep the family together even though it is a constant struggle which is “tearing her apart”. However, Ines often calls upon the spirit of her late husband Lorenzo, the family patriarch, to guide her and give her strength which detracts from her abilities to successfully lead her family.

Ines represents solidarity and reliability, a parental figure who the participants can depend on. Wairu in the extract above refers to the unconventionality of Ines' character, and after saying that she incorporates phrases and lessons from *Cuando Seas Mia* into her own everyday behaviour:

Wairu: I always quote *Cuando Seas Mia* in my life.

goes on to discuss a particular incident involving Ines that impressed her and that she refers to as a source of guidance to reinforce her own identity as a woman.

The participants therefore admire the strength of Ines and Soledad and learn lessons from them which they hope to apply to their own lives. The importance that they place on the role of strong maternal figures in the narrative has a direct correlation with their own lives. They recognise in Ines and Soledad characteristics, or traits of character, that are similar to those of an important person in their own lives (Pitout, 1998:72). That is, they identify with the strong female characters of Ines and Soledad from *Cuando Seas Mia* because strong women occupy a central role in their own lives.

Faith, for example, like Paloma, was brought up by a single mother and her mother's extended family. Her mother continues to be her role model because of her strength in single-handedly raising her and her brothers on her own in a society where the father occupies a crucial position as the male head of the family. Similarly, Evelyn, a child from a polygamist home of five wives and forty children, was brought up in a close knit family of many mothers and sisters so much so that in her childhood she did not know who her real mother was or who her real (and not half) sisters were until she was much older because she was “raised by everybody”:

Evelyn: You don't know who your real sister is, you are loved by everyone.

The same applies to Joanne, Liz and Maureen. Even though they live with both of their parents, because of the traditional behaviour of African men, they are close to their mothers, confide in them and have a strong relationship with them. Their fathers, on the other hand, when they are present, represent silent, disciplinary figures more than parental figures:

Maureen: [In Kenya] fathers are very formal. School results, money, books. *Bas*, that's all. Daddy's girl? In Kenya, we don't see that. We are close to the mother more.

(Sadly, in some of the cases the participants felt more distanced from their fathers because they or their mothers had been beaten by them.)

Ines and Soledad also represent family and tradition for the participants, and remind them of their own traditional values and identities although they differentiate between two types of tradition: one that builds women and the other which ties women down, and clearly associate Ines and Soledad with the type that enhances the roles of women:

Joanne: Grandparents ... can tell you about tradition, how life was at their age. They can advise you and also bring the family closer together.

They are also drawn to the closeness of the Sanchez-Serrano family, which despite the "drama" involved shows that "they love each other as a family". For the participants, some of whom have been brought up in large families (Evelyn) or extended families (Faith, Susan), "family is everything":

Faith: Grandparents, uncles, aunties – they are like your mothers. Your uncles are like your big brothers.

While these older characters represent strong traditional values, which appeal to the participants, the lack of traditional values in other characters, such as Barbara who behaves in an undignified, desperate manner in her relationship with Fabian, distances them. Through these varying character representations, the participants are prompted to discuss the role and importance of tradition in their lives. They supplement their discussions of the telenovela with their individual experiences. The way they dress, for example, is defined by their environment and by the discourses of patriarchy, and it acquires a meaning within their gender and ethnicity based identities. Evelyn speaks of her traditional *Teso* culture, and she mentions how when she goes home to her village, she is expected to dress a particular way especially when she is around elders or seniors because that is the role of the women in her culture "to be respectful ... it is something to be valued", and so western clothing is discarded in favour of the traditional full-length *kitenge* which according to her culture "symbolises the African woman". There are therefore particular cultural and traditional values that the participants, despite their city lives, are expected to abide by both in terms of dress. This impacts upon their behaviour as African women, even when they are within a modern city environment. The ways in which they engage with the various female characters in *Cuando Seas Mia* suggests that these negotiations are made by them on a daily basis, and that although they live in an urban environment, tradition remains an "integral part of [their] present" (Thompson, 1995:183) and it retains its significance in their modern lives especially as a "means of making sense of the world ... and as [a] way of creating a

sense of belonging” (Thompson, 1995:187).

The participants therefore feel a close association with the female characters in *Cuando Seas Mia*. They discuss their characters as a way to explore, within their society, their own femininity and what constitutes acceptable behaviour. Ines and Soledad as the matriarchs represent the ideal. They are women, rooted within the rural life and its traditions. They have dedicated their lives to their families and their children, and they behave at all times with the decorum that their age demands.

Paloma, Barbara and Daniella are the characters that they engage with more actively in defining their own femininity as modern African women. They debate Paloma’s aggression, eventually legitimating it by aligning it with rural Mexico. They question Barbara’s desperate behaviour with Fabian, associating it with her excessive modernity (seen in her appearance and her behaviour), and vacillate between rejecting it as ‘unfeminine’ or accepting it as a characteristic of ‘modern’ feminine behaviour. They are similarly ambiguous about Daniella, uncertain of whether to praise her for challenging social expectations and having a relationship with a man who has a totally different background to her own and whom her family disapproves of, or to condemn her for her patronising treatment of him.

Aspects of the identities of these young, Kenyan women are therefore reinforced while others are constructed in response to their reception of *Cuando Seas Mia* and their engagement with its characters:

Susan: You can feel her.

These negotiations influence their definitions of what it means to be a woman and how a woman ought to behave, and they are given the opportunity to emulate their behaviour, and aspire to be like them or to achieve similar things:

Maureen: Some women get like a character, Talking loud, plotting, bitchy, aggressive ...  
and you know that they picked it up from watching the show.

Because of their need to “balance being African with being modern” (Spronk, 2007:30), the participants have an ambivalent attitude to modernity and they actively debate and modify their roles and their understandings of what it means to be a woman in a contemporary, urban, African society, relating these observations closely to their own cultures and family backgrounds (Leal, 1990:190), and selectively appropriating some of them.

### 2.3 Professional women

While traditions remain an integral influence on the identities of these women, there is one area in which they are completely modern and unconventional, and this is in their professional aspirations.

These women come from a rural, patriarchal society where men and women occupy culturally defined positions. In spite of this, or perhaps because of it, they challenge the most sacred aspect of their cultures, the roles defined for them by their gender. They have left their rural homes and are living in the capital city, some alone, some with family members; they are working (sending money home to their families) while studying part time to better themselves; and they are aspiring to professional careers in disciplines such as law, information technology and public relations. These young women are ambitious, both socially and economically. It is no coincidence that they are avid consumers of the telenovela genre, a genre which is imbued with the education-entertainment, self-betterment spirit which encourages social change.

Even those telenovelas that have not been written within the entertainment-education approach are purported to have a wide-ranging social effect upon audiences through their role in promoting awareness about different lifestyles, be they based on gender, age, geographic location, and potentially social change (La Pastina *et al*, 2003). They act as a “cultural reservoir of alternative visions encouraging people to question the traditional values and official interpretations and helping them to imagine alternative ways of living” (Thompson, 1995:178). Their promotion of social mobility especially amongst Brazilian women is examined by Machado-Borges (2006) in her study of Brazilian telenovelas:

The subjects that most consistently represent and embody transformation and movement across social hierarchies in telenovelas are women. They depict individual renegotiations of the self: characters change from poor to rich, from unattractive women to seductresses, from prostitutes to respectable housewives, from elitist whites to politically aware mothers of black children. These transformations in attractiveness, knowledge or status are usually lived by women and connected to social mobility (2006:8-9).

Gauntlett (2002) adds that media products are to an extent self-help products since they attempt to increase the self-esteem of audiences and build their confidence enough for them to change their lives. He adds that the media positively and constructively describes “aspirational reasonably realistic (as opposed to utopian) models of how we might expect women and men to present themselves in today’s society” (Gauntlett, 2002:2). Media products therefore offer “insights into another reality” (La Pastina, 2005:145), the opportunity to take up positions that one could not do in real life (Ang, 1990:83) and the opportunity to “explore other situations, other identities, other lives” (Ang, 1990:84; Appadurai, 1996:36). “More persons in more parts of the world consider a wider set of “possible” lives than they ever did before” (Appadurai, 1996:53) simply because through the media, they have access to “a rich, ever-changing store of possible lives” (1996:53).

This parallels the theory of symbolic distancing (Thompson, 1995) and of emotional realism (Rajagopal, 1996) where the presentation of characters from a different walk of life to those of its audiences but who encounter similar challenges in their daily lives builds a bridge between the two groups and encourages audiences to learn from the lives of the fictional telenovela characters and apply elements to their own lives.

[I]ndividuals are able to gain some conception, however partial, of ways of life and life conditions which differ significantly from their own (Thompson, 1995:175).

Audiences from one social situation can therefore vicariously engage with, relate to and interact with identities, relationships and presentations of life in media products. In addition to vicariously experiencing the different social scenarios presented in the telenovela, they are also given the opportunity to “take some distance from the conditions of their day-to-day lives” (Thompson, 1995: 175) and to explore possibilities, imagine alternatives and experiment with the project of the self (Thompson, 1995:233). The telenovela, in effect, becomes a resource with which to think critically about their own lives and life conditions (1995:175).

The entertainment-education element, although not recognised to be such, is touched on by the participants during their discussions, most especially through the character of Paloma. Paloma is the only child of a single mother, and she never knew her father. Her life consists of working as a collector in various coffee plantations in Mexico, but she dreams of being an executive working in an office in the capital city. In the early episodes, she is often shown reading a book in the evening, trying to better herself, instead of sitting with the rest of the collectors, drinking and exchanging stories. Early in her relationship with Diego, he uses his watch to teach her how to tell the time and by the end of the telenovela, Paloma is a successful executive at Mexico’s coffee regulatory authority, the Mexican Export Council, has worked in London and is helping Diego to market his brand of gourmet coffee. Part of her appeal is how she is a success story, a self made woman, and one that the participants wish to emulate:

Wairu: One of the things I really like is the fact that ... all the others ... give up their dreams to achieve things but Paloma still goes for London. She follows her dreams first.

They admire her unswerving dedication to her career, how she gradually rises through the ranks through hard work and refuses to compromise on her values by indulging in romantic liaisons with her bosses (Fabian and Diego):

Maureen: Women are very strong characters. She [Paloma] had to make ends meet for herself.

Paloma’s professional achievements are therefore represented positively within the narrative, and

not seen to be too masculine. However, this is probably because Paloma represents the “new woman (Gallagher, 2003) who is affected by social and economic demands made of her, but whose “femaleness” remains the core issue. She does not forsake key aspects of her femininity (such as her beauty, and her desire to be a wife, a mother and a care giver) even though she wants to be a successful executive in a male dominated industry (and world), where the only other female professional is Martha, who as a secretary in the Mexican Export Council, occupies a post that is traditionally held by women. In many instances, Paloma’s femininity (represented by the flowery prints, flared skirts and long, open hair) is contrasted with the dark, business suits of the men.

However, the strengths of Mexican women in general are admired by the participants:

Wairu: They’re the ones who keep the family together. They’re the ones who keep things running. They’re the ones who make things happen.

These characters act as role models for the participants, and where particular aspects of their characters appeal to them, they appropriate them into their understandings of what it means to be a successful, modern woman and how such a woman ought to behave. The images and narratives that they are exposed to through global media thus feeds into their dreams of spatial and social mobility (Frederiksen, 2002:45) and redefines what it means to be a young woman. In embracing the strength of these women, and attempting to emulate their professional successes, the participants “undermine ideals of domestic motherhood and of husbands as breadwinners” (Spronk, 2007:27) and negotiate and reconfigure the images and identities of an African woman. However, even within this redefinition of themselves as modern woman who can legitimately and successfully participate outside of the domestic arena, there is a recognition and an acceptance that aspects of their feminine role remain intact as they do in the narrative through Paloma. In addition to the undue emphasis given to Paloma’s physical appearance and her style of dressing, her professional achievements are to an extent undermined by her behaviour. For example, whenever she experiences any harassment from Barbara and Angela she turns to her boss at the Export Council who, along with the Sanchez-Serrano family lawyer (two men), intervenes and resolves the situation thereby rescuing Paloma. This reestablishes the power relations between the genders, effectively returning it to the men despite any gains that the men may have made in the professional arena suggesting again that the ground rules for women do not really change.

This discussion of the professional identity of women subverts the rural-urban binary that is constructed in the previous sections. In that discussion, the rural environment of the hacienda and the coffee fields are represented positively. Rural women are aligned with the strong and honourable values of tradition, and femininity constricted within this setting to reaffirm patriarchal notions of what it

means to be a ‘proper’ woman. The modern woman, depicted by Barbara, is labelled as villainous, manipulative and essentially wicked. Barbara defies traditional definitions of what it means to be a woman, and transgresses the boundaries of moral conduct and respectability, and she is chastised for these transgressions by Ines, the embodiment of tradition. However in this section which explores the professional achievements of Paloma (and the aspirations of the participants), this binary is subverted. Mexico City and its urbanised modernity, chaotic from the perspective of the idyllic rural setting, is now progressive and liberating. In this scenario, the city imparts a positive connotation and working women are imbued with positive characteristics. Paloma’s professional achievements and financial independence neither challenges her femininity nor her social identity as a daughter, lover, and future wife. The capitalist environment of Mexico City (which encourages the financial independence and professional growth of women) is not linked to patriarchal notions of a woman’s place in society (Von Werlhof. 2007:1).

The participants therefore experience a break between tradition and modernity. They are attempting to retain their traditional identities (supported by one binary in the telenovela narrative, in which the rural home is positively associated with tradition, family and “real” femininity) while at the same time coming to terms with their modern, professional aspirations and new cultural experiences in an urban centre (supported by a second binary in the narrative in which the city is positively associated with progress, liberation and prosperity). They are holding onto their traditional roles as African women and the values of their ethnic communities while living a life which, on a daily basis, challenges these teachings and distances them from it since they are educated professionals working in an urban, industrialised environment.

The participants are trying to find a middle ground between their traditional-conservative and their modern-progressive identities (Wildermuth, 2002:207) in order to bring the two together in a way that can relate to the duality of their lives as African women who have had a traditional upbringing, are rooted within their African cultures and are subject to the influences of a patriarchal society, but who live in the urban, modern environment of an African capital city with its cosmopolitan and western influences. They neither turn away from tradition nor do they whole-heartedly embrace the modern. Instead from their modern surroundings, they frequently turn back to their traditions as a way of “nourishing” their sense of identity and in order to provide them with “a sense of belonging, a sense of being part of a community” that has “similar beliefs ... a common history and a collective fate” (Thompson, 1995:194). They either choose to reinvent their traditional collective bonds and satisfy their need for a sense of belonging and local roots (Martin-Barbero, 2006:292) or they embrace modern and non-conventional habits and practices from their “new styles of living” (Thompson, 1995:192), and aggressively defend women who have done the same.

The effect is the dislocation of culture and the creation of a new transitional identity which has strong traditional roots to family, morals and culture and which also incorporates modern gender positions in terms of overcoming class barriers and achieving career aspirations. The Africanness of their identities is “eroding ... in the face of contemporary changes” (Spronk, 2007:29) and they are defining and understanding themselves in relation to a modern, middle class world. They are debating their roles, in dialogue with global and local media, challenging the definitions of the “proper place of women” (Frederiksen, 2000:222) in African society, strengthening their social and economic possibilities, and shaping and redefining the “social fabric” (Frederiksen, 2000:222) of their African society. They are defining the contours of what modernity means for a Kenyan woman.

### **3. Defining the identities of men**

The female characters in *Cuando Seas Mia* are more complicated characters than the male characters and they are discussed by the participants as undergoing more development within the narrative. However, there are selected male characters that the participants enjoy discussing and engaging with in relation to their roles within the narrative, and their behaviour towards the women in their lives. Their discussions of them are rooted strongly within their understandings and experiences of masculinity and sexuality, and they contrast them where possible to African men that they know. The participants discuss four main male characters: three young men, Diego, Fabian and Mariano, and an older gentleman, Juan Francisco. While Diego and Fabian are seen as uncomplicated characters who are “good” and “evil” respectively, they are drawn to Mariano and Juan Francisco because of the character transitions that they undergo.

