Making meaning of reality television celebrities: the reception of *South African Idol* by young adults in Joza, Grahamstown

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By

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ABSTRACT

Reality television or "factual entertainment" is a hybrid of old television formats and factual programming in order to create a "new" entertaining show designed to draw the attention of audiences and increase viewership ratings. *South African Idol* is one popular local example. Adapted from the British programme *Pop Idol*, the show promises upward mobility for the young star who wins the competition. This show has become a subject of conversation amongst young people in South Africa who aspire to the "success" and "celebrity" status that is produced by participating on the show. This paper uses a Cultural Studies framework in order to examine the relationship between texts and audiences as an aspect of the "circuit of culture," with its interrelated moments of production, texts, consumption and lived experience. My research focuses on the text and audience "moments" of this circuit. Audience studies research suggests that we should situate television viewing and the meanings made of TV programs in the natural setting of the home, and that this setting should be taken seriously as a unit of analysis. This study therefore, seeks to understand the ways in which audiences make meaning of this television programme within the domestic context.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late mother Queen Puleng Elizabeth Khati Magade (1956-2016). You are dearly missed Mamofokeng, may the ancestors guide your ways so that you may continue to Rest in Peace. This is for you.

When darkness becomes a friend,

And sorrow is your appellation.

When you seem lost and unfound.

When the ground is shaken and your feet can't stand no more.

When you look back and all you see is how good it was,

But sadly your hands are too short to catch the memory of time.

It all becomes dull and numb,

That, is when the sun don't shine

When the sun don't shine.

Memories are all I have to refer back to.

Memories of you and your amorous voice.

I hear you speak, even in my dreams.

And I remember how sweet it was,

For you to touch my heart during times of doubts.

But now,

In my bed I lay, thoughtful indeed.

Wondering how it is there; wherever you are.

For I know, when the sun don't shine.

I'll always listen to your voice.

To guide me back to life again!

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Aims and objectives of the study

The study investigates the meanings that young adults of Joza Location in Grahamstown make from watching the *South African Idol* reality television show. It asks in what ways these meanings relate to the identity-building project of young township adults who may aspire to being upwardly mobile. It deals with the individuals' experiences of watching the show and the importance that they attach to the show's process of celebrification measured in a context marked by extreme inequality.

The research focuses on the interest that 'ordinary' young adults from Joza have towards the show, and what implication does their viewing, interpretation of the text and interaction with the show have on their everyday behaviour and identities. In my research, I aim to prove or disprove a claim made by Turner when he argues that the expansion of reality television has an influence on the everyday lives of the viewers and participants of the show (Turner, 2006).

Research questions

The study is asking what meanings do young people in Joza, Grahamstown make from watching the reality TV show *South African Idol*. It is seeks to ask whether or not the show offers these young people aspirations with which they can make sense of their lived experiences. And lastly, what are the implications that this show has on the identity building project of these young adults.

Rationale to the study

The reason I am interested in researching about the show

I became interested in *South African Idol* because of its popularity. Over the years since its inception in 2002, the show has become a well-known reality show, which identifies the country's new singing sensations. The show produces a new generation of celebrities, which the audience relates with on a different level due to the audience's involvement in crowning the winner. It is the show's long tradition to give its audience an opportunity in crowning the winner by means of voting. The audience's involvement in choosing the winner is one of the things that lead to the show's popularity. This popularity makes the show an interesting research focus. Though extensive research on pop culture is largely conducted in the UK and

USA, South Africa remains a place of interest as little or limited research being conducted in this sphere.

Due to its popularity, *South African Idol* has become one of the most talked about shows in South Africa, whether in social media platforms or in day-to-day conversations. The show brings people closer. I know that I like watching the show with my friends because it is much more interesting when you have people to analyse the show with. In addition, in some cases because the show is so popular, even those who do not have access to DSTV find other means to watch the show because they do not want to be left out since it is something that everyone talks about. Even on social media, those who follow a certain contestant become member of one clan when they like the Facebook pages of their favourite participants. This creates a group of people who share certain common interests and therefore talk about these interests in these spaces that are created online.

From experience, I know that on a typical Sunday evening, I would gather with my friends and some family members. It is in this setting and family oriented environment that we get to discuss various aspects of the show. What usually stands out for me is how my friends and my family would discuss the participants of the show. The conversations range from discussing which participants will be eliminated from the beginning because they do not appear likable. In other cases we would talk about who we thought would win based on their appearance and star quality. It is these conversations that got me interested in conducting research on how other people, who are also fans of the show, make meaning of the show and its contestants.

In some cases, people talk about how the quality of the show has increased and how much better the contestants are getting each year. One of the conversations that attracted social media in the last season was the introduction of a new judge in the panel of judges. People were keen to find out who this new judge would be and could not wait to watch the first episode of the season. Even the adverts that go out just before a new season is aired are created in a way that will attract the audience's attention. Phrases such as, "your Sunday TV experience will never be the same" are used in order to create a sense of urgency in the viewers' mind.

The show is also entertaining especially if you are a person who really loves music. The contestants get to compete with each other every week performing different songs from different artists in an attempt to win votes. As they do this, they must do it in style in order to

attract voters and thus it is interesting to watch people showing different sides and styles of themselves every week in trying to win votes. Guest artists are also invited on a weekly basis to come perform on the show in order to entertain both viewers who are watching the show live or watching from home.

The other interesting part of the show is the way which the contestants view the show. They view it as a life changing situation especially if you win the competition or you get picked up by well-known producers in the music industry. For those contestants to whom singing is the only means of survival, this is a situation of life and death and winning the show means everything to them. Nevertheless, though thousands of people go to audition for the show, at the end of it all there can only be one winner. So the show is thus a beacon of hope for the young, armature artists who are willing to do everything in their power in order to make sure that they win the competition.

My specific interest with this kind (DSTV) of viewing is in the ways in which viewers in these poor townships navigate and organise themselves in order to share the viewing space. It has become tradition in these townships that those who have DSTV connection invite or allows those who cannot afford the subscription to come and watch these interesting shows like *Idol*. The nature in which people converse about these kinds of shows leaves one with the "fear of missing out" (FOMO) as it is called in slang and social media. It is for this reason that viewers arrange a viewing space every Sunday in to be able to watch these most talked about television programs

The implications of the study and the subject position of the participants

The study leads to several implications. First, the phenomenon of participant viewing by young people in Joza location of Grahamstown, and the ways in which they interact with the show, provokes questions about the show's relationship to broader social trends, especially the value that is placed on upward mobility in a context of scare social and economic resources. And also what means they have to go through in order to negotiate their access to the media text. A majority of the youth in Joza are mostly black with a small percentage of coloured youth, and their daily struggle is the issue of unemployment amongst others.

Whilst theorists like Hartely and others link the rise of access to reality television with democracy, in this context of Joza there seems to be a negotiation pattern that by nature is not so democratic but rather represents the total opposite of democracy. Although it is true that

the rise in the interest of the ‘ordinary’ has opened up the ways of accessing popular media texts, the costs involved in doing so still exclude those who cannot afford to pay the cost of subscription, like the youth of Joza location. For these young adults, access that is deemed ‘democratic’ by Hartely et al. remains oppressive and exclusionary in our context, and is a highly negotiated process. To enjoy the pleasure of viewing *Idol*, young people often gather at a house that has DSTV in the area and plead for viewing pleasure.

So in essence, reality television shows, through their texts, are able to position and subjectively influence the everyday lives of their participants and viewers. These shows are usually scripted and viewed by audiences across for months at a time in a set of daily timeslot (Turner, 2006). Thus in this way, these reality television shows are not only received as live media events, but they are also embedded on the structures of the audiences’ everyday lives (Turner, 2006). I would also like to argue in this case that, this subject positioning is not evident in the audiences’ behaviour and construction of the identities alone, but the participants of the show themselves are also subjectively positioned in order to accept a certain notion of the ‘real’ and celebrity.

It is for this reason that I would like to argue that the subjective positioning that takes place on the show is not one-sided (from the viewer’s side only), but the participants are also subjectively positioned in order to think a certain way about what it means to be a celebrity.

Chapter One: The Broadcasting Context

Broadcasting in South Africa, *Idol*, youth in SA, audience ratings, Grahamstown

1.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the broadcasting context of the study. It focuses on the South African media context within which *South African Idol* is broadcast before moving on to examine the research context of Grahamstown, the small town in the Eastern Cape in which viewers encounter the show. It more specifically locates the study within the township of Joza and the socio-cultural and economic conditions that constitute the lived environment in which the viewers, who are the respondents of my study watch, talk about and mutually reflect on the show and its contestants.

The first section looks at the broad South African broadcasting context within which the show is produced. Here, I examine some of the critiques of broadcasting of the post-apartheid state in order to situate DSTV's M-net, the platform that produces the show and its structure as the first subscription television network in South Africa. This examination of the broader broadcasting context and of DSTV will enable me to examine the agenda setting of the network, and how it promotes some audiences while it simultaneously marginalises other audiences according to socio-economic factors. In this way the network not only just marginalises some identities, but at the same time, it is about the promotion of others. This forms the backdrop to the history of *South African Idol* as a reality television show, including the show's target audience and its ratings, which indicate its popularity amongst young adult viewers, visible on social media platforms such as Facebook and twitter (https://www.facebook.com/IdolsSA/?fref=ts; https://twitter.com/IdolsSA).

1.2 Media Context

In all societies, human beings engage in the production and exchange of information and symbolic content (Thompson, 1995). With the latest technological developments, the way in which media messages are produced has also transformed in a significant way (Thompson, 1995). In his argument, Thompson proposes an approach to the study of the media that is 'cultural'. This cultural approach is concerned both with the meaningful character of symbolic forms and with their social contextualisation. According to Thompson (1995),

communication media are concerned with the production, storage and circulation of materials, which are meaningful for the individuals who produce and receive them. Thompson further reminds us that, mediated communication is contextualised, and because the social context in which communications occurs is structured in various way, this has an impact on the kind of communication that occurs (Thompson, 1995).

In keeping with Thompson's position, I argue that it is easy to focus on the symbolic content of media messages and ignore the complex array of social conditions which underline the production and circulation of these messages (Thompson, 1995). My study of the meanings made by young people in Joza from watching *South African Idol* makes use of this approach. In this way, without ignoring the ideological implications of the symbolic forms of the show's messages, I seek to show how "mediated communication is an essential part of the broader contexts of social life" (Thompson, 1995), as the meaning that are made from these forms of mediated communication are interpreted in relation to the social, cultural and economic factors of the recipients.

1.3 South African broadcast media during apartheid

The history of broadcasting in South Africa reflects the national history within which it developed. Initially, the development of broadcast media in South Africa was largely shaped by the establishment and evolution of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) (Fourie, 2007; Tomaselli & Muller 1989). The SABC played a significant part in both constructing and supporting the governance structures of apartheid in South Africa. It primarily supported the then government's efforts to combat what were seen as the "revolutionary forces" ostensibly marshalled by the African National Congress (ANC) in exile during the apartheid regime (Teer-Tomaselli & Tomaselli, 2001, p. 124). It also played a significant role in the apartheid project of separate development and ethnicisiation of black South Africans (Teer-Tomaselli & Tomasellim 2001; Schuman, 2008). The apartheid attitude of 'separate development' was not confined to the political sphere, but extended to cultural matters, thereby contributing to the infusion of the arts with political meanings (Schuman, 2008).

The South African apartheid government was a capitalist state which exercised power and monopoly on the state functions and state institutions (Sparks, 2009). The obsession of the apartheid government to hold on to power led to its fear of introducing television in the country, even though other, Western, countries had introduced television decades earlier.

Television was viewed as a powerful tool that had the potential of destabilising political control through exposing the state's oppression of minority groups. This government was characterised by the fact that race and class were closely linked together with the dominant economic and political groups being more or less exclusively white (Louw, 2004).

As a result when television was introduced later in South Africa, the national broadcaster was a 'state' rather than a 'public' broadcaster, and was widely perceived as an extension of the National Party (NP) government (Sparks, 2009: 198). According to this apartheid logic, the establishment of the national broadcaster, the SABC, was 'originally conceived along racial divides' (Baker 1996: 219), and with the intention to serve as a propaganda machine for the apartheid government.

1.4 South African media and the transition to a new state

The post-apartheid SABC is marked by a great deal of transformation including its independence and inclusiveness (Sparks, 2009). However, it is still contestable whether the public broadcaster has succeeded in fulfilling this mandate. The public service broadcaster's role of providing a universal service of excellent programming while maintaining public legitimacy through an editorial independence from both the government of the day and commercial interests has proven to be difficult under the financial pressure that the SABC has undergone in recent years since its 'independence'. This 'universal' programming means that there should be a full range coverage of genres, from information to education and entertainment, for the widest possible audience and covering the most extensive geographical spread (Teer-Tomaselli, 1998).

Towards the end of the apartheid regime, as the country moved towards the transition to a democratic state, discussions took place between the apartheid government and the ANC. These discussions included the issue of transforming the South African broadcasting sector. The aim of these discussions was to make the broadcasting industry inclusive and to play a role in creating a new national identity. The broadcasting sector during this time was still white-owned. It is also during the end of the apartheid era that a few black television station were established, but with the majority still serving the white population group. It is at this point the broadcasting industry became more competitive at the same time that it left significant audiences marginalised. Prior to 1994, pay television subscription network(s) were established in order to attract and serve new audiences. Though the transition period promised to give marginalised groups a chance of ownership in media companies, the reality

was that these new opportunities were still being taken up by white elites. These networks, such as M-Net, were only available to a wealthy, overwhelmingly white, audience (Tomaselli 2002: 137). The contradiction is that, while claiming to open their service to the wider general audience, these networks continue to divide audiences along the lines of race and class in ways that further sediment the lingering apartheid media landscape.

The transmission to democracy was "contradictory", Sparks argues, insofar as the radical political objectives of the struggle period were juxtaposed by powerful and entrenched economic interests. The transition to democracy was characterised by two main factors. Firstly, by the negotiations between the white elite and the ANC and secondly, by the popular movements with radical concerns (Sparks, 2009: 199).

Unsurprisingly, these contradictions also shaped the evolution of the new state's media landscape. While white elites were largely complacent with the role that the media, particularly broadcasting, played during the apartheid era, more radical interests wanted significant transformation. The radicals also called for the autonomy of the public service broadcaster where the state has no say or control over the public broadcaster.

The autonomy and structure of the SABC was one of the issues that was reviewed between the white elites and those with radical agendas, due to its influence as a white propaganda machine and an institution which assisted the apartheid government to maintain power over the majority of black people. The SABC became a focus during this intense process of political negotiation (Sparks, 2009). In these debates, a wide range of views were articulated, including those who wanted a state controlled system, those who wanted to make it more responsive to communities, through to those wanting a commercial system (Barnett 1998). The stakeholders in the negotiations reached an agreement that it was necessary to re-establish an independent 'public service' broadcaster (Teer-Tomaselli 2004; Barnett 1998), arguing that the role of the broadcaster should be to unite all citizens irrespective of cultural and language differences amongst other segregators.

This expansion of audiences and their multiplicity of cultures and languages resulted in television being suggested as an effective platform 'to advance the self-development of all its peoples and to foster their pride in their own identity and culture' (Mersham in Fourie, 2007: 175).

1.5 Liberalisation of the media post-apartheid

At the same time that the public broadcaster was going through a transformation and gaining its independence, the state also implemented a policy of media liberalisation. Prior to its demise in 1994, the apartheid regime had transformed South Africa into a pariah state, largely disconnected from the global capital markets. After apartheid, the new South African broadcasting policymaking became underpinned by a 'nationalist-reconstructionist' project and an "expansionist-capitalist" agenda (Banda, 2003:190).

The demise of apartheid and the liberalization of South Africa's media market had far-reaching consequences for the composition of the media landscape. It notably resulted in the in-flow of foreign direct investment into the South African media market (Tomaselli, 2002). The movement of global capital and investment has not only been one-way – that is, into South Africa. There has also been a media investment out-flow from South Africa. Arguably, this demonstrates that an African media system could extend its reach into the Western money markets, with Naspers-controlled MultiChoice International listed on the Dutch stock exchange as well as on the USA's Nasdaq (Berger, 2001). It is for this reason that the South African broadcasting policy and regulatory model can be said to be "expansionist-capitalistic."

Fackson Banda argues that the "expansionist-capitalist" nature of post-apartheid South African media was shaped by not only by the influence of global capitalism and economic imperialism. Rather, national media policies must be viewed within the context of the local histories of internal media policy reform processes (Banda, 2006). He further states that South Africa offers two extreme cases that allow for a clear comparison of the process of media policy restructuring. First is that, media policy reform is an "actively negotiated response to local exigencies" and secondly, a response to "global political and economic tendencies" (Banda, 2006). It is for this reason I argue that these two simultaneous processes – the inadequate transformation of the national broadcaster and the monetisation of both public and private broadcasting – result in a media landscape that entrenches the apartheid divisions of race and class which are perpetuated by the intention to make profits over serving the public.

1.6 Post-apartheid broadcast media and national identity

Even though a number of communication media exist, by far visual media is known to have the greatest impact on the way viewers perceive the world around them (Khan, 2016). Hence, people are so enthusiastic and so willing to be connected to these new ways of viewing like DSTV. But the reality is that the costs continue to marginalise those who don't have over the ones that have.

The need for a public broadcasting service has characteristically been justified on two grounds. First, it must "protect the national identity and culture and secondly it must deal with the provision of information, education, and entertainment to those sectors of society which are economically non-profitable" (Teer-Tomaselli, 1998).

Nation building continues to be an overriding consideration, as is evidenced by the SABC's Guidelines for Programme Content. According to the South African Broadcast Corporation, its role in the new and multicultural disciplinary society was to ensure that diversity is reflected positively. As the public service broadcaster, the SABC vowed that its programmes will contribute to a sense of nation building and in addition, will not seek to disparage the beliefs systems of a specific cultural group (SABC, 1996b). The only thing that the public broadcaster should be concerned about is what is in the public interest and creating one national identity.

The need for the consolidation of national identity is keenly felt in developing countries, and the role of the mass media rightly has been foregrounded in this debate, as media provide the self-image of a society. It is for this reason that the medium of television is one of the most highly centralised institutions in modern society (Teer-Tomaselli, 1998; Fiske & Hartley 1978) for "its centralisation speaks to all members of a highly fragmented society" (Fiske & Hartley 1978, p. 86).

Broadcasting policy and legislation thus became a cultural site for ideologically dismantling the apartheid regime and reconstructing a new national identity based on the principles of truth, reconciliation, solidarity, diversity, plurality, democracy, and development - all of which seem to define the "new" South Africa (Banda, 2006). With the new legislation put in

place in 1994 to govern South Africa, policies that administered the media were also established. These legislations and policies opened South Africa's borders to an influx of foreign cultural products. The new legislation also allowed for foreign ownership of local media organizations (Duncan and Seleoane, 1998). As a result, although Black South Africans had been exposed to foreign media content during apartheid (Memani, 2017), the volume of this international programming increased enormously in the democratic era (Memani, 2017). The legislation also opened doors for media companies to be privately owned. Debates over ownership were not driven solely by the imperative to economically "transform" the media, but were closely linked to the kinds of content – and hence identities – that were validated in the new state. (Duncan, 2011). "In spite of various interventions by the state through promotion of transformation processes and BEE [Black Economic Empowerment], the majority of media in South Africa is still owned/ dominated by a few companies and individuals" (MDDA 2009). Indeed, it is still evident that in post 1994 South Africa, the media landscape, "has not transformed much in terms of ownership and control and is still majority owned and controlled by white shareholders" (MDDA, 2009).

Surveying media transformation in South Africa, the Tomasellis argue that while significant changes had taken place in the racial composition of media ownership, class continuity was also evident (Teer-Tomaselli and Tomaselli, 2001). Disputing this view, Guy Berger (2001) argued that the changes on media ownership between 1994 and 2000 were much more significant than the Tomasellis were willing to admit.

In order for us to understand ownership and funding mechanism, we need to also understand that media are capitalist in nature. The political economy of media organisations needs to be understood in order to understand the agenda setting of such media companies. Media organisations do not produce television shows like *Idol* in isolation. They produce them in a specific context and for a specific reason. It is therefore important to understand and interrogate the context before we understand the meanings that are made by the audiences from coming into contact with such media products.

1.7 Changes in media regulations in South Africa: Multichoice and M-Net

The deregulation of the broadcast media attracted international media business interests, mainly from South Africa. MultiChoice Africa obtained a licence to establish subscription Digital Satellite Television (DSTV). However, this was largely on government terms - while

MultiChoice Africa holds 70% of the shares in the new company, the state broadcaster holds 30% (Banda, 2006).

MultiChoice South Africa is a multinational company that claims to be a "leading" video entertainment and internet company. Like other multi-media empires, it spans large portions of the globe and exerts considerable economic, political and cultural power, particularly within Africa (Khan, 2016, Arsenault & Castells, 2008: 707). As a conglomerate, the MultiChoice Group operates under various brands, including: DSTV, M-Net, SuperSport, GOTV, DSTV Digital Media, DStv Media Sales and MWEB (http://www.multichoice.co.za/, 2016).

The contemporary processes of globalisation, digitisation, networking and cultural differentiation of the media has induced new business models (Arsenault & Castells, 2008: 707), resulting in companies like Multichoice and M-net often finding themselves following international trends of reinventing themselves in order to retain audiences.

In 2015 Multichoice made a deal with the SABC to expand the footprint of the public broadcaster by airing a 24-hour subscription news channel. This makes it difficult to differentiate between Multichoice and the SABC as they are both driven by need to make economic gains.

Multichoice has produced a wide variety of shows on it platforms which have become subjects of conversations amongst viewers. This content-producing company has the objective of creating content that people talk about. However it is problematic because the programming is biased towards the use of English as the language of communication. This trend of producing content in English has been criticised for being too American. The argument is that Multichoice through its platforms has normalised the English culture, what Orwell (1946) terms "the Englishness of culture". The dominant "idea of Englishness" that this content producing company sells to the viewers is that, in order to be able to watch the shows produced Multichoice, one must be able to understand and conversant in English, thus in the process accepting this idea as "common sense". People and social structures dominant in society construct their definition of reality through the manipulation of cultural symbols, leading others to accept the defined reality as 'common sense' a notion Gramsci (1971) explains as "cultural hegemony".

Two examples of such shows include *Our Perfect Wedding* and *Top Billing*. These are the only two wedding television reality programs broadcast in South Africa (Memani, 2017). *Top Billing Weddings* features weddings of celebrity couples from different racial groups while *Our Perfect Wedding* largely showcases the weddings of Black non-celebrities. *Our Perfect Wedding* is produced by Connect TV while *Top Billing Weddings* is an insert into a full lifestyle magazine show called *Top Billing* which is produced by Tswelopele Productions. Both these shows offer their respective audiences a certain kind of common sense on how to think about weddings. Though in some cases African traditional weddings are featured, it is important to note that even traditional weddings have been westernised. In essence this showcases the Westernised agenda setting of the production houses like which use DSTV and other platforms to produce these shows.

MultiChoice South Africa grew as the subscriber management arm, and it has continued the business of bringing its audience what it calls "world-class entertainment" (http://www.multichoice.co.za/, 2016). Yet, companies like these segregate their audiences in terms of who can and cannot pay or afford the monthly subscriptions, which they charge for their pay television channels. Their aim is not only to deliver this 'world class' entertainment but also to maintain economic and cultural power (Arsenault & Castells, 2008: 707).

In recent years, this network has prided itself for having spent its resources on local content. In 2016, it was reported that the network has spent R1, 7 billion on local content alone (Multichoice Social Report, 2016). This includes spending money and other resources in producing shows like *South African Idol*, amongst others, which are aired on M-Net, a network owned by media company Naspers. While this network prides itself on providing local content, much of this content is rooted in the West (Arsenault & Castells, 2008: 707). Local and regional media companies like M-net actively import and re-appropriate foreign products and formats while corporate transnational media organizations are pursuing local partners to deliver customized content to audiences (Arsenault & Castells, 2008: 708). The airing of shows like *South African Idol* on platforms like M-Net can be understood as a result of this constant adaptation and revamping of foreign television programmes with a local twist.

M-Net's primary focus is on local movies and award winning series; however, subscribers can also enjoy sports programmes, music programmes, children and teenagers' programmes, as well as a variety of local productions. On a daily basis, it offers content like Hollywood

movies and US and UK television series. M-Net broadcasts to over 1.5 million subscribers in 49 countries across Africa. In doing so, it claims to be aiming to be "Africa's story teller" (http://www.superbrands.com/za/pdfs/MNET.pdf, 2007), while positioning itself as the benchmark of the continent's local content industry. However, this quality comes at a price. Demographically, M-Net has identified its market as Living Standards Measures (LSM) 9 and 10: at-home singles, young couples, new parents, mature parents and "golden nests" (http://www.superbrands.com/za/pdfs/MNET.pdf, 2007). By doing so they serve only middle income and elite earners, leaving out the majority of South Africans, many of whom live in conditions of poverty and unemployment.

After restructuring, M-Net retained the role of domestic broadcaster/scheduler and continued as a provider of subscription TV in Africa and the adjacent islands, while Multi-Choice functioned as a distribution network, with control of the Subscriber Management Services (SMS) and Communications Technologies (ComTech) divisions as well as technology and program distribution in Africa and Europe. Multi-Choice International Holdings (MIH) initially provided subscriber management services to households subscribing to M-Net, BBC World Service TV, Canal Horizons, TV Portuguesa, Christian Network, Shalom TV, and Bop TV (Multi-Choice, 1994). Currently, the MultiChoice Group operates under various brands, including SuperSport and M-Net amongst others (Mutlichoice, 2017).

M-Net claims that part of the reason behind the split was the new political dispensation and investigations by the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) into broadcasting. M-Net and its diversification into Multi-Choice allows the company to function as a commercial company, not subject to the social obligations that might be imposed on M-Net as a broadcaster. In other words, the IBA has little legal recourse over a financial, management company which is the nature of Multi-Choice (Tager & Govender, 1994). By-passing the regulation of the IBA over the international operation, MIH has greater accessibility to the international capital market. This is because the company has increased its audience reach beyond Africa. It also depends on overseas productions that it airs for its South African market.

M-Net has no production infrastructure and, as a result, when it embarks on a local production, it enlists the services of outside production houses. M-Net justifies this outsourcing of content production as financially and creatively beneficial to the local film and television industry. The media production industry then benefits from this practice, as

commissioning work to outside companies creates work, income, and investor confidence in the industry, which in turn promotes prosperity. M-Net also asserts that the commissioning of productions to outside companies contributes "towards a vibrant and dynamic range of creative input that encourages growth, diversity and healthy competition within the industry" (Tager & Govender, 1994, p. 4). This fits its outsourcing and profit-driven neo-liberal economic model, a model which is operationalised within the framework of democracy (Harvey, 2005). In South Africa's case, the achievement of democracy "did not alter the enormous structural gap in wealth between the majority black and minority white populations. Indeed, it set in motion neoliberal policies that exacerbated class, race, and gender inequality" (Bond, 2004). Bond (2004) further escalates this view by painting a clear picture of the class and social divisions in South Africa. He argues that "South Africa has witnessed the replacement of racial apartheid with what is increasingly referred to as class apartheid: systemic underdevelopment and segregation of the oppressed majority through structured economic, political, legal, and cultural practices" (Bond, 2004).

The broader South African economy employs a neoliberal model of profit making strategies (Bond, 2004). It is within this macro-economic context that networks like M-net and Mzansi Magic operate. Neo-liberal economic strategy is designed to ensure wealth creation by the state and those who own the means of production. The state's control of certain sectors of the economy and its oversight of market regulation was gradually worn away as the neo-liberal model gained traction. This new model is designed to ensure capital accumulation "guaranteed by freedom of the market and of trade with assumptions of individual freedom" (Harvey, 2005:7).

1.8 Mzansi Magic

The South African local production industry appeared to be strengthened when M-Net announced a new local content channel, Mzansi Magic, which debuted on DSTV on 12 July, 2010. The channel was developed to "showcase" locally produced programming with a strong entertainment focus and its content was shaped through dialogue with actors, musicians and comedians in order to promote local content both in South Africa and globally (www.tvsa.co.za, 2016).

The channel claims to offer a "diverse" content mix, including local and international feature films, music specials, documentaries, soap operas and interactive talk shows hosted by new and established television and radio personalities (www.tvsa, 2016). In 2012 when *Idol* was

in its 8th season, M-net announced that the show would be broadcast on M-net and Mzansi Magic simultaneously as it was eager to grow its audience base. This was important for the wider audience reach of the show and also as a way of populating content to the newly established television channel. The simultaneous broadcast of the show on these two channels helped with getting more people, amounting to a viewership of 1.12 million viewers, to interact with the show whether as participants or as voters. For its twelfth season in 2016 the show reached the highest number of participants to audition, and received over 8 million votes for its season finale. In addition, the show took third place as one of the top 30 of most watched television shows on DSTV (Broadcast Research Council of South Africa, 2016). The number increased significantly in season 13, airing in 2017, reaching more than 11 million votes for the top three contestants (www. mzansimagic.dstv.com/show/idols, 2017).

1.9 The History of South African Idol

South African Idol is a reality competition talent show based on the original United Kingdom (UK) format *Pop Idol*. The rules of all the shows (both the international and local version) are also the same. *Pop Idol* was created by Simon Fuller, a British television producer and talent manager who became known for creating the *Idol* franchise and other famous reality television programmes such as *So You Think You Can Dance* and *American Idol*. The local show proceeds through four stages which are similar to the stages of the original program. Each stage of the show has its own unique character, easily identified by the viewer. The show opens with an initial audition, in which the contestants sing for the approval of the judges in order to get through to the next round. Contestants need the approval of at least three judges out of four (or two out of three) in order to qualify for the next round of the competition. Having avoided elimination and been given a "Golden Ticket" in the initial audition, contestants have the chance to move up into the next round. Only a few contestants are given a Golden Ticket to reach the second round of auditions, usually called "theatre week".

Theatre week is the second stage in the competition, and it is regarded as the most grilling and difficult stage of the competition. In this stage, contestants are required to perform in groups, which have been chosen randomly. Thereafter, they enter solo performances from which the top 16 and the top 10 of the show are selected. The third stage includes the top 16

and the top 10 at Sun City[1] and finally performing for the audiences' votes. Sun City in this instance symbolises stardom and glamour. It is where the reality of living in the lime-light begins. Contestants are seen to transform in an extraordinary manner in the way they dress and how they look as they start preparing themselves for fame and the life of stardom. This transformation is a necessary stage that they have to pass in order to be Idols. Holmes (2004) describes the various stages of the show as rigorous and grilling for the contestants.

The local format is produced by Fremantle Media in association with M-Net Original Productions. Fremantle is an international content production company which creates other popular reality shows such as *Got Talent* and *X-Factor*, both of which have been adapted into local formats. These instances of the local production of global content are good examples of the way in which international media conglomerates form networks and partnerships with local companies in order to distribute their content to world-wide audiences, as Arsenault & Castells (2008) note. Many of these productions adapted from international formats such as *Idol* are forced to employ similar features to the local production as stipulated in the agreements signed with the international original production companies. Though local productions may differ slightly in some aspects like language (in order to fit the context they are produced in), they still need to be produced within the parameters and culture set by originator. In essence, these adapted shows are not simply produced for local audiences with the intention to affirm local cultures: they inescapably glamorise a European and American culture of being a celebrity and famous.

1.9.1 New inventions

Season 13 also introduced a new way of auditioning, via the "Telkom audition booth". This is a satellite booth that moves to different places which the judges do not visit during the audition stage. Contestants get a chance to do a live audition via this satellite booth while the judges watch and decide which contestants will make it to the next round. The booth is provided by Telkom, the State-owned telecommunications enterprise, which is also one of the major sponsors of the show. By so doing, Telkom gets exposure which it uses as a method to promote their brand both to contestants and the viewers. To move to the next round, which is called "theatre week", contestants first have to get a "golden ticket".

[1] A resort in South Africa that offers entertainment and is the home of Idol SA for theatre week.

A golden ticket is the passport that each contestant gets if the majority of the judges vote for him or her. No contestant can go through to theatre week without a golden ticket. As only a couple of hundred of contestants make it to theatre week from amongst the thousands that audition, a golden ticket symbolises two things: achievement; and being acknowledged as being potentially worthy to be a future celebrity. In the first case, it symbolises that a contestant has been able to rise above the other contestants and has emerged as a winner (for this round at least). Second, the golden ticket reaffirms the contestants' talents insofar as the judges see some potential in the contestants. The effect of receiving a golden ticket at this early stage of the show is to boost the contestants' confidence in their talent. .

Another innovation of season thirteen is the golden disk. A golden disk works differently from the golden ticket. Each of the judges is given one golden disk to use during the audition stages of the season. The judge can only use a golden disk when other judges have decided against the contestant. Its power is to override all the other judges' decisions, and once used the contender can go through to the next round even if the majority of the judges have voted against the constant. The trick is that each judge gets to use his or her golden disk only once.

In the local format, one extra judge was included in Season 11. This extra judge, Somizi Mhlongo, is a South African actor, singer, choreographer, radio and television personality, well-known for his flamboyant and at times outrageous stage and online presence. His addition on the judging panel came after the show's producers decided that the show needed someone who exemplifies the "full package," in other words someone who knows the ins and outs of the entertainment industry.

1.9.2 The other side of *Idol*

Singers with potential are not the only ones that get rewarded either by a golden ticket or a golden disk. Bad singers also get their own recognition, by receiving a wooden microphone. Wooden mic contestants are voted for by the viewers from the list of bad auditions. A top ten is selected and the wooden mic winner is announced during the season finale and in some instances they are given the chance to perform in front of the crowd. This is a light-hearted and entertaining aspect of the show that viewers like to talk about on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter.

Though the show is a subject matter of conversation amongst its viewer on social media, this is not where it ends. Even the contestants themselves share their own views about the show,

whether it is about how they feel about being part of the show or their favourite moment in the show. This is show in the background of the television show for some various episodes.

1.9.3 The Judges

The other long serving judges on the panel include the songstress and radio personality Unathi Msengane. Randall Abrahams, a record label manager with experience in artist management, is well-known within the entertainment and broadcasting industry, specialising in both radio and television. Finally, there is the fourth panel member is Gareth Cliff, a well-known broadcasting personality. His status is signified by the fact that in 2013 Cliff was rated as one of the most highly-paid and reputable radio hosts in South Africa. Randell left the show at the end season 11 to pursue other business interests, taking the number of the judges in the panel back to three.

The new judge, Somizi grew up in the entertainment industry as both his parents are actors. His father Ndaba Mhlongo was a well-known actor and comedian known for his famous role as Mshefane in a South African telenovela, *iNyaka-Nyaka* (Big Trouble). His mother, Mary Twala, is a South African veteran actress with a career spanning over 20 years in the entertainment industry. She has appeared in lead roles in both local and international productions, including *Sarafina*, an international award winning show based on the 1976 Soweto uprising, created and directed by Mbongeni Ngema. Involved in acting from a very young age, Somizi was part of the international tour of *Sarafina* and is a respected choreographer. He assisted in planning the choreography for the 2010 Fifa World Cup which was held in South Africa. His addition intensified the audition process because having only a singing voice is simply not enough. What is needed is someone who can sell albums, looks like "showbiz" and can attract audiences.

Another important member of the cast on the show is Proverb, the presenter of the show. Proverb, whose real name Tebogo Tekisho, is a South African rapper who started his career in 1999. Over the years Proverb has expanded his work into radio and television as both a presenter and producer. Some of the well-known radio stations he has worked for include Metro FM and youth radio station Y-FM before joining *Idol* on its 6th season as a presenter. As a celebrity himself, one of his key roles is to groom the top three contestants as they travel internationally as part of the show. The winner also gets to travel all around the country with Proverb in order to gain publicity, part of the package with which the winner is rewarded, along with a recording contract and the winning contestant's own CD release.

1.9.4 New audiences for the show

Originally the show was broadcast exclusively on M-Net but later began simulcasting on Mzansi Magic. For the last few seasons, a 24-hour dedicated channel has been introduced on DSTV which screens all of the auditions, including those of people who didn't make the cut. *Idol* can also be viewed on DSTV's On Demand service. DSTV's mobile users can watch *Idol SA* on their Drifta[2] or Walka [3]and DSTV On-Demand offers the shows for its PC users.

[2] Mobile DSTV decoder.
[3] A portable TV.

Chapter Two: The Social Context

2.1 Introduction

In this section, I outline the current debates about South African youth and their status within South Africa's post-apartheid socio-economic dispensation. It is within this wider context that the young people of Grahamstown East, who are the subjects of this research, receive and interpret the show. I go on to discuss the significance of this local context for the analysis, in order to situate and understand the pre-existing conditions that shape the audience's' meaning making processes. It is the meanings made in relation to the setting of the home and the lived experiences of the township that my research is interested in.

2.2 South Africa, Grahamstown and Joza

Despite the transition to democracy in 1994, South Africa continues to be a country marked by severe and increasing inequalities (Cornish-Jenkins, 2015). This is still evident in the society that we live in today. Even though a number of black people have managed to get better chances of employment and education. The conditions are still dire in many black communities. As researchers have observed it, some South African children grow up amid extraordinary affluence and privilege (Bray et al., 2011). But this is not the case is areas like Grahamstown, where majority of black youth are still unemployed and in some cases with only a Matric certificate at their disposal. "The boundaries of privilege have extended beyond whiteness to include considerable numbers of black children growing up within the fast-growing black elite and middle class" (Bray et al., 2011). While this observation is valid, it is only applicable to a minority of the black population. This means that groups that were marginalised during the apartheid era remain marginalised to this day.

Even within black communities there is some segregation between working class blacks and middle class blacks, blacks who have versus blacks who don't have. Nevertheless, the truth of the matter is that, majority of black youth still live in dire conditions of poverty and limited or no access to resources. In post-apartheid South Africa, class has replaced race as the foundation of deep social cleavages (Seekings, 2010). The unemployment rate amongst the youth, women and black people is drastically increasing instead of decreasing (Seekings, 2010). This will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

The truly remarkable nature of South Africa's transition to a new state was portrayed in the election and the inaugural of Nelson Mandela as the new president in 1994 (Adler & Webster, 1995). In order to map out this transition I will adopt the transition theory as explained by Adler and Webster. These two authors identify three factors that have contributed to the country's transition to democracy. They argue that in order for South Africa to be where it is today, there had to be contestations between those who had power and those who were disadvantaged (Adler & Webster, 1995). This is still evident in the society we live in today, where young people are always striving to get access to better education and other opportunities.

Due to the well-known fact that the government of today has failed to provide resources and services to its citizens, this has led to the public exploring other options to find a means of survival. It is for this reason that shows like *Idol* are very popular amongst young people, especially those who are looking to better themselves. If young people cannot get employment opportunities, shows like *Idol* are a promise of a better life for them.

Alongside all the things that needed to be done during the transition period, at the helm of was a focus on developing the young people who were seen as the future leaders of the country. The transition period also came up with its challenges. When the African National Congress (ANC) gained power post the 1994 general elections, many promises were made including eradication of poverty, access to education and employment opportunities for young people. While a lot has changed in policies, the practicality of these promises have proven to be difficult to implement. This is evident in the current socio-economic status of our country which is characterised by the lack of employment opportunities, especially amongst young people.

Young people are always among the first to experience the challenges and possibilities of social change (Willis, 2002). The youth embodies and performs the 'flow of cultural modernisation' that accompanies the economic, political, and technological transformations that shape their lived context (Willis, 2002). Willis argues that young people usually look at themselves in relation to political and economic shifts and respond to these in different ways. His insight offers us a way of studying how young people form and reform their ideas about themselves or others when their social and political context fractures (Fine & Sirin, 2007). Put more simply, often their responses are seen as violent, mischievous and rebellious.

Today, young people are emerging as one of the central concerns of African studies. Located at the heart of both analytical apparatuses and political action, they also have become a preoccupation of politicians, social workers, and communities in Africa (Doff, 2003). Undoubtedly, the centrality of this subject is connected to the extraordinary change over the last three decades in the way African societies see them (Diouf, 2003).

Youth are an increasingly compelling subject for study in Africa, entering into political space in highly complex ways. To pay attention to youth is to pay close attention to the "topology of the social landscape-to power and agency; public, national, and domestic spaces and identities, and their articulation and disjuncture; memory, history, and sense of change; globalization and governance; gender and class" (Durham, 2000).

In most African societies, distress as well as success adhere to the body and are read on the body, especially among young people (Diouf, 2003). By living life on the margin, young people abolish the gap between adolescence and adulthood, and in some cases, between childhood and adolescence. Sex and violence become rites of passage and initiation which, like the new religious practices, produce a historicity of dissidence and dissent (Diouf, 2003).

When it comes to the local youth in South Africa, research has indicated that young people experience considerable emotional distress (Nduna et al., 2010). The causes of distress amongst young people in South Africa can be attributed to many factors, most visibly those social and economic conditions which constrain their life-chances. These include forms adversity such as poverty, unemployment, dysfunctional families (Department of Health, Medical Research Council and OrcMacro, 2007; Eddy, 2009). These challenges are prevalent amongst young people in the Eastern Cape Province, where my study is based, which is estimated as being the poorest province out of the nine provinces in the country (Statistic South Africa, 2014).

This research is conducted amongst the youth of Grahamstown, South Africa. Grahamstown is located in the Eastern Cape Province and falls within the Makana Local Municipality. It is a fairly isolated provincial town, with the closest major urban cities being Port Elizabeth and East London, 120 and 140 km away respectively. The total population of greater Grahamstown, which is inclusive of the black communities that lie on the outskirts of the city, is roughly 125,000 people. Of the total population, 78 percent are black, 12 percent are coloured, 10 percent are white, and less than 1 percent are Indian (Jones, 2014: 31). Forty-

five percent of the population is between the ages of 20 and 49 years of age, while 39 percent are younger than 20 years of age (Jones, 2014: 32).

My specific local area of interest is Joza location of Grahamstown. This location contrasts markedly with the city centre, with its white suburbs and businesses (Schoon, 2012). It is a small township, situated in SA's poorest province, and like many of its metropolitan cousins, its inhabitants struggle with the lack of provision of basic services, such as water and sanitation. In addition, many of its residents are unemployed: in 2010, the local unemployment rate was estimated to be 32.9 per cent, higher than the national average of 24 per cent (Duncan, 2013).

2.3 South Africa broadly; Youth within this context

South Africa, like many other developing countries, has a youthful (15-34 of age) population consisting of 70% of the national population. In 2010, the country had an unemployment national average rate of 24 per cent (Duncan, 2013), which had increased to 36.1% in 2014 (Stats SA, 2014). The majority of young people from poor South African townships still live in dire conditions, in contrast to their white counter parts (Cornish-Jenkins, 2015; Stats SA, 2014). It is important to note that because of poverty and other structural factors, young people continue to live on the margins of political and socio-economic participation, unable to make meaningful contributions to decisions that affect their lives (Garman & Malila, 2016). This is mostly the case with young people in Grahamstown who, because of being situated in a rural area, often feel excluded from the nation building project of the country.

The inequality that characterises Grahamstown mirrors that of South Africa, which is one of the most unequal societies in the world with the richest 20% earning nearly 70% of the country's income (Møller, 2010). Due to these challenges, many young people are faced with prospects of dropping out of school at an early stage. These challenges and the high rate of unemployment in the area mean that the majority young people from poor households are more likely to be without jobs (Møller, 2010). In 2007, unemployment among black South African youth 25–34 (years of age) stood at 42% (South African Institute of Race Relations, 2008; 213).

To try and deal with this issue of unemployment amongst young people, the South African government has implemented the Community Work Programme (CWP) in order to create employment for young people. This programme is also available in Grahamstown but has been criticised by many, with the view that it does not address the issues of poverty as it

offers low wages. Men between the ages of 15 to 34 are more likely to find jobs in the formal sector than women, but young men from poor households are finding it increasingly difficult to enter the job market (Møller, 2010).

In South Africa's broken and violent society, youth who are socially excluded are particularly at risk of turning to drugs, crime, and violence (Steinberg, 2007; Møller, 2010). This results in the image of regarding black youth as problematic, a notion Seekings (1996) terms the "youth problem". Both the "youth" and the supposed "youth problem" were socially constructed ideas (Seekings, 1996). Seekings further argues that, the "youth problem" notion was traced to the revolts that took place in South African townships and rural areas during the 1980's. At the height of political transformation, young people were often referred to "shocked troops" or "foot soldiers" to indicate the kind activism and participation they had in fighting the apartheid regime (Seekings, 1996).

Young people during this time boycotted school classes, demonstrated and fought in the streets against security forces (Seekings, 1996). The "comrades", as they came to be known, rendered whole areas ungovernable and helped build the structures of people's power (Seekings, 1996). The way young people in the 1990s were viewed by those who opposed the apartheid government contrast markedly with the ways in which young people are viewed in this day and age. In the 1980's, young people were referred to as the "Young Lions", which is contradictory to today's view of regarding the youth as "problematic" and "troubled" (Seekings, 1996).

2.4 Young people and the media: A global picture

It is commonly accepted today that many young people in a globalized world have ceased to see the relevance of state-based politics or state-oriented activism and no longer find meaning in or opportunities for traditional modes of social affiliation and participation (Andres and Wyn, 2010).

Andres and Wyn (2010) suggest that many young people are disenchanted with political structures that are unresponsive to their needs and interests, but that they remain interested in social and political issues and continue to seek recognition from the political system. At the same time, their participatory practices are not oriented towards spectacular anti-state activism or cultural politics but take the form of informal, individualized and everyday activities.

At the same time, young people's own forms of identification are becoming less fixed, long term and singular as they grapple with the individualization of the life course and the shift away from structured pathways to adulthood. The challenges of establishing economic security in conditions of globalization and deindustrialization also emerge as a significant barrier to participation, as young people's overwhelming priority is to take charge of their livelihoods and to focus on study and work in unprecedented ways (Andres and Wyn, 2010; Lagos and Rose, 1999).

These developments have also had an impact on young people's approaches to formal politics, as there is little reason to have faith in the state's capacity to protect their rights, politicians do not demonstrably listen to their concerns and they find themselves increasingly targeted by civic education campaigns or regimes of responsibilisation that construct them as inadequate citizens (Harris, 2006). From this perspective, it is not surprising that young people's political participation is declining, and scholars argue that disengagement is a logical response to these conditions.

However, a concurrent emergent direction in research on youth participation is to explore the new ways young people are coping in these socioeconomic conditions by becoming 'self-actualizing citizens' (Bennett, 2003) or 'everyday makers' (Bang, 2004). In other words, while they are disengaged from governments and party politics, they are personalizing politics by emphasizing their own behaviour in terms of taste, lifestyle, consumption and leisure. Conditions of insecurity, risk and individualization lead to transient and self-expressive participatory practices.

According to Henk Vinken (2005: 155), young people are developing a 'new biography of citizenship', characterized by 'dynamic identities, open, weak–tie relationships and more fluid, short-lived commitments in informal permeable institutions and associations'. Theorists such as Ronald Inglehart (1990) have argued that this is part of a broader generational shift from 'materialist' to 'post-materialist values', in which young people become more focused on quality of life issues.

2.5 Theorising the youth: A local picture

Thirty years ago the actions of the youth of the 1980's called the Young Lions contributed to the end of the apartheid regime, their actions also led to the non-racial democracy that South Africa is today (Boyce, 2010). As much as young people of the 1980's contributed significantly to the realisation of the democratic state, it is also argued that South Africa has

had an ambiguous relationship with its youth (Boyce, 2010). For example, even though the youth is seen as 'lionised', the same township youth of the 1980's and early 1990's were also regarded as the 'lost generation' (Seekings, 1996; Boyce, 2010). The 'lost generation' youth is categorised as the unskilled, un-socialised who represented a threat to the traditional structures of authority (Seekings, 1996; Boyce, 2010).

When it comes to posing a threat to authority, today's youth has seen as having similar characteristics to that of the Young Lions of the struggle period. Though it is not clear what image of today's youth predominates, there is a similar sense of expectation, of promise in many aspects of today's youth (National Youth Commission, 2002).

The relationship(s) that young people in South Africa have with social institutions is also understood as a cause for concern. For example, young people's great involvement in protest action due to their dissatisfaction with how the government is handling issues such as youth employment. The recent protests by students in the well-publicised #Feesmustfall protests graphically highlighted this dissatisfaction. The reasons cited for participation in protests include marginalisation from the mainstream economy, the unaffordable expense of the education necessary for economic inclusion, and the lack of government service delivery (Benjamin, 2010). These issues, all effected the future prospects and life expectations of young people.

Nevertheless, township youth remain optimistic about the future, even though they generally show low life satisfaction with their present conditions (Boyce, 2010; Seekings, 1996). If the youth's expectations about the future are likely to influence the kinds of choices they make today in anticipation of tomorrow (Boyce, 2010), then shows like *Idol* may hold out a promise of hope, as they bring a new perspective that looks towards the future.

2.6 Young people in different localities

South Africa is a country with economic growth being disproportionately generated in the biggest cities, and a growing proportion of people living in urban areas. Even though this is the case, only 60 per cent of the country is currently situated in urbanised areas, suggesting more urbanisation is to come (CDE, 2014). It is projected that if the next wave of city growth is managed well, it can accelerate economic growth and job creation, and improve people's quality of life (CDE, 2014).

It is argued that cities or urbanised areas can also be good for young people as they are often more entrepreneurial and better educated than their parents (CDE, 2014). Majority of young people also tend to be less committed to a rural lifestyle and more interested in the amenities and economic opportunities available only in urban economies (CDE, 2014). As a young country, South Africa's future is urban. But this proves to be the opposite when it comes to young people who reside in un-urbanised or less urbanised areas. Young people in these areas often resort to criminal activities to due to unemployment and lack of development in these areas.

Almost 38 per cent of young people's population aged between 15 and 34 are more likely to live in urban areas given the chance, especially compared with children who are disproportionately rural in residence (CDE, 2014). Relative to older adults, young people are nearly 50 per cent more likely to have moved from one province to another at some point in their lives, and their movement is generally towards the metros (CDE, 2014). But this navigation to metros by young people is more likely to evident in young people who have attained a certain level of formal education. They gravitate towards these areas in prospects of finding employment opportunities or to further their studies. On the other hand, for young people who have less formalised education or have not studied beyond Grade 12, it is difficult to navigate and gravitate towards bigger cities as they are less likely to be employed without formal education. Overall, 6 per cent of young people have higher education, but the figure rises to 10 per cent among young people in the large metros and falls to 3 per cent in rural areas (CDE, 2014). Young people without education are, however, less likely to be in employment than similarly ill-educated older adults (CDE, 2014).

2.7 The Youth and the Media

The relationship between South African youth and the media has been a contradictory one. During last decade of the apartheid era, when township youth mobilised as part of the struggle to make townships ungovernable, "South Africa was gripped by episodes of 'moral panic' focused on the political and social threat supposedly posed by young black South Africans" (Seekings, 1996). An image of South African black youth as dysfunctional and antisocial was media, widely circulated in local media, which constructed "images of unemployed black youth with no future, no home, busy destroying everything in their way; homes, shops, schools, infrastructures and traditions" (Sitas, 1991; Marais 1993).

Post-apartheid, the disturbing image of an out-of-control youth has been replaced by the idea of the politically disaffected young person. A recent study suggests that many young South Africans (86.3% of respondents) are more interested in popular culture as a media topic than politics (Malila & Oelofsen, 2016).

The youth's mounting of distrust and lack of participation in political and social activities is evident in their lack of participation during elections. Though it is clear that many young citizens of this digital age have demonstrated some sort of interest in making a contribution to society (Bennett, 2008). The challenge is finding ways of engaging effectively with politics that are linked to spheres of government (Bennett, 2008). Eliasoph offers a casual look at world democracies and suggests that, many of the most established [ways of engaging effectively with politics] are showing signs of wear. "Parties are trying to reinvent themselves while awkwardly staying the course that keeps them in power. In the press, in everyday conversation, and often from mouths of politicians, politics has become a dirty word rather than a commonly accepted vocabulary for personal expression" (Eliasoph, 1998). Most notably, there trend of the youth's disconnection from conventional politics and government has deteriorated in alarming numbers (Bennett, 2008). These have parallels in other democracies as well, including Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom (Bennett, 2008). Due to the lack of interest in politics portrayed by young people, entertainment and reality shows have been an escape route for young people. Through these shows, young people have created forums and communities where their views and participation is valued and recognised

It is no surprise that this trend can also be observed in South Africa. At the same time that their participation in political activities has declined, young people's interest in the *South Africa Idol* has grown over the years. As a prominent example of popular culture, it has managed to increase its viewer participation enormously, reaching a turnout of 8.8 million votes cast for its eleventh season, with season twelve reaching over 12 million votes (www.IdolsSA.co.za, 2016; 2017).

As young "people in South Africa take up the task of citizenship, their construction of a civic identity, their political participation and agency and voice are indicators of the potential for a vibrant democracy in South Africa" (Malila, 2013). Malila argues that the relationship between journalistic media and young people in South Africa seems to be largely characterised by one-way traffic from the media to the youth, that is, from the media (source) to its young audiences. Perhaps the opposite is true of entertainment formats such as *Idol*.

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the broad South African broadcasting history, the media context of the *South African Idol* show linking it to the brooder social context of South Africa. I then move to discuss the local context of Joza in Grahamastown in which this show is viewed by these young adults.

Both these worlds are marked by challenges of unemployment amongst young people. It is these pre-existing circumstances and challenges that these young people take into their viewing space of the show.

Chapter Three: Literature review of the study

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the literature review of the study by firstly discussing the approaches that we can use when studying the text/audience relationship. It discusses the approaches that stress power of the media and those which argue for the autonomous power of the audience. By doing so, it locates the problem with these approaches and further discusses the Cultural Studies approach as a starting point in studying the relationship between texts and audiences.

The 'circuit of culture' is a model that distinguishes between the different moments in the process of the production, circulation and consumption of media texts. It links these moments to the social contexts in which they are situated. This model is helpful as it enables the researcher to focus on the lived context of the audiences which interpret and make meanings from the media messages they receive. The chapter also introduces an approach that analyses the natural setting of the home in order to study audiences and texts.

In addition, this chapter also briefly discusses the history of reception studies in order to correctly locate my research within the field of reception studies. Furthermore, a constructivist approach to studying identity and media is adopted by this study and explained in this chapter. Lastly, a detailed discussion of celebrity studies is outlined in order to contextualise and explain how the South African Idol reality show construct and shapes the identities of its contestants.

3.2 The Approaches to studying the text/audience relationship

In response to the negative reactions to the processes of industrialisation, urbanisation and the emergence of contemporary forms of mass media, theorists have been concerned with the relationship between the text and the audience and with the effects of the media on their moral, political and economic lives (Silverstone, 1990).

Theorists looking at the competing approaches between those that stress the power of the media and those arguing for the autonomous power of the audience have two propositions to studying the social life (Silverstone, 1990). The first position is represented by the 'effects' tradition that draws on a hypodermic model of media influence (Strelitz, 2005). Strelitz suggests that even though theorists within this tradition may differ in their political perspective and their focus on short-term behavioural changes and or long-term cultural and ideological changes, what they do share is the view that the media, as powerful social

institutions, are able to ‘inject’ their audiences with their messages and thus affect their behaviour (Strelitz, 2005).

Opposing the ‘hypodermic’ model of the media and social life is an approach that stresses audience autonomy instead of textual determination (Strelitz, 2005). Within the latter approach, there are differences in terms of the underlying political philosophy. Whether it is ‘uses-and-gratifications’ research or the ‘two-step flow’ approach, mainstream theories rooted in liberal pluralist philosophy have emphasised individual, psychological meanings rather than social ones (Seiter et al., 1989).

Strelitz (2005) argues about the different approaches to studying the social life by describing those theorists who were concerned with ‘culture industries’ as ideological apparatuses that seek to serve the interests of dominant groups. He compares it with ‘mainstream’ American approaches that see the media as a reflector of the value consensus that is deeply embedded in society (Strelitz, 2005).

According to theorists using the American approach to study social life, the media have short term and restricted influence (Biltereyst, 1995), while for the Frankfurt School theorists, the media act as a powerful instrument that aid the maintenance of class oppression. Media in the mainstream American approach are seen as relatively weak, but important, instruments in the circulation and reinforcement of shared values (Hall, 1982). The limitations of such a perspective is that the differences of response or interpretation are attributed solely to individual differences or personality (Moorley, 1989). In contrast, cultural studies theorists who support relative audience autonomy attempt to uncover clusters of readings that correspond to significant axes of power within particular social contexts (Moores, 1993).

To look at the meanings made in a particular social context, a Cultural Studies approach that look at the relationship between the media and its audiences is employed. Where the audiences being examined are not viewed as passive television viewers but rather as active (Moores, 1993; Lemish, 2007). For a long time audiences of media message have been viewed a passive receivers, however, research confirms that audiences choose to engage with the medium and its content in a variety of active ways, including managing their attention to it, making meanings out of its messages, analysing and criticising, and selectively remembering it (Lemish, 2007).

The approach thus views audiences as active participants in the process of receiving and making meaning of these media messages (Thompson, 1995). The active audience approach also maintains that even if individuals may have relatively little control over the content of the symbolic materials "made available to them, they can use these materials, rework and elaborate them in ways that are quite alien to the aims and intentions of the producers in order to interpret and make sense of their own lives" within a specific lived context (Thompson, 1995; 39).

Making sense of media texts is a habitual part of our everyday existence. Making sense of media texts requires an active process of interpretation in which meaning is actively decoded (Hall, 1980; 1997). This act of decoding takes place within a complex social structure in which the message is not isolated from relations of power (Hall, 1973; 1980).

Media texts are interpreted and manipulated by audiences in ways in which they make sense of them. It is important therefore that the "consumption of media messages should be seen as an *activity*: not as something passive, but as a kind of practice in which individuals take hold of and work over the symbolic materials they encounter" (Thompson, 1995: 39).

3.3 The 'circuit of culture', cultural studies and political economy

Specifically in this study, a cultural studies approach known as the 'circuit of culture' has been adopted to study the text/audience relationship. This approach enables the researcher to examine the 'moments' of the 'circuit of culture' (Johnson, 1983), namely; production, texts, readings and lived cultures (Johnson, 1983). However, it is important that we do not privilege one single process in studying the text/audience relationship, like the process of production, but rather look at the combination of processes – it is in their 'articulation' that the beginnings of an explanation can be found (du Gay et al., 1997). It is important that in trying to get at the 'meaning' of a text, we need to acknowledge both the moments of production (text) and the audience (lived culture) (Strelitz, 2005).

Hall's model separated the encoding and decoding moments in textual production and reception (Strelitz, 2000). This model gave rise to arguments that the text has the power to propose or suggest particular ideological readings, while the audience should be seen as active readers who will not necessarily accept the proposed readings (Strelitz, 2000). This understanding of the text/audience relationships gave impetus to the emergence of ethnographic approaches to media consumption as well as a lot of well-known works on the

youth subcultures (Hall & Jefferson, 1976; Wills, 1977; Hebdige, 1997). Cultural studies approach draws on qualitative research in order provide detailed descriptions of how audiences negotiate and use media texts in the course of their everyday lives, constructing their own meanings within an autonomous cultural economy (Curran, 1990). Thus, against the emphasis of the critical paradigm on top-down power – a perspective which informs political economy – this perspective emphasised bottom-up resistance as itself a form of subordinate power (Strelitz, 2000).

On the other hand, theorists that are informed by the political economy approach argue that the ethnographic emphasis on meaning-making at the point of consumption has resulted in an approach which downplays the structuration of experience via objective factors such as class and so on, which stand outside our subjectivity (Curran, 1990; Kellner, 1997; Garnham, 1995; Murdock, 1989; Gitlin, 1997). Political economy theorists argue that cultural studies has often lapsed into naïve humanism, in which the power of the text is completely subordinated to the semiotic creativity of the consumer (Strelitz, 2000). Political economists also argue that the production and distribution of culture takes place within a specific economy system and that this places constraints on the range of textual meanings made available by the producing institutions (Strelitz, 2000). Cultural studies theorists argues that the reductionism and economism of some versions of political economy results in their failure to engage concretely with the texts and audiences (Strelitz, 2000). It has been argues that, in essence, too much work in cultural studies admittedly fails to take economics seriously enough, political economy also fails to take culture seriously enough (Grossberg, 1995).

3.4 The domestic context: Natural setting of the home

Since the central aim of reception ethnography as proposed by cultural studies, 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 use and interpreted (Moores, 1993). The growing recognition and interest in the context of reception, as important and as the object of viewing, represents one of the most important advances in audience work (Morley 1989). With regards to television viewing, Morley (1989) argues:

> *"Given that television is a domestic medium it follows that the appropriate mode of analysis must take the unit of consumption of television as the family or household*

> *rather than the individual viewer. This is to situate individual viewing within the household relations in which it operates, and so to insist that individual viewing only makes inside this frame."* (1989: 93)

The importance of taking into consideration the family or household context of viewing, you then move away from treating the viewer as a free or rational consumer (Morley, 1989). The reason we have to do this is because we need to consider issues of power which translate in this context, to negotiations around program choice (Strelitz, 2000). This approach enables us to move beyond the view that sees television as disruptive of family life, rather the focus should be on the way in which television is used to construct occasions around viewing, in which various types of interaction are pursued (Strelitz, 2000). Morley (1989) suggests that, instead of holding on to the notion that people either live in social relations or watch television, we should consider how the viewing is done within the social relations of the household.

Therefore, it is important to contextualise media culture because in order to understand reception, or the process of meaning making, it is fundamental that we understand the environment inhabited by the audience (Drotner & Livingstone, 2008). It is for this reason that this study focuses on the home or the household as an immediate viewing context.

3.5 Media audiences

The traditional theories in studies of media effects on audiences employ a 'hypodermic' model of media influence. This perspective presents the media as having the power to 'inject' ideologies into their audiences, resulting in them behaving in particular ways. This model however "simplistically describes communication as transmitting a message from sender to receiver" (Waisbord, 2001: 4). This tradition also views the relationship between the media and the audience as one where the audiences simply accept the attitudes, opinions and beliefs expressed by the media without question (Bennett, 1982: 30-55).

This "hypodermic" model implies that people exist only as vessels for media messages and as passive groups whose behaviours and attitudes are the direct result of a powerful external force (Mapudzi, 2009). The implied assumption is that to understand the media's effects on people, one simply needs to know what the message says. However, it is by no means certain that the media have such direct effects on the audiences they serve. An alternative view sees the media as having a reasonably weak influence in shaping individual beliefs, opinions and attitudes (Fiske, 1992: 262). Here, the effects model is deemed as an inadequate depiction of

the relationship between media and the audience, as it does not account for the audiences' diverse beliefs, opinions, ideals and attitudes. Audiences are not blank sheets of paper on which media messages can be written. Rather, audiences will have prior attitudes and beliefs which will determine how meanings of media messages are made (Abercrombie, 1996:140). Hall's encoding-decoding model is credited as the model which formulated basis of how to look at the audience-text relationship.

Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding model established the critical theoretical framework that has informed most succeeding audience reception studies (Schroder *et al.,* 2003: 128). It builds on insights which had emerged from Uses and Gratification theory as well as neo-Marxist approaches which had attempted to theorise how the media (amongst other state institutions) achieved its ideological work. The encoding/decoding model develops the idea that mass communication is a planned activity, "in which media production institutions have power to set agendas" (Hall, 1980: 131). Hall argues that the transformation of a historical event as communication process had been conceived as a closed circle, but that it is important to think of it as a series of articulated, linked moments of production, circulation, distribution/consumption and reproduction in order to link all the various theories that had existed previously in cultural studies (Hall 1980: 128).

During the production moment of the text, producers of the text encode certain meanings into the text through their production practices. Then when the audiences receive these texts, they decode them within the cultural contexts in which they are received. In other words, diverse audiences do not deduce messages (Hall, 1980), 'as sent' or 'as expressed', and moreover, messages are not simply 'transmitted', but meanings are produced: first by the encoder from the 'raw' "material of everyday life, second, by the audience in relation to its location in other discourses" (Hall, et al, 1980: 130). Hall also argues that the moment of media production is framed throughout by meanings and ideas, knowledge in-use concerning the routines of production, historically defined technical skills, professional ideologies, institutional knowledge, definitions and assumptions, assumptions about the consumption (1980:133).

Additionally Hall adds that;

> *Media texts are thus located between their producers and the audiences who decode them in a manner that may be related to specific social, economic and cultural situations* (Hall, 1980:131).

This view of the text-audience relationship suggests that the meaning of a text is not located in the text, nor is it located in the audiences' understanding alone, but is the result of the intersection of the text and the situated reader. Hall's approach thus signals a shift from one paradigm of understanding text-audience relationship to another, and unlike the previous behavioural paradigm, it questions issues of how "ideology" works (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998: 10; Mapudzi, 2009). In this instance I am taking up Thompson's conception of the term which he defines as "meaning in the service of power" (Thompson, 1990: 7). My study will apply this model in analysing the text-audience relationship with regards to the meanings the audience makes from watching *Idol*. The emphasis on audience in the encoding/decoding model is valuable as it indicates that the meaning is not in the text, but in the socially situated "*reading*" (Hart, 1991: 65). Acknowledging the audience's interpretive capacity in this way, the Cultural Studies approach "distances itself from the determination of strong media effects tradition" (Hart, 1991: 65). But rather, it is of the view that the audience derives and negotiate their own preferred meanings from the media texts they receive. The implication therefore is that the audience, regardless of the medium, are not passive or inconsequential in shaping their participation in the content of popular media (Hart, 1991: 65). They take an active part on interpreting media messages in a way that will help them shape their identities.

3.6 Media and identity

In this study, I adopt a constructivist position with regards to identity formulation and the media. Contemporary theories of identity conceive of identity as a social process, rather than as a fixed possession or label (Weber & Mitchell, 2008). Within cultural studies, investigations of what constitute, and that of the politics of identity are often predicated on a distinction articulated by Hall (Grossberg, 1996). Hall defined identity by distinguishing between two forms of struggles over – two models of production of identities (Hall, 1990). The first model assumes that there is some intrinsic and essential content to any identity which is defined by either a common origin or a common structure of experience or both (Grossberg, 1996). "Struggling against the existing constructions of a particular identity takes the form of contesting negative images with positive ones, and trying to discover the 'authentic' and 'original' content of the identity" (Hall, 1990; Grossberg, 1996: 89). In this case, the struggle over representations of identity takes the form of offering one fully constituted, separate and distinct identity in place of another (Grossberg, 1996).

The second model emphasises the impossibility of such fully constituted, separate and distinct identities (Grossberg, 1996). "This model denies the existence of authentic and original identities based in a universally shared origin or experience" (Grossberg, 1996: 89). As Hall (1991: 21) and Grossberg (1996: 89) put it:

Identities are always relational and incomplete, in process. Identity is a structured representation which only achieves its positive through the narrow eye of the negative. It has to go through the eye of the needle of the other before it can construct itself. Thus, identity is always a temporary and unstable effect of relations which define identities by marking differences.

This conception of identity emphasise the multiplicity and flexibility of identities (Grossber, 1996). Additionally, it emphasises the difference rather than one singular identity, and focuses on the connections or articulations between the fragments or differences (Grossberg, 1996). It is this conception of identity I seek to work within the context of my research. It consists of aspects such as our languages, cultures, characters, behaviours, beliefs, and so forth (Weber & Mitchell, 2008). Our identities therefore come into being from, and are constructed from, all that we associate with ourselves. It is the essence of what defines us as individuals (Weber & Mitchell, 2008).

From this perspective, we are offered an understanding of identity which is not something that can never be achieved once and for all: rather, it is fluid and open to negotiation, but is also subject to many constraints and thus is always under construction (Weber & Mitchell, 2008). "Identity, as well as the discourses and narratives which refer to it, cannot be understood as reflecting a complete or absolute reality. Rather, it is an ever changing process which is always under construction" (Bekker & Prinsloo, 1999: 189).

Identity is regarded as a product of an individual's lived experiences and everyday meanings made from day to day interactions with others (Castells, 1997: 6). 'Meaning' in this case is defined as the symbolic identification by a social actor of the purpose of her or his action. Identity is a process of constructing meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or related set of cultural attributes that are given priority over other sources of meaning (Castells, 1997). It is also possible for an individual to possess multiple identities depending on the context they are in.

The identity theory illustrates that an individual can own multiple identities, and that there are specific meanings that individuals attach to their multiple identities. These identities relate to one another and as a result influence people's behaviour, thoughts, and feelings or emotions, as well as connect individuals to broader society (Peter et al., 2009; Bekker, 2001; Webber & Mitchell, 2008). Individuals possess these multiple identities because they occupy multiple roles, belong to multiple groups, claim multiple personal characteristics and are influenced by various social institutions (Peter et al., 2009; Bekker, 2001).

Dominant social institutions such as the media can greatly contribute towards identity construction but it must be noted that, individual receivers on the other hand have the agency to adopt or reject certain identities (Castells, 2003: 6). Television is considered one of the major contributing mediums in identity formation, and thus television viewing is considered to be used by viewers in the process of identity formation – be it of gender, sexuality, social, political and cultural in nature (Lemish, 2007).

While the emphasis above is on the process of individual identity formation, Turner argues that a new dimension of cultural power available to the international media system is that it has the capacity not only to generate celebrity identities, in the form of reality television, but it may also have the capacity to generate broader formations of cultural identity (Turner, 2010).

While these increasingly globalised formats may suit the large media conglomerates who have mastered the art of trading across cultural and national differences, they may be trading in constructions of identity that are dislocated from any social and cultural context (Turner, 2010). For this reason, it is important to read and analyse these media formats in relation their local context as the meaning they elicit may differ from that of the global audience. It is on these premise that I am reading the meanings made by the local audience of Joza location from viewing the South *African Idol* show. My argument in this instance is that celebrity images play an aspirational role, in how people view and make sense of their own lives, as in the case of *Idol*. This role of the celebrity is what Chouliaraki (2012) terms "aspirational discourse" of the celebrity. It is this role that I argue that the celebrities produced through the reality television show *Idol*, play in the wider South African context.

3.7 Celebrity identities

The discourse of celebrity is characterised by a certain amount of contradictoriness. This is because the notion of celebrity includes both the "capacity to simultaneously valorise a celebrity's elite status while nonetheless celebrating their intrinsic ordinariness" (Turner et al., 2000: 13). It is this element of 'ordinariness' that make prospective or aspiring celebrities attractive to producers of reality television shows like *Idol*. Ordinary people have always been 'discovered', and suddenly removed from their normal 'everyday lives' and processed into stardom (Turner, 2010), where they come to occupy an elite position. This tool, of being able to turn ordinary people into stars, is one that has been used and incorporated in the 'cultural mythologies', as well as in the industrial practices, of both the film and music industries in order to create stars (Turner, 2010). It is also argued that this method and practice in recent years have become more dramatic and more systematic as in the case of *South African Idol*. The contestants in this show are regularly interrogated over the period of the show through various challenges to see who is worthy of occupying a position in stardom.

The process and practice of turning ordinary people into household names has become so popular in recent years that a number of media formats have been dedicated to it entirely (Turner, 2010). What is interesting about this phenomenon is that consumers have become accustomed to following what happens in the process of turning ordinary people into celebrities, a process Driessens (2012) terms 'celebrification'. The popularity of celebrities and reality television formats can be attributed to this increasing audience followership and interest in these sophisticated images, called celebrities.

Sophisticated as celebrities might be, one of the important attributes they need to have in order to become highly valued (or worthy of being) celebrities, is the very same 'ordinariness' which defined their pre-celebrity status. This 'ordinariness' is so fundamental to the casting of the contestants in reality television shows that it appears non-negotiable (Turner, 2010).

Big Brother housemates have been evicted after they were found to be already working within the entertainment industry and thus attempting to merge their new visibility as celebritised 'ordinary people' with a pre-existing media career (Turner, 2010; 13).

As is the case in the *South African Idol*, the judges comment on the 'ordinary' attributes of the desired 'Idol'. In most cases they are describing someone who is 'real', 'in touch with the

people' and someone who is 'raw' or in simple terms someone 'ordinary'. Therefore, the 'ordinariness' of the aspiring celebrity is an essential part of the transformation process into the world of the well-known. Even in the rules of the *Idol* show, it is stated that the contestants must not have a standing contract with any recording company. If a contestant is found to have a standing recording contract during the time they enter she show, they are disqualified from the competition with immediate effect. Nick Couldry argues:

> *Ordinary people have never been more desired by, or more visible within, the media; nor have their own utterances ever been reproduced with the faithfulness, respect and accuracy that they are today* (Couldry, 2003 in Turner, 2010: 13).

Reiterating Couldry's views, Turner (2010) alludes that television can also invent, produce and sell its own celebrities from scratch just like those who have been produced through other means. The advantage of television is that it produces their own celebrities on a much larger scale than ever before (Couldry, 2013; Turner, 2010). Turner further states that;

> *Casting 'ordinary people' into game shows, docu-soaps and reality TV programming enables television producers to 'grow their own' celebrities and to control how they are marketed before, during and after production – all of this while subordinating the achieved celebrity of each individual to the needs of the particular programme or format* (Turner, 2010: 15).

While Tuner here is commenting on the relationship between the political economy of television production and the creation of a celebrity, this process has significance for identity formation on the part of the viewers. The extent of the control of the producers over the creation of a celebrity identity makes this an "extremely significant shift, not only in terms of the production and consumption of celebrity, but also in terms of how the media now participate in the cultural construction of identity and desire" (Turner, 2010: 15). These formats of reality television shows are "all set out to produce what most would regard as better as better outcomes for their contestants while modelling appropriate behaviours for their viewers" (Turner, 2010: 39).

My interest in the *South African Idol* is based on these claims made by Turner, and therefore seeks to investigate how the meanings made by my research subjects assist them in constructing their own identities and how it shapes their desires for upward mobility. Thus in the process of coming into contact with the programme. The meanings, behaviour of these

young people that are modelled by the show as Turner suggests, and the decisions that inform their identity building project takes place within existing living conditions and social experiences. I then argue that the process of making meanings from watching the show does not happen in isolation but rather within their living context as suggested in the previous section.

Television is seen as a major socialising agent in young people's lives. It competes with other more traditional socialising agents such as family, school, peer group, community and religious institutions (Lemish, 2007). Through this process, young people learn about their own culture and internalise their values, belief systems, perceptions, and those of 'others' (Lemish 2007: 101). In this process they are therefore forced to engage in making meanings of their own lives and in constructing their own identities (Lemish, 2007).

3.8 'Reality' Television

The explosion of reality television in the last decade has increased television's demand for celebrities (Turner, 2010). This form of programing is regarded as the most 'noticed' form of programming in the history of television, and can certainly attract attention (Turner, 2010: 33). Through these formats, ordinary people have gained "unprecedented access to representation in the media" (Turner, 2010: 33). This has brought researchers' attention to study the cultural function of this increasingly demanded format of reality programming.

This shift has been accompanied by debates on what the cultural function of reality television is. Turner (2010) summarises the different positions in this debate by pointing out those who see reality TV as a tasteless and a cynical exploitation of ordinary people's interest in becoming famous (Turner, 2010). He further says they do this by using the contemporary audience's regrettable fascination with witnessing spectacles of shame and humiliation. Secondly, there are those who regard reality TV as a positively empowering development which has opened the media up to new participants in ways that mirror the democratisation so often attribute to the digital revolution (Turner, 2010).

In considering Turner's arguments on the debate I argue that though the first proposition is not to be ignored, reality television shows offer more than exploiting the audiences' fascination with shame and humiliation. Reality television offers new ways of thinking about ourselves and others, of making sense of our experiences. By considering the latter proposition, this will enable me to identify the positive meanings the young adults of Joza

make from watching Idol, of course not ignoring the negatives (shame and humiliation) in cases where they arise.

3.9 Understanding 'reality' and format television

Many reality television shows like *Pop Idol*, *Big Brother* and *South African Idol*, in the South African context, thrive in contemporary television because they sell the idea of a new participatory and interactivity that exists between the viewers and the screen (Holmes, 2004). Holmes distinguishes between the theories that foreground TV's insistence on viewers being empowered by interactivity, and that which sees the viewers as 'unthinking'. He states that, much of the emphasis on reality television is exemplary of a widespread dumbing down of media forms for the audience to consume, a view which portrays a negative conception of the audience (Holmes, 2004; Hight, 2001: 390).

On the other hand, other reality television theorists have come up with emerging work on the field of reality television. This work foregrounds the extent to which media forms demand a considerable degree of media knowledge from their audiences (Hill, 2002; Roscoe, 2001). Holmes therefore suggests an interesting approach to studying interactive audiences of reality television. He states that in approaching the interactivity of reality television audiences, we need to retain the notion of television text as an analytic category, but at the same time, we also need also acknowledge the changing parameters within this occurs (Holmes, 2004).

Furthermore, another theorist who comes with a useful approach to understanding reality television and the 'ordinariness' of celebrities is Graeme Turner. Turner coined the term 'demotic turn' as a way of describing the increase in production of 'ordinary' celebrities through reality television and celebrity websites. He does this by refusing the notion that the process of celebrification necessarily constituted a democratising process. He suggests that he uses the term 'demotic' as means to try and examine the role that the access to mass-mediated fame plays in constructing cultural identities (Turner, 2006). Turner goes further by probing whether or not the closing gap between TV and 'reality', including the shrink between the famous and the 'ordinary', might mean and that we need to re-examine our understanding of what kind of cultural apparatus the media has become (Turner, 2006).

In supporting this view of looking at the media as an institution with its own agendas Turner argues that we need to think about the media in the same way that we have been accustomed to think about the state - as an apparatus that has its own interest and its own power (Turner,

2006). Early research argued that media was used as means of accessing information and mostly framed as an instrument of the ideological state apparatus. It was rarely seen as merely serving the interests of the media organisations themselves (Turner, 2006). The point Turner tries to put across is that we should not only be interested in media texts because they tell us about the generation of meaning or for what they tell us about the production of culture, but rather we should look at the media as the producer of cultural identities instead of just as a mediator (Turner, 2006).

3.10 Celebrity creation: manufactured or 'authentic'?

'Reality' of reality television is a construction, in essence what has become the focus of many research projects is the way that these formats have exploited the reality effect of television's liveness (Turner, 2010; Kilborn, 2003). This foregrounded 'liveness' enhances the impression that what is being viewed by audiences is real and genuine, thus challenging the notion that what is on TV is only staged for the camera (Turner, 2010). The idea of selling the 'real' in these reality shows, I argue, is to make the audience aspire the glamour of celebrity. its effect is to authentic the idea that we all can be celebrities whereas in actual fact this is not the case. This is a very important point to consider for my study as it will allow me to separate elements of the 'real' from those that are manufactured in relation to the show. By doing so, this will enable me to assess whether or not my research subjects are also able to differentiate between these two aspects as consumers and meaning-makers of this reality show. The danger of not being able to separate these two elements is that it may mislead the audience into thinking that all aspects of reality television are authentic and 'real'. These reality shows have demonstrated an exceptional capacity to "embed themselves in the process through which their audiences construct their everyday lives" (Turner, 2010: 42).

Reality TV programming indeed happens in real time with the viewers watching the events unfold as they happen, and those who want to interact with it directly can also do so either by commenting on one of the programmes' websites, on Twitter, or by participating in the audience vote via mobile phones as is the case in the *South African Idol* show. During the live show performances, the audience is encouraged to vote for their favourite contestant(s) in order to make sure they do not get eliminated from the show. The contestant with the least number of votes is booted out of the competition and their chances at stardom come to an ignominious end. By allowing audiences' participation through voting and other means, these reality television shows become agents of social and cultural conversations.

3.11 Celebrities and commodification

Studies investigating whose interests the media seeks to serve have adopted a fundamental Marxist approach. This means that research projects conducted in this vein are based on the assumption that the dynamics of the 'culture producing industries' can be primarily understood in terms of their economic determination (Murdock and Golding, 1997; Curran and Seaton, 1981). From this perspective, the contents of the media and the meanings that are carried by these media texts are primarily determined by the economic base of the organisations in which they are produced (Curran et al., 1981).

James Curran and his colleagues also suggest that the mechanisms and processes whereby ownership of the media or control of their economies are translated to control over messages are complex and problematic. Thus, if we want to study and understand the workings of these controls, we must do so by examining ideologies which prevail in these media institutions.

Studies of the political economy of the media organisations must therefore be closely related to, and supplemented by, analyses of professional ideologies and practices found in these media organisations (Curran et al., 1981).

These professional ideologies and institutional practices include the culture, language, tone, audience and technology that is used in the production and circulation of media messages. That is why for this study I gave a detailed discussion of the context of the *South African Idol* show and the channel that it airs on. In the case of reality and celebrity television shows like the *South African Idol*, the technology element is of significant value. The raison d'etre of this programme is to bring the values of 'reality' and 'glamour' to the audience. From the set design, lights, cameras and costumes to the kind of online platforms used to air and market the show, the whole production acts as a complex set of interrelated signs which signify stardom and achieved celebrity status, all need to be in order and of good technological quality in order to draw the audience. It is for this reason that in interviewing the audiences, I prompt them to give me their inside perspective of what they think of these elements.

Thompson (1995) argues that the technological developments since the nineteenth century have changed the way that that media messages are produced, reproduced and received in all

aspects of social life. These technological developments and the ever-expanding scale in production and circulation, have resulted in symbolic forms being turned into commodities "which can be bought and sold on a market" (Thompson, 1995: 11).

3.12 Reception studies: abroad and in Africa

All media texts are subject to numerous readings reliant on the perspectives and subject positions of the reader (Kellner, 2011). "Members of distinct genders, classes, races, nations, regions, sexual preferences, and political ideologies are going to read texts differently" (Kellner, 2011).

The theory of media is dedicated to the integrated analysis of production, texts, and audiences (Livingstone et al., 2001). While traditional mass communication approaches analyse each as separate but interlinked elements in the flow of mediated meanings, more cultural and critical approaches focus on the interrelations of these elements in the (re)production of cultural meanings (Hall, 1980).

Although the importance of all three elements of the media system has never been in doubt, the analysis of production and texts has often been of primary concern, while analysis of the interpretative activities of audiences has until recently been neglected, or taken for granted within media studies (Livingstone, 1998a). The key findings of audience reception analysis include the marked and often unanticipated differences between lay and academic interpretations of media texts (Livingstone et al., 2001). The point is not that audiences are "wrong" but that they construct their interpretations according to diverse discursive contexts that are themselves socially determined. Audiences act on media texts to make them meaningful in particular ways, thereby playing a role in the mediation of media influence (Livingstone, 1998b). Yet audiences, acting in private, remain elusive.

Audience reception theory aims to foreground the cultural contexts within which meanings are both encoded and decoded and acknowledging the importance of the socially shared (or diversified) aspects of those contexts, for "the life of signs within modern society is in large measure an accomplishment of the audience" (Jensen, 1993: 26).

Audience reception research is making audiences noticeable within media and communication studies by exposing the unexplored assumptions about audience interpretations and practices (Livingstone et al., 2001). "While not without problems, reception research challenges notions of a homogeneous, passive audience and asserts that

media theory cannot investigate media texts and production contexts while presuming that audiences are predictable from those texts /contexts" (Livingstone et al., 2001: 166).

Media are not neutral texts, and are neither produced nor consumed in a social or political vacuum (Boshoff, 2006). A reception study investigating the interpretation of, and insight into Bollywood in the world of the South African Indian community was conducted at Rhodes University, South Africa. The study showed that, the uses that diasporic cultures make of media, and the uses that diasporic youth make of Bollywood and their creation of new forms of culture, cannot be divorced from the contexts and methods of Bollywood's production and consumption (Boshoff, 2006)

In order for us to understand media consumption in Cultural Studies, we need to radically contextualise the media within the social and cultural structures of its reception community (Boshoff, 2006).Strelitz (2000) suggests that, in analysing media reception we need recourse to the notion of ideology - 'meaning in the service of power' as defined by Thompson (1990:7). The reason this call is that without it, it is difficult to move beyond the level of description to theoretical abstraction (Strelitz, 2000). "Furthermore, we need to interrogate what kinds of media frameworks are likely to be produced under different economic conditions, and what effects these frameworks and classifications are likely to have on audiences" (Strelitz, 2000: 43).

3.13 Conclusion

In conclusion, in this chapter a discussion of Cultural Studies and its usefulness in studying the relationship between the text and the audience has been given. The history reception studies was outlined alongside audience theory in order to contextualise and locate this research within a suitable position in relation to these approaches. The important of using the 'circuit of culture' when studying audiences and their meaning making process was discuss in detail with the aim of finding suitable way and approaches that could make the aim of this study fulfilled. The next chapter will deal with methods and methodologies that were used in collecting data for this research.

Chapter Four: Methodologies and Methods

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the qualitative approaches that were used in studying the meanings made by viewers of the South African Idol show in Joza. It differentiates between the qualitative methods and quantitative methods and explains why the former has been use for the purpose of this research. The chapter also gives and overview of how television audiences have been studied and how they continue to be studying in the field of media studies. A brief outline of reception analysis is give and why it is an important tool to use in qualitative research. Lastly, a discussion of Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA) as an interdisciplinary method is given and a reason for its application in this study is further explained. The chapter also explains why a purposeful selection of participant and snowball sampling were used to gather data and participants for this research.

In my study, I draw analysis from three seasons, those being season 11, 12 and 13. The reason from choosing these three seasons is that I started doing preliminary interviews and thematic analysis in 2015 when the show was in its 11th season. This began my initial phase of gathering all the data that I needed in order to conduct my research. In 2016, when the show was in its 12th season, I started observing how the contestants were viewing the show, the setting of the viewing contexts and the kinds of conversations that took place during the viewing process. In my observations, I would watch the show while taking notes of the themes and comments that arose during the airing of the show. In 2017, on the show's 13th season, I continued with my observations while holding focus groups meetings and one-on-one interviews with the audience. The advantage of looking at these three seasons has granted the researcher with enough knowledge in terms of the viewing context and the interpretations/meanings that the audience make from watching the local version of the show.

4.2 Qualitative Research

Since its inception, research in the communication and media industry has been concerned with the issue of impact or effects. The claim of communication research to disciplinary status and as well as to a wider political relevance, "comes from the concern of researcher trying to explain how the mass media make a difference in social life" (Jensen, 1987). This is the case in the study I am conducting as I will looking at the meanings that my research

subjects make from watching the *Idol* show and how does this show shape the way they view themselves and their social life within their lived context.

This study employs a qualitative method into studying the meanings made by the research subjects from watching the *Idol* show. Qualitative research is a method that involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter (Denzil and Lincon, 1994: 2). This means that as a qualitative researcher one is required to study things in their natural settings, with the attempt to make to make sense of and interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzil and Lincon, 1994; Strelitz, 2000).

A qualitative approach differs from quantitative in significant ways. The latter can establish regularities in social life, while on the other hand qualitative evidence can allow the process which link the variables to be revealed (Bryman, 1988). Qualitative research is regarded as messy and at times tends to involve false trails and blind alleys to a much greater degree than the idealisation implies (Bryman, 1988: 21). Bryman further explains:

> *The problem that much quantitative research is relatively unconcerned with theory implies that it is a weak account of how concepts come into being and also how they come to be subject to a measurement process. In fact, concepts provide a central focus for much social science research but they are loosely or tangentially related theoretical considerations* (1988: 22).

The role of a researcher using a qualitative approach is to "seek to preserve the form and content of human behaviour and to analyse its qualities, rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal transformations" (Lindlof, 1995:21).

Six focus group discussions were conducted and interviews were held when necessary in order for the respondents to expand further on what had emerged on the discussions. Furthermore, in order to get the respondents' independent inner views, I gave respondents questionnaires so that they can answer freely without being influenced by other participants in the focus groups. To protect the true identities of the respondents, they will referred to as "R" which stands for respondent.

4.3 Audience Theory

Audience research has been the central research interest of the empirical school (Jensen, 1987). Empirical researchers are overly and increasingly conscious of the limitations of the audience research tradition (Jensen, 1987). Traditionally, television audience study emerged out of a concept of mass audience and it is argued that the questions posed, placed the audience in a passive position (Press and Livingstone, 2001). In this regard, the audience was seen and treated as subjects of experiments and basically treated as exploited members of a mass group (Ibid). The criticism of this approach is that researchers focusing on the effects of communication cannot afford to ignore the nature of the communication system that is producing and delivering the message, which must also include issues of ownership (Rogers, 1985; Jensen, 1987). In other words the trend of divorcing the act of communication from its wider social context and political significance has come to be perceived as flawed tradition (Jensen, 1987).

The traditional theories of audience study focussed on the audience as passive subjects who just consume media messages and therefore act in a certain way thereafter. These traditional theories did not see audience as members who are willing and actively taking part in the communication process and therefore making their own meanings from the media messages they receive. The other downfall of this approach was to assume that the meanings made by the audience members from media messages are homogeneous in nature. Rather, the process of interpretation and meaning making depends on the individual viewer and his or her situational context plays a significant role in assisting the media consumers in interrogating and interpreting media messages. Press and Livingstone paint a clearer picture of this argument when they state:

> *In response to what researchers identified as an overly passive characterisation of the television audience, the tradition of an active audience emerged. This tradition posed questions about the audience which emphasised the creative response of audience members to the media question. According to theories of the active audience, sweeping generalisations about the dangers of the media had suffered from the lack of close attention paid to audience activity* (2001: 177).

Understanding the audience as active viewers who make sense of media messages allows the researcher to operate in an open system rather than a closed one. The open systems give credit to the fact that audience members come to the viewing space with different pre-existing

perceptions and lenses with which they see the world. It is these pre-existing ideas that they use when they try to make sense of media messages. In this way, they allow the researcher to get an emic perspective, which is the inner perspective of what the audience has about the media that they are exposed to.

> *The new type of close analysis, carried out by researchers trained in the traditions of qualitative and ethnographic methodologies, indicated that there were subtle aspects to the interaction between audience and the media that could add crucial information to both textual analysis as well as survey research. Audience members sometimes used media, and interpreted media, in diverse, unexpected, and creative ways that belied the hegemonic influence that textual analysts so often hypothesise* (Press and Livingstone 2001: 177).

4.4 Reception analysis

Due to the fact that my research focuses on the social production of meaning, this study is a reception analysis which is predicated upon a qualitative approach to research that includes both text and the socially situated audience (Jensen, 1986: 4; Schroder et al., 2003: 147). It is therefore important in this research that I focus on the audience (reception) and their social conditions (social context), because the meanings that they make from watching this show (*Idol*) are preceded by experiences which have occurred in their lived context. The reception analysis tradition emphasises the idea that human "subjects are engaged in the process of making sense of their own lives and that they continuously interpret, create and give meanings to their own actions" (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:28).

This approach is useful as it suggests that the everyday constructions and interpretations people make about their lives should be taken into consideration in any conception of social science research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:28). The main central aim of ethnographic reception analysis is therefore to understand the live experiences of the audience. Thus, it then has to engage with the situational contexts in which the media are used and interpreted (Moores, 1993).

4.5 Ethnographic Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis

The introduction of the ethnographic audience research is advantageous because of "its interdisciplinary, richness of its data and insights, its ability to integrate the study of text and viewer, and contextualisation" (Press and Livingstone, 2001: 176). To further explain the importance and usefulness of active audience research Press and Livingstone argue:

> *To begin, active audience research is significant because it challenged the grand claims about dominant ideology, media imperialism and media power. Hence, empirical audience research posed ideas of heterogeneity against homogenisation, of active against passive, of resistant against exploited audiences* (2001: 177).

It is for this reason that our approach to studying audiences should be flexible in order to accommodate the social conditions which affect peoples' everyday life. The modern communication media have become a major focus for research and are central to organising every aspect of contemporary life (Deacon et al., 1999). Thus when we study the modern communication media and its effects on audiences' life we should not do so in isolation from the social conditions that shape their lives. Researchers who set out to undertake research on communication as a social process with ideological ramifications cannot afford to ignore those audiences who are the manifest link between the media and the wider social processes (Jensen, 1987).

The research will be informed by a broad thematic content analysis of the show's episodes against which I will read the interviews. Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA) as it is known, is embedded in constant discovery and constant comparison of relevant situations, settings, styles, images, meanings and nuances (Altheide, 1987). The aim is to be systematic and analytic, but not rigid, thus allowing other themes, categories and variables to emerge throughout the study (Altheide, 1987; Lindlof, 1995).

A purposeful selection of households with DSTV and a snowball selection of young Joza adults who watch this show were used as sampling methods. These young adults will be interviewed by means of one-on-one interviews and semi-structured interviews. Prompts taken from certain moments of the show will be used in order create conversations about the aspects of the show. The interviewer will, where needed, guide the participants to talk about particular issues or topics relating to the program.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the importance using qualitative methods for the purpose of this research was explained. A clear outline of Ethnographic content analysis was given and an explanation as to why it was used, was also given. Purposeful selection and snowball tools were discusses and further an explanation of why they were used as sampling tools was also given. The next chapter will discuss the analysis of the interviews which were conducted with the participants for the purpose of this research.

Chapter Five: Analysis of interviews

5.1 Introduction

The study was conducted through various contact sessions. These sessions included focus group meetings, one-on-one interviews and questionnaires. The aim was to get the viewers' perceptions about the show and what meanings they make from watching the show in the natural context of the home.

5.2 Biographical information of the participants

The focus of the study was mainly based on South African youth situated specifically in Joza location, Grahamstown's biggest township. The township is just opposite the city centre and is characterised a high unemployment rate, lack of service delivery and residents' dependency on government for social grants and housing facilities. The interest in this location came from my engagement with people in township as someone who has lived in Joza. Through social engagements with other young people, I noticed that amongst other things that the youth in this area would converse about, the *Idol* show was amongst their favourite topics to discuss.

This came as no surprise to me as I have also noticed similar trends on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Fans of the show would use these two social media platforms every Sunday evening to discuss various aspects of the show. Such discussions would span from what the contestants are wearing to how talented they are on stage.

The age group for my interest in terms of the audiences' age group includes young people between the ages of 16 to 35. This is the core audience demographic, which reflects the age group targeted by the show for its contestants. *Idol* only allows young people from 16-35 to audition and compete.

The participants consist of both women and men who are either unemployed or at tertiary institutions, and young adults who are working or doing an internship programme. The majority of the people I interviewed are unemployed and seeking ways to better their lives. These young people are either trying to find work or are in institutions of higher learning.

Unlike conventional politics which limit young people's freedom of expression and participation in politics as argued in the above section, reality television shows offer young people a chance to participate in the conversations about 'realities' of the everyday life which are produced by the show. The level of interactiveness that these shows offers to its audiences offers the audiences an opportunity to engage in cultural conversations which become subjects of conversations amongst their peers. This can be attributed to the moral panic that comprises of a period of intense anxiety among particular sections of South African society, particularly young, black men, stereotyped as the "youth" (Seekings, 1991).

5.3 Focus groups, one-on-one interviews and questionnaires

As discussed the data by for this research was collected through a thematic analysis of the text, and by means of focus groups followed by interviews and questionnaires in order to get further information from the participants. For this research, I deemed it necessary to follow up the focus groups with interviews as they are useful for expanding and verifying was has been said in the focus groups (Gorman et al., 2005).

In order to familiarise myself with the research environment I started preliminary interviews with possible respondents in 2016 in order to identify possible factors that might help me further with my study. Since I used a snowball method for sampling, I began my interviews with two respondents who were also willing to introduce me to other like-minded people in terms of watching the show. I further asked friends who knew people who were fans of the show to introduce me and my sample grew. The minimum number of respondents I had planned to interview was five and the maximum was 30. If I fell short I knew I would be happy if I could end up with a sample of 15 respondents as it would at least be a 50% of the maximum number I had set out for myself at the beginning of the research project.

5.4 The viewing context

As discussed in my literature review that cultural studies proposes that the main aim of reception ethnography is to understand the lived experiences of the consumers. Thus it is important that this approach engages with the situational context of the everyday lives in which the media are used and understood (Moores, 1993). The respondents had this to say when asked about how the view the show:

R: *I like watching the show with my family.*

Respondent was more specific when responding.

R: *I watch the show with my sister, my mom and dad. My dad is the huge fan of the show*.

Other respondents also agreed that they watch the show with family members of their friends.

I then further ask the respondents why the enjoy watching the show with family and friends. It turns out that on Sundays at 5pm everyone is ready to watch *Idol*. As we know, the viewing context is a rule-based context in which power relations play a significant role. It is therefore important that we pay attention to the viewing context because we need to consider the issues of power that translate into this context like negotiations around programme choice (Strelitz, 2000). The respondents had this to say:

R: *I watch the show with my sister so that I can be comfortable and not be disturbed*.

R: *I watch the show with my family and friends because I like the comfort of being in my own space and I enjoy the heated conversations we have over the show and about the contestants*.

Other contestants also stated that stated that they like watching the show with their family and friends because the conversations and the debate that they engage in with the people they watch the show with. The viewing of television in this case is not disruptive of the social relations that exists between the family members and friends, but rather enhances the viewing experience into something that they enjoy. It is Strelitz (2000) that suggests that taking into consideration the household context in which the viewing takes place, enables us to move beyond the position that sees television as disruptive of family. Strelitz (2000) explains that the focus should be on the way in which television can be used in order construct occasions which enable various types of interactions to be pursued.

5.4.1Socio-economic conditions

As it was pointed out in chapter two, the socio-economic conditions of Grahamstown represent those that prevail in the broader society in South Africa ((Møller, 2010). What is interesting in the case of this study is the way in which the viewing experience of the show is negotiated by the fans of the show in this location. Due to high unemployment rates many households do not have a DTV connection because they cannot afford the monthly subscriptions. But this does not stop the minority group of fans from watching the show. What happens is that these fans gather together at a friend's house who has a connection and they watch from there. Those who are fortunate enough to have connections are in any case

always willing to invite and welcome those who do not have a connection to watch the show every Sunday. In this way, new social relations are created and new ways of interacting are pursued as Strelitz (2000) suggests.

This is evident in this study. Majority of the respondents mentioned that, as they watch the show with friend and family members, there people who do not have DSTV connection who usually come and watch they show with them. Through this interaction and watching the show with other, new social relations that would have not been formed if it were not for the interest in the show, are formed.

During the preliminary interviews, one of the respondents also suggested that they sometimes host a couple of friends on Sundays when they are watching the show. One of the friends they usually invite is someone whom her parent did not know, but through these constant visits, a new bond was created by these constant visits on Sundays.

The respondent explained that she has a friend who is a fan of *Idol*. However, because he (the friend) does not have access to DSTV, she then invited him over at her parents' house to come and watch the show. From then on, the parents were introduced to the friend who has now become a regular visitor on Sundays in order to watch the show.

5.5 Celebrity as a field for competition

In an interview of season eleven's top ten contestants, they shared their views about being in the show and the answer that they all came up with is that being on the show is very competitive. One of the contestants attested mentioning that the only competition on the show is himself, while others mentioned the names of the contestants which they thought were the strongest. Turner (2010) argues that the formats of reality television like *Idol* are all set out to produce what is deemed "the best" for their contestants. This way some sort of competitiveness is set out to be the most important factor in the competition.

On the case of *Idol SA* judge Randall Abrahams warned the contestants during the live performance shows by stating that: "At this stage of the competition, we expect nothing less from you but the best". Not only does this put pressure on the contestants, but it also makes them highly competitive with one another.

This indicates that being in the show is the survival of the fittest. Another contestant said that every single person taking part in the competition is "versatile". By saying this, the contestant

means that even though they are in a competition, there is something different that each contestant has which is different from what others have. He further stated that each contestant has an upper hand over the other, but no one really has a leverage on anyone.

Also in the case of contestants being interviewed. When one assesses the clothes they wear, the background in which the interviews are done is different as compared before they got to Sun City. In Sun City, everything is clear, the cameras and the lighting is done as if a well-known celebrity is going to perform. By doing so, the producers are setting the scene for both the viewers and the contestant. By so doing they are inventing in the viewer's mind an idea of what life can be once one becomes famous, which is totally different from the life the contestants lived before coming to the show. This is supported by Turner (2010) when he alludes that, the extent of control and convincing that the producers have to portray is important for the construction of desire and identity in the viewer's mind. What Turner suggests here, is the idea that producers will do almost anything in order to sell the notion or lifestyle of celebrity and glamour, something that the viewers should desire and aspire to.

The show's presenter and executive producer Proverb, said this about season thirteen:

"My thoughts on this season, I think it's been an incredible season. We've introduced a couple of new things including the mobile auditions that we did with Telkom. We've also introduced the golden disk in form of the judges. So we've added some nice dynamics, and I think from there, you can see from the pool of that we have. And also from the response from the viewership, from the numbers, from the votes and from the engagement. People are really loving and responding to the contestants. So, I think it's going to be another incredible season. We did promise to up it last season and I think we are really beginning to do so. So the pressure only now is on the contestants to keep bringing it week-on-week but so far, I think they are doing so"

What Proverb tells us in this interview is that, the show and it producers have done almost everything in their power to make the show sellable to the viewers. By introducing these Telkom Booths for auditioning in places where the Idol's judges do not visit, they have made it easier for the contestants to get to the show and by so doing also expanding their reach to the viewers. During the interviews, it also emerged that the viewers would watch the show because there are contestants that they know personally or from social media.

5.6 The *Idol* show, glamour and Sun City

5.6.1 The glamorous stage

When it comes to the show itself, the producers make sure that everything is on point. This includes the setting of the stage, the cameras and the equipment that is used. The glamorised effect of reality shows is what has led to an increase in television's demand of celebrities (Turner, 2010). This means the audiences are drawn to this sophisticated technology that is being used in the show and thus by doing so increase viewership ratings. This is how some of the participants responded when they were asked about the appealing stage used for performance and the technology used such as the sound equipment and other technical elements of the show.

R: *The stage platform has greatly improved from what it was before. This way, the contestants are given the time of their lives by being on that stage and each year it improves*.

As explained by the above statement, being on the *Idol* stage is a big deal for all the contestants. The stage on the show is closely associated with glamour, celebrity status and having achieved something great. Contestants on the show get to share the stage with some of the country's big artists, hence it such a big deal and an honour to be on that stage. One of the contestants in the top 3 had this to say on sharing the stage with one of the country's well established artists:

Contestant: *He is such a cool dude and he is so chilled. He is very wise and he knows a lot about the industry. For him to be such a young artist it is nice to get input from him because he understands me better*.

This response reiterates the importance of being on the Idol stage. It is also an opportunity to learn from the artists that are well established. The contestant was the youngest in season 13 as she was only 16 years old at that stage. Therefore, she appreciated sharing the stage with another younger artist as this made it easier for them to relate. She also says that the artist she performed with was "cool" and "chilled", basically meaning that the artist was relaxed and able to manage the nerves when he is on stage. This is something that the contestant had an opportunity to learn as an upcoming music idol.

Another respondent also mentioned that the stage and the lighting in the show were "beautiful". "I like it [the equipment used on stage], it is fancy and more like the one used in the American version of the show". The respondents are also of the view that the more advanced the technical aspect of the show are, the more they assist the contestant in winning the show. This is because the equipment and the personalised stages performances helps enhance the contestants' star presence on the stage.

It is Thompson (1995) who reiterates this point by stating that the technical and technological innovations have significantly changed how media messages are being circulated and received. The main reason is to create and interest in the viewers' mind by means of marketing these shows as glamorous and fun, hence producers spent so much time on these aspects to the last detail.

5.6.2 Sun City as a symbol for stardom

As discussed in chapter two in the section that discusses the history of the *South African Idol* show, after a round of auditions, contestants are elevated to the next level. This round sees the contestants travel from their homes to the glamorous venue of Sun City where they will compete further in order to enter the next level. It is also at this point of the competition where we start seeing the contestant being taught how to be an idol. In this round, contestants have to work with people who they have never worked with previously and form groups. They are taught to work under pressure as they will be expected to do so in real life.

Sun City is also the selling and the marketing point for the contestants who are partaking in the competition. In Sun City contestants are told how to win the audience over. It is also their very first chance to get to perform in front of the crowd which includes other contestants. One of the judges Unathi said this to the contestants about performing in front of a crowd:

At this stage of the competition you need to be serious. If you cannot in front of a small crowd which includes the people you will be competing against. Then you definitely will not make in the live shows where you have to perform in front of a big crowd being watched by million viewers.

To prove this point, one of the contestants who was performing in the group stage at Sun City forgot his lyrics. Though he had a good voice which the judges were looking for, he did not go through the next round of live shows because the judges felt that he was not ready for that kind of exposure. In this instance, Sun City becomes a crucial stage in the competition and in

the lives of the contestants as it is an opportunity for them to market and sell themselves to the viewers.

As an important turning point in the competition, Sun City therefore signifies three things. Firstly, the journey to Sun City tell the viewers that the contestant has the 'it" factor that is need to be an idol. Judges often congratulate the contestants for getting to that stage by saying they have proven that they have what it takes to be an idol. Secondly, it is proof that the contestants can be marketable and sold to the viewers. Somizi, the newest judge on the panel commented on one of the contestants' performance by saying that they have the "whole package". By whole package the judge alluded that the contestant can sing, has a dress sense, looks like a pop idol and has the perfect face and sense of style suitable for the television. Lastly, Sun City is important as it is the stage where the audience chooses whether they respond to you positively or otherwise. This stage of the competition is the last stage where the judges will ever have a say on whether or not a contestants stays or leaves the show. During this stage, the audience get to choose and vote for their own favourite contestants on the show. If the contestant does not prove to have the "it "factor, or to be marketable and convince the audience that they are worthy of being an idol, they are in danger of not being voted for by the viewers, with the result that they will be eliminated and leave the show.

The idea behind this kind of exposure is to present the contestants as commodities to the public. They are then subjected to the standard and idea of celebrity as seen fit by the producers of the show. This is purposefully done in the early inception and stage of the show so that whenever the winner is selected. They can already know the path that they are set out to walk in, a life of glitz and glam. This points out a n opinion as suggested by Curran and colleagues that the political economy studies pertaining to the media organisations must be related and supplemented by analysing the professional ideologies and practices which are found in the very same media organisations (Curran et al., 1981).

5.7 Contestants and the process of celebrification

The main idea of the show is to transform an ordinary person into a star. Wining the show comes with a lot of media publicity which greatly assists in the process of constructing the winner as a celebrity. This process of transforming an ordinary person into a star is a called "celebrification" (Driessens, 2012). The show achieves this aim through various means which include a complete makeover of the contestants. This is evident in the fact that, when the

contestants leave the show, they leave with a totally different identity than the one they came to the show with. The way they look and talk is different from when they began they journey.

To investigate the matter further respondents were asked about what they think about the contestants from the current and previous seasons. This was done in order to get the participants' inner perspective of the contestants and this is what they had to say.

R: My favourite contestants from season 11 was Siphelele and for season 12 was Karabo. Siphelele had a great voice and had a very good potential of winning the Idol show. Karabo is my favourite because he ended up winning the show. He is a very good vocalist and he was very accurate when it came to songs. He a good choice of songs.

R: My favourite contestant is Paxton. She is beautiful, she has the look and the voice. When she performs you can tell that she is feeling the song.

Based on these two statements a conclusion can be drawn that in the context of the show, the celebrification process constitutes of the two most important qualities that the contestants will have to show in order to win the show. Firstly, it is clear that one cannot achieve the celebrity status or the idol status without having the talent. The respondents complemented the vocals of their favourite contestants and stated it is one of the reasons they deemed them worthy of winning the show.

Other respondents also attested to the fact that the fact that when the contestants get to the top 16 really look transformed. This is the turning point in the competition because it is the point where the audience gets to have a say on deciding the fate of the contestants through the voting process.

R: *When the contestants were given the opportunity to be in the top 16, it really felt like they are ready for the industry.*

The respondent further explained that the reason that the contestants looked like they are ready for the industry is because of the intense transformation they had undergone. From being taught how to be on stage, the way they look to the way they pronounce certain words during their performances.

Another respondent had this to say about the rest of the contestants.

R: *the rest of the contestants do really good for themselves especially in the top 16. I also believe that the platform of being on Idol gave them good exposure when it comes to the music industry*.

This means that the publicity, exposure and celebrity status for some contestants goes beyond the boundaries of the show. It many cases as proven through my analysis of the show's past winners, it is evident that the contestants that leave the show in the top 10, top 5 or top 3 have had more success than the winners of the show. So this proves that the status of celebrity can last longer than the duration of the show if the contestant possesses the right qualities which attract the audience.

5.8 Contestants as subjects of celebrity

When the contestants participate in this show with hopes of becoming celebrities, they become constituted by the notion of fame and glamour. This is to say they become embedded to the process of celebrification with its power effects as imposed by the producers of the show. For them to part take in the competition it means that they have bought into the idea that the show will give them a change at stardom, thus become subjected to the rules and regulations as set out by the show. Respondents had this to say about contestants being subjected to the process of celebrity.

R: *I think the process they go through is fair because we need to see now and again in the good music they deliver to use as listeners.*

Another respondent said.

R: *Yes, the process they go through is fair because you cannot go to the industry without being prepared by being judged in terms of your voice*.

Both these responses indicate that the contestants have to subject themselves to a set of qualities and requirements in order to make it as celebrities in the entertainment industry. Ammy Allen (2002) reiterated Foucault's view on subjectivity by stating:

For Foucault, individual subjects/agents don't come in to the world fully formed; they are constituted in and through a set of social relations, all of which … are imbued with power. Thus, power is a key element in the very formation of individuals. For Foucault, individuals are subjected, and this in a dual sense; they are subjected to the complex, multiple, shifting

relations of power in their social field and at the same time are enabled to take up the position of a subject in and through those relations.

This is reiterated by the statement which makes it clear that subjectivity is directly linked to power (Newton, 1998). It is further suggested that the condition of becoming a subject is produced by particular discourse and practices (Henriques et al. 1984). The discourse of celebrity as produced by the show is a foundation in which the contestant are subjected to the notion of becoming an idol. Thus if the contestant do anything that falls outside of that discourse they are deemed not fit or worthy enough to become celebrities.

To show their seriousness about the journey to fame, contestants are also subjected to changing the way they look in order to convince the viewers that they can act the part of becoming a celebrity. In every season, contestants undergo a huge transformation in terms of the way they look. It is a prerequisite that before the live show every contestant get a make-over in order to transform them into new beings. Even their dress sense is changed through means of securing sponsorships with big retail companies which will sponsor the contestants with brand new clothes.

During rehearsals, the coaches that the contestants are allocated to go to the extent of even teaching the contestants on how to hold the mic. They are also spoiled with the services of a make-up artists, choreographers and vocal coaches. Though they have not made yet in the entertainment industry, these contestants are offered all the things that an establish celebrity would be granted with.

5.8 Effects of reality television on the 'ordinary'

As I have alluded earlier on the literature review section that, as Turner puts it, ordinary people have always been discovered. Turner (2006) explains that this discovery happens when 'ordinary' people are suddenly extracted from their everyday lives and they are processed or prepared for stardom. A good example where ordinary people have been turned into stars is the film and music industries. As mentioned by Turner, both these industries have incorporated processes of celebrification into their culture and mythologies as well as their industrial practices (Turner, 2006). Reiterating Turner's views, is Couldry (2006), who states that 'ordinary' people have never been desired more than they are currently. Turner (2006) suggests that we live in a state where the media, as a powerful mechanism of legitimisation, is being used in ways which are familiar in order to represent forms of behaviour and identity

that are motivate by the media's presence. As a result, this has led into a situation whereby fame is being talked about as a possible career by young people even though they have yet to decide in what area of public performance they might pursue their fame (Turner, 2006).

Chapter Six: Analysing various aspects of the show

6.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the analysis of the various aspects of the show. The analysis has been aligned with the theory and the literature that has been discussed in the literature review chapter.

6.2 The expert in *Idol*

6.2.1 Face, Identity and Im/politeness

"Face" is defined as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (Goffman, 1967:5). Goffman further argued that face can be seen as closely connected to/with one's emotions, rather than belonging to the individual, he claims that face is located in the flow of events in the encounter and becomes manifest only when only when these events are read and interpreted for the appraisals expressed in them (1967:7). Subsequent application of face to the theory of politeness was made by Brown and Levinson by presenting face as a cognitive and an individualistic that was influenced by a rational, rather than model person (1978/1987). The importance and usefulness of Brown and Levinson's conception is that it separated the conception of identity for face, making it easier to differentiate between the two. Furthermore this separation made it easy for researchers to examine the interconnections between identity con-construction and impoliteness in a media genre like talent shows such as *Idol*. The discursive/post-modern approach to politeness came with a renewed interest in conceptualisations of face. Other constructivist theories have argued that relational work should form part of the work on identity and further explained that face should be viewed as closely related to, and embedded, in identity (Blitvich et al., 2013).

This approach suggests that it is identities rather than the individuals who carry out social practices (Reckwitz, 2002). By so doing, this approach made it easier to understand that it is identities who have face. The constructivists further asserted that the assessments of im/politeness can be connected to the notion of identity including the notion of face (Blitvich et al., 2013). Blitvich (2009), argues that "impoliteness may ensue when identities and positioning that speakers are trying to construct are not verified their interlocutors".

6.2.2 Judges, viewers and their role(s) on the show

The judges occupy an important role in the show. Their role is often described as an interactional one as they lead by asking questions and summoning the contestants to sing while they are making their assessments (Blitvich et al., 2013). The contestants are required to sing in front of the judges while after judgement they have to argue their chance in the show. Blitvich argues that, one of the genre-specific features of *Idol* is that contestants have the opportunity to respond to the judges' assessment of their performance (2013). Though the judges' role in the in show is to give expert opinions, this roles is interestingly challenged during the live shows. During this phase of the show, the viewers have the ultimate say on which contestants make it to the next round. Therefore, a contestant actually win the contest against the expert judgement (Blitvich et al., 2013). The relation between the audience, contestants and the show remains an interesting field of research amongst some ranchers.

To put this into context, the respondents for this study have indicated that the judgement that the judges make in some case is not always a fair. Hence the intervention of the viewers is also needed at some stage in the show. Here are some of the responses about the way that judges assess the contestants.

R: *I don't think that the way of judging in the show is fair. It is not a good thing that the future and the fate of the contestants must lie in the hands of four people. It is a good thing that at some stage in the show, the audiences is asked to intervene*.

While the above response above praises the intervention of the audience's decision making power in the process of creating celebrities. Some respondent felt a different way.

R: *I honestly think that the judging in the show is fair because the judges show no favouritism*.

Another respondent agreed and had this to say.

R: *The way the judges assess the contestants is fair. The show is the image of how aggressive the music industry is, so the judges are okay for being tough on them*.

These responses are an indication that the respondents themselves feel different about how the judges conduct their assessments of the contestants. While other feel like their harsh criticism is much needed others are vying the viewers' power in the process of decision making. Hence then it is not a surprising issue that the contestant- judge and viewer judge

interaction is often found to be very confrontational at times, making this section of the show a crucial locus for identity negotiation (Holmes, 2004) and impoliteness (Blitvich et al., 2013).

The expert (the judge) in the show relates to the entertainment aspect of the show in two, sometimes overlapping, styles: "through harmonious, non-confrontational relations, as in some lifestyle shows: or through verbal conflict and confrontation, as in courtroom shows" (Lorenzo-Dus, 2008; Smith, 2010). With this being said, it is important to note that, in *Idol* the "generic rhetorical strategies of the judges are related to their expert identity and crucially involve the rating of contestants' artistic talent (Blitvich et al., 2013:103). In addition, different *Idol* judges relate can and do relate to the entertainment dimension of the show in different ways, an area which needs further research on its own.

To sum up, it would be useful to use Blitvich's views when he states that with a huge number of contestants claiming star quality and a panel of judges, alongside the viewers, voting in and out the contestants until the winner is selected, the show has turned the talent search into an entertainment battle that often includes impoliteness (Blitvich et al., 2013). Where impoliteness is genre-sanctioned as in the case of *Idol*, there have been a debates amongst researchers in that field whether or not the confrontainment within which impoliteness is recognised emerges and develops can still be considered impolite (Blitvich, 2009). To answer this, recent global explosion of confrontainment-based reality television genres signals the view that is recognised as such, even if it is genre-sanctioned and that it is used as an important attention-grabbing mechanism (Blitvich et al., 2013).

In the interview, the contestants also said that the part of the show they enjoy the most is the live show. They pointed out that they like the debate and the clashes that ensue between the contestants and the judges. In other cases the judges are in conflict with each other's assessments of the contestants, and this makes the show very interesting to the viewers.

6.3 Fame and Authenticity

When the contestants get to the live shows they are carefully styled and the viewers are shown clips of the contestants selecting their new outfits to complement their newly found status (Holmes, 2004). From this phase of the competition, it is evident that there is a shift from the visual codes of the of reality television to the aesthetic and technological form of light entertainment (Holmes, 2004). Some of the noticeable changes is that the camera starts

to capture the performance through swift panning aerial shots. The contestants in their performances now directly address their acts to the viewer rather than the judges (Holmes, 2004).

Giving a take on the UK version of the show, Raven (2005) argues that *Pop Idol* has shattered our cultural illusions of stardom in that its narrativised emphasis on the process of manufacturing mitigates against the investment of fantasy, desire and adoration. For pop to work, reality and fantasy must merge (Raven, 2005). In many cases in the competition, contestants and viewers are given the sense that, when the experts (the judges), are done working on the contestants they will become stars. This reiterates the idea that, the judges together with the producers of the show are the manufactures of stars, proving the fact that they are manufactured identities presented to the viewers as real and authentic.

Chapter Seven: Concluding remarks and summary of findings

7.1 Introduction

In conclusion, this research has provided details about what meanings young people in Joza Location make from watching the South Africa Idol show. The sampling of the contestants was done using a snowball sampling tool. Following a purposeful selection of the participants who watch the show. This strategy was used by the researcher in order to select participants who are knowledgeable about the show the research was conducted on.

The purposeful selection of the participants helped as it made it possible for the participants to engage meaningfully with the researcher on topics and themes relating to the show. Once a few participants were selected, participants referred the researcher to other contestants who are fans of the show and were willing to take part in this research. A further thematic analysis of the show's content was conducted in order to analyse the notion of celebrity that the notion of celebrity that the show was selling or promoting to the contestants and the viewers of the show.

7.2 Findings/conclusion

This study was built as a results of the researcher's interest in celebrities as influencers of young people. It was also fuelled by the researcher's passion for watching the South African *Idol* shows. To make sense of the meanings that the viewers male from watching the show, a Cultural Studies approached was employed as a means to guides the study. Audience and reception were used on order to make sense of the way in which audiences make meanings of reality television shows such as *Idol*.

The research recognises the fact the young people are always trying to find themselves. By this I refer to the fact that young people are living in a society whereby they are encountered by issues of unemployment inability to access institution of higher learning. As a result, majority of them resort to committing crime but others do try to build a better life for themselves by finding casual employment and finding other opportunities to better themselves.

The *South Africa Idol* show has become one of the opportunities and platforms that young people can use in order to better themselves. The winner is guaranteed a chance at stardom and in the entertainment industry and is sold the dream that their life will never be the same

again. Many young people across the country gather each season with hopes that their lives will be changed. This research has therefore proved two things in this regard. Firstly, this research had indicated that the viewers view the show as an opportunity to achieve upward mobility in life. The viewers watch the show with idea that the show promises the winner an exit from poverty into a better life. Secondly, this research has indicated that these young people have a sense of admiration and envy that develops from watching the show. These young people admire the promised dream that the idol will be living after the show. The prize money is and sponsorships that they winner gets, are amongst some of the things that make the viewers wish they were the actual winners.

The study also indicated that the show has offered an opportunity for new social relation to develop. In most cases the viewers do not have DSTV subscriptions, but this does not stop them from watching the show. This rather causes the viewers with no subscriptions to navigate their way of watching the programme which they do by asking neighbours or by gathering at a certain venue in order for them to watch the show.

It has also been proven in this study that the viewers are attracted to the show due to its entertainment factor. But this is not the only thing that they are watching the show for. In the interviews many participants have agreed that the other interesting thing about the show is the clashes amongst the contestants. The competitive nature of the show makes it a worth-while for the contestants. Many of whom believe that the reality of the world we are living in requires a person to be able to fight for what they want. These research participants also feel like the judges are not being unfair to the contestants when they are being harsh to them but rather they are treating them the very same way they will be treated in the entertainment industry. As a result, these participants express that the contestants should be grateful for being on the show, as this is a platform to practice for what is yet to come in their lives as celebrities.

The study has also showed that the show showcases a glamorised idea and construction of being a celebrity. If does not foreground the fact that celebrities are also ordinary people contestants are always shown performing on stage wearing new clothes every time during the live shows. This is also done through means of glamorising the stage that they are performing on. This construction of celebrity is somehow misleading the viewers as it present the celebrity as an individual who is living a life free of stress. The downfalls, though they

happen, are not made to be the point of focus in the show because they will distort the kind of celebrity construction that the show is selling to the viewers and the contestants.

In addition to these findings, the study found out that the idea of stardom is represented by a physical place which is Sun City. In Sun City the contestants are required to perform all kinds of challenges which will see them getting to the next stage of the competition. While this is the case, contestant s who fail to make it to the next stage pride themselves for having reached this point of the competition. Though they fell short, it is a big thing for them to reach the Sun City phase. Also for those who pass the challenges set out for them in Sun City, this becomes and achievement for them, having made it through to the next round despite the odds. This has proven that reaching this stage the contestants feel a sense of accomplishment and that this place of stardom, will hold memories of sentimental value for them.

It is not doubt that the production of the celebrity and hybrid reality television offer a form of personal validation (Turner, 2006). The young people who watch the South African Idol turned to look at their personal lives in relation to the show. As majority of them have expressed in the interviews and focus groups that they would like to be successful in their careers one day. To them, the definition of success is to be a well-known person or an expert in what you do best. Just like the person who is going to the Idol competition, they would have gathered the knowledge of the industry and the skills that are needed to thrive by the time they leave the show. For them, being a celebrity, being famous and well-known is as good as being successful. This reiterates Turner's point which I made earlier where he suggests that, research on celebrity culture suggests that young people aspire to be famous even though they might not be sure in which area they would want to acquire their fame in (Couldry, 2003).

To further expand, it has been argued that reality formats like Idol, issue an open invitation to its participants (both contestant s and viewers) look at their personal everyday life/reality with that which is created by television (Turner, 2006). For example, on the Idol show, contestants are always taught to behave in a certain way, to pronounce word in particular manner when they art singing. Due to the fact everyone on the show wants to be a winner, they are therefore forced to fall into those conventions and rules that have been put for them to follow all in the name of fame. It is no surprise therefore that the viewers also turned to follow some of these rules as they see themselves as part of the Idol family. Turner (2006), further suggests that, the fact that the opportunity idolise the reality television life is offered

and accepted as a validation and empowering process, shrinks the distance between the two dimensions of everyday life – "on TV" and "not on TV" even though everyone is aware of how constructed the process is.

With that being said, Couldry (2003) offers a beautiful and clearer explanation when describing the appeal of such a process. The explanation starts by describing the place that the media occupies within systems of identity and desire among young people by saying, the media as a powerful tool has a commercial imperative rather than an ideological or political one. The implications of this is that, when the media occupies the centre of symbolic production, the kinds of realities they offer as forms of identity within the shows must have a powerful social and cultural impact (Couldry, 2003). It is for this reason Andrejevic (2004) argues that, the surveillance culture both TV and on the streets, has made the experience of being watched into a mind-set that invites a continuous reflection on the performance of self and of authenticity especially for the younger generation.

In conclusion, the meanings of celebrity made by young adults of Joza from watching the *Idol* show is centred around three connotations. First of all to be a celebrity means that you are worthy of attention. These participants view celebrities as people who are worthy of being watched and desired. As evident in the case of *Idol*, contestants perform every Sunday on television in order to be please and bring pleasure to the viewers. In actual fact, this means that there the *Idol* contestants cannot be stars without spectators (and being watched). Secondly, the viewers locate being a celebrity or being a star closely to being successful. This means that a person cannot be a star or a celebrity without having any claim to fame, something that they have done and earned them their claim to fame and success. In the case of the show this would mean being the winner of the show's season. Thirdly and lastly, the competitive nature of celebrity proves to be an interesting factor the participants deemed important in the constructions of celebrities. In this case, this means that in order for one to become a celebrity they must fight with all they have in order to occupy their spot in the entertainment industry. This is also evident in the show by the amount of competition that is visible amongst the contestants. Each contestant is willing to do anything in order to be ahead of others. As the judges would normally put it in the show when they are addressing the contestants, that the contestant who has more chances of winning the title and be crowned an idol is the contestant that is willing to do everything in their power in order to stand out of the rest of the crowd.

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