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WHAT ABOUT MEN? GENDERED RECEPTION OF AN EDUTAINMENT DRAMA

L. Meghan Mahoney

ABSTRACT

An estimated 34 million people globally are living with HIV, with Sub-Saharan Africa being the most severely affected area, with nearly 1 in every 20 adults diagnosed (UNAIDS, 2012). Botswana experiences one of the highest adult prevalence rates in Sub-Saharan Africa, with almost 100,000 children, in a country of only two million people, having lost a parent to the virus (Botswana Country Report, 2010). Makgabaneng is a serial radio soap drama that addresses critical HIV/AIDS awareness and behaviour change issues in Botswana. This study aims to understand how fans of the programme understand the storyline that presents narratives where female characters are portrayed as educated, independent and confident individuals. Results of 42 in-depth interviews with self-defined fans of the drama show that males are constructed as uneducated, irresponsible and dependent in society. It is recommended that Makgabaneng address this inequity by creating a more balanced number of positive and negative female and male characters.

Keywords: *audience reception, entertainment-education, gender, MARCH model, Botswana, Makgabaneng.*

I. Introduction

Makgabaneng is a serial radio soap drama that addresses critical HIV/AIDS awareness and behaviour change issues in Botswana. Based on the MARCH strategy (Modeling and Reinforcement to Combat HIV/AIDS), this drama aims to help change risky behaviours associated with HIV/AIDS through modeling and reinforcement (Galavotti, Pappas-DeLuca, & Lansky, 2001). Specifically, *Makgabaneng* aims to provide listeners with higher levels of HIV knowledge that will lead towards prevention and less stigmatizing attitudes towards those affected by HIV/AIDS.

One of the key cultural challenges in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Botswana is gender inequality. In Botswana, young men aged 15-24 hold a 5.7 percent HIV prevalence rate, and young women aged 15-24 hold a 15.3 HIV prevalence rate (PEPFAR, 2011). For communication professionals, combating HIV/AIDS with communication campaigns presents behavioural challenges regarding human behaviours involving interaction between unequal parties. Botswana struggles with culturally based social and economic disparities that are linked with escalating rates of male violence against women (Mookodi, 2004a). An estimated 3 out of 5 women have been victims of violence (Mookodi, 2004b). This violence increases prevention challenges because response to the disease involves adoption of behaviours that depend on the compliance of both men and women. In a patriarchal system struggling with domestic violence, this can become quite challenging.

For example, if a husband is being secretly unfaithful to his wife with someone who is HIV positive, than she may still be at risk without engaging in any risky behaviours

herself. Targeting challenges deal with populations that are often hard to reach by means of conventional media channels. Some of the most infected regions are rural and exclusive in nature, especially in countries such as Botswana, where many urban dwellers and migrant labourers return to their village of origin when they fall ill (FAO, 2011).

Based on this understanding, the purpose of this study is to provide an audience reception analysis of gender representations found in *Makgabaneng*. Through 42 in-depth interview discussions with fans of the drama, a better understanding is gained of how fans of *Makgabaneng* interpret and make sense of societal gender roles through the edutainment series.

II. Literature Review

Edutainment (or entertainment-education, E-E) is one way that Botswana and other countries around the world fight against public health challenges. E-E seeks to capitalize on the popular appeal of entertainment media to show individuals how to live safer, healthier and happier lives (Pant, Singhal, & Bhasin, 2002). It involves a process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate audiences in order to increase knowledge about an educational issue (Singhal, Cody, Rogers & Sabido, 2004). E-E programs are able to stir audience emotions and retell narratives until the stories become popular narratives of a culture.

Two organizations drove the beginnings of E-E projects: Population Communications International (PCI), a non-governmental organization from New York City, and Johns Hopkins University's Center for Communication Programs (JHU/CCP). Since these initiations, media professionals all over the world have recreated various E-E strategies.

Most of these strategies exist in the form of radio and television soaps that incorporate health-related messages in their storylines. Viewers of these programs are able to enjoy conflict-filled, suspense dramas while simultaneously receiving education regarding their personal health. E-E has spread to over 100 projects in 50 countries (Singhal & Rogers 2003).

