

**Disability representation and portrayal in selected  
South African soap operas: A Content Analysis**

By

**Elsonia Swarts**

Dissertation presented for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Disability  
Studies, Department of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences  
University of Cape Town

**Supervisor: Dr Busayo Ige**

**July 2020**

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

## Declaration

In accordance with the regulations of the University of Cape Town, I, Elsonia Swarts, declare that the content of this dissertation is my own original work (except where acknowledgements indicate otherwise) and that neither the whole work nor any part of it has been, is being, or is to be submitted for another degree in this or any other university.

I empower the University of Cape Town to reproduce for the purpose of research either the whole or any portion of the contents in any manner whatsoever.

Signed by candidate

Date: 26-02-2021

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to all persons with disabilities, who rise up and stand tall in spite of the daily inequalities and discriminations faced.

## **Acknowledgements**

I am in awe of God's grace and mercy upon my life. If it wasn't for the faith and belief I have in God, I doubt that I would have started or even endured this journey until the end. His grace is truly sufficient for me and I am certain that I can do all things because God gives me the strength.

Dr Busayo Ige, thank you so much for your supervision throughout this Masters' journey. Your guidance and support has been a blessing to me. You sacrificed your weekends and even holiday times to provide guidance and clarity on issues when I needed it. Thank you.

Prof Theresa Lorenzo, thank you for taking the time to read and provide inputs on my thesis. I really appreciate it.

I also wish to thank Megan Moll for editing and proofreading my thesis. It has been phenomenal to work with you.

To the Free State Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, I am grateful for the funding of my studies and for a working environment that encourages education. To all my colleagues, thank you for the supportive part you played in my academic journey.

I am blessed and highly favoured for the continuous love, support, and encouragement I receive from my mother, Patricia and siblings, Lucia, Lenah, Pieter and Zhane. Thank you!

To my academic family and support squad, Jane Harrison, Ncediwe Mdlulwa, Delicia De Vos, thank you ladies for the beautiful people that you are inside and out. I am thankful for the support, encouragement and the shoulders you provided when I needed to cry.

Last but not least, I thank myself for starting and finishing this Masters journey!

## **Abstract**

The absence of or stereotypical portrayal of persons with disabilities in the mainstream media has negative and far-reaching consequences not only for an identity of disability but for how non-disabled persons relate to persons with disabilities. Conversely, positive media portrayal and representation has the potential to challenge stereotypes and spread counter-narratives on a wide scale. This study was motivated by a perceived dearth of research into the representation of persons with disabilities in soap operas, which has been studied minimally in South Africa. The goal of the study is to contribute towards an understanding of media representation of disability and its implications in South Africa, specifically through soap opera, by investigating how South African television soap operas represent and portray disability and disability issues daily to their viewers. Drawing on relevant disability identity theory, this study used a qualitative content case study analysis of portrayal and representation of disability in two South African local soap operas, namely *7de Laan* and *Generations: The Legacy*. These soap operas are popular among South African television audiences. The soap opera content was interpreted using qualitative content analysis by exploring the implicit and explicit representation of disability in the soap opera scenes and episodes.

Contrary to the historical representation of persons with disabilities, the data revealed that persons with actual disabilities were used in the soap operas as opposed to non-disabled persons acting as if they had a disability. This positively gives a voice to persons with disabilities. However, the scenes and episodes where these characters appear are minimal and short in duration, diminishing any positive intent envisioned by including these characters in the first place. In addition, the themes that emerged from the study indicate a positive representation of persons with disabilities as contributors to the economy through their participation in work and business. At the same time, the stereotypical portrayal of 'super cripple' in the same scenes shows how the positive representation can be rendered futile with a negative one in the same episode or scene, highlighting the importance and necessity of engaging with media representations on how they may impact individuals with disabilities in a very diverse society like South Africa.

## Definition of Terms

### ***Reasonable Accommodation:***

A needed alteration in a specific situation that enables participation for a person with a disability on an equal footing with a non-disabled person (UN, 2006). For example, modifying a building that only has stairs for access by making ramps to enable a wheelchair user access into the building.

### ***Assistive Devices:***

A specific device made with the aim to enable an individual (especially with a disability) to do a specific task (WHO, 2011). For example, a device like a wheelchair enables a person with mobility difficulties to manoeuvre around.

### ***Impairment:***

A physical, sensory, intellectual, psychosocial or neurological bodily or mental deficit which affects how individuals carry out certain tasks (WHO, 2001).

### ***Tokenism:***

Inclusion solely on the basis of belonging to a minority group with the aim of claiming equity (Kanter, 1977).