It is interesting to see that their discussions of the men, especially the younger three, are more light hearted in comparison to their more serious and involving discussions of the female characters. The participants laugh more often, and tease each other on their preferences. They also closely watch their friends’ responses to their own preferences suggesting that they are more sensitive to criticism when discussing the identities of men and relationships, than when discussing their own identities as women.

#### *3.1 The men in Cuando Seas Mia*

##### Diego

The participants, with their undisputed faith in the Diego-Paloma romance, always see Diego as Paloma’s match even when his role in her life is challenged by the entrance of competitors for her affection. This suggests that they do not view any of the suitors as serious competition to Diego, and reaffirms their belief in Diego and Paloma’s fidelity towards each other. However, they experience

difficulty in making sense of Diego's character. His everlasting love for her makes him a "success" in their eyes since "his love was true love", but as an individual, he is described as "submissive, impulsive, [portraying a] bad light of men", and criticised for his laid back attitude and immature behaviour, although this never equates him to being an evil character. They describe him as a "mouse" who is weak, who breaks down and who likes to cry and this brings his masculinity into question since he is simply not the dominant, assertive style of hero that they prefer:

Evelyn: [Diego] wasn't a very strong man.

The participants also criticise his cowardly character and selfish behaviour especially when it comes to standing up for Paloma and his relationship with her, and how he puts her through so much pain and suffering:

Evelyn: ... Paloma was suffering so much because of him ...

Faith: The most hurting (sic) thing is the person you suffered for, finally betrays you, to leave you because he thinks he's protecting you.

At one point, they even feel that he does not deserve to end up with Paloma since he is causing her more pain than pleasure:

Faith: Diego was selfish in that he did things that was ... He thought he was protecting Paloma but he was being selfish ... Inside him he knew what he should have done but then he didn't do it.

Catherine: Diego over exaggerated the male concept ... he failed.

However, his family values and commitment to Paloma and his son (with Berenice) appeals to them, and they like how he is the "black sheep" in the family because it means, unlike Fabian, that he is not obsessed with money or the hacienda but "only cares about Paloma, his gourmet coffee, maybe the son that is not his". This redeems his masculinity within the narrative, and reaffirms their socially constructed understandings about masculinity and what constitutes appropriate behaviour for men (Connell, 1987; Connell, 2003) since he is committed to being a husband, a provider and a father. Reassured that, in spite of his moments of weakness (femininity), the power relations between Diego and Paloma have been restored to a socially acceptable standard where he is the quintessential authoritative (masculine) figure, the participants look forward enthusiastically to a happy ending between the two and dismiss any doubts that they may have had about the relationship.

### Fabian

Fabian is contrasted to Diego in the same way that Paloma is to Barbara. Paloma and Diego are associated with the land and rural Mexico, with its positive connotations (nature, family, tradition). Barbara and Fabian identify closely with Mexico City and its modernity. They are the professionals

where Paloma is the collector and Diego the farmer.

The participants are irritated by Fabian, just as they are with Barbara:

Nyambura: I can't stand Fabian, he's just too evil [laughter]. He just irritates me. I feel like killing him.

They expect him to behave in an evil and malicious manner, and confidently say that "he is too evil to come out straight" in any scenario. They even celebrate the fact that he will eventually end up in jail and be punished for his actions.

Nyambura: I don't think he'll win. I think it will all come back to him ... The puzzle will now fit well, everyone will be happy.

Fabian getting his proper punishment is looked forward to by the participants with as much enthusiasm as a happy ending for Diego and Paloma because both of these conclusions imply the satisfying triumph of morality and goodness when the bad guys are punished in a happy ending where everyone is reconciled (Unesco, 2004):

Wairu: Fabian was trying to make everyone turn against Diego and make it look like he was the one who messed up the company. It will all come back to him ... There are people who have evidence of bad dealings and Diego and Paloma had a feeling about it all so I'm sure. I don't think he'll win. I think it will all come back to him.

Audiences are offered the momentary satisfaction that "in the make believe world, and maybe nowhere else, there's justice" (Unesco, 2004).

However, the participants prefer Fabian's physical appearance with his clean shaven, suave look (which represents physical strength, power and virility) to Diego's long, curly hair tied back in a ponytail (which he mid way through the series cuts off as a show of protest and defiance against his tormented relationship with Paloma). They respond to Fabian's masculinity and his sexual appeal, which his promiscuous behaviour only serves to emphasise:

Maureen: Fabian, being the man, he had another girl.

Fabian's "sharpness" (intelligence) and ruthless business nature is also admired, because it makes him more attractive than "weak" Diego.

### Mariano

Mariano is the shy competitor for Paloma's affections. He is referred to by the sarcastic nickname that Diego uses for him, Mr Wonderful, and because he has a love interest in the leading lady, his behaviour is contrasted to Diego's romantic tactics. Mariano is Paloma's supervisor at the Mexican Export Council, and although their relationship starts as a professional one, his romantic interest in

her gradually develops. However, unlike other love stories, Mariano is not depicted as the villain who is trying to break up the perfect couple. Instead he plays the role of a silent, supportive friend who undergoes a transition during the narrative, for which the participants are drawn to him more. The change that Mariano's character undergoes helps him to "become a better person, a more real person" as compared to his initially "weak" nature, and it makes him more appealing:

Nyambura: I like the way he's been able to change.

He continues to have a gentle nature, like Diego, but is not criticised for it. Instead it endears him to them, as does his complete obliviousness to how his secretary at the Mexican Export Council is in love with him, a relationship that the participants encourage and whose eventual culmination they rejoice in.

The participants discuss the few incidents when Mariano and Diego become physically combative over their feelings for Paloma (macho posturing), but because they are confident that Mariano does not pose a real threat to the Diego-Paloma romance and because it is handled in a humorous manner, they dismiss it with laughter and ridicule Diego for his overly exaggerated actions like cutting off his ponytail and calling a *mariachi* band to serenade Paloma:

Wairu: I don't think men behave like that.

### Juan Francisco

Juan Francisco, Fabian's father, is the second male character that the participants discuss for the positive transition that he undergoes during the narrative. He begins the serial strongly affiliated to his sons and his wife, Angela, all of whom are characterised as "bad" because of their obsession with money, wealth and power. His support of them, even when they are committing underhanded actions, is complete. The participants compare his behaviour at this stage of the narrative to that of Diego, challenging both their masculinities, since both of them avoid confrontations and opt for compromises:

Nyambura: They don't like fighting for their rights.

But towards the end of the serial, Juan Francisco experiences a medical condition which forces him to change his outlook on life. He advises his wife and sons to stop their criminal behaviour, and when they refuse to, distances himself from them and closes ranks with his mother Ines, and his brother's children, Diego, Daniella and Diana. Juan Francisco is commended by the participants for this "transformation" which they describe as having imbued him with a "new energy for life" and which helps him to refocus his priorities onto what really matters:

Nyambura: He used to be *woye* Angela knows best. I don't care. I'm old. I'm dying. But

nowadays ... he has new energy for life. He's trying. He doesn't care what she [Angela] thinks or what she says. Even if they get a divorce he doesn't really care.

The positive changes that he makes in his life after undergoing this transformation and ending his relationship with Angela, which all the participants agree is a good move, is depicted in the narrative by a changed lifestyle diet, physical appearance and approach to work. They applaud his newly gained energy and are not as quick to forgive Angela when she returns to him at the end of the serial and begs him to forgive her.

Even though Juan Francisco is an older man, the participants do not relate to him as a parental figure, as they did with Ines and Soledad. They see him instead as a character who makes a transition during the narrative from bad to good. They approve of this, identify with him more closely after he displays positive (and more masculine) personality traits and gain pleasure from the viewing experience. They also admire him for standing up to his wife and sons, and distancing himself from them when he realised that they would not change, eventually returning to his mother and nephews/ nieces and giving them his support (strong familial values).

### 3.2 Kenyan men

In Kenya, “[m]asculinity has equated being a man with acting in ways that show repression of fear or pain, risk taking, physical dominance and aggressiveness whether they feel like it or not. To be otherwise, is to indicate weakness, to be unmanly or even worse to lose respect within the male fraternity” (Muteshi in the *Sunday Standard*, 2009:7). It is a discourse of African masculinity that the participants understand and one they discuss in relation to the representations of masculinity within *Cuando Seas Mia*:

Maureen: Boys are not supposed to cry, Be a man. Hard hard. Strategic, Pay bills. No soft side. [That's] the way people are raised ... Kenyan men are not sensitive. They're hard hearted ... allergic to hugs. Hugging is an issue.

Susan: Holdings hands. Men don't like [it].

Their preoccupation is with defining men as African (which they equate with being masculine, aggressive and dominating). Men that express their emotions run the risk of being too feminine, and of having their sexuality and their manhood called into question. ‘Real’ African men, according to them, do not share their feelings or emotions. Latin American men are therefore criticised and ridiculed for being “too emotional, always crying” and too “soft” (feminine), and since “African men are not like that” sensitive men who are in touch with their emotions do not hold any appeal for them.

The participants associate most of the differences between the men that they know and the men in *Cuando Seas Mia* to cultural differences between African society and Latin American society (although some writers claim that the characteristics of Latin American-ness in telenovelas have been progressively neutralised (Martin-Barbero, 1995 in Barker, 1997:87)), and explain that a society “create[s]” the man. They describe the men in *Cuando Seas Mia* as “romantic, a bit weak, not afraid to show emotion” whereas African men are “all caught up with being a ‘man’ and acting macho:

Susan: Some things are beyond Kenya because you don’t expect a man to bring you flowers and candy

Maureen: and cry

Susan: and run for you in the street

The depiction of men in *Cuando Seas Mia* therefore conflicts with the participants’ own unmediated experiences of Kenyan men and they question the realism of such a portrayal both in their own lives and in Latin American society. Wairu says she “won’t even want to marry a man who cries a lot” and that she does not believe that there is a Diego in South America or anywhere in the world:

Faith: As real men? African men because of our cultures are worse than any other country or any other culture because them, they have different cultures so you can’t start saying ... because we know our men so we can always speak for our own because of their cultures. Can you imagine a man crying ... It’s not possible. See even you, you said you can’t marry a man who cries. So you see our culture makes our men different from the others.

Wairu adds:

[In *Cuando Seas Mia*], men [are] portrayed in a certain way. Romantic, bit weak, not afraid to show emotion. [There are] no men like that ... in Africa. ... The African men start like that but it doesn’t last. They [African men] are all caught up with being a man.

The participants therefore recognise the differences between men in *Cuando Seas Mia* and men in African society, and accept that while aspects of the sensitive, romantic man may be attractive at times, it is just not realistic for them and in some ways, displeasing.

Some Kenyan men (Pala, 2009) however claim that Kenyan women, defined as “urban dwelling manipulative females”, hero worship a limited and unattainable group of elite men (the men in telenovelas), and that in so doing, they are attempting to redefine African masculinity and endanger their relationships by setting up a standard of behaviour that is entirely “female-oriented” (Pala, 2009:8 in the *Saturday Nation*):

The burden of expectations on guys is so absurd, one might as well change their name to Alejandro (Sanz), the Mexican soap opera star, another poster boy fronting this feminist ideal ... The classic male virtues of the yesteryears such as physical might, aggression in

defence of the family, independence, decisiveness and emotional maturity no longer count much. Of essence today is sensitivity, communication and adulation (Pala, 2009:8).

The participants do not agree with this. They describe African men as deserters, unfaithful, players, wife beaters, and criticise them for their adoption of patriarchal roles which make them overly aggressive, dictatorial and disrespectful towards the women in their lives. For some participants, like Joanne, this comment is drawn directly from her own life experiences since her father used to regularly beat her mother; a topic that she openly talks about during the session and which she admits has influenced her outlook on men and relationships.

This, their discussion of the ideal man as one who falls somewhere between the African patriarch who is powerful, dominating and in control and the modern man who is romantic, sensitive and in touch with his emotions, is one of the most emotionally fraught discussions that the participants have because of the implications that the characteristics of the man has on who they ought to be as women. They continue to understand and define themselves in relation to their men. They know that they want to be strong, confident, and financially empowered women:

Maureen: Girls are getting more independent, educated, self assured, outgoing.

Susan: ... They don't want to get married and depend on the husband for everything.

...

Maureen: It's different for us. We can hold high titles, earn salaries and even drive cars.

but they do not know what they want from their men. They are attracted to the stereotype of the overpowering African man as long as he is neither promiscuous nor violent. At the same time, they embrace aspects of the romantic man as long as he is not as gentle and sensitive as Diego. But they are unsure of how to find a man who is both of these things, and how they, as modern, empowered women will be received by the typical African man, who expects them to be subservient and "programmed to think only in the kitchen".

It is ironic that these women can recognise the negative influences of patriarchy on African masculinity in their fathers who are stern, remote and sometimes violent, while at the same time, being drawn to aspects of these same character traits in choosing partners who are arrogant, dominating and oppressive. This is another instance of how they are unable to fully challenge patriarchy from within their local contexts which draw heavily upon rural and traditional influences. They struggle in trying to redefine masculinity and make it more relevant to their contemporary lives through the incorporation of qualities such as romance, sensitivity and gentleness. But they succeed only partially since although they can introduce some new traits into the definition of modern, African masculinity, they are unable to remove the unwanted traits which traditionally define the African men.

Similarly, at the same time as they want to marry for love and not be forced into an arranged marriage, they concede that their decision to choose a husband will be based on factors such as tribe, affiliation, and the social standing of the man and his family, thus acknowledging the dictates of tradition, despite their city lives and their cosmopolitan identities as African women:

Susan: In Kenya, you marry for wealth and for convenience. The right age, a good job, a car, a house, a fair complexion. You should marry for love

Maureen: But in life, there's bills, kids, school, so can't marry someone that struggling, that has no occupation. ... In Kenya, you take responsibility and look after the family.

They even accept that in Kenya, marriages are between two families and not two individuals and so however much they aspire to a love marriage it is not practical for them:

Maureen: In the telenovela marriage, it is you and the person. In Kenya it is you, your parents and the family. And if your parents don't agree, you live with the curse forever and don't have blessings. Here, you can break a relationship because of your parents.

Through their interaction with *Cuando Seas Mia*, the participants are redefining their own identities as women, and also debating what constitutes acceptable social behaviour for the men in their lives. Traditional male-female gender roles are being reassessed and while some aspects of traditional patriarchal African culture are being reinforced, others are being balanced with the demands of local economic cultures:

Males ... wanted to maintain their culturally granted rights, and women wanted to acquire what they perceived to be those rights of theirs that had been suppressed (La Pastina, 2005:145).

The participants' discussions of the kinds of men that they are attracted to feeds directly into their attitudes towards romantic relationships, which is discussed in the next section.

#### **4. Defining romantic relationships**

The participants are members of a transitional society because of their migration from a rural to an urban environment, and from a traditional to a modern lifestyle. In addition, they are caught within a second transition. They are in their mid to late twenties, coming to terms with what it means to be a young, professional woman in an urban setting and are exploring and experimenting with how to behave, how to interact with members of the opposite sex, and what an adult relationship means. They are unsure of how to handle men and how to behave in romantic situations and they turn to media texts, such as telenovelas, for role models and character portrayals, which they can appropriate into their own lives and behaviour (Radway, 1987):

We need role models. Due to the kind of life we live in the contemporary world, young

couples hardly get time to interact with their old counterparts and so they don't know how to do this marriage thing (Gacheri, 2004:17 in *The Standard*).

Telenovelas' exploration of emotions and relationships through their strong focus on romance thus holds an appeal for these young women because it helps them to understand their own female identities, relationships and ways to engage and behave with men without entering into an actual relationship. Telenovelas provide lessons on romance and how to handle men (Mutunga, 2000 in the *Daily Nation*). They also allow these young women to question, without challenging, the fundamental patriarchal structures of their African society and negotiate them to fit their contemporary capitalist day to day lives.

#### 4.1 *The love story*

The international appeal of telenovelas has been attributed to a narrative style which emphasises the themes of romance, deception, revenge and violence (Soong, 1999), the "centrality of personal and kinship relations" (Barker, 1997:93), and which tells "stories in ways and about subjects that have resonance with its audience" (Barker, 1997:73):

Narratives ... provide explanations for the way things are. They supply answers to the question: how shall we live? They offer us frameworks of understanding and rules of reference about the way the world is constructed (Barker, 1997:73).