Edutainment holds great potential in advancing public health messages across a vast audience. Edutainment research demonstrates how initiatives increase members' awareness, attitudes and behaviour toward a socially desirable end. It influences the audience's external environment to help create the necessary conditions for social change at a system level (Singhal, Cody, Rogers, & Sabido, 2004). It triggers and facilitates public debate and discussion about difficult issues and helps mobilize social groups toward individual, community and policy action (Tufté, 2005; Usdin, Scheepers, Goldstein, & Japhet, 2003). Many organizations have adapted the theoretical roots of edutainment towards their own public health strategies. One such example is the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Behavioural scientists from the CDC's Division of Reproductive Health have built upon edutainment literature to develop the MARCH strategy, which is being implemented in four countries, Botswana, Ethiopia, Zambia and Guyana (CDC, 2009). MARCH strives to provide alternative narratives in which individuals have control over their sexual and reproductive behaviour (Galavotti, Pappas-DeLuca, & Lansky, 2001). Through this process, behaviour change does not take place simply by including a desired messaging in these narratives. Instead audiences must identify with the storylines with

which they are engaged. Identification is established through positive, negative, and transitional character development strategy.

Narratives built with the MARCH strategy, like Botswana's *Makgabaneng*, should include a positive role model who consistently makes responsible health decisions and a negative character that consistently engages in risky and irresponsible behavior (Galavotti, Pappas-DeLuca, & Lansky, 2001). Transitional characters are also included, who may start making risky decisions, but evolve over the series into an empowered, knowledgeable, and positive character. These dynamic transitional characters most likely serve as the most identifiable role models for audience members, as they are neither consistently positive nor consistently negative. The MARCH model demonstrates how audiences internalize these challenges, apply them to their own lives and develop solutions through interpersonal interactions. This process hinges on audiences modeling behaviours exhibited by the positive characters, but could become problematic if audiences find negative character behaviours endearing (Galavotti, Petraglia, Harford, & Kraft et al, 2005).

Few scholars have examined the impact of *Makgabaneng's* implementation of the MARCH model on its audience. In 2004, Pappas-DeLuca, Kraft, Galavotti et al. (2008), conducted a cross-sectional study to understand how successful the programme was in encouraging listeners to know their HIV status. Researchers conducted face-to face interviews in 1,730 households. They asked respondents about the frequency, duration, discussion and identification with *Makgabaneng*. Their findings suggest that the popularity of the show, along with intermediate outcomes related to HIV testing, show that the drama is a, "promising medium to facilitate behavior change in Botswana" (p.

503). However, this study had many limitations, including the assessment being conducted before the behaviour change modeling process occurred on the program. During this time, characters in the *Makgabaneng* storyline had not yet completed their positive transition by getting tested for HIV, an imperative piece of the MARCH strategy.

Cole (2005) explored the development of *Makgabaneng* through interviews, surveys, personal observations and promotional materials to demonstrate the positive impact it has in promoting preventative education in Botswana. During this project, members of the *Makgabaneng* staff consistently stated that the trajectory of the serial drama would continue until the war on HIV/AIDS is over (p. 11). However, none of these studies examines the role that gender plays in fan identification with characters. A description of key characters within the *Makgabaneng* narrative is illustrated in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Key Makgabaneng Characters

Gorata	A young positive female character dealing with the pressures of transitioning through school and young relationships. Godfrey’s love interest.
Godfrey	A young positive male character dealing with the pressures of transitioning through school and young relationships. Gorata’s love interest.
Boramane	A young negative adult male character who is always looking for a good time. This character is dealing with the pressures of fidelity, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, making money and HIV.
Opelo	A young transitional female adult character dealing with the pressures of fidelity, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, making money and HIV.
Cecilia	An adult positive female character who is struggling to balance the pressures of raising her children and dealing with her unfaithful husband, Oteng.

Oteng	An adult negative male character who is unfaithful to his wife, Cecilia, and is constantly trying to hide his affairs from family members and friends.
Mma Meshack	An elder positive female character who is constantly caring for her husband, Rra Meshack, who is HIV+.
Rra Meshack	An elder transitional male character that is HIV+ and wants to be healed through traditional medicine.

Very little audience reception research based on participatory dialogue exists. Even fewer attempts have been made to conduct audience reception studies through monitoring and evaluation efforts to advance public health. Petraglia (2007) demonstrates how narrative interventions are grounded in social-cognitive theory that hinge on the power of storytelling, but are often designed to seek direct behavioural effects. These objectives are easy to construct and measure through quantitative means, but should be evaluated by examining the variation in an intervention's impact on cognition towards individual behaviour and broader populations (Petraglia, 2009)

It is important that this study proves itself as an extension of the small body of literature that does exist. Two notable examples that this study is modeled after include the Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication (Chikombero, 2009), and Tufte's (2008) research *Fighting AIDS with Edutainment: Building on the Soul City Experience in South Africa*. Soul City has proved itself as being committed to monitoring and evaluation efforts in order to better understand health and development communication through media for social change interventions over the past 15 years (Usdin, Scheeper, Goldstein, & Japhet (2003). Tufte's work further demonstrates the importance of involving audiences in all stages of communication strategies for public health through extensive participatory monitoring and evaluation efforts.

III. Methodology

During the summer of 2009, the American researcher was assigned field placement working as an intern with *Makgabaneng*. The internship lasted for four weeks, and during that time, she was able to work and interact with all five of the NGO departments: administration, writing, production, reinforcement and monitoring and evaluation. This experience provided insights into the culture and everyday challenges of putting together an edutainment drama.

Once the researcher returned from Gaborone, she had approximately 11 months to formulate a research design for the audience reception study. The larger research project was completed through triangulation methodology, including field visits, participant observation, in-home visitations, personal interviews, focus group discussions and a survey distributed to fans of the program. Results for this specific study are based solely upon the in-depth interview discussions.

Prior to data collection, the researcher undertook a careful reading of the *Makgabaneng* script. As Tufte (2000) explains, the researcher must examine various dimensions of intertextuality, and distinguish different layers through primary, secondary and tertiary texts. Through this type of "genre analysis," a more holistic understanding of their relationship may be formed. McKee (2003) explains how audience interpretations are produced and negotiated through intertextuality. No media live in isolation from others, and so it proves futile to study them accordingly. The researcher read episodes 865-896 of *Makgabaneng*. These scripts were the most recent broadcasts near the time of data collection. Therefore, it can be assumed that events going on in these scripts serve as

the most recent frame of reference for fans of *Makgabaneng*. The events retailed in those episodes are the most recent events that fans of the drama referenced in the interviews. The researcher took great care in ensuring that this reading extended beyond the author's themes and interpretations of one text, but also includes genre, cultural context and the media setting where these negotiations take place. This was done through incorporating many elements of Tufte's (2000) methodology, which looks at various dimensions of intertextuality, and distinguishes different layers through primary, secondary and tertiary texts. Petraglia's (2007) research reinforces the importance of considering differences between messaging and providing alternative worldviews in monitoring and evaluation efforts. These various dimensional readings helped the author identify the most salient messages found within the drama itself, allowing the researcher to best understand the storylines of which audiences speak.

There are many challenges for an American scholar completing a reception study of a Botswana E-E drama. All script readings were completed with the final English phase of the script writing process. It is not until the final stage that scripts are transcribed into Setswana, Botswana's primary language and the broadcast language of *Makgabaneng*. Therefore, exact dialogue exchanges between characters were not a part of the text reading, just summative frameworks. This provides its own limitations, but the researcher is confident that in addition to informant consultants, it was similar enough to the final script to understand characters and storylines. Additionally, scripts were examined throughout the entire data collection process for additional insights and were discussed with native Botswana citizens for secondary interpretations and clarifications.

Results of this analysis are based on 42 in-depth interviews with fans of *Makgabaneng*. It makes sense to turn to interpersonal dialogue when interested in the audience sense-making practice. The purpose of these interviews was to help understand self-defined fans of the drama perspectives regarding their interaction and interpretation of gender roles portrayed in *Makgabaneng*. Participation in the study was voluntary, and sampling recruitment was initially done through a key informant in Gaborone, Botswana.

Participants were mostly recruited from urban centres in Botswana, with great care taken to include areas where more rural residents may travel. This includes the bus station, local markets and shopping malls. The researchers also traveled to a nearby rural village to visit tertiary institutions, high schools and local neighbors. Purposeful sampling was also taken to include participants across four age group categories: 16-19, 20-24, 25-34, and 35-49, as well as balanced between male and females (22 females, 20 males). Respondents were asked their age, number of family members, place of origin and number of years in the area, as well as various questions regarding their media use and experience with *Makgabaneng*. A complete copy of the interview guide can be found in Appendix A.

The key informant in this study was able to coordinate five initial interviews with individuals she knew were fans of the drama. Once those interviews were completed the researcher used snowball sampling to find others in the area who were also fans of the drama. Therefore, most interviews were conducted with individuals residing in an urban setting. The researcher traveled to outside centres of the city to find additional fans to interview that were not a part of the snowball sample. This is where the majority of rural

residents were recruited for interviews. However, it should be noted that there is not a balance between urban and rural respondents.

Open-ended interviews were conducted by the American researcher with a Botswana translator present and lasted between 20 and 45 minutes in length. Participants were excluded from the sample if they did not self-define as regular fans of *Makgabaneng*. Therefore, individuals noting that they "used to watch," or "watch once in awhile" were not included in this study. Most interviews were conducted in English, as the majority of respondents were fluent in both Setswana and English. However, a translator from the University of Botswana accompanied the researcher on all interviews, and translated when necessary. Interviews were anonymously recorded based on the recommendations and approval of the Institutional Review Board at Ohio University, as well as the Botswana Ministry of Health. They were then transcribed and analyzed using the ATLAST.ti qualitative data analysis and research software. Nine themes were found in this analysis; the theme of gender identification is the focus of this study.

IV. Results

Through interview discussions it became clear that female fans of *Makgabaneng* strongly identify with characters that they believe are fulfilling societal roles and expectations of reality. This section aims to understand how female audiences identify with female characters in the story, and what these identifications are teaching them about how a woman should act in society. This proves especially important, as *Makgabaneng* producers have striven to create characters and storylines with the

intention of empowering Botswana women. This section aims to understand if the stories of *Makgabaneng* help rewrite narratives of the patriarchal society.

One of the most consistent themes found within in-depth interview discussions is how admirable it is for a woman to focus on education, rather than relationships. In reference to the story of Gorata, one fan said:

She is in a relationship now. She does not always have time to concentrate on her relationship because she also has to concentrate on her education, and that is why I like it. It makes the story more realistic. I would like to be like them, but I would like to be like the young girl who is giving her studies big time and listening to her parents.

(personal communication, May 28, 2010)

Also talking of Gorata, another fan said:

I think I myself identify with it ... There is this young girl who is finishing school getting ready to go to tertiary school, and I think I identify myself with that person because she is so excited. Now I am going to focus, and I am going to teach. I think she found personal identity. To most, she was a young girl who knew what she wanted. Though she knew what she wanted, she began accepting other things, like love and all those things. You know how love changes things and brings your dignity and integrity down. I just like the character (personal communication, May 26, 2010).

One fan explained in great detail the story of a female character whose boyfriend proposed marriage. She really admired the way the female character turned him down.

This shows a clear contrast to the admiration many traditional audiences felt towards Cecilia for being so faithful to her cheating husband. It represents a sign of progression regarding the independence of women in society. "He told her to drink it, and she drank it, and then she found the ring. He asked her to marry him, and she said she told him, 'No.' She was not prepared. I liked the response" (personal communication, May 25, 2010).

The youngest teen focus group talked of previous *Makgabaneng* characters that did not focus on education and ended up regretting their decision. "Prioritizing your life and education is the most important thing. When you are in a relationship, you get to choose what goes on, because she [the previous character in *Makgabaneng*] did not know [about the high risk behaviors of her partner], now she regrets all the opportunities she had" (personal communication, May 28, 2010).

It is clear through these discussions that male characters stand in the way of a woman's success. While education should be promoted in storylines, it is important to note that this same focus was not evident in discussions with male fans. It seemed to be much more of a priority and public conversation between female fans of *Makgabaneng*.

Another theme that emerged during these discussions was the importance of being able to support yourself, so that you do not engage in transactional and inter-generational relationships. One fan said:

There was this girl who was dating this old man. Then, the uncle [of the girl] came in and demanded the guy [the girl's partner] to buy him a bottle of whiskey or something. The uncle asked that person [the girl], "Tell this guy to buy me a bottle of

whiskey." Then, the guy gave the young chick money so that he [the uncle] can buy the alcohol. (personal communication, May 27, 2010)

When asked if this story accurately depicts what goes on in households, the aforementioned fan replied:

It is real. It is happening ... I can say that our parents sometimes contradict [how we should combat] the problems of HIV and AIDS. It is like they are supporting [high risk behaviours]. If my mother finds that I am dating an old married man, she should tell me, "Do not do that," and not to ask me to ask that old man for money so that we can support ourselves. (personal communication, May 27, 2010)

Females in these discussions talked of how tradition and government were to blame for many of the gender inequalities. One respondent told her story of how she made choices in life:

We sell ourselves so we can feed these kids we got from having unprotected sex. The minute you drop out, unless a social worker comes and says you can get free food every month, nobody works to empower me. Nobody says, "My child, do you want to go back to school?" Even if I do want to go back to school, I am always going to be compared to the smart ones ... This is why we have the problem of me, a 19 year-old, who has four kids. You ask me where I got four kids from? I am telling you, "I need to survive. That is why I sell myself to a taxi driver." (personal communication, May 28, 2010)

Women told narratives of how female characters in the show knew what was best for them, and if they acted out [through negative behaviours] because of pressures from men

or those in power. A counseling professor from the University of Botswana talked about the change in Botswana society for women, and how even though they are becoming more educated and independent, traditional mindsets are standing in their way.

Women are given pastoral responsibilities, but they are still expected to play the role of a mother, a wife, an aunt, a grandmother, ... and also the day to day roles such as cooking, taking care of the children and guiding them, etc. Those roles are still expected to be done by women in society. (personal communication, May 28, 2010)

The women interviewed very much felt as though female characters in *Makgabaneng* were smarter and made better decisions than male characters. However, it was unclear whether they also believed this was true in real-life. One fan describes her favourite character, Mma Meshack as follows:

When she acts, you feel like listening. For example, in life you should advise your husband of what to do and what not to do...I like the way Mma Meshack does things, especially when it comes to her husband. Sometimes her husband forgets about his ARVs and goes for more traditional doctors. (personal communication, May 25, 2010).

Many others also admired Mma Meshack's actions. One fan stated, "She encourages the husband to take the ARV and take care of himself because he is HIV positive." Another participant said about Mma Meshack, "She is quite aggressive. She protects what she believes in" (personal communication, May 27, 2010). "They [producers of *Makgabaneng*] encourage a woman to stand up for herself" (personal communication, May 25, 2010).

Consistently across age groups, female characters were most likely to be cited as the most knowledgeable and better decision makers. However, there was a clear distinction between these sentiments regarding older respondents and younger respondents. Younger generations seemed to feel as though these strong female characters held control over their lives and decisions. They grew frustrated with characters like Cecilia who were educated but still not taking control of their own sexual health. Older generations also believed that the female characters proved more knowledgeable than the male characters, but tended to still believe that they must yield to the wishes and desires of the men. This suggests that the younger Botswana generation is growing up feeling more empowered than previous generations.

The female participants among the respondents of the oldest age group were asked how a strong female character in *Makgabaneng* would act. One answered that she would "encourage women to use a condom, even with husbands who have developed the infection and teach basic prevention skills" (personal communication, May 28, 2010). This demonstrates how even though women in society have the knowledge of how they can protect themselves, it becomes difficult when men hold the majority of power in a patriarchal society. Therefore, broader societal equality issues must be addressed in the storyline, not just individual education lessons. A University of Botswana professor explains:

Women are becoming more proactive. They are able to relay into practices what they are learning. They are able to say 'no' and accept no other answer. Of course, they are learning to have a positive self-image about themselves, and this is the most crucial

thing. They also need to know that a woman can be a leader and can achieve her dreams (personal communication, May 28, 2010).

Based on these discussions, it appears as though *Makgabaneng* has been successful at presenting narratives where female characters are educated, independent and empowered. Through these storylines, men and government powers have been identified as antagonistic to these narratives. The hope is that over time, these empowerment messages will lessen gender inequalities in Botswana. Now, that more is understood regarding how female characters in the show are constructed, it is time to turn attention towards male characters.

While *Makgabaneng* has been successful at presenting narratives where female characters are educated, independent and empowered, men have been constructed as uneducated, irresponsible and dependent in society. A counseling professor at the University of Botswana explains how an excess of female empowerment campaigns in Botswana has led to little support for men in society when they may actually be in more need of such programs:

Males have a harder time because females are more open. A male in this society is expected to be a man. They are not expected to cry. They are expected to be strong and always show they are leaders, so it is difficult for them to talk, but for young girls they are more social (personal communication, May 28, 2010).

Men in *Makgabaneng* are presented as cheaters, thieves, alcohol abusers and drug users. Female characters are constantly coming to their rescue and forgiving them for their actions. Male fans of the show retell the story of some of their favorite characters:

There is a problem with a family, a man and his wife. At the same time, this man goes cheating around with his wife. There is another family where a male is at a tertiary school. He is married and unfortunately this man also is a womanizer as well (personal communication, May 26, 2010).

Another fan describes his favorite storyline by saying:

There was a man who was beaten by the boyfriend of his girl. He has impregnated another lady, but [his] wife is at home. She [The girlfriend] is out of the house and is hiding. I think someone, somehow, somebody is sick and is trying to tell his friend that it [multiple partners] is not bad. You find that most of them are engaged in two or three affairs. In most cases, they are impregnating those other ladies and are not using condoms, and that is the only way they are spreading HIV. What they are saying is what is happening. I like it. When the wife goes out of the house I wonder what he is going to say (personal communication, May 27, 2010).

This is not only a problematic depiction of men in Botswana society, but it is also troubling the way some respondents agree with the negative representations. The biggest fear of these consistent negative storylines is that they desensitize the audience towards negative male behaviour and normalize it for the audiences. They may watch the storyline and think, "Everyone else is doing it; I might as well too." One male fan said, "The representations are fair. They reflect how we cheat on wives. It is fair." Another participant agreed that the representation of Boramane's drug abuse was accurate because "boys do not smoke cigarettes. They smoke weed, and abuse alcohol. Boys have a challenge. They have this competition [about] who can have more girlfriends. It is like

the person who has sex with his girlfriend wins and gets famous." (personal communication, May 28, 2010)

If audiences feel that this representation of men consistently engaging in bad behaviour is accurate, then they may begin to construct this negative behavior as the way men do and should behave in society. Moreover, this representation clearly does not represent the variety of roles men play and how audiences perceive them.

While negative female characters, such as Opelo, seem to progress over time, the same does not seem to be true for the males:

There was a time when a male character had a car accident with a family car. He took it on his own while he was not allowed to do so. He had an accident and the sister who was with him got her neck broken. After some time, my expectation was that the character would develop and learn from his mistakes, but it seems as though he was going down and down and down. Right now, he is a drug dealer and is doing all the bad things you can think of. (personal communication, May 26, 2010)

In fact, the most transitional male character seems to be Oteng who was once a caring, loving husband and is now engaged in extramarital affairs. His story was repeated often among participants when asked which male represented the biggest issues facing men in Botswana society.

Through interview discussions, it became clear that male audiences of *Makgabaneng* were in search of a positive male role model. One young male respondent identified the female character of Gorata as the character most like himself. He said, "Though she is a

girl, I identify with her because she is going to tertiary school and is preparing [for her future] ... I just like the character" (personal communication, May 26, 2010).

What alternative characters would fans of *Makgabaneng* be interested in seeing? Another fan said he would like to see:

one of the responsible guys who make positive impact and try to drive positive messages in society. I try to do that. I try to lead an exemplary life myself. I would say that is what I relate to most of the time. (personal communication, May 25, 2010)

Including a positive male role model in the story could make a difference to its audience. Through interview discussions, one participant talked of a character that used to play on *Makgabaneng*, but since has been written out.

There is a guy who was going to the university, but I remember listening to him back in the days when I was in high school. I remember listening to him and thinking, 'This is the guy whose life I want to emulate. He studies well; he works hard; he does well at school; he is very good at home; he is in a very stable relationship with his girlfriend in which he does not cheat.' (personal communication, May 25, 2010).

Unfortunately, that character is no longer portrayed in the *Makgabaneng* narrative.

Many participants recognize the difference between the way female and male characters are portrayed in the programme:

I think at times the defamation of the male character, while yes I will not discard the fact that it does portray elements within us, at times I think it is too much at the expense of men. The women are presented as perfect; they are smart people ... Women

also have problems. Women can do some things that are outward as well ... I think that is why I identify with the female character. (personal communication, May 26, 2010)

Another fan talked of how more positive representations of men may actually increase male ratings. Retaining a strong male audience is something that *Makgabaneng* has struggled with since its 2001 inception.

There should be a proper representation of each sex. Women identify with the programme and love it. If you do not identify with the programme, there is no way you will love it. Thus, if you put some elements of men [that are positive]; of course, not all men within the programme should be good or all the females be good, but if they could put key people that can perfectly represent men, that way I think men can come and say, 'I love this programme because I identify myself with this person.' It will properly represent us.

V. Discussion

Based upon the most salient messages found within these 42 in-depth interview discussions, it appears as though *Makgabaneng* has been successful at empowering females in presenting narratives where female characters are portrayed as educated, independent and confident individuals. It is important to note how unique these depictions of strong women are to the Botswana-produced media culture. Norna, Rama & Ndlov (2009) examined gendered representations across media houses and found that there are significantly more men than women overall, and that gendered representations mirrored Botswana's patriarchal society. It is unusual that in *Makgabaneng* men and government powers have been identified as antagonistic to narratives. This has been

accomplished by constructing males as uneducated, irresponsible and dependent in society. This is a troubling depiction as very little support or counseling programs exist in Botswana when compared to campaigns designed for female empowerment. It is recommended that *Makgabaneng* addresses this inequity by creating a more balanced number of positive and negative female and male characters.

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APPENDIX I

Open Interview Guide

Introduction

Name

Age

Family Members

Place of Origin

Number of Years in this Area.

Preferred Radio Drama

1. Which programs do you prefer to listen to on the radio? Why?
2. Which radio soap dramas do you listen to?
3. What is the story of your preferred radio drama? Tell the story.
4. What do you like in it?
5. Do you recognize anything from your everyday life in the drama? What?
6. Does the story seem realistic?
7. Why or why not?
8. What is realistic/ what is not realistic?
9. Do you imagine neighborhoods like your own in the radio drama?

10. If no, why not, do you think?

Identification

1. Why do you like to listen to radio dramas?
2. Who do you like best in *Makgabaneng*? Why?
3. Do you recognize anything of yourself in the characters of *Makgabaneng*?
4. What do you recognize?
5. Would you like to live like the main characters of *Makgabaneng*?
6. Why/ Why not?

Traces of the Everyday Life

1. Do you daily think about the drama/ the character/ the story?
2. What do you think about?
3. Do you talk to friends/colleagues about the radio drama?
4. Do you use the story of the radio drama in your everyday life? How?
5. Does the radio drama give inspiration to solutions of problems in your everyday life?
6. Which?

Production

1. Do you notice the music in the radio drama?
2. Do you like it?
3. Why/ Why not?
4. Is it possible for you to follow the story of the radio drama if you miss some of the episodes?
5. If yes, how do you do that?

Your Own Radio Drama

1. If you could make your own radio drama/Imagine you could tell a story in a radio drama, which story would you like to tell? Why?