## **Acronyms and Abbreviations**

7dL	7de Laan
DS	Down syndrome
DSSA	Down Syndrome South Africa
GTL	Generations: The Legacy
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
WHO	World Health Organization
WPRPD	White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

## Table of Contents

Declaration.....	i
Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Definition of Terms.....	v
Acronyms and Abbreviations.....	vi
Table of Contents.....	vii
List of Figures.....	x
List of Tables.....	x
Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 History of Disability Representation in the Media.....	2
1.3 Context of the Study.....	4
1.3.1 Generations: The Legacy.....	6
1.3.2 7de Laan.....	7
1.4 Motivation.....	9
1.5 Problem Statement and Research Question.....	10
1.5.1 Research Question.....	11
1.6 Aim and Objective of Study.....	11
1.6.1 Research Aim.....	11
1.6.2 Research Objectives.....	11
1.7 Structure of Dissertation.....	11
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	13
2.1 Defining Disability.....	13
2.2 Theory of Disability Identity.....	16
2.2.1 Disability identity framework.....	17
2.3 Representing Disability in Soap Opera.....	22
2.4 Stereotypes of Disability in the Media.....	24
2.5 Conclusion.....	31
Chapter 3: RESEARCH METHOD.....	33
3.1 Introduction.....	33
3.2 Philosophical Standpoint.....	33

3.3 Research Design .....	33
3.4 Sampling .....	35
3.4.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria.....	37
3.5 Data Collection .....	38
3.5.1 Data collection challenges and resolutions.....	39
3.6 Position of the Researcher .....	40
3.7 Data Management and Analysis .....	41
3.8 Ensuring Rigor.....	43
3.8.1 Credibility .....	43
3.8.2 Transferability .....	44
3.8.3 Confirmability .....	44
3.8.4 Dependability .....	45
3.9 Ethical Considerations .....	45
3.9.1 Risk and benefits.....	46
3.10 Conclusion.....	47
Chapter 4: ANALYSIS OF EPISODES AND SCENES REPRESENTING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES .....	48
4.1 Introduction.....	48
4.2 Frequency of Disability Scenes and Episodes .....	49
4.3 Role and Representation of Characters with Disabilities in the Soap Operas .....	54
4.4 Subduing Stereotypes of Disability on Soap Operas.....	60
4.4.1 Economic Participation of Persons with Disabilities.....	61
4.4.2. Social and societal participation of persons with disabilities .....	69
4.4.3 'Super cripple' .....	72
Chapter 5: DISCUSSION .....	74
5.1 Introduction.....	74
5.2 Marginalisation of Disability Identity in South African Soap operas .....	74
5.2.1 Uncommon Scenes.....	75
5.2.2 Limiting Roles of Characters .....	77
5.2.3 Work Type.....	82
5.2.4 Limiting Social Interactions.....	84
5.3 Conclusion.....	86
Chapter 6: CONCLUSION .....	87
6.1 Summary of Findings.....	87
6.2 Contribution and Recommendations of the Study .....	88

6.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Study .....	89
Reference List.....	92
APPENDICES	
APPENDIX A .....	109
APPENDIX B1 .....	110
APPENDIX B2 .....	111
APPENDIX C .....	114
APPENDIX D .....	115

## List of Figures

Figure 1: A map of South Africa depicting the different provinces and their main spoken languages .....	5
Figure 2: Total number of episodes vs number of episodes representing disability for both GTL and 7dL in 2016.....	52
Figure 3: 7de Laan cast and members of DSSA during the Youth Day celebration of 2013 (7de Laan (Amptelik), 2013) .....	56
Figure 4: A screenshot of the character Kosie in 7de Laan.....	56
Figure 5: Screenshots of the character Uncle Tebogo in Generations: The Legacy.....	57
Figure 6: Screenshots of the dialogue that took place between the characters Kosie and Charmaine .....	68
Figure 7: Screenshots of the character Uncle Tebogo facing the other characters when engaging in dialogue.....	69
Figure 8: Screenshots of Kosie interacting with the characters Hilda and Matrone at the local Deli.....	72
Figure 9: Screenshots of Uncle Tebogo at a family gathering and at a political rally .....	72

## List of Tables

Table 1: Sample of Video tape coding of 7de Laan – Series 17 Episode 27-04-16.....	39
Table 2: Total number of episodes vs number of episodes representing disability for both GTL and 7dL in 2016.....	50
Table 3: Duration of Disability Scenes .....	52
Table 4: Summary of themes from the episodes .....	60

# Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

The representation or portrayal of persons with disabilities in the mainstream media, particularly television, has been linked to various stereotypical beliefs and attitudes which reinforce and perpetuate discrimination and marginalisation towards persons with disabilities in society (Ellis, 2015; Hall, 1980; Harnett, 2000; Inimah et al., 2012; Ellcessor & Kirkpatrick, 2017; Ellis & Goggin, 2015; Burns, 2016). This thesis seeks to shed light on current trends of disability portrayal in two South African soap operas and show ways in which the representations and narratives facilitate or hinder disability inclusion efforts broadly. It draws on Gibson's (2006) disability identity theory, which moves beyond the essentialist medical model of disability to the social model of disability. This identity theory is emancipatory as it defines and unpacks the disability sense of self from the perspective of persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the ten categories of media stereotypes of disability as postulated by Hunt (1991) were used to examine the portrayal of persons with disabilities in the selected soap operas.