Romantic love within a narrative functions as a powerful ideological tool because it is closely linked to matrimony and patriarchy (Godsland and Moody, 2004). The centrality of the Diego-Paloma love story in *Cuando Seas Mia* cannot therefore be overestimated and it is one of the main reasons why the participants watch it. While it goes through its ups and downs, it retains their attention because they know that it will eventually have a "happily ever after" ending. It is therefore a tale of "female triumph" (Radway, 1987) since Diego in spite of his initial inadequacies (and questions about his masculinity) is the perfect lover, and this reaffirms the structure of patriarchy in the way that romance narratives do (Radway, 1987:138). Their love develops during the narrative and overcomes a variety of obstacles, and the participants are confident that eventually all the challenges will be overcome and that Diego and Paloma's romance will eventually triumph over all adversity and culminate in marriage.

"[The] happy ending restores the status quo in gender relations when the hero enfolds the heroine protectively in his arms" (Radway, 1987:81) and the participants interpret this moment as "an occasion for the vicarious enjoyment of a woman's 'ultimate triumph' in maintaining her integrity and achieving a formal commitment from the hero and thus a sign of a woman's attainment of legitimacy and

personhood in a culture that locates her in the roles of lover, wife and mother” (Radway, 1987:84). For them, the entire program is a “kind of a search for their love and to find out whether it can survive the test of time, all the problems that have come between them, whether they can still survive regardless of all these things”:

Faith: Everything is focused on it. The whole thing is just centred around Diego and Paloma. That is the centre.

Their conviction in the “sincerity” of the Diego-Paloma romance, apart from relegating all the other relationships in the telenovela to unimportant asides, develops into a confidence that Diego and Paloma will end up together, and then into an expectation that *Cuando Seas Mia* will have an emotionally satisfying ending. The participants depend upon this predictability:

Wairu: It wouldn't be a soap opera if they don't. They have to.

Nyambura: If they don't, I'll feel ripped off [laughter] ...

Wairu: ... It's supposed to be happily ever after.

Or as expressed by the writer of a column in the *Saturday Standard* (Kageni, 2008:16):

Soaps offer an appropriate wormhole where I can escape into the ethereal world of gorgeous men who do all the right things right, scheming lovers who fall flat on their faces, true love triumphs and many happily-ever-after. As an unwritten rule, I only watch a soap or a movie if I am guaranteed it ends in a happily ever after.

While this predictability of a happy ending has been criticised and mocked, the promise of a happy ending where good eventually triumphs, is a generic trait that keeps these women coming back:

Faith: There was a time when you felt like there's going to be a break up between Diego and Paloma and you didn't want it to happen. You want to see them get together ... You still want to come back and confirm that what you thought is right and it is going to happen some time so you keep watching. You keep coming back, and coming back again.

This cyclical deferment of a happy ending, alluded to above, has been described as “an articulation of a feminine definition of desire and pleasure” (Fiske, 1987:149), and is contrasted with the masculine pleasure of the final success. It is seen as a validation of feminine principles within and against patriarchy (Fiske, 1987:149).

The participants become so intimately involved with the telenovela characters that they discuss their lives beyond the narrative. Wairu, for example, discusses the future of the Diego-Paloma romance fifty years down the line willingly blurring the line between fiction and reality by discussing a moment in time that the telenovela will never reach. She talks of the arguments that they have had along the

line and how these will inevitably manifest in their marriage at some stage. Then she stops, laughs at herself for being too realistic about a telenovela narrative, and then re-engages with the discussion. Evelyn does the same thing. Her involvement in the narrative and with the characters is intertwined to such an extent that she even recommends changes in the script of *Cuando Seas Mia*. She suggests that the “Life after happily ever after” should be shown to audiences, by which she means the life of the characters and the actors after the conclusion of the telenovela narrative. She is so intensely involved in the lives of the characters that she is unwilling to let go even at the end of the narrative. Both her and Faith compare the ending of *Cuando Seas Mia* to another telenovela that they have watched and rate it in terms of satisfaction:

Faith: It showed you in real life who are these people, their profession. It’s something ...  
It ends the program nicely. A good conclusion.

At the same time as relying upon a happy ending to the love story and choosing to blur the line between fiction and reality, the participants question whether they may have become too emotionally involved in *Cuando Seas Mia*. Wairu, for example, combines her expectation of a happy ending with an almost regretful admission that it is a fictitious production:

Wairu: Maybe I’m being a bit too realistic about a soap opera. It’s supposed to be happily ever after.

while readily admitting that its lack of realism enhances her enjoyment of the story line:

When it’s not real, I like it a lot.

She therefore willingly chooses to distance herself imaginatively from her immediate circumstances and takes an interest in matters that do not bear directly on her day-to-day life (Thompson, 1995:189-190):

[Soap operas] provide a welcome relief from our predictable, tediously boring routines (Rehal, 2007:5 in the *Saturday Nation*).

The realism of *Cuando Seas Mia*, or at times lack of it, is therefore also engaged with by the participants, and this negotiation constitutes one of the appeals that the telenovela holds for them. *Cuando Seas Mia* either conforms with their notions of what ought to happen, or they are able to understand and make sense of it within the context of their own lives and experiences. However, some Kenyan men have reacted defensively to the suggestion that the telenovela represents (and maybe even encourages) alternative (non-hegemonic) kinds of masculinity. They question whether their women are really aware that soap operas and telenovelas are make believe, saying that the love lives of average Kenyan men are being affected because their partners are comparing them to male characters in soaps, and making unreasonable demands of them:

This has actually caused some men to avoid dating altogether (George, 2008:11 in the *Daily Nation*).

The participants attribute their enjoyment of the telenovela to its escapism (and realist) elements:

Faith: I like it because it gets me out of my books. It gets you to think, ok this can happen.

This can be done to an extent. Ya, it gets you out of your normal.

although they are quick to add, in reference to a different telenovela, that there are limits to how unrealistic a narrative can get:

Nyambura: It was too long and too fake.

Wairu: And then they make the psycho people too psycho. So it's like, ok, just get on with it. Let's move on now.

The blurred line between fantasy and reality in the narrative does not hinder the participants' viewing experience nor do they feel short-changed by it. Instead their ability to emotionally engage (Tufte, 2002:16) enhances their viewing pleasure, and increases their ability to identify with the story line and its characters. They enter into a "playful, light-hearted interaction [with the narrative] where [they] ... commute between involvement and distancing while watching television soaps" (Pitout, 1998:65). The result is that they gain pleasure from the telenovela viewing experience by legitimately participating with characters in the program:

In soap operas women tell off their mothers in law as their husbands hold them supportively - something many African women would love to do but culture and tradition will simply not just allow it ... The soap opera to me is a catharsis. The weight of my burden lies in the main character who does what I wish in my heart but would never do in the open in case I am deemed mad or rushed to Mathare ... I can live my dream for a moment and go back to reality the next day (Mutunga, 2006:22 in the *Daily Nation*).

This provides "an occasion for the release of certain kinds of desires among young persons of lower middle class for participation in the glamour of the world of film and television" (Das, 1995:155). By building a network of links with the characters on the screen, the participants who are in transition between cultures, traditions, role models and identities, feel that "their lives [are] in some inexplicable way linked with the lives of the characters" (Das, 1995:156), and gain a sense of belonging and stability.

The central hold that telenovelas have over audiences is therefore emotional (Fuenzalida, 1987 in Tufte, 2002:16):

Nyambura: [*Cuando Seas Mia*] makes you laugh, makes you cry.

and when the narrative addresses controversial or taboo societal issues, dialogue and debate amongst audiences increases, and it enhances their emotional involvement:

The state of harmony which many telenovelas and soap operas begin with, is challenged by the introduction of taboo issues which challenge the relational structures and moral codes present in an initial state of harmony, but simultaneously may very well become articulators of debate and ‘gossip’ (Brown, 1994 in Tufte, 2002:18).

They question and debate their private societal and cultural norms and values through the common language (Hamburger, 2001:3) of the telenovela, and since its narratives usually centre on a family, reflect upon their own lives and discuss ideal models of family structure, relationships, portrayal of women, and conflicts between tradition and modernity.

The participants therefore respond to *Cuando Seas Mia*’s narrative, its plot developments and character portrayals in relation to their personal expectations of what ought to happen, which are drawn directly from their own lives and experiences (their individual constructions of reality). They critique the telenovela by justifying some aspects while challenging others, so while the plot overall is considered to be unrealistic, its incorporation of realistic elements is recognised and lauded:

Wairu: [*Cuando Seas Mia*] is not very realistic. They’ve tried to put in some realistic things. Like one of the things I really like is the fact that Paloma is not blond. All the others are blond and they give up their dreams to achieve things but Paloma still goes for London. She follows her dreams first so she can follow her love. I like that. She’s ambitious, and she moved up.

The young women in this study are also quick to defend their rights to watch programs like telenovelas and soap operas. Unlike other women audiences, such as the *Crossroads* audience in Hobson’s study (1982 in Moores, 1993:42) who were either apologetic or defensive about their viewing preferences, the women in this study celebrate the emotional satisfaction that they gain from watching *Cuando Seas Mia*. They describe *Cuando Seas Mia* as “Soul food” and say that not watching it “messes up” their week since they are “glued” and “hooked” to it. They have “no reservations” about watching it and are aggressive about defending their rights to watch telenovelas, which they describe as a media product that targets their needs as women:

Wairu: People attack you for watching the soap ... but you know what – it targets women and I enjoy it in some way that men don’t. And men don’t apologise for watching soccer or *24* ... I call it my right as a woman ... it’s inherent in me for watching such things.

They confidently challenge the negative stereotypes that have been applied to audiences that watch programs from this genre, attacking both the patriarchal structures and the individuals that attempt

to shame them, thereby tying in directly with Das' observation that media products offer audiences a way to "contest the patriarchal ideologies of male power" (Das, 1995:147):

Wairu: It's part of patriarchy ... [being] made to feel that what women like is lesser than what men watch but you shouldn't feel any less. Why should I feel guilty? I call it my right as a woman and women who don't [watch] are being traitors ...

I'm a woman. It's inherent in me for watching such things. I shouldn't feel guilty.

In this extract, Wairu willingly discusses her identity and what she considers to be her rights as a woman, thereby gaining an understanding of her own womanhood. Not only is she comfortable with her decision to watch telenovelas, but she openly defends this right even though in doing so, she challenges social and cultural norms by behaving in a manner that is not submissive.

The participants' engagement with the romantic, emotional and realistic-fantastical elements of *Cuando Seas Mia* therefore provides insight into the ways that they define themselves as women, and the next section will discuss how this informs their understandings of romantic relationships, and what constitutes acceptable behaviour for a woman who is in one.

#### 4.2 *The ideal relationship*

The participants discuss the female characters in *Cuando Seas Mia* in relation to their own identities, and the male characters in relation to how men in African culture behave. They reject some character traits and admire others. Their discussions of relationships in *Cuando Seas Mia* are just as involved and passionate since this is also an area in which they are personally involved, and in which they have the power and the influence to make a change.

All of the women in this study are young, single and do not have children. Their own experiences of men draw upon their fathers, their brothers, their male friends and the men they have dated. During the individual interviews, many of them mention that they have not been in "serious" relationships, and by serious they mean that they have not had sex with the men that they have dated, attributing this to a variety of factors such as religion, family and values. But they all aspire to being in a long term relationship with a man and discuss the relationships in *Cuando Seas Mia* with this in mind, weighing the pros and cons of each relationship, and in a sense, defining the youthful styles of gender relations that they want to enter into.

They are dismissive of the love triangles in *Cuando Seas Mia*, such as the Diego-Paloma-Mariano-Martha one, stating clearly that such a situation frustrates them:

Susan: Us girls, when we fall in love we are really into it but the guys are not.

This is a modern view that they embrace, of one man for one woman, and they accept that it is at odds

with the common African practice of polygamy:

Susan: African men are not tuned to one wife. You know there is this issue of polygamy so you can have many.

They also reject sexual intimacy before marriage, and are vocal about how they do not intend to engage in a sexual relationship with a man outside of marriage. Interestingly, the “no sex before marriage” approach is perceived as a traditional practice, but in Kenya it is one that is more closely affiliated with religion than culture since single parenthood and ‘come we stay marriages’ are more common and generally accepted:

Ours is a society that sanctions fatherless families. Papa is always a rolling stone. Christianity is feminised and men are a diminishing minority in church pews (Pala, 2009:8 in the *Saturday Nation*).

None of the participants make any reference to Paloma’s sexual relationship with Diego. They neither criticise nor judge her for conceiving his child out of wedlock since the scenario of “a single mom, alone, fighting for herself ... The dad is nowhere to be seen” is something they can identify with. (Faith, one of the participants, is brought up by a single mother.)

The strong emphasis on romance, relationships and not sex in *Cuando Seas Mia* appeals to them. As young women, they are negotiating the various identities that they can adopt in their romantic relationships with men, including what a man’s behaviour in certain situations means and how they as young women ought to behave. By observing the development of various relationships in *Cuando Seas Mia*, they feel invited to critique the male characters, their behaviour, the different relationships that they are engaged in, and relate these discussions closely to their own lives.

The participants therefore engage with the telenovela on a personal level, and they use their understandings of its characters and plot lines to negotiate their own identities and subsequently more comfortably and confidently exist in their own social scenarios. This is especially so when it comes to relationships (both those with members of the opposite sex, and those within a family setting), so, for example, the women discuss what traits to look for in men that one is dating, how to understand the behaviour of men and how to behave in particular social scenarios. They discuss the importance of love in a relationship and list what they have learnt from *Cuando Seas Mia*: “little things about life”, that “love exists”, that there are “different types of love”. They pick out the tell tale give-aways that one should watch out for in a relationship, like how to know when someone has “the wrong motives” and “fake plans” or when they are covering up, drawing a moral lesson from all these scenarios which is to “always keep honesty” in a relationship. They even mention that money should never take precedence over family.

The participants also discuss particular relationships between men and women, such as that between Paloma and Diego, identifying the lessons that it has taught them, and whether it is a kind of behaviour that they may want to emulate in their own relationships. They mention that it is “a source of knowledge for them”. Diego and Paloma’s ability to question their relationship is important for Wairu and the implication is that this may be something she will possibly want to incorporate into the relationships in her own life:

Wairu: I like the way Diego and Paloma treat their relationship. Is this worth it? Do we love each other that much? Is this worth it?

For Faith it is the accessibility of particular experiences such as getting “married to someone who is very different from you, you can go to a family where your mother in law doesn’t like you” that appeals to her, while for Evelyn it is the way in which true love helps them to overcome everything.

The participants critique the different roles and positions that each man and woman occupies, and it shapes their notions of romantic relationships. For example, they criticise Diego for being over-sensitive and weak but celebrate Paloma for her assertiveness and strength. This suggests that while they have not fully embraced *Cuando Seas Mia*’s introduction of new gender roles, a stronger woman and a weaker man, the identity of a stronger woman, who is not restrained from expressing herself, is more acceptable than that of a flawed male identity. They celebrate Paloma’s physical aggression and the way that she attacks Barbara, thus “gain[ing] pleasure by defying subordinate cultural positioning” (Brown, 1990:198) and embrace characters that offer “access to new kinds of symbolic material which can be incorporated reflexively into the project of self-formulation” (Thompson, 1995:177). On the other hand, they are disappointed by Diego’s over-sensitivity which they feel puts too much pressure on Paloma to compensate for his inadequacies and weaknesses. The criticism is therefore directed more at the men who have failed to fulfill their social responsibilities than at the women who have made the best of a bad situation:

Nyambura: They [the women] are too aggressive.

Wairu: Like they’re the ones who keep the family together – they’re the ones who keep things running – they’re the ones who make things happen – and its like the men just sit back and you know cry [laugh] or fight or drink tequila. Like you know this other guy, the one who was left because he was sleeping around, the one for the hacienda.

Nyambura: Aurelio

Wairu: Aurelio – I mean [laugh]. He’s always crying and drinking tequila and the wife ... the wife, her, she’s moving on. She’s working and she’s just ignoring him.

They criticise Diana for becoming impatient and plunging into a marriage just because “she wanted

to be like other married women”, and they question the longevity of the Diego-Paloma romance:

Wairu: They’ve had a lot of arguments ... and they’ve had a lot of tiffs. And they want to make us believe that these are the things that will bring them together or whatever but I always say that like within their marriage, this will come out and they will manifest.

The participants therefore relate to the portrayal of women, relationships and family structures in *Cuando Seas Mia*. They appropriate elements into their local cultural capital, and use this knowledge to interpret and to develop their own lives and relationships (Hamburger, 2001:26; La Pastina, 2005).

They are quick to add that their choice to watch *Cuando Seas Mia* is as deliberate as their rejection of North American soap operas which portrays characters and relationships which are not “proximate relevant, or appealing to their own tastes and sexual relationship values” (Straubhaar, 2007:198). North American soap operas are too sexualised, they undermine their traditional African cultures and they are “not something I can relate with”:

Faith: We just don’t come across such extreme issues, like you know a brother marrying sister, you know those things that you can’t understand in an African setting ... In your setting, something like that can’t happen

...

Evelyn: Like Paloma. Them they are not dirty. A love story, yes, but not dirty compared to African ones ... Like *The Bold and the Beautiful*, it’s not a program you like to watch with your mum or young kids ... Them they could even go to an extent of making love, and show, you know. But you won’t get that from Paloma kind of stories.

showing how their local cultural frameworks have filtered their selection and reception of global media products.

Kenyan men feel that Mexican telenovelas are as destructive of local cultures and relationships as North American soap operas, since Kenyan women use them to explore different masculinities and by doing this, question and gradually erode African defined masculinities. In an article in a local daily, the writer discusses how the representations of men in Mexican soaps as sensitive and romantic undermines the character of Kenyan men and has a detrimental effect upon Kenyan relationships since Kenyan men are being judged by foreign, impractical standards:

Men are also accused of being cold-hearted for their inability to show emotions such as crying and saying “I love you” every five minutes. This is common in soaps. But our women are forgetting that it is embarrassing for a man to cry in front of his girlfriends, And for many men, it is weird to keep saying I love you! ... At the end of the day this puts serious strain on a relationship (George, 2008:11 in the *Daily Nation*).

He continues:

Women must realise that soap operas are just make-believe or else there will be a problem because the average Kenyan man will never measure up to their expectations (George, 2008:11).

However the participants in this study selectively negotiate the characters and relationships in *Cuando Seas Mia* demonstrating their sophistication as an audience. They identify with different aspects of several characters (Beltrao, 1993 in Machado-Borges, 2006); and extract what is relevant to them and apply it to reinforce their own conceptions about family, integrity and a character's moral standing. This is because there are components of a character's identity that they can identify with, and aspects that they admire and wish to appropriate. They do not choose one side whole-heartedly:

[The participants'] ... difficulty is that while they are very critical of what they call western cultural imperialism, they are also part of global cosmopolitan processes that are often interpreted as 'westernisation'. The contradiction is complete when the same processes that enable them to pursue certain lifestyles are also interpreted as causing the 'erosion of tradition'. Their sense of Africanness is also contradictory. On the one hand it is related to a sentiment of glorifying traditions as truly authentic, while on the other hand, they identify themselves as African because of their inter-ethnic backgrounds and/or lifestyle and progressive attitudes. So their Africanness is far from self-evident, and neither is their 'westernisation'; these ill defined or flawed notions highlight the[ir] complex position (Spronk, 2007:12-13).

These ambiguities plague the participants as young African professionals, and they are part and parcel of their contemporary life in Nairobi (Spronk, 2007:26) and of the transformations that their transitional society embodies.

## 5. Conclusion

The women in this study engage and interact with the narrative and characters of *Cuando Seas Mia* on an intensely personal and emotional level. Watching it changes and moulds them, their identities as women, the kinds of men that they are attracted to and the nature of the romantic relationships that they want to engage in. They use *Cuando Seas Mia* to reflect on how to conduct their everyday lives and human relations (Frederiksen, 2000:210), and localise aspects of it into their own lives (Ray, 2007:64):

Nyambura: I always quote *Cuando Seas Mia* in my life.

In so doing, they challenge the tenets of the media imperialism thesis and its claim that local audiences are influenced and manipulated by the alien cultures inherent in global media products.

These women debate their culture, traditional and modern practices, social expectations, lifestyle

options and identities, and engage with the male and female characters and the representations of relationships in *Cuando Seas Mia*, selectively appropriating some aspects and openly rejecting those that do not align with their local contexts, forging new identities for themselves. It is here that the transitional tensions which they experience can be detected. They feel alienated from both traditional and western cultures, have a desire to uphold family and traditional values in spite of their feeling of dissociation from them, and simultaneously want to embrace and emotionally connect with the values of their urban lifestyles. They turn to *Cuando Seas Mia*, distancing themselves from some aspects and embracing others, and fabricate new identities for themselves.

As young, professional African women, the participants adopt many different identities (Ang, 1990:85). They see themselves as “explorers of a contemporary identity” (Spronk, 2007:12) and incorporate attitudes which neither embrace nor reject westernisation or Africanness as a mode of identification, but which look to “being modern the African way” (Spronk, 2007:13). They delicately balance what they can imagine and what their social surroundings will permit (Appadurai, 1996:54) coming to terms with “positions and world-views that are inherently contradictory” (Grixti, 2006:117). For example, they are accomplished and financially independent women living in an urban centre, but they are also defined by their submissive roles within African patriarchal culture as daughters, wives and mothers. Their ideal man is a strong and powerful masculine figure who is also sensitive and in touch with his emotions. Their choice of whom to marry will be decided by love, and also by the suitability of tribe, class and other traditional, social dictates.

Their city life (and the social roles that it offers) thus becomes a site of anxiety where these young women vacillate between embracing some feminine behaviours and being offended by other ‘unfeminine’ behaviours. (Even these ‘unfeminine’ behaviours are sources of ambivalence for them since within a second binary, they attract a ‘positive’ association and their unsuitability to a contemporary African lifestyle is diluted.) As a result, their entire outlook upon society changes. They are drawn to *Cuando Seas Mia* because it provides resources which they can use to question and challenge the established norms in their own lives. In this moment when they are experiencing tension and crisis about their own identities, gender roles and heterosexual relationships, they reimagine aspects of their lives (Davis and Davis, 1995:578; Straubhaar, 2007:205), strengthen their new perspectives (La Pastina, 2005:147) and shape their identities of what it means to be a young woman living in an African urban environment. In so doing, they create an amalgam of the traditional and the modern, the rural and the urban, the young and the mature, the student and the professional.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

While identifying participants for this study, I was approached by a number of Kenyan men from the same age group as the female participants in my study. They wanted to know why they were being excluded from participating even though they were avid watchers of *Cuando Seas Mia*, and perhaps watched it more regularly than some of the women who were part of the study. In addition to the competitive undertone, I realised that they felt slighted because my study focused on women. (Perhaps this was partly because as African men, they felt they had more of a right to voice their opinions and be consulted in a research study, another instance showing the prevalence of patriarchy in the urban African environment.) Although future research may choose to look at the reception of Mexican telenovelas by young Kenyan men, and to examine how their negotiations of their cultural and social identities influence their own definitions of African masculinity, this study and its findings were deeply rooted in understanding how a group of young Kenyan women receive, respond to and interact with the Mexican telenovela, *Cuando Seas Mia*.

This group of women, who live in Nairobi, are members of a society that is undergoing a process of transition (Fornas, 1995; Giddens, 1998). They live in an African city and experience urban life with its modern influences, practices and behaviours, and at the same time, they are attached to their rural identities, and some of its traditions, customs and practices. Upon returning to *shags*, they willingly re-adopt some rural practices as they relate to dress code and (to a certain extent) behaviour while aggressively rejecting other traditional practices such as forced circumcision and marriage at a young age. Elements of their subordinate gender position as young African women are therefore reinforced by their rural settings, regardless of their social and economic gains in the urban environment, while others are outrightly challenged and struggled with. These women are undecided on whether to embrace one lifestyle wholeheartedly. They neither want to “accept all the elements they perceive as modern into their lives”, nor do they want to “abandon those (traditional) cultural values that they consider worthwhile and preferable to their Western options” (Prazak, 1999:97). They live with the demands of both a rural (traditional) and urban (modern) lifestyle.

The participants constitute one of the groups that is continually re-negotiating their roles and identities in relation to, on the one hand, patriarchal Kenyan society, and on the other, the modern influences of an urban environment. This has given rise to the creation of identities and roles where the local and the global interplay, and where tradition and modernity overlap. They “draw selectively on [their] mediated experience, interlacing it with the lived experience that forms the connective tissue of their daily lives” (Thompson, 1995:230), thinking critically about their own lives and trying to find a balance that they can live with and justify to themselves (Thompson, 1995:234). The significant cultural consequence here, as with Prazak’s (1996) study of adolescents in rural Kenya, is that these

women do not harbour “a sense of cultural loss and fragmentation” because of their exposure to two different lifestyles, neither of which they can fully identify with. Instead they assimilate the effect of the two societies on their identities and establish a sense of “positive growth” (Prazak, 1999:106). So, for example, they are proud to be independent women who live in the city and who are developing educationally and professionally such that they can support their siblings and their parents back home. Their pride stems, in part, from a recognition that as city dwellers, they are relatively liberated from social and cultural dictates, and that they have access to opportunities that were not always available to African women.

At the same time as they experience this pride and exult in their public and professional achievements in the urban environment, they experience “a sense of threat, loss and confusion” (Prazak, 1996:106) which is most evident in their personal lives, an area that is shaped heavily by the dictates of tradition. Their African traditions have certain expectations of how a woman ought to dress, behave, and interact with men and elders in the society, and these expectations are challenged by the urban environment. So, these women are unsure of how to be a ‘good’ African woman (how to dress, how to behave, what to say); how to choose the ‘right’ man (romantic and sensitive or aggressive and patriarchal); and how to behave in a relationship with a man (the place of romance, whether sex before marriage is acceptable, how to negotiate and overcome challenges) while living in an urban African environment. At the core of these negotiations is their need to understand their femininity as modern African women.

The dual influences and demands of their rural and urban lives therefore become the point of conflict and resistance which exposes these inherent tensions. Faced with two positions, they are reluctant to wholly embrace either the modern or the traditional definition of an African woman, and instead select aspects from both, appropriate them into their identities and restructure them to suit their daily lives and contexts. They dismiss some of the traditional expectations that are made of them, and continue to pursue their financial independence through their career and education. At the same time, they reject being defined as ‘modern’ women because of the negative connotations that rural African society (men) gives to it, and discard particular styles of behaviour. Their professional and personal identities are therefore negotiated in very different ways: one (the personal) is approached conservatively and the other (the professional) radically. They are more willing to challenge the norms when it comes to their identities as working women, but when choosing a husband and managing a relationship, they depend on the advice of their elders and embrace aspects of their traditional teachings. They relate to the narrative and the characters of *Cuando Seas Mia* because it balances the rural with the urban, tradition with modernity. *Cuando Seas Mia* allows the participants to interact with characters who are faced with the same difficulties that they as young Kenyan women face and this is a key point of engagement for them.

My ethnographic study of the reception of a Mexican telenovela began with a desire to understand why they evoked such support and passion amongst a group of young Kenyan women, and how these women used *Cuando Seas Mia* as a way to make sense of their own lives. The research process however led to an appreciation of the complexity of how people interact with media in a variety of social spaces (Ginsburg, 2005:20) and how the formation of local youth identities amongst a group of women in Nairobi is increasingly interwoven with their consumption of global media, upon which they draw to challenge and affirm their local identities.

This study has shown that the identities of these women are entrenched within a wider post-colonial social transition within which they negotiate aspects of their social and cultural identity as ‘Kenyans’, their femininity (and Kenyan masculinity), their relationships and their values in response to their experiences and understandings of tradition and modernity. Each of them engages with the tensions of the rural-urban, traditional-modern elements of their identities on a daily basis and these negotiations fundamentally influence the identities that they inhabit, various social roles they play, the manner in which they behave and their personal and professional aspirations. As explorers of a contemporary African youth identity, they neither embrace nor reject their westernisation or Africanness. Instead they question and destabilise both the Western and the African definitions of female and male gender roles and heterosexual relationships, and reconstruct what it means to be a woman or a man or to be in a relationship. They simultaneously erode and nourish definitions of tradition and modernity, moulding them to fit with their own experiences in an urban environment, and redefine what African urban society means in relation to their evolving identities as African women. An exploration of how a group of young women in Nairobi watched and engaged with a Mexican telenovela has therefore given rise in this study to an exploration of the changing fabric of Kenyan society.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Preliminary Questionnaire

1. How old are you?

Below 18	
18-21	
22-25	
26-30	
30+	

2. What race are you?

Black	
White	
Indian	
Coloured/ Half caste	

3. Indicate your level of fluency

(five is very fluent and 1 is minimal)

English	
Swahili	

4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Below KCPE	
Primary School (KCPE)	
Secondary School (KCSE)	
College (Diploma)	
Undergraduate (degree)	
Postgraduate qualification	

5. Are you ...

(please choose one or more)

Studying	
Employed – please specify title	
Unemployed	
Other	

6. What is your monthly income?

Less than Kshs 10,000	
Kshs 10,000-19,999	
Kshs 20,000-39,999	
Kshs 40,000-59,999	
Kshs 60,000-79,999	
Kshs 80,000-99,999	
Kshs 100,000 above	

7. What is your current marital status?

Single, never married	
Married	
Separated	
Divorced	
Widowed	

8. What is the highest level of education your mother has completed?

Below KCPE	
Primary School (KCPE)	
Secondary School (KCSE)	
College (Diploma)	
Undergraduate (degree)	
Postgraduate qualification	

9. What is the highest level of education your father has completed?

Below KCPE	
Primary School (KCPE)	
Secondary School (KCSE)	
College (Diploma)	
Undergraduate (degree)	
Postgraduate qualification	

**Appendix 2: Results of the Preliminary Questionnaire**

Participant	Age	Race	Fluency in English*	Fluency in Swahili*	Educational level	Current occupation	Monthly income	Marital status	Mother's educational level	Father's educational level
1.	22-25	black	5	5	college	Studying and employed (receptionist)	Kshs 10,000-19,999	Single, never married	Primary school	college
2.	22-25	black	5	2	undergraduate	Studying	-	Single, never married	undergraduate	Post graduate
3.	26-30	black	5	4	undergraduate	Studying and employed (layout assistant)	Kshs 20,000-39,999	Single, never married	diploma	undergraduate
4.	22-25	black	5	-	undergraduate	Employed (legal researcher)	Kshs 10,000-19,999	Single, never married	postgraduate	undergraduate
5.	18-21	black	5	5	undergraduate	studying	Less than Kshs 10,000	single, never married	postgraduate	undergraduate
6.	18-21	black	5	2	undergraduate	studying	-	married Single, never married	postgraduate	Postgraduate
7.	18-21	black	5	5	undergraduate	studying	-	married Single, never married	college	Undergraduate
8.	22-25	black	5	3	undergraduate	studying	Kshs 10,000-19,999	married Single, never married	postgraduate	undergraduate
9.	26-30	black	5	5	undergraduate	studying	Less than Kshs 10,000	married Single, never married	college	college
10.	26-30	black	5	5	undergraduate	Studying	-	married Single, never married	undergraduate	postgraduate

\*(1-5 where 5 indicates high fluency)

### Appendix 3: Focus Group Guide

#### I. Introduction

#### II. Trigger episode

#### III. Interview guide

##### A. Plot/ Story line/ Characters

1. How would you describe *Cuando Seas Mia*? What is it about?
2. How believable is the story line?
3. How believable are the characters?
4. Who is your most/ least favourite character?

##### B. Reasons for popularity

5. How interesting do you find it?
6. How much do you enjoy it?
7. What do you enjoy about it?
8. What, if anything, do you dislike about it?

##### C. Reception setting

9. Why did you start watching it?
10. Where do you watch it?
11. How often do you watch it?
12. Who do you watch it with?
13. Who do you discuss it with?
14. How do you feel after watching it?
15. What do you do when you have missed an episode of it?

##### D. Relevance/ ability to relate

16. How relevant do you think it is to your life in Kenya?
17. Has it taught you any lessons?

##### E. The genre

18. Which other soap operas do you watch?
19. How would you rate *Cuando Seas Mia* compared to them?
20. What do you find different about *Cuando Seas Mia*?
21. Why did you chose *Cuando Seas Mia* on KTN and not another telenovela on another channel?

**Appendix 4: A comparison of Latin American telenovelas to soap operas (of varying national origin) that are aired on Kenyan television Stations, 2007-2008**

Kenyan Station	Name of Program	Genre	Country of Production	Time slot
KTN	La Hija del Jardinero (current)	Telenovela	Mexico	Saturday and Sunday 8:00 pm
	<i>Quando Seas Mia</i>	Telenovela	Mexico	Saturday and Sunday 8:00 pm
	La Revancha	Telenovela	Mexico (Venezuela)	
	Neighbours (current)	Soap opera	Australia	Weekdays 12:30 pm
	Happy Days	Soap opera	Kenya	Weekends 8:00pm
NTV	Las Dos Caras de Ana (current)	Telenovela	Mexico	Monday and Tuesday 8:00pm
	Secreto de Amor	Telenovela	Brazil (Venezuela)	Monday and Tuesday 8:00 pm
	Rubi	Telenovela	Brazil (Venezuela)	Monday and Tuesday 8:00 pm
	Cobra Squad	Soap opera	Kenya	Sunday 7:30pm
Citizen	El Cuerpo del Deseo (current)	Telenovela	Mexico	Weekdays 10:50 pm
	Nunca Te Dire Adios (current)	Telenovela	Venezuela	Weekdays 8:05 pm
	Tahidi High	Telenovela	Kenya	Monday 1:15 pm Saturday 7:30pm
	Sunset Beach (current)	Soap opera	United States	Weekdays 7:00pm
	Only You (current)	Telenovela	China	Monday 9:50 pm
	Hiram (current)	Telenovela	Philippines	Wednesday 1:15 pm
KBC	It might be you (current)	Telenovela	Philippines	Wednesday 9:45 pm
	The Bold and the Beautiful (current)	Soap opera	United States	Friday-Sunday 9:45pm
	Dallas (current)	Soap opera	United States	Monday & Tuesday 10:30 pm

\* An item that has been marked “current” indicates that it is currently airing on the Kenyan station.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Acosta-Alzuru, C. 2003. "Tackling the Issues: Meaning Making in a Telenovela". Popular Communication, 1(4): 193-215. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Adorno, TW and Horkheimer, M. 1979. "The culture industry: enlightenment as mass deception" in O. Boyd-Barrett and C. Newbold (eds). 1995. Approaches to Media: A Reader. pp 77-80. London: Arnold.
- Agesa, J and Agesa, RU. 1999. "Gender differences in the incidence of rural to urban migration: Evidence from Kenya". Journal of Development Studies. 35(6): 36-58.
- Agesa, R and Kim, S. 2001. "Rural to urban migration as a household decision: evidence from Kenya". Review of Development Economics. 5(1): 60-75.
- Agesa, RU. 2004. "One Family, Two Households: Rural to Urban Migration in Kenya". Review of Economics of The Household. 2(2): 161-178.
- Allen, RC. 2006. "Soap Opera". The Museum of Broadcast Communications. <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/S/htmlS/soapopera/soapopera.htm>. Accessed: 9 February 2006.
- Ang, I. 1990. "Culture and Communication: Towards an Ethnographic Critique of Media Consumption in the Transnational Media System". European Journal of Communication. 5: 239-60.
- Ang, I. 1990. "Melodramatic identifications: telenovela fiction and women's fantasy" in ME. Brown (ed) Television and Women's Culture: The Politics of the Popular. pp 183-198. London: Sage.
- Ang, I. 1991. "Dallas and the ideology of mass culture". Watching Dallas. London: Routledge.
- Ang, I. 1991. Desperately Seeking the Audience. London: Routledge.
- Ang, I. 1996. Living Room Wars: Rethinking Media Audiences for a Postmodern world. London: Routledge.
- Ang'awa, W. 2002. "The Kenya Media Industry: Television and Radio". <http://www.kenya.org.uk/html/news&media.html>. Accessed: 18 December 2007.
- Angus, L. 1993. Education, Inequality and Social Identity. London: Falmer.
- Anyangu, S. 2009. "Significant strides in legal arena". The Sunday Standard. 8 March 2009.
- Appadurai, A. 1991. "Global Ethnoscapes: Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology" in RG. Fox (ed) Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present. pp 191-210. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research.
- Appadurai, A. 1996. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy" in Appadurai, A(ed) Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation. pp 27-48. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.
- Appleton, S., Bigsten, A. and Manda, DK. 1999. "Educational Expansion and Economic Decline: returns to Education in Kenya, 1978-95". Centre for the Study of African Economies. Working Paper Series, No. 99/6. Oxford: Oxford University.
- Armes, R. c1987. Third World Film Making and the West. Berkeley: University of California.
- Assefa, E. 2005. "An Investigation into the popularity of American Action Movies in Informal Video Houses in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia". Masters Thesis, Rhodes University.
- Atkinson, P. 1990. The Ethnographic Imagination: Textual Constructions of Reality. London: Routledge.
- Azevedo, M. (ed) 1993. Kenya: the lands, the people and the nation. Durham: Carolina Academic.
- Bailey, J. 1993. Kenya: The National Epic. Nairobi: Kenway Publications.
- Banga, D. 2007. "TV plays crucial role in the lives of E Africans". The Standard. May 7 2007. <http://www.eastandard.net/archives/index.php?mnu=details&id=1143968264&catid=1>. Accessed: 18 December 2007.
- Bardhan, P. 1979. "Labour Supply Functions in a Poor Agrarian Economy". American Economic Review. 69(1): 73-83.

- Barker, C. 1997. "Global Soaps and Global News". Global Television: An Introduction. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Barker, M. 1989. Comics: Ideology, Power and the Critics. Manchester: Manchester University.
- Barrera, E. "Mexico". The Museum of Broadcast Communications. <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/M/htmlM/mexico/mexico.htm>. Accessed: 21 January 2008.
- Baym, NK. 2000. "The Soap Opera and its Audience: TV for the Less Intelligent?" Tune in, Log on: Soaps, Fandom and Online Community. California: Sage.
- BBC News. 2007. "Country Profile: Kenya". [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country\\_profiles/1024563.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1024563.stm). Accessed: 22 June 2007.
- BBC. "Country Profile: Mexico." [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country\\_profiles/1205074.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1205074.stm). Accessed: 21 January 2008.
- Beck, U., Giddens, A. and Lash, S. 1994. Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order. Cambridge: Polity.
- Becker, HS. 1996. "The Epistemology of Qualitative Research" in R. Jessor *et al.* (eds). 1996. Essays on Ethnography and Human Development. pp 53-71. Chicago: University of Chicago. <http://home.earthlink.net/~hsbecker/qa.html>. Accessed: 14 December 2005.
- Biltreyest, D. and Meers, P. 2000. "The international telenovela debate and the contra-flow argument: a re-appraisal." Media, Culture and Society. 22: 393-413. London: Sage.
- Binsbergen, WMJ. and Meilink, HA. (eds) 1978. "Introduction". in Migration and the Transformation of Modern African Society. Holland: Printingtrade Hasselt.
- Boshoff, P. 2005. "Diasporic Consciousness and Bollywood. South African Indian youth and the meanings they make of Indian film". Masters Thesis. Rhodes University.
- Bourdieu, P. 1984. Distinction in "Audience Research". 2007. <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/A/htmlA/audiencerese/audiencerese.htm>. Accessed 22 June 2007
- Boyd-Barrett, O. 1977. "Media imperialism: Towards an international framework for an analysis of media systems" in J. Curran, M. Gurevitch and J. Woollacott (eds.), Mass communication and society. pp 136-165. London: Edward Arnold.
- Boyd-Barrett, O. 1995. "Early theories in media research" in O. Boyd-Barrett and C. Newbold. (eds) 1995. Approaches to Media: A Reader. pp 68-76. London: Arnold.
- Boyd-Barrett, O. and Newbold, C. 1995. "Defining the field" in O. Boyd-Barrett and C. Newbold. (eds) 1995. Approaches to Media: A Reader. pp 2-7. London: Arnold.
- Branston, G. and Stafford, R. (ed) 1999. "Narratives". The Media Student's Handbook. Second Edition. London: Routledge.
- Brava, M. "Telenovelas and Soap in Latin America". <http://www.zonalatina.com/Zldata131.htm>. Accessed: 21 June 2005.
- Breger, C. 2005. "Complexity Soap: Tales of Globalization in René Pollesch's Tent Saga." Talk for Media in Transition Conference "The Work of Stories". May 6-8, 2005. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. <http://web.mit.edu/comm-forum/mit4/papers/breger.pdf>. Accessed: 22 June 2007.
- Brown, ME. 1990. "Motley Moments: Soap Operas, Carnival, Gossip and the Power of the Utterance" in ME. Brown (ed) Television and Women's Culture: The Politics of the Popular. pp 183-198. London: Sage.
- Bryman, A. 1984. "The debate about quantitative and qualitative research: a question of method or epistemology?" British Journal of Sociology. XXXV(1): 75-92.
- Bryman, A. 1988. Quantity-Quality in Social Research. London: Routledge.
- Business Daily. 2008. "Technology and youth to drive media industry". Business Daily. March 28, 2008.
- Caffrey, AM. 1993. "Angry Women Bad Subjects". Issue 5, March/April 1993. <http://bad.eserver.org/issues/1993/05/caffrey.html>. Accessed: 20 July 2005.

- Caldarola, VJ. 1990. "Reception as Cultural Experience: Visual Mass Media and Reception Practices in Outer Indonesia". Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation. Annenberg School of Communication, University of Pennsylvania.
- CCMS-infobase. 2005. "Introductory models & basic concepts: Osgood & Schramm". <http://www.cultsock.ndirect.co.uk/MUHome/cshtml/>. Accessed: 28 February 2005.
- CCMS-infobase. 2005. "Introductory models & basic concepts: Shannon-Weaver". <http://www.cultsock.ndirect.co.uk/MUHome/cshtml/introductory/sw.html>. Accessed: 28 February 2005.
- Central Bureau of Statistics. 2000. Analytical Report on Population Dynamics. Volume III. Kenya 1999 Population and Housing Census. Nairobi: Government Printer.
- Central Bureau of Statistics. 2004. Analytical Report on Migration and Urbanisation. Volume VI (November 2004). Nairobi: Government Printer.
- Chandler, D. 1997. "David Morley's Study of the Nationwide Audience (1980)". <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Modules/TF33120/morleynw.html>. Accessed: 3 March 2005.
- Chandler, D. 1997. "The Katz and Liebes Cross-Cultural Viewing Studies". <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Modules/TF33120/katzlieb.html>. Accessed: 3 March 2005.
- Cheng, S. 2006. "Cultural Proximity, Diasporic Identities, and Popular Symbolic Capital: Taiwan Cultural Worker Qiong Yao's Cultural Production in the Chinese Media Market". Global Media Journal. 5(8). <http://lass.calumet.purdue.edu/cca/gmj/sp06/graduatesp06/gmj-sp06gradref-cheng.htm>. Accessed: 19 November 2007.
- CIA. 2007. The World Factbook. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ke.html>. Accessed: 22 June 2007.
- Clenton, R. "Origin of Latin American television". Latin America. Telenovelas, Fictions and Formats. TVmasNovelas2005: Third World Summit of the Telenovela Industry. Spain 2005. [http://www.onlytelenovelas.com/Only\\_4/5\\_1\\_Telenovela\\_lat.php](http://www.onlytelenovelas.com/Only_4/5_1_Telenovela_lat.php). Accessed: 21 January 2008.
- Clifford, J. and Marcus, G. 1986. (eds) Writing culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. Berkeley: University of California.
- Cohen, J. and Ribak, R. 2003. "Sex Differences in Pleasure from Television Texts: The Case of Ally McBeal". Women's Studies in Communication. 26: 118-134.
- Collender, G. 2006. "The Media in Kenya". March 2006. <http://www.stanhopecentre.org/training/EA/Kenya.doc>. Accessed: 18 December 2007
- Communications Commission of Kenya. 2005. [http://www.cck.go.ke/about\\_cck/](http://www.cck.go.ke/about_cck/). Accessed: 2 February 2009.
- Connell, RW. 1987. Gender and power. Stanford, CA: Stanford University.
- Connell, RW. 2003. "Masculinities, Change, and Conflict in Global Society: Thinking about the Future of Men's Studies". The Journal of Men's Studies. 11: 249-266.
- Creeber, G. 2001. "Studying Soap Opera" in G. Creeber. (ed) The Television Genre Book. pp 47-49. London: British Film Institute.
- Curran, J., Gurevitch, M. and Woollacott, J. 1982. "The study of the media: theoretical approaches" in O. Boyd-Barrett and C. Newbold. (eds) 1995. Approaches to Media: A Reader. pp 103-107. London: Arnold.
- Curran, J. 1990. "The New Revisionism in Mass Communication Research: A Reappraisal". European Journal of Communication. 5(2-3): 135-164.
- Dahlgren, P. 1998. "Critique: Elusive Audiences" in R. Dickinson, R. Harindranath and O. Linne. (eds) Approaches to Audiences: A Reader. pp 298-310. London: Arnold.
- Das, V. 1995. "The Effects of Television Viewing". Television: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. III: 147-167. London: Routledge.
- Davis, SS. and Davis, DA. 1995. "The mosque and the satellite: Media and adolescence in a Moroccan town". Journal of Youth and Adolescence. 24: 577-593.

- De Haan, A. 2000. "Migrants, Livelihoods, And Rights: The Relevance of Migration in Development Policies". February 2000. [http://www.livelihoods.org/hot\\_topics/docs/Haan\\_Migrants.livelihoods.pdf](http://www.livelihoods.org/hot_topics/docs/Haan_Migrants.livelihoods.pdf). Accessed: 7 November 2008.
- De Urbina, AO. and Lopez, A. 2005. "Soaps with a Latin accent". [http://www.unesco.org/courier/1999\\_05/uk/connex/txt1.htm](http://www.unesco.org/courier/1999_05/uk/connex/txt1.htm). Accessed: 20 June 2005.
- Deacon, D *et al.* 1999. "Approaching Research". *Researching Communications*. London: Arnold.
- Denscombe, M. 2002. *Ground Rules for Good Research: a 10 point guide for social researchers*. Maidenhead: Open University.
- Dent, M. and Whitehead, S. 2002. *Managing Professional Identities*. London: Routledge.
- Deutsch, KW. 1961. "Social Mobilisation and Political Development". *American Political Science Review*. LV: 493-514.
- DFID. 2004. *DFID Rural and Urban Development Case Study - Kenya*. Oxford Policy Management, June 2004.
- Dickinson, R., Harindranath, R. and Linné, O. (ed) 1998. *Approaches to Audiences: A Reader*. London: Arnold.
- Ekechi, F. 2003. "'Wicked' Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa" (Review). *Africa Today*. 50(1): 130-132. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4187558>. Accessed: 20 December 2009.
- Encyclopædia Britannica. 2007a. "Kenya". <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9108363/Kenya>. Accessed: 22 June 2007.
- Encyclopædia Britannica. 2007b. "Ethnic Groups and Languages". <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-259731/Kenya#419057.hook>. Accessed: 22 June 2007.
- Encyclopedia of the Nations. 2008. "Kenya – religions". <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Kenya-RELIGIONS.html>. Accessed: 5 February 2009.
- Evans, R. 2005. "Research" in *Media Matters*. <http://journalism.cf.ac.uk/2005/MAJS/sjore/research1.html>. Accessed: 20 June 2005.
- Eyck, TT. 2000. "Interpersonal and Mass Communication: Matters of Trust and Control". *Current Research in Social Psychology*. 5(14): 206-224.
- Featherstone, M. 1995. *Undoing culture: Globalization, postmodernism and identity*. London: Sage.
- Ferguson, M. 1995. "Media, Markets, and Identities: Reflections on the Global-Local Dialectic: The 1994 Southam Lecture". *Canadian Journal of Communication*. 20(4). <http://www.cjc-online.ca/viewarticle.php?id=313&layout=html>. Accessed: 19 November 2007
- Fiske, J. 1987. *Television Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Fiske, J. 1989. *Reading the Popular*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Fiske, J. 1989. *Understanding Popular Culture*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Flick, U. 1998. "Process and Theories". *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.
- Fontana, A. and Frey, JH. 1994. "Interviewing: The Art of Science" in NR. Denzin and YS. Lincoln. (eds) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. pp 361-376. London: Sage.
- Ford, S. 2008. "Soap Operas, Relative Realism, and Implicit Contracts". *Convergence Culture Consortium*. [http://www.convergenceculture.org/weblog/2008/05/soap\\_operas\\_relative\\_realism\\_a.php](http://www.convergenceculture.org/weblog/2008/05/soap_operas_relative_realism_a.php). Accessed: 5 February 2009.
- Fox, E. 1997. "Mexico". *Latin American Broadcasting: From Tango to Telenovela*. Luton: University of Luton.
- Fox, E. and Waisbord, S. 2002. "Latin American Media: A Long View of Politics and Markets". <http://lirne.net/resources/netknowledge/fox.pdf>. Accessed: 4 June 2009.
- Fornas, J. 1995. "Youth, culture and modernity." in J. Fornas and G. Bolin. (eds) *Youth Culture in Late Modernity*. p 1-11. London: Sage.
- Frayne, B. 2004. "Migration and urban survival strategies in Windhoek, Namibia". *Geoforum*. 35: 489-505.

- Frederiksen, BF. 1991. "City Life and City Texts : Popular Knowledge and Articulation in the Slums of Nairobi" in P. Kaarsholm. (ed) Cultural Struggle and Development in Southern Africa. pp 227-237. London: James Currey.
- Frederiksen, BFF. 1991. "Joe, the Sweetest Reading in Africa: Documentation and Discussion of a Popular Magazine in Kenya". African Languages and Cultures. 4(2): 135-155. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1771726>. Accessed: 5 November 2008.
- Frederiksen, BF. 2000. "Popular Culture, Gender Relations and the Democratization of Everyday Life in Kenya". Journal of Southern African Studies. 26(2): 209–222.
- Frederiksen, BF. 2002. "Mobile minds and socio-economic barriers: Livelihoods and African-American identifications among youth in Nairobi" in KF. Olwig and NN. Sørensen. (eds) Work and Migration. Life and Livelihoods in a globalizing world. pp 45-60. London: Routledge.
- Gacheri, JR. 2004. "Those cool guys in soaps are fantasy". The Standard. 1 August 2004.
- Gallagher, M. 1995. "Lipstick Imperialism and the New World Order: Women and Media at the close of the Twentieth Century". <http://www.un.org/documents/ecosoc/cn6/1996/media/gallagher.htm>. Accessed: 20 June 2005.
- Gallagher, M. 2003. "Feminist Media Perspectives" in AN. Valdivia. (ed) A Companion to Media Studies. pp 19-39. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gauntlett, D. 2002. "Self help books and the Pursuit of a Happy Identity." Media, Gender and Identity: An Introduction. <http://www.theoryhead.com/gender>. Accessed 20 July 2005.
- Geertz, C. 1973. "Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture" in C. Geertz. The Interpretation of cultures. New York: Basic.
- George, N. 2008. "Please ban these soap operas!" Living Magazine in The Daily Nation. 5 March 2008.
- Geraghty, C. 1991. Women and Soap Opera: A Study of Prime Time Soaps. London: Polity.
- Gerold-Scheepers, T. and Binsbergen, WMJ. "Marxist and Non-marxist approaches to Migration in Tropical Africa" in WMJ. Binsbergen and HA. Meilink (eds) 1978. Migration and the Transformation of Modern African Society. pp 21-35. Holland: Printing Trade Hasselt.
- Giddens, A. 1990. The Consequences of Modernity. Cambridge: Polity.
- Giddens, A. 1991. Modernity and Self Identity. Cambridge: Polity.
- Giddens, A. 1998. Conversations with Anthony Giddens: Making Sense of Modernity. Stanford: Stanford University.
- Giddens, A. 1999a. Globalisation. Lecture 1. London. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/reith\\_99/week1/week1.htm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/reith_99/week1/week1.htm). Accessed: 7 November 2008.
- Giddens, A. 1999b. Tradition. Lecture 3. London. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/reith\\_99/week3/week3.htm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/reith_99/week3/week3.htm). Accessed: 7 November 2008.
- Giddens, A. 1999c. Family. Lecture 4. London. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/reith\\_99/week4/week4.htm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/reith_99/week4/week4.htm). Accessed: 7 November 2008.
- Gilpin, S. 2008. "Disadvantaged Women Dress for Success: A Study in Empowerment and Censure". American Communication Journal. 10(2). [http://www.acjournal.org/holdings/vol10/02\\_Summer/articles/gilpin.php](http://www.acjournal.org/holdings/vol10/02_Summer/articles/gilpin.php). Accessed: 30 December 2009.
- Ginsburg, F. 2005. "Media Anthropology: An Introduction" in EW. Rothenbuler and M. Coman (eds) Media Anthropology. pp 17-25. London: Sage.
- Githinji, P. 2006. "Bazes and Their Shibboleths: Lexical Variation and Sheng Speakers' Identity in Nairobi". Nordic Journal of African Studies. 15(4): 443–472.
- Githiora, C. 2008. "Kenya: Language and the Search for a Coherent National Identity" in A. Simpson. (ed) Language and National Identity in Africa. pp 235-252. Oxford: Oxford University.
- Gitlin, T. 1997. "The Anti-Political Populism in Cultural Studies" in M. Ferguson and P. Golding. (eds) Cultural Studies in Question. pp 25-38. London: Sage.

- Gledhill, C. 1997. "Genre and Gender: the case of soap opera" in S. Hall. (ed) Representation, Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices. pp 339-386. London: Sage.
- Godsland, S. and Moody, N. 2004. Reading the popular in contemporary Spanish texts. Newark: University of Delaware.
- Goldthorpe, JE. 1958. Outlines of East African Society. Kampala: University College of East Africa.
- Gordon, RG. Jr. (ed). 2005. Ethnologue: Languages of the World. Dallas: SIL International. <http://www.ethnologue.com/>. Accessed: 17 June 2009.
- Gough, N. 2002. "Blank spots, blind spots, and methodological questions in postgraduate research." Paper presented at the Postgraduate Conference, Deakin University, Australia. 4-6 October. [http://www.deakin.edu.au/dusa/stud\\_support/noelg\\_DUSA\\_2002.pdf](http://www.deakin.edu.au/dusa/stud_support/noelg_DUSA_2002.pdf). Accessed: 14 December 2005.
- Government of Kenya. 2007. The Kenya Communications (Amendment) Bill, 2007. [http://www.kenyalaw.org/Downloads/Bills/2007/The\\_Kenya\\_Communications\\_\(Amendment\)\\_Bill\\_2007.pdf](http://www.kenyalaw.org/Downloads/Bills/2007/The_Kenya_Communications_(Amendment)_Bill_2007.pdf). Accessed: 2 February 2009.
- Graber, D. 1988. Processing the News: How People Tame the Information Tide. New York: Longman.
- Granqvist, RJ. 2006. "Peter Pan in Nairobi: Masculinity's Postcolonial City". Nordic Journal of African Studies. 15(3): 380-392.
- Grixti, J. 2006. "Symbiotic transformations: youth, global media and indigenous culture in Malta." Media, Culture & Society. 28(1): 105-122. London: Sage.
- Haferkamp, H. and Smelser, NJ. (ed). 1992. Social Change and Modernity. Berkeley: University of California. <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft6000078s/>. Accessed: 9 February 2009.
- Hake, A. 1977. African Metropolis: Nairobi's self-help City. New York: St Martin's.
- Hall, S. 1977. "Culture, the Media and the Ideological Effect" in J Curran, M. Gurevitch and J Woollacott. (eds) Mass Communication and Society. pp 315-348. London: Edward Arnold.
- Hall, S. 1980. "Encoding/ Decoding" in S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe and P Willis. (eds) Culture, Media, Language. pp 128-138. London: Hutchinson.
- Hall, S. 1982. "The rediscovery of "ideology": return of the repressed in media studies" in M. Gurevitch. *et al* (eds) Culture Society and the Media. pp 56-90. London: Methuen.
- Hall, S. 1992. "The Question of Cultural Identity" in S. Hall, D. Held and T. McGrew. (eds) Modernity and its Futures. pp 274-316, Cambridge: Polity.
- Hall, S. 1997. Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices. London: Open University.
- Hall, S. 1999. "Cultural identity and diaspora" in S. Vertovec and R. Cohen. (eds) Migration, diasporas and transnationalism. pp 229-314. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Hall, S. and Whannel, P. 1964. "Falling in Love". The Popular Arts. Essex: Hutchinson Educational.
- Hall, S. and Whannel, P. 1964. "Fantasy and Romance". The Popular Arts. Essex: Hutchinson Educational.
- Hall, S., Held, D. and McGrew, T. 1992. (eds) Modernity and its Futures. Cambridge: Polity.
- Halloran, JD. 1971. The Effects of Mass Communication with Special Reference to Television: A Survey. Leicester: Leicester University.
- Hamburger, E. May 2001. "Telenovela, Gender and Demography in Brazil" . [http://www.iussp.org/Brazil2001/s30/S31\\_02\\_Hamburger.pdf](http://www.iussp.org/Brazil2001/s30/S31_02_Hamburger.pdf). Accessed: 9 February 2006
- Hamermesh, DS. 1987. "The Demand for Labour in the Long Run" in Handbook of Labour Economics. 3(4): 463-89.
- Hannerz, U. 1989. "Notes on the Global Ecumene". Public Culture. 1(2): 66-75.
- Hannerz, U. 1996. Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places. London: Routledge.
- Hansen, A. *et al*. 1998. "Media Audiences: Survey Research". Mass Communication Research Methods. London: Macmillan.

- Hansen, A. *et al.* 1998b. "Media Audiences: Focus Group Interviewing". Mass Communication Research Methods. London: Macmillan.
- Hartley, J. 1987. "Invisible fictions: television audiences, paedocracy, pleasure". Textual Practice. 1(2): 121-138.
- Harwood, J. 1999. "Age Identification, Social Identity Gratifications and Television Viewing". Television: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. IV: 28-42. London: Routledge.
- Hawley, C. 2003. "World staying tuned to Mexico telenovelas". Republic Mexico City Bureau. <http://www.azcentral.com/specials/special42/articles/0923Telenovelas23.html>. Accessed: 21 January 2008.
- Hayes, FW. 2000. A Turbulent Voyage. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Hecht, J. 2006. "Telenovela market". Hollywood Reporter. [http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/content\\_display/international/features/e3iCAGp1f%2FrC6qEU8LDUEO2lg%3D%3D](http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/content_display/international/features/e3iCAGp1f%2FrC6qEU8LDUEO2lg%3D%3D). Accessed: 21 January 2008.
- Hedges, M. 2007. "The textures of African broadcasting". Internews: Empowering local media worldwide. [http://www.internews.org/articles/2007/20071101\\_followthemedias\\_chad.shtm](http://www.internews.org/articles/2007/20071101_followthemedias_chad.shtm). Accessed: 4 June 2009.
- Henrichsen, L., Smith, MT. and Baker, DS. 1997. "Epistemology". Taming the Research Beast. Brigham Young University. [http://linguistics.byu.edu/faculty/henrichsen/researchmethods/RM\\_1\\_02.html](http://linguistics.byu.edu/faculty/henrichsen/researchmethods/RM_1_02.html). Accessed: 24 October 2007.
- Hermes, J. 2003. "Practicing Embodiment: Reality, Respect and Issues of Gender in Media reception" in AN. Valdivia. (ed) A Companion to Media Studies. pp 382-398. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hesmondhalgh, D. and Toynbee, J. 2008. The Media and Social Theory. London: Routledge.
- Hofmeyr, I., Nyairo, J. and Ogude, J. 2003. "Specificities: 'Who can Bwogo Me?' Popular Culture in Kenya". Social Identities. 9(3): 373-382.
- Hooker, R. 1996. Modernity: Crisis of Modernity. <http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/GLOSSARY/MODERN.HTM>. Accessed: 9 February 2009.
- Hooker, R. 1996. Tradition. <http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/GLOSSARY/TRAD.HTM>. Accessed: 9 February 2009.
- Human Rights Watch. 2003. "Double Standards: Women's Property Rights Violations in Kenya". <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2003/03/03/double-standards>. Accessed: 7 November 2008
- Ingman, KA., Ollendick, TH. and Akanda, A. 1999. "Cross-cultural aspects of fears in African children and adolescents". Behaviour Research and Therapy. 37(4): 337-345.
- Internet Movie Database. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0282289/>. Accessed: 21 January 2008.
- Iwabuchi, K. 2002. "Recentring globalization: Popular culture and Japanese transnationalism". London: Duke University.
- Jelin, E. 1990. (ed) "Introduction". Women and Social Change in Latin America. London: Zed.
- Jenkins, H. 2000 "Reception Theory and Audience Research: The Mystery of the Vampire's Kiss" in L. Williams and C. Gledhill. (eds). Reinventing Film Studies. London: Arnold. <http://web.mit.edu/cms/People/henry3/vampkiss.html>. Accessed: 22 November 2007.
- Jensen, KB. *et al.* (ed) 1982. A Handbook of Media Communication Research. London: Routledge.
- Jensen, KB. 1988. "Answering the Question: What is Reception Analysis?". Nordicom Review. 9(1): 3-5.
- Johnson, R. 1983. What is Cultural Studies Anyway? Stencilled occasional paper no 74, University of Birmingham.
- Johnston, C. 1977. "Myths of Women in the Cinema" in K. Kay and G. Peary. (ed) Women and the Cinema: A Critical Anthology. pp 407-411. New York: EP Dutton.
- Juma. P. 2009. "Thirst persists for university degrees". The Daily Nation. December 29 2009.

- Kaarsholm, P. and James, D. 2000. "Popular culture and democracy in some southern contexts: an introduction". Journal of Southern African Studies. 26(2): 189-208. London: LSE Research Online. <http://www.eprints.lse.ac.uk/archive/00000792>. Accessed: 7 November 2008
- Kageni, B. 2008. "A taste of how things could be." The Standard. October 4 2008.
- Kaminsky, SM. and Mahan, JH. 1985. "Genre and Order". American Television Genres. Chicago: Nelson Hall.
- Kaminsky, SM. and Mahan, JH. 1985. "Television Soap Opera: Incest, Bigamy, and Fatal Diseases". American Television Genres. Chicago: Nelson Hall.
- Kaminsky, SM. and Mahan, JH. 1985. "What is the critical task?" American Television Genres. Chicago: Nelson Hall.
- Kanogo, T. 2005. African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900-1950. Nairobi: East African Educational.
- Kanter, RM. 1977. Men and women of the corporation. New York: Basics.
- Kanyoro, MRA. 1991. "The politics of the English language in Kenya and Tanzania" in J Cheshire. (ed) English around the world: socio economic perspectives. pp 402-419. Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- Karen, W. 2007. "Alejandro: No woman has ever broken my heart in real life". The Sunday Nation. 29 April 2007.
- Kariuki, J. 2001. "Kenya moves to limit foreign presence in TV". The East African. July 9 2001. <http://www.nationaudio.com/News/EastAfrican/16072001/Regional/Regional24.html>. Accessed: 18 December 2007
- Karner, C. 2007. Ethnicity and Everyday Life. London: Routledge.
- Kavulya, JM. 2003. "Challenges facing information literacy efforts in Kenya: a case study of selected university libraries in Kenya". Library Management. 24(4-5): 216-222.
- Kent, S. 1985. "The Effects of Television Viewing". Television: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. III: 131-146. London: Routledge.
- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. 2007. Basic Report: Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey 2005/06 (August 2007) (Revised Edition). Nairobi: Regal.
- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. 2008. Economic Survey 2008. Nairobi: Government Printer.
- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. 2008. Statistical Abstract 2008. Nairobi: Government Printer.
- Kiboro, W. 1997. "The Challenges of Running an Independent and Financially Successful Newspaper Business in Africa". Paris: World Association of Newspapers.
- La Pastina, AC. 2005. "Audience Ethnographies: A Media Engagement Approach". Global Media Journal. 1(6). <http://lass.calumet.purdue.edu/cca/gmj/sp05/gmj-sp05-lapastina.htm>. Accessed: 22 June 2007
- La Pastina, CA., Rego, CM. and Straubhaar, JD. 2003. "The centrality of telenovelas in Latin America's everyday life: Past tendencies, current knowledge, and future research". Global Media Journal. 2(2). <http://lass.calumet.purdue.edu/cca/gmj/sp03/gmj-sp03-lapastina-rego-straubhaar.htm>. Accessed: 23 October 2007
- Laswell, HD. 1948. "The structure and function of communication in society" in L. Bryson (ed) The Communication of Ideas. pp 37-51. New York: Harper Row.
- Leal, OF. 1990. "Popular Taste and Erudite Repertoire". Television: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. III: 182-191. London: Routledge.
- Leavis, FR. and Thompson, D. 1933. Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Lemish, D., Drotner, K., Liebes, T., Maigret, E. and Staid, G. 1998. "Global culture in practice: A look at children and adolescents" in Communication. 13(4): 539-556.
- Levy, MR., Windahl, S. 1984. "Audience Activity and Gratifications". Television: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. IV: 1-18. London: Routledge.

- Liebes, T. 1984. "Ethnocriticism: Israelis of Moroccan Ethnicity Negotiate the Meaning of Dallas" Studies in Visual Communication. 5(4): 277-292.
- Liebes, T. and Katz, E. 1993. The Export of Meaning: Cross Cultural Readings of Dallas. Cambridge: Polity.
- Lindlof, TR. 1995. "Introduction to Qualitative Communication Studies". Qualitative Communication Research Studies. London: Sage.
- Livingstone, S. 1990. Making Sense of Television: The Psychology of Audience Interpretation. London: Routledge.
- Livingstone, S. 1998. Making Sense of Television. London: Routledge.
- Lovell, T. 1981. "Ideology and Coronation Street" in R. Dyer, C. Geraghty, M. Jordan, T. Lovell, R. Paterson and J. Stewart. (eds) Coronation Street. pp 40-52. London: British Film Institute.
- Lovell, T. 1990. "Landscapes and stories in 1960's British realism". Screen. 37(4): 357-376.
- Lukalo, FK. "Consuming my loyalty: Youth, popular culture and gender contestations in Kenya". Muziki. 3(1): 97-113.
- Lull, J. 1990. Inside Family Viewing: ethnographic research on television's audience. New York: Routledge.
- Lull, J. 1991. China Turned On: Television, Reform, and Resistance. London: Routledge.
- Lunt, P. 1996. "Rethinking the Focus Group in Media and Communications Research". Journal of Communication. 46(2): 79-98.
- Lyotard, J. 1984. "The Postmodern Condition: A report on knowledge". Manchester: Manchester University.
- Machado-Borges, T. 2006. "Going with the Flow: Ethnography & Dialogism in the Reception of Brazilian Telenovelas". Particip@tions 3(2).. [http://www.participations.org/volume%203/issue%20%20-%20special/3\\_02\\_machado-borges.htm](http://www.participations.org/volume%203/issue%20%20-%20special/3_02_machado-borges.htm). Accessed: 23 October 2006.
- Machor, JL. and Goldstein, P. (ed) 2001. Reception Study: From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies. Routledge: New York.
- Maile, S. 1999. "Intermanagerial rivalries, organizational restructuring and the transformation of management masculinities" in S. Whitehead and R. Moodley. (eds) Transforming Managers: Gendering Change in the Public Sector. pp 145-165. London: UCL.
- Martin-Barbero, J. 1999. Interview with Dr. Jesús Martín-Barbero (May 1999). Communication Initiative Site. <http://www.comminit.com/en/node/149538>. Accessed: 16 November 2007.
- Martin-Barbero, J. 2006. "A Latin American perspective on communication/cultural mediation". Global Media and Communication. 2(3): 279-297. <http://gmc.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/2/3/279>. Accessed: 14 November 2007.
- Martin-Barbero, J., Fox, E. and White, RA. 1993. Communication, Culture and Hegemony: From the Media to Mediations. London: Sage.
- Martin-Barbero, J. and Janer, Z. 2000. "Transformations in the Map: Identities and Culture Industries". Latin American Perspectives: Politics, Culture, and Postmodernism. 27(4): 27-48. <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0094-582X%28200007%2927%3A4%3C27%3A%2F%3E20.CO%3B2-N>. Accessed: 14 November 2007
- Mattleart, A. 1994. Mapping world communication. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.
- Maxwell, JA. 1992. "Understanding and Validity in Qualitative Research". Harvard Educational Review. 62(3): 279-300.
- McCarthy, A. 2001. "Realism and Soap Opera" in G. Creeber (ed). The Television Genre Book. pp 47-60. London: British Film Institute.
- McGeehan, P and Anderson, J. 2005. "Chairman of TV Azteca Is Charged With Fraud". The New York Times. <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/05/business/media/05azteca.html?r=1&oref=slogin>. Accessed: 21 January 2008.
- Media Matters. 2005. "Research". <http://journalism.cf.ac.uk/2005/MAJS/sjore/research1.html>. Accessed: 20 June 2005.

- Meilink, HA. 1978. "Some Economic Interpretations of Migration" in WMJ. van Binsbergen and HA. Meilink (eds). Migration and the Transformation of Modern African Society. pp 51-66. Afrika-Studiecentrum: Leiden.
- Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. 2009. Imperialism. <http://www.merriam-webster.com>. Accessed: 2 February 2009.
- Miller, D. 1992. "The Young and the Restless in Trinidad: A Case of the Local and the Global in Mass Consumption" in R. Silverstone and E. Hirsch. (eds). Consuming Technologies: Media Information in Domestic Spaces. pp 163-182. London: Routledge.
- Moore, S. 1993. Interpreting Audiences: The Ethnography of a Media Consumption. London: Sage.
- Moran, A. 1998. "Television Format Adaptation and National Identity". Copycat Television: Globalisation, Program Formats and Cultural Identity. Luton: University of Luton.
- Morgan, WTW. 1967. Nairobi: City and Region. London: Oxford.
- Morley, D. 1980. The 'Nationwide' Audience: Structure and Decoding. London: British Film Institute.
- Morley, D. 1986. Family Television: Cultural Power and Domestic Leisure. London: British Film Institute.
- Morley, D. 1992. "Towards an ethnography of the television audience". Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies. London: Routledge.
- Morley, D. 1994. "Postmodernism: The Highest Stage of Cultural Imperialism" in M. Perryman. (ed) Altered States: Postmodernism, Politics, Culture. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Muganda, C. 2008. "Local productions take TV prime time by storm". Lifestyle magazine in The Sunday Nation. November 2 2008.
- Mugonyi, D. 2003. "New Law could hurt TV stations". The Daily Nation. August 10 2003.
- Mulvey, L. 1977. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in K. Kay, G. Peary (ed) Women and the Cinema: A Critical Anthology. pp 412-428. New York: EP Dutton.
- Mumford, LS. 1998. "Feminist Theory and Television Studies". Television: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. II: 83-101. London: Routledge.
- Mungai, B. 2005. "Riding the wave of romance". The Daily Nation. July 30 2005.
- Muraro, H. 1987. Invasion, Cultural, Economia y Comunicacion. Buenos Aires: Legasa.
- Murungi, MM. 2007. The Kenya Communications Amendment Bill. May 28, 2007. [http://www.kenyalaw.org/Downloads\\_Other/Kenya%20Communications%20Amendment%20Bill%202007.pdf](http://www.kenyalaw.org/Downloads_Other/Kenya%20Communications%20Amendment%20Bill%202007.pdf). Accessed: 2 February 2009.
- Musila, GA. 2005. "Age, Power and Sex in Modern Kenya: A Tale of Two Marriages". Social Identities. 11(2): 113-129.
- Muteshi, J. 2009. "What about re-negotiating masculinity?". The Sunday Standard. March 8 2009.
- Mutunga, K. 2000. "Addicted to soap operas". The Daily Nation. September 27 2000.
- Mutunga, K. 2004. "No Classics please; Give us 'Days of Our Lives'". The East African. February 2 2004. <http://www.nationaudio.com/News/EastAfrican/02022004/Features/PA0202200492.html>. Accessed: 18 December 2007.
- Mutunga, K. 2006. "Local soap operas back with a bang." The Daily Nation. January 21 2006.
- Mutunga, K. 2007. "Mexican Soaps glue Kenyans to screens". The Daily Nation. February 17 2007.
- Mwaniki, P. 2008. The Saturday Nation. September 20 2008.
- Nariman, HN. 1993. "Formulation of the Entertainment-Education Strategy for Development Communication in Mexico". Soap Operas for Social Change: Toward a Methodology for Entertainment-Education Television. Connecticut: Praeger.
- Nayar, KE. 2004. The Sikh Diaspora in Vancouver: Three Generations Amid Tradition, Modernity, and Multiculturalism. Toronto: University of Toronto.
- Newbold, C. 1995. "The media effects tradition" in O. Boyd-Barrett and C. Newbold. (eds) 1995. Approaches to Media: A Reader. p 118-123. London: Arnold.

- Ngwiri, M. 2003. "Local content? What local content?". *The Sunday Nation*. August 17, 2003. <http://www.nationaudio.com/News/DailyNation/17082003/Comment/Comment1708200311.html>. Accessed: 18 December 2007.
- Nightingale, V. 2003. "The Cultural Revolution in Audience Research" in AN. Valdivia (ed) *A Companion to Media Studies*. pp 253-279. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Njogu, K. 2003. "Soap opera summit comes to Kenya." *The Standard*. June 1 2003.
- Noh, S. 2007. "Intersecting Gender and Race in Globalization: Beyond the Evolution from Cultural Imperialism to Cultural Hybridity". *Global Media Journal*. 6(10). <http://lass.calumet.purdue.edu/cca/gmj/sp07/graduate/gmj-sp07-grad-noh.htm>. Accessed: 2 February 2007.
- NTV. 2009. "Media Owners: self-regulation is the only way in democracy". January 6 2009. [http://www.cck.go.ke/about\\_cck/](http://www.cck.go.ke/about_cck/). Accessed: 2 February 2009.
- Nyairo, J. 2005. "'Modify': Jua Kali as a Metaphor for Africa's Urban Ethnicities and Cultures". First AEGIS (Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies) conference, SOAS.
- Nyairo, J. and Ogude, J. 2003. "Specificities: Popular Music and the Negotiation of Contemporary Kenyan Identity: The example of Nairobi City Ensemble". *Social Identities*. 9(3): 373-382.
- Nyugen, H. 2004. "Review: Researching Audiences" *Canadian Journal of Communication*. 29(3&4): 439-440. <http://www.cjc-online.ca/viewarticle.php?id=942&layout=html>. Accessed: 19 November 2007.
- O'Shea, CM. 2005. "Making meaning, making a home : students watching Generations". Masters thesis, Rhodes University.
- Ochieng', WR. 1990. *Themes in Kenyan History*. Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya.
- Ogola, G. 2005. "Popular Culture and Politics: Whispers and the 'Dramaturgy of Power' in Kenya". *Social Identities*. 11(2): 147-160.
- Ohito, D. 2009. "Raw deal for politicians". *The Sunday Standard*. March 8 2009.
- Olima, IWHA. 2001. "The Dynamics and Implications of Sustaining Urban Spatial Segregation in Kenya – Experiences from Nairobi Metropolis". A Paper Prepared and Presented at the International Seminar on Segregation in the City held at Lincoln Institute of Land Policy in Cambridge, MA, USA, July 25-28, 2001.
- Oliveira, OS. 1990. "Brazilian Soaps Outshine Hollywood: Is Cultural Imperialism Fading Out?" in K. Nordenstreng and H. Schiller (eds) *Beyond National Sovereignty: International Communication in the 1990s*. pp 116-31. Norwood: Ablex.
- Ombara, O. 2006. "Soap opera: the fairest of them all". *The Saturday Standard*. June 17 2006.
- Overton, J. 1987. "The colonial state and spatial differentiation: Kenya, 1895–1920". *Journal of Historical Geography*. 13(3): 267-282.
- Owuor, SO. 2006. "Bridging the urban-rural divide Multi-spatial livelihoods in Nakuru town, Kenya". *African Studies Centre*. <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/4637>. Accessed: 7 November 2008.
- Pal, F. "The Novel of the Future: Is it the Telenovel?" <http://www.filmkultura.hu/regi/articles/essays/telenove.en.html>. Accessed: 20 June 2005.
- Pala, O. 2009. "The henpecked generation". Saturday Magazine in *The Saturday Nation*. March 14 2009.
- Parameswaran, RE. 2003. "Resuscitating Feminist Audience Studies: Revisiting the Politics of Representation and Resistance" in AN. Valdivia (ed) *A Companion to Media Studies*. pp 311-336. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Paul, J. and Kauffman, BJ. 1995. "Missing Persons: Working Class Women and the Movies, 1940-1990". *Feminism, Multiculturalism and the Media: Global Diversities*. Sage: Thousand Oaks.
- Phiri, D. 2006. "An Investigation into the popularity of Nigerian movies in Zambia: a reception study of Lusaka viewers". Masters Thesis. Rhodes University.

- Pino, JC. 1997. "Teaching the History of Race in Latin America." American Historical Association. <http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/1997/9710/9710tec.cfm>. Accessed: 9 February 2009.
- Pitout, M. 1998. "Reception Analysis: a qualitative investigation of the parasocial and social dimensions of soap opera viewing". Communicatio. 25(2): 65-82.
- Prazak, M. 1999. 'We're on the run': ideas of progress amongst adolescents in rural Kenya. Journal of African Cultural Studies. 12(1): 93-110.
- Press, AL. 1990. "Class, gender and the Female Viewer: Women's Responses to Dynasty" in ME. Brown (ed). Television and Women's Culture: The Politics of the Popular. pp 144-157. London: Sage.
- Radway, J. 1987. Reading the Romance. London: Verso.
- Radway, J. 1987. "Reading 'Reading the Romance'" in O. Boyd-Barrett and C. Newbold. (eds) 1995. Approaches to Media: A Reader. pp 512-517. London: Arnold.
- Rajagopal, A. 1996. "Mediating Modernity". Television: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. I: 308-336. London: Routledge.
- Ray, L. 2007. Globalisation and everyday life. London: Routledge.
- Reeves, G. 1993. Communications and the 'Third World. London: Routledge.
- Rehal, M. 2007. "Addicted to soap operas". The Saturday Nation. March 17 2007.
- Report of the Task Force for the Review of Laws Relating to Women, Nairobi, 1998.
- Republic of Kenya. 2000. Economic Survey 2000. Nairobi: Government Printer.
- Rheault, M. and Tortora, B. 2008. "In Kenya, Most Ethnic Groups Distrust 2007 Election: Trust in Electoral Commission plunged 36 points between 2006 and 2008". Gallup. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/111622/kenya-most-ethnic-groups-distrust-2007-election.aspx>. Accessed: 17 June 2009.
- Richardson, D. (ed) 1994a. "Communication, Culture and Hegemony: From the Media to the Mediations" by J. Martin-Barbero. E. Fox, RA. White. Canadian Journal of Communication. 19(3). <http://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/837/743>. Accessed: 6 June 2009.
- Richardson, V. 1999b. "Kenya Media Report". <http://journ.ru.ac.za/amd/kenya.htm>. Accessed: 18 December 2007.
- Rigby, P. 1989. "Ideology, Religion, and Iparakuyo-Maasai Resistance to Capitalist Penetration". Canadian Journal of African. 23(3): 416-440. <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0008-3968%281989%2923%3A3%3C416%3AIRAIRT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-3>. Accessed: 29 November 2007.
- Robertson, RC. 1994. "Globalisation or Glocalisation". The Journal of International Communication. 1(1): 33-52.
- Robins, K. and Aksoy, A. 2005. "Whoever looks always finds: Transnational viewing and knowledge -experience" in JK. Chalaby (ed) Transnational Television Worldwide: Towards a New Media Order. pp 14-42. London: IB Tauris.
- Rogers, EM. and Antola, L. 1985. "Telenovelas: A Latin American Success Story". Journal of Communication. 35(4): 24-36.
- Rosengren, KE. and Windahl, S. 1972. "Mass media consumption as a functional alternative" in D. McQuail (ed) Sociology of Mass Communications. pp 166-194. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Ruby, J. 1995. "The Viewer Viewed: The Reception of Ethnographic Films" in PI Crawford and SB Hafsteinsson (eds) The Construction of the Viewer. pp 193-206. Hojberg: Intervention. <http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/ruby/viewer.html>. Accessed: 22 November 2007.
- Saicedo, RN. 1971. "What leads to Modernisation?" The Journal of Modern African Studies. 9(4): 626-33.
- Schiller, H. 1976. Communication and Cultural Domination. New York: International Arts and Science.

- Schiller, H. 1991. "Not yet the post-imperialist era". Critical Studies in Mass Communication. 8: 13-28.
- Schiller, HI. "Information Inequality". An interview by Lovink, G. <http://www.heise.de/tp/r4/artikel/8/8018/1.html>. Accessed: 23 October 2007. (Herbert I. Schiller, *Information Inequality, The deepening social crisis in America*, Routledge, New York/London, 1996)
- Schiller, HI. 1979. "Transnational media and National Development", in K. Nordenstreng and HI. Schiller (eds) National Sovereignty and International Communication. pp 21-32. New Jersey: Ablex.
- Schlefer, J. "Global Must-See TV". January 4, 2004. [http://www.boston.com/news/globe/magazine/articles/2004/01/04/global\\_must\\_see\\_tv/](http://www.boston.com/news/globe/magazine/articles/2004/01/04/global_must_see_tv/). Accessed: 21 January 2008.
- Shannon, C. and Weaver, W. 1949. The Mathematical Theory of Communication. Urbana: University of Illinois.
- Shaw, CM. 1995. Colonial Inscriptions: Race, Sex and Class in Kenya. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.
- Shils, E. 1961. "Mass society and its culture" in O. Boyd-Barrett and C. Newbold. (eds) 1995. Approaches to Media: A Reader. pp 81-86. London: Arnold.
- Silverstone, R. 1990. "Television and Everyday Life: Towards an Anthropology of the Television Audience" in M. Ferguson. (ed) Public Communication: The New Imperatives. pp 173-89. London: Sage.
- Sinclair, J. and Turner, G. (ed) 2004. Contemporary World Television. London: British Film Institute.
- Sinclair, J. 1996. "Mexico, Brazil and the Latin World" in J. Sinclair, E. Jacka, and S. Cunningham (eds) New Patterns in Global Television. pp 33-66. New York: Oxford University.
- Sinclair, J. 1999. Latin American television: A global view. Oxford: Oxford University.
- Sinclair, J. 2004. "Latin American and Spanish Television" in J. Sinclair and G. Turner. (eds) Contemporary World Television. pp 87-89. London: British Film Institute.
- Sinclair, J. 2005. "International Television Channels in the Latin American Audiovisual Space" in JK. Chalaby. (ed) Transnational Television Worldwide: Towards a New Media Order. pp 196-215. London: IB Tauris.
- Singhal, A. and Rogers, EM. 1999. Entertainment-Education: A Communication Strategy for Social Change. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: New Jersey.
- Skovmand, M. and Schroder, KC. 1992. (eds) Media Cultures: Reappraising Transnational Media. London: Routledge.
- Smythe, D. 1981. Dependency Road: Capitalism, Communication, Culture, and Canada. New York: Ablex.
- Sobania, N. 2003. Culture and Customs of Kenya. Westport: Greenwood.
- Soja, EW. 1968. The Geography of Modernisation in Kenya: A Spatial Analysis of Social, Economic and Political Change. Syracuse: Syracuse University.
- Soong, R. 1999. "Racial Classifications in Latin America." <http://www.zonalatina.com/Zldata55.htm>. Accessed: 9 February 2009.
- Soong, R. 1999. "Telenovelas in Latin America". <http://www.zonalatina.com/Zldata70.htm>. Accessed: 21 June 2005.
- Soong, R. 2001. "Telenovela Fantasies". <http://www.zonalatina.com/Zldata211.htm>. Accessed: 21 June 2005.
- Sousa, H. 1997. "Crossing the Atlantic: Globo's Wager in Portugal". Paper presented at the International Association for Mass Communication Research. Oaxaca, Mexico. <http://bocc.ubi.pt/pag/sousa-helena-globo-wager-mexico.html>. Accessed: 21 June 2005.
- Sousa, H. 1998. "The re-export of the US commercial television model Time-Life/Globo/SIC: Replicating Business Strategies?". <http://www.bocc.ubi.pt/pag/sousa-helena-globo-sic.html>. Accessed: 6 June 2009.

- Spitulnik, D. 1993. "Anthropology and Mass Media". *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 22: 293-315.
- Spronk, R. 2007. "The young and the ambitious in Nairobi: Sexuality and emerging middle class self-definitions". <http://www.ascleiden.nl/Pdf/paperspronk.pdf>. Accessed: 7 November 2008.
- Standard Chartered. 2008. Diva Club Account. <http://www.standardchartered.com/ke/personal-banking/deposits/current-accounts/diva/en/>. Accessed: 2 February 2009.
- State of the Art. <http://www.npi.ucla.edu/qualquant/stateart.htm>. Accessed: 14 December 2005
- Steadman Group. 2007. <http://www.steadman-group.com>. Accessed: 22 June 2007.
- Storey, J. 1993. "Culturalism". *An Introductory Guide to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Storey, J. 1999. "Cultural Consumption as Manipulation". *Cultural Studies in Practice: Cultural Consumption and Everyday Life*. London: Arnold.
- Straubhaar, JD. 1984. "Brazilian Television. The Decline of American Influence". *Communication Research*. 11(2): 221-40.
- Straubhaar, JD. 1991. "Beyond Media Imperialism: Asymmetrical Interdependence and cultural proximity". *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*. 8: 39-59.
- Straubhaar, JD. 2003. "Choosing national TV: Cultural capital, language, and cultural proximity in Brazil" in MG Elasmr. (ed) *The impact of international television: A paradigm shift*. pp 77-110. London: LEA.
- Straubhaar, JD. 2004. "Brazilian and Portuguese Television" in J. Sinclair and G. Turner (ed) *Contemporary World Television*. pp 90-92. London: British Film Institute.
- Straubhaar, JD. 2005. "Global Television and Multiple Layers of Identity". *Flow TV*. <http://flowtv.org/?p=450>. Accessed: 19 November 2007.
- Straubhaar, JD. 2007. "Multiple Proximities between Television Genres and Audiences". *World television: From global to local*. London: Sage.
- Strelitz, L. 2001. "Global media/ local meanings". *Communicatio*. 27(2): 49-56.
- Strelitz, L. 2005. *Mixed Reception: South African Youth and their experience of Global Media*. Pretoria: Unisa.
- Strelitz, LN. 2000. "Approaches to understanding the relationship between texts and audiences". *Communication*. 26(2): 37-61.
- Sullivan, C. 1999. "Kenya's Great Female Hope: Charity Ngilu". <http://www.geocities.com/Wellesley/3321/win19c.htm>. Accessed: 28 June 2009.
- Suter, EA. 2000. "Focus Groups in Ethnography of Communication: Expanding Topics of Inquiry Beyond Participant Observation." <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR5-1/suter.html>. Accessed: 23 November 2007.
- Sutter, M. 2001. "Telenovelas still simmer: Storytelling, prod'n values, local tastes have caused the genre to evolve". <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117791725.html?categoryid=14&cs=1>. Accessed: 21 January 2008.
- Swainson, N. 1978. "State and Economy in Post-Colonial Kenya, 1963-1978". *Canadian Journal of African Studies*. 12(3): 357-381. <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0008-3968%281978%2912%3A3%3C357%3ASAEIPK%3E2.0.CO%3B2-S>. Accessed: November 29 2007.
- Tate, SA. 2005. *Black Skins, Black Masks*. Hants: Ashgate.
- Terre Blanche, M. and Durrheim, K. 1999. "Histories of the present: social science research in context" in M. Terre Blanche and K. Durrheim. (eds) *Research in Practice: Applied Methods for the Social Sciences*. pp 1-16. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.
- Thompson, EP. 1963. *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York: Vintage.
- Thompson, J. 1995. "Self and Experience in a Mediated World" *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*. Cambridge: Polity.

- Thompson, JB. 1988. "Mass communication and modern culture: contribution to a critical theory of ideology" in O. Boyd-Barrett and C. Newbold. (eds) 1995. Approaches to Media: A Reader. pp 54-65. London: Arnold.
- Thompson, JB. 1990. "The concept of culture". Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication. Cambridge: Polity.
- Thompson, JB. 1995. The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media. Cambridge: Polity.
- Thornham, S. 2007. Women, Feminism and the Media. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University.
- Time Magazine. 1997. "Breaking Taboos". Latin American Edition. <http://www.comminit.com/trends/ctsglobal/sld-2085.html>. Accessed: 20 June 2005.
- Tomlinson, J. 1991. Cultural Imperialism: A Critical Introduction. London: Continuum.
- Tomlinson, J. 1991. Cultural Imperialism. London: Pinter.
- Torossian, G. 1999. "Television And Audience: Cultural Proximity". <http://www.ypc.am/Old/English/Colleagues/pressclub/05.1999/19-22.htm>. Accessed: 19 November 2007.
- Trepte, S. 2003. "The Intercultural Perspective: Cultural Proximity as a Key Factor of Television Success". Panel Title: Predicting the Success of TV Programs – An Interdisciplinary Approach. Paper presented at ICA conference. San Diego, USA. June 23 – 27, 2003.
- Trinta, AR. 1997. "News from Home: A study of Realism and Melodrama in Brazilian Telenovelas" in C. Geraghty and D. Lusted (eds) The Television Studies Book. pp 278-285. London: Arnold.
- Tufte, T. 2000. Living with the Rubbish Queen: Telenovelas, Culture and Modernity in Brazil. Luton: University of Luton.
- Tufte, T. 2001. "The Telenovela" in G. Creeber (ed) The Television Genre Book. pp 57-60. London: British Film Institute.
- Tufte, T. 2002. "Soap Operas and Sense-Making: Mediations and Audience Ethnography". [http://webzone.k3.mah.se/projects/comdev04/frame/Tufte\\_soap\\_operas.pdf](http://webzone.k3.mah.se/projects/comdev04/frame/Tufte_soap_operas.pdf). Accessed: 22 June 2007.
- Tulloch, J. 2001. "Soap Operas and their Audiences" in G. Creeber (ed) The Television Genre Book. pp 55-57. London: British Film Institute.
- Turkstra, J. and Raitelhuber, M. 2004. "Urban Slum Monitoring". <http://gis.esri.com/library/userconf/proc04/docs/pap1667.pdf>. Accessed: 11 February 2009.
- TV Mas Novelas. 2005. "Mexico: The powerful Televisa". Latin America. Telenovelas, Fictions and Formats. TVMAS Novelas 2005: Third World Summit of the Telenovela Industry. Spain 2005. [http://www.onlytelenovelas.com/Only\\_4/5\\_5\\_Telenovela\\_lat.php](http://www.onlytelenovelas.com/Only_4/5_5_Telenovela_lat.php). Accessed: 21 January 2008.
- TV Mas Novelas. 2005. "Shocked by Globo's productions". Latin America. Telenovelas, Fictions and Formats. TVMAS Novelas 2005: Third World Summit of the Telenovela Industry. Spain 2005. [http://www.onlytelenovelas.com/Only\\_4/5\\_4\\_Telenovela\\_lat.php](http://www.onlytelenovelas.com/Only_4/5_4_Telenovela_lat.php). Accessed: 21 January 2008.
- TV Mas Novelas 2005. "TV Azteca, a globally expanding giant". [http://www.onlytelenovelas.com/Only\\_4/5\\_6\\_Telenovela\\_lat.php](http://www.onlytelenovelas.com/Only_4/5_6_Telenovela_lat.php). Accessed: 21 January 2008.
- Tworek, A. 2009. "What makes primetime soap operas different from day time soap operas?". Helium. <http://www.helium.com/items/691385-what-makes-primetime-soap-operas-different-from-day-time-soap-operas>. Accessed: 4 July 2009.
- UNESCO. 2004. Women and Cultural Policies. Material Media: Artefacts from a Digital Age. [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=11574&URL\\_DO=DO\\_PRINTPAGE&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=11574&URL_DO=DO_PRINTPAGE&URL_SECTION=201.html). Accessed: 21 June 2005.
- United States Department of State. 2008. Report on International Religious Freedom - Kenya. <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/48d5cbb350.html>. Accessed: 17 June 2009.
- Valdivia, N. 2003. "Salsa as Popular Culture: Ethnic Audiences Constructing an Identity" in AN. Valdivia (ed) A Companion to Media Studies. pp 399-418. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Von Werlhof, C. 2007. "Capitalist Patriarchy and the Negation of Matriarchy: The Struggle for a 'Deep' Alternative" in G. Vaughan (ed) Women and the Gift Economy. A Radically Different World View is Possible. pp 139-153. Toronto: Inanna. <http://emanzipationhumanum.de/downloads/capitalistpatriarchy.pdf>. Accessed: 20 January 2010.
- Wa Mungai, M. and Samper, DA. 2006. "'No Mercy, No Remorse': Personal Experience Narratives about Public Passenger Transportation in Nairobi, Kenya". Africa Today. 52(3): 51-81.
- Wagner, J. 1993. "Ignorance in educational research: or how can you not know that?" Educational Researcher. 22(5): 15-23.
- Wahome, M. 2007. "In battle for viewers, TV looking to niches". Smart Company in The Daily Nation. April 3 2007.
- Wahome, W. 2007. "Soap operas". The Daily Nation. October 9 2007.
- Wandago, A. 2003. "We need more local content". Friday magazine in The Standard. September 5 2003.
- Wangalachi, AM. 2003. "Free Primary Education In Kenya: Key Components The Government Should Include". African Journal of Food, Agriculture, Nutrition and Development. 3(2). <http://www.ajfand.net/Issue-V-files/IssueV-Student%20section%20-%20Anne.htm>. Accessed: 5 February 2009.
- WDI. 2002. World Development Index. World Bank.
- White, LA. 2001. "Reconsidering cultural imperialism theory". Florida State University. <http://www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Spring01/white.html>. Accessed: 23 October 2007.
- Wikipedia. "Televisa". <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Televisa>. Accessed: 21 January 2008.
- Wikipedia. "TV Azteca". [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TV\\_Azteca](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TV_Azteca). Accessed: 21 January 2008.
- Wikipedia. "Culture of Kenya." [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture\\_of\\_Kenya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Kenya). Accessed: 22 June 2007.
- Wildermuth, N. 2002. "Negotiating a Glocalised Modernity: Images of the 'New' Indian Woman on Satellite Television" in G. Stald and T. Tufte (eds) Global Encounters: Media and Cultural Transformation. pp 195-215. Luton: University of Luton.
- Wilensky, HL. 1964. "Mass society and mass culture: interdependence or independence?" in O. Boyd-Barrett and C. Newbold. (eds) 1995. Approaches to Media: A Reader. pp 87-92. London: Arnold.
- Williams, R. 1983. Keywords. London: Fontana.
- Wimmer, R. and Dominick, J. 1991. "Qualitative Research Methods". Mass Media Research. Belmont: Udswoth.
- World Bank, The. 2005. African Development Indicators. Washington: World Bank.
- World Bank, The. 2006. African Development Indicators. Washington: World Bank.
- Zimmer, L. 1988 "'Tokenism and women in the workplace': The limits of gender-neutral theory". Social Problems. 35(1): 64-77.