This study examined the scenes and episodes of two popular South African soap operas, *Generations: The Legacy* (GTL) and *7de Laan*<sup>1</sup> (7dL), aired on the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) channels, SABC1 and SABC2 respectively, during the year 2016. This was done in order to explore the extent of disability representation as well as the nature of disability portrayals in these selected soap operas. The SABC's Editorial Policy (SABC News, 2017), which was initially introduced on 1 April 2004, states the commitments of the SABC to represent disability fairly in all of its programmes. More than a decade after that, in 2015, the South African Cabinet signed the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (WPRPD) (Department of Social Development, 2015). Therefore, the year 2016 was selected for the soap opera analysis in order to ascertain the efforts of the SABC in including disability in soap operas following the signing of the

---

<sup>1</sup> 7de Laan (Sewende Laan) is Afrikaans for 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue (Seventh Avenue)

WPRPD. The year 2016 is also the year in which the SABC launched their SABC Disability 360 campaign in November with the aim of raising awareness about disability.

In order to contextualise the selected South African soap operas, it is important to provide some background with regards to their origins. The introductory chapter briefly provides important background for a broader understanding of the topical issues explored and discussed in the study, such as the history of disability representation in the media. It also presents the context and rationale for the study. The following is also covered in this chapter: problem statement and research question, aim and objective of the study, as well as the motivation. The conclusion of the chapter will outline the structure of the dissertation by giving an overview of the rest of the chapters that will follow in this thesis.

## **1.2 History of Disability Representation in the Media**

Rice et al. (2015) are of the opinion that persons with disabilities are either ignored in the media or put on display. This means that it is the disability instead of the person as a whole that is highlighted, usually to get a certain message across or to elicit a particular reaction from the viewers. This type of focus on the impairment instead of the person as a whole is problematic as it furthers the 'othering' (Jensen, 2011) gap between non-disabled persons and persons with disabilities, and diminishes the uniqueness and abilities of the individual. This has been the focus of disability in the media previously. Hunt (1991) identified and categorised the different manners in which the media portrays persons with disabilities as follows: as an object of curiosity or violence, as sinister, as 'super cripple' (making it against all odds), as atmosphere, as laughable, as their own worst enemy, as a burden, as non-sexual, and as unable to participate in everyday life. These media portrayals usually promote negative stereotypes of disability (Burns, 2016) and do little or nothing to adequately educate or represent the actual lived experiences of persons with disabilities. For example, a staggering 95% of characters with disabilities on television are portrayed by non-disabled persons (Woodburn & Kopic, 2016), taking away the authentic voice of actual persons with disabilities. This is particularly important because the media in general and particularly soap operas have a great opportunity to represent disability as an everyday life occurrence due to their viewership numbers

(Harnett, 2000). Therefore, soap operas need to portray disability in a manner that reflects the real-life experiences of persons with disabilities accurately.

South Africa is a developing country, with both a diverse and somewhat conservative society, which means that citizens in this country are likely to live by their religious and cultural beliefs and practices (Kotze & Loubster, 2018; Kuperus, 2011). As a result, depending on the different groupings, most perceptions about disability are shaped by the mystical black African cultural beliefs and are maintained by the media through stereotypical coverage on television (Barnes, 1992; Olaiya, 2013). In most of the African traditional beliefs, for instance, persons with disabilities are generally associated with undesirability, which in turn makes persons with disabilities feel like sub-humans (Khupe, 2010). An example of this is the brutal killings of persons with albinism which was all over the news media in recent years (Ikaneng, 2018; Maseko, 2018; Wadula, 2018). Persons with albinism are kidnapped and killed for muti (traditional medicine) purposes due to the false belief that they possess special powers. Other false beliefs that exist are that sexual intercourse with an individual with albinism cures HIV/AIDS (Bucaro, 2010) or that different body parts of someone with albinism attract good fortune and prosperity. These false beliefs endanger the lives of persons with albinism in many communities across a number of African countries, South Africa included, a clear indication that there are harmful cultural traditional practices which still persist in our South African communities. If this were not the case, there would not be people who kill other human beings purely on the belief that the other human beings' physical differentness could bring some sort of success or healing. These barbaric killings of persons with albinism are ironic, given that persons with albinism, as with other disabilities, are considered undesirable (Bucaro, 2010; Dawn, 2019; Goffman 1963) and yet are believed to attract desired attributes such as wealth and success.

Similarly, in most religions (e.g. Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism), disability has a negative connotation. For the purpose of this study and its context, the focus (briefly) will be on Christianity as the dominant religion in South Africa. There are contradicting depictions given in the Bible about disability. In some of the Bible verses, for example, disability is painted as punishment for disobedience or wrongdoing (Deuteronomy 28:28),

while in others, it is depicted as a medium through which God makes his mercy, grace and power known to humankind (John 9:2-3) (Miles, 2002; Henderson & Bryan, 2011). Although the Bible is subject to individual interpretation, it is, importantly, undeniable that the verses about healing being sought and given indicate that illnesses and disabilities are not viewed as desirable or normal. This only seeks to highlight the adverse beliefs held about disability, which in turn give rise to stereotypical attitudes and behaviours acted out towards persons with disabilities. It is well-documented that soap operas also largely operate from a stereotypical stance of disability (Wilde, 2004; Wilde, 2007; Ellis & Goggin, 2015), hence it is extremely rare for viewers to see a person with a disability as part of the actors appearing on screen (Haller & Zhang, 2014). When people with disabilities *do* feature, it is usually for a short period of time and for a specific reason (Samsel & Perpa, 2013; PirsI & Popovska, 2013). Soap operas in most cases make use of non-disabled actors to portray disability (Ellcessor & Kirkpatrick, 2017; Ellis & Goggin, 2015). These disabilities are usually a secondary disability that is acquired due to an accident or sinister plot and is often, if not always, cured after some time (Wohlmann & Harrison, 2019). The body of research on disability representation in soap operas is generally very scanty, South Africa inclusive (Haller & Zhang, 2014; Bond, 2013; Ellis, 2015). This research study therefore starts to fill this gap by adding to the available research on this topic.

### **1.3 Context of the Study**

This study was conducted in South Africa, which, as of June 2020, has a population of approximately 59 280 000 people (Worldometer, n.d.).



Figure 1: A map of South Africa depicting the different provinces and their main spoken languages

The two selected soap operas, GTL and 7dL, take place in and around the city of Johannesburg in South Africa. Johannesburg has a long history linked to that of the whole country, and therefore the geographical location of the two soap operas creates an atmosphere to which their audiences from around South Africa can relate (Barker, 2011). Below are some highlights about Johannesburg (Brodie, 2014).

- The world's largest gold deposit is in Johannesburg.
- A giant meteor hit the ground at Vredefort, about 120km south-west of Johannesburg, approximately two billion years ago.
- South African history icons, Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela, both spent formative years working as attorneys in Johannesburg.
- During apartheid, the city of Johannesburg was intended to be a 'whites only' settlement. Black people were forcefully removed and placed in townships 20km away from the city due to the apartheid land policies of the time.

- The Freedom Charter was signed by anti-apartheid activists in 1955 in Kliptown, Johannesburg.
- In 1976, the youth of the Johannesburg township, Soweto, protested against the discriminatory Bantu education policies. Today, the activities of that day are commemorated as Youth Day.
- South Africa's highest court, the Constitutional Court, was founded after the country's first democratic elections in 1994 and is situated in Johannesburg.

South Africa is known for its apartheid past and the new dawn that came with democracy in 1994. With the changes envisioned for democracy in the country, popular media was also influenced by the new discourse aimed at countering apartheid ideologies (Tomaselli & Dunn, 2001; Berger, 2002). For example, the vision for South African media was of diversity and accessibility to all citizens while also being independent and forceful in addressing the issues faced by the masses (Chuma et al., 2017). Race was at the forefront of this vision, while disability followed at a very slow pace behind, even though, as put into perspective by Barnard (2006), South African soap operas have a responsibility towards the creation and facilitation of democratic transformation by shaping the imagination of the audience towards a diverse country, inclusive of disability.

### ***1.3.1 Generations: The Legacy***

In 1994, South Africans were introduced to what has become the longest running and most popular soap opera in the country, "Generations", produced by Mfundi Vundla (SABC1, n.d. b). The soap opera airs weekdays from Monday to Friday at 20:00 on SABC1, using subtitles in English as characters speak a number of official South African languages, such as Tswana, Xhosa, and Zulu. The themes of the soap opera focus on building family wealth, rivalry, and various social issues such as gender-based violence, crime and abuse (SABC1, n.d. b; Ndayi & du Plooy, 2019). The steady Generations boat was, however, rocked in 2014 when a group of 16 actors went on strike due to the grievances they had regarding their wages (Mangena, 2014). The strike caused the soap opera to go off air for a period of two months from October to November 2014 but it

resurfaced and was reintroduced on the first of December 2014 as “Generations: The Legacy” (Qukula, 2016; Ngwenya, 2014; Khumalo, 2015).

In a study done by Motsaathebe (2009) on gender roles, images and behavioural patterns in the soap opera Generations, he identified the issues tackled on the soap operas as involving a variety of relatable social issues such as domestic violence, homosexuality, and prostitution. It would seem that issues of gender are at the forefront in terms of the themes tackled in GTL. During September 2016, GTL introduced a storyline around a transgender person in order to educate the South African public about the challenges transgender people face (Modisane, 2017). It is necessary to also report that, as this current study progressed, GTL introduced a character with autism played by a non-disabled actor in 2018 (Zeeman, 2018). Although this is outside of the year of focus of this current study, it is important to highlight here.

### **1.3.2 7de Laan**

The predominantly Afrikaans soap opera, “7de Laan”, airs weekdays at 18:00 and is repeated on Sundays from 8:30am to 11am. It plays out in a fictional suburb called Hillside, where the lives and experiences of the characters come to life (SABC2, n.d. b). The soap opera caters for a diverse language audience through its use of code-switching between languages (Van der Merwe, 2012) such as Tswana, Zulu, and English, as well as Afrikaans. Through this, it aims to model a multicultural South Africa in which everyone is equal (Milton, 2008).

The soap opera 7dL seeks to depict the social issues affecting the South African community such as race, disability, and gender. 7dL’s first gay scene was aired in March 2017 when two men were shown kissing (Modisane, 2017). Roets (2017) writes that 7dL’s premise has always been South Africa’s multicultural landscape, but there were no interracial relationships on the show until after 2010, when Felicity (coloured) and Herman (white) claimed the title of the show’s first interracial couple. Since then, the show has featured the much-published kissed between Nandi (black) and Bernard (white), and the characters Fikani (black) and Alexa (white) were introduced as an interracial couple in

January 2019, for which the actors received hate speech from viewers who were against the interracial couple.

Furthermore, although not part of the analysis for this study, it is interesting to note that in 2019, a non-disabled actor who plays the character of Rickus portrayed disability by being involved in an accident and subsequently using a wheelchair (7de Laan Amptelik, 2019). This portrayal reiterated what is contained in the literature when it is mentioned that the majority of characters with disabilities are commonly portrayed by non-disabled actors on television (Woodburn & Kopic, 2016; Ellcessor & Kirkpatrick, 2017; Ellis & Goggin, 2015). The soap opera sought advice in order to adequately portray the journey of the character Rickus and even included an actual person with a disability to play the character Eugenie to assist the former to adapt and accept his disability (de Swardt, 2019; 7de Laan Amptelik, 2019). However, the character with an actual disability's role was short-lived and the non-disabled character eventually healed from his paralysis, a phenomenon that is also very common in television programmes (Foss, 2009; Wohlmann & Harrison, 2019). Thus, as much as the soap operas are making an effort to include disability in their storylines, it seems to be on the basis of tokenism.

The continuous airing of the selected soap operas over a long period of time is an indication of the number of years the soap operas have been a part of South African's lives. The social issues tackled in both the soap operas are relevant to the South African public, which makes them highly relevant and relatable. As rightly put by Ellis and Goggin (2015), soap operas deal with the representation of everyday life situations and aim to entertain and educate their audiences, stressing that viewers thus identify with the storylines depicted in soap operas depending on the types of story being told. These soap operas seem to have made a mark on gender and racial issues in South Africa, but their viewers with disabilities remain underserved, as little or nothing is shown to address the realities of disability in society.

## 1.4 Motivation

This study interprets the portrayal of disability in two South African soap operas and hopes to inform change in their storylines where necessary. It has implications for inclusive and equitable viewing, the perception of persons with disabilities in the larger society, human rights, and social justice. The study also seeks to facilitate the process of positive changes taking place in the two soap operas by investigating and providing findings on current representation practices and disability narratives, and the implications of how viewers perceive persons with disabilities, as well as the impact on persons with disabilities themselves as members of society. This also serves as an advocacy tool for the inclusion of actors with actual disabilities in soap operas. There is not much research available around soap operas and disability, especially in South Africa, and the hope is therefore that the results from this explorative case study will provide the needed baseline and impetus for further research in this field.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1983 (Act 110 of 1983) and of 1993 (Act 200 of 1993) recognised persons with disabilities as a historically disadvantaged group due to the inequalities and discrimination they suffered in the past and continue to suffer. In a bid to include and mainstream disability, the South African government has signed and created various policies and legislation aimed at the inclusion and mainstreaming of persons with disabilities in society. These legislative papers make mention of the media and its importance in educating and depicting disability in a non-discriminatory manner. However, very little has translated into actual practice by key role players and organs of the state, including the media (UN, 2006; WRPD, 2015; Haller & Zhang, 2014; Wilde, 2017).

Similarly, the South African Bill of Rights (1996), a document that is aimed at affirming the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom, protects the rights of persons with disabilities, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (UN, 2006) encourages “all organs of the media to portray persons with disabilities in a manner consistent with the purpose of the present convention” (p. 8). In addition to the UNCRPD, the South African cabinet approved the White Paper on the Right of Persons with Disabilities, (Department of Social

Development, 2015) in 2015. The WPRPD in particular stresses the role and functions of the media and advertising by stating that “transformation is needed in the industry to provide the kind of information and imagery which acknowledges and explores the complexity of the experiences of disability and disability identity as well as facilitate the meaningful integration of all persons with disabilities into the mainstream and social life of the community” (p. 131).

Although these documents are in place and encourage the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the media, they still appear to be vague with regards to how such inclusion should be implemented. They only give statements of disability inclusion but do not provide any clear-cut and formalised guidelines as to how the media can and must include disability.

## **1.5 Problem Statement and Research Question**

Persons with disabilities are minimally represented or portrayed on television (Haller & Zhang, 2014; Bond, 2013), and when they are, it is mostly in a subordinated and discriminatory manner (Ellis, 2015). This consequently negatively influences the perception of audiences about disability (Ahmad, 2019). Despite this, people with disabilities are members of society with a lot to offer their communities. They therefore need to be given opportunities and recognition like any other members of society, and this ideal needs to be reflected in and sustained by the media narratives of disability across all media platforms. This would promote people with disabilities' inclusion in socio-economic and political fabric in their communities and simultaneously deal with social stigma. Where society's attitude needs to change, the media has a bigger role to play, both through the characterisation of disability and playing an active role in challenging society's fear and misunderstanding of disability by consciously seeking to portray characters with disabilities realistically, fairly and as frequently as all other characters. Realistic portrayals of disability by the media in soap operas will help both in the construction of a healthy self-image for persons with disabilities and in contributing to a larger informed society. The research question was aimed at generating answers around the portrayal and representation of disability in two selected South African soap operas.

### ***1.5.1 Research Question***

What is the extent and significance of the representation of persons with disabilities and disability issues in the two selected soap operas?

## **1.6 Aim and Objective of Study**

### ***1.6.1 Research Aim***

The aim of the study was to examine how two selected South African television soap operas represent and portray disability and disability issues daily to their viewers.

### ***1.6.2 Research Objectives***

The research objectives were:

- To identify and describe the nature of disability representation in South African soap operas
- To describe the types of disabilities covered in the soap operas
- To compare differences and similarities in coverage and analysis in terms of the portrayals of disability in the two selected soap operas

## **1.7 Structure of Dissertation**

Chapter 1 introduced the background of the study by highlighting the origins and context of the two selected soap operas of the study, the history of disability representation in soap operas, and the rationale and purpose of the study. Chapter 2 presents the relevant literature review and theoretical framework employed for the study. Chapter 3 presents the methodology, methods, and processes of the study. Chapter 4 analyses the findings using content and thematic analysis, while chapter 5 is the discussion of the findings.

Lastly, chapter 6 presents a summary of the findings, recommendations, and suggestions for further research.

## **Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This chapter of the thesis presents the literature review and the theoretical framework that underpins this study. The chapter focuses on relevant literature investigating disability identities in media and theoretical perspectives of disability identities to unpack and understand the representation of persons with disabilities in South African soap operas. By highlighting some hitherto unexplored questions, I will ascertain the appropriateness of this investigation.

### **2.1 Defining Disability**

The definition of disability in the UNCRPD (UN, 2006) is as follows: "Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (p. 4). This definition of disability aims to provide a holistic coverage of all the different disability categories under one umbrella term. It is important to draw attention to all the different categories of disability in order to dispel the erroneous and old belief that disability only refers to physical (e.g. wheelchair users) and sensory impairments (e.g. deaf and blind), while excluding other types of impairments (Ellis & Goggin, 2015) such as mental (e.g. depression) and intellectual disabilities (e.g. Down syndrome).

It is important to interrogate the concept of disability because it is multifaceted and does not ascribe to one definition, starting with the two broad views that have dominated the debate for many decades. In earlier definitions, for instance, disability was viewed as a medical condition which occurs from birth or is acquired (Creamer, 2009 Ahmad, 2019; Edwards, 2005; Goffman, 1963), with a primary focus on the bodily ailments and limitations which can or should be cured. This is known as the medical model of disability. The emphasis of such a view is more on an individual's inability to perform tasks considered normal by society which in turn result in the exclusion of persons with

disabilities. The media is more inclined to portray disability according to the medical model (Clogston, 1990) by depicting persons with disabilities as sick and helpless (Haller & Zhang, 2013). Over time, the medical model was debated and transitioned from viewing disability as a health condition to viewing it as being caused by attitudinal, behavioural and institutional barriers within society (Millers et al., 2010; Barnes, 2011; Kanter, 2011; Oliver, 2013), known as the social model of disability. In the opinion of Clogston (1990), the media portrays disability according to the social model when a person with disability is shown as being disadvantaged and dependent on the society and the state for economic support.

Due to the multidimensional nature of disability, it would be limiting to view the medical and social models of disability as existing as opposites without considering how the two can and do co-exist as well as differ from individual to individual. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) (WHO, 2001) puts it in perspective when it recognises disability as an umbrella term influenced by bio-psycho-social factors, thereby also including the psychological impact of disability. The types of disabilities represented in the 2016 scenes and episodes of the soap operas analysed for this study are Down syndrome and hearing impairment. Down syndrome undeniably has its foundation based in the bio-medical sphere as it is a genetic condition caused by an unusual occurrence in the human foetus. Down syndrome is caused by the existence of one extra chromosome in the human cells, which means that instead of the standard two 21s, a child with Down syndrome has three (Weis, 2018; Cohen, Nadel & Madnick, 2002). The bio-medical occurrence of chromosomes which results in an individual being diagnosed with Down syndrome has further health consequences such as heart and gastrointestinal conditions for the individual (Asim et al., 2015). As much as Down syndrome has undeniable roots in the medical sphere, the social sphere also plays a pivotal role in a person with DS's inclusion in society. There are various stereotypes associated with persons with Down syndrome which hinder their full and meaningful participation in society. These stereotypes are derived from generalised and misguided beliefs such as that adults with Down syndrome act and think like children and as a result need continuous care and therefore can't live independently (Gee, 2012; Buckley, 2004).

Just as the perception of Down syndrome is rooted in the medical sphere, so is that of hearing impairment. This might be due to the medical diagnoses ascribed to both Down syndrome and hearing impairment (Asim et al, 2015; WHO, 2011), making the medical model of disability more prominent in this regard. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2011) defines disabling hearing loss in terms of an individual's ability to hear sound frequencies, using hearing impairment classifications ranging from "no impairment" to "profound impairment" according to the threshold, and citing a myriad reasons for the hearing loss such as aging, ear infection, and exposure to prolonged or excessive noise. Storbeck and Martin (2010) claim that approximately 3.5% of the South African population have hearing loss of some sort. Depending on the nature of the hearing loss, the condition can usually be alleviated by operations or the use of hearing aids (Foss, 2014).

Sensory impairments such as hearing loss are recognised as a disability in the UNCRPD (UN, 2006), especially if there are interactions involved which hinder full social participation. Interesting to note is the fact that there are conflicting views regarding whether hearing impairment and Deafness are disabilities (Dant & Gregory, 1991; Smith et al., 2014). According to the medical model of disability, hearing loss or deafness is viewed as a medical condition that can be rectified by ear surgeries or the use of assistive devices such as hearing aids or cochlear implants which seek to eliminate or minimise the hearing barrier (Lane, 1992; Foss, 2014). However, under the social model of disability, hearing loss or Deafness is viewed as the inability of society to adjust to the needs of those with hearing loss or Deafness in an inclusive manner. This brings to the fore the argument that Deafness is not a disability but rather that Deaf people belong to a community of people who are Deaf with their own language and culture (Lane, 1999; Singleton & Tittle, 2000; Dolnick, 1993). Either way, it is important to note that hearing impairment or d/Deafness are seldom if ever represented on television and as a result continue to be overlooked and stigmatised (Foss, 2014).

It is important to stress that although disability might have a medical foundation, which directly or indirectly creates a societal perception around the abilities of the impaired person, the building blocks that contribute to the whole aspect of an individual are influenced by societal and infrastructural factors which hinder participation for a person

with a disability. The UNCRPD (UN, 2006) emphasises the eradication of such barriers which hinder the social participation of persons with disabilities.

## **2.2 Theory of Disability Identity**

According to Darling (2013, p. 7), disability identity refers to “that part of the self-concept that emerges from disability-related self definition that exist (*sic*) within an individual”. In this regard, disability is self-defined by the person with a disability. However, Dunn and Burcaw (2013) are of the view that disability is an identity marker in itself, especially for those with visible disabilities. Disability identity can be positively defined when individuals with disabilities have a positive sense of self-identity, and associate with and feel part of the disability community (Dunn & Burcaw, 2013). This stance of disability identity is, however, not a given, but rather depends on an individual's confirmation or refutation of disability for themselves, as some individuals with disabilities are more inclined to disassociate from or conceal their disabilities if possible due to the negative stereotypes attached to them in society (Darling, 2013). Identifying positively with disability has the advantage of assisting individuals to adapt to their disabilities by finding ways to deal with and overcome barriers that hinder their participation in society, whereas identifying negatively prolongs the very stereotypes of struggle and undesirability commonly associated with disability. Thus, a positive association with disability leads to a positive disability identity and a negative association with disability leads to a rejection of disability identity (Gibson, 2006). From this, it is clear that disability identity is as much influenced by external factors such as discrimination, prejudice and marginalisation (Dawn, 2019 ; Dunn & Burcaw, 2013; Goffman 1963) as by internal factors such as a positive sense of self-worth and pride (Putnam, 2005). It is therefore no surprise that the myriad barriers to inclusion faced by persons with disabilities, as well as the positive self-realisation that disability is part of life, have strong influences on an individual's acceptance or rejection of an identity of disability.

People's experiences and identities are shaped by various other identities, as explained by the concept of intersectionality (Settles & Buchanan, 2014; Crenshaw, 1989). According to the theory of intersectionality, the oppression experienced by marginalised

groups is saturated in an intersection of diverse attributes related to race, gender, class, and disability, among others (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Cooperman, 2003; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005; Moodley & Graham, 2015). Like other socially-constructed identities, disability intersects with all other socially-constructed roles. For instance, the disability identity of an individual is not only based on their disability but intersects with other factors (e.g. race, class, gender) which need to be explored in order to fully understand the individual and their identity. Disability as an identity carries with it the burden of oppression (Darling & Heckert, 2010; Dawn, 2019; Shakespeare et al., 1996; Goffman 1963), which needs to be overcome, eradicated or corrected in society in order to enable an individual to live a life in which he or she can fully participate and feel equal to others without disabilities. Different types of social groupings are frequently portrayed on television and these portrayals are usually constructed from commonly held beliefs about those groupings which might be true or false (Ellis & Goggin, 2015; Fortuner & Fackler, 2014). Disability identity is all encompassing due to the fact that disability cuts across all other identity approaches. In a context such as South Africa, intersectional identities such as gender, race, and sexuality, and specifically the oppressed identities within these categories (e.g. woman, black, homosexual), create more complications for a person with a disability seeking full inclusion. For instance, it is harder to be black and have a disability or to have a disability and be gay (Moodley & Graham, 2015; Emmett, 2006). Disability identity and intersectionality are therefore central to this current study, given the context and transitions the country is going through in the post-apartheid era.

### ***2.2.1 Disability identity framework***

Gibson's (2006) disability identity model addresses three core phases to explore when interrogating the individual with a disability's responses to disability identity. These are (a) passive awareness, which focuses on the inability to recognise disability, (b) recognition, which is seen as the reconciliation of relationships with society, and lastly (c) acceptance, which is embracing the disability identity. In this study, these three concepts are explored to help understand and unpack the disability stories that the selected soap operas are pushing and the philosophical reasoning of the featuring of the disability and relevant

storylines. These concepts are a useful tool for this study as they highlight the implications certain portrayals have on the identity formation of viewers with disabilities and how they create meaning about disability for non-disabled persons. In addition to Gibson, this study also acknowledges Dunn and Burcaw's (2013) model of disability identity narratives, which is built on Gibson's model. Dunn and Burcaw (2013) identified the individual's internal emotional factors which contribute to the identity formation of persons with disabilities, as with Gibson's model. In addition, their model also addresses the contribution of community relationships and attachments, which is a gap in Gibson's model. Unlike with Gibson's model, Dunn and Burcaw's model focuses on statuses as oppose to phases. These statuses include communal attachment, affirmation of disability, self-worth, pride, discrimination awareness, and personal meaning and disability. These disability identity models are used together to provide a comprehensive idea of disability identity.

#### *2.2.1.1 Passive awareness phase (inability to recognise disability)*

According to Gibson (2006), the passive awareness phase of disability identity occurs from birth and can continue into adulthood. This phase includes people who are born with a disability as well as those who acquire a disability over time. Characteristic of this phase is the inability of the impaired person to recognise their impairment as a disability due to negative disability associations (Goodley et al., 2012; Edwards, 2005). This denial is usually a result of the individual with a disability feeling unimportant or invisible due to persistent barriers which hinder their full participation in society (Swartz & Watermeyer, 2008) as well as due to the non-existence of disability role models. Watermeyer (2014) believes that denial of a disability identity is more common with individuals who acquired a disability at a later stage of life. They deny their disabilities as a result of going through the stages of grief as first proposed by psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in 1969. The stages are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. These individuals go through the process of grief due to the loss of their independence and abilities brought on by their disabilities. It could be that society picks up on this denial of a disability identity from persons with disabilities and reproduces it. This in turn has the potential to lead to a cause-and-effect phenomenon where the passive awareness phase that a person with a

disability goes through contributes to the discrimination and stereotypical views of disability held by society. Consequently, these adverse views have the potential to continue the urge to deny or conceal a disability if possible.

On the other hand, Dunn and Burcaw (2013) believe that persons with disabilities affirm their disability identities when they can share their experiences with other persons with disabilities, which they call communal attachment. The communal attachment notion has to do with the positive feelings towards and active participation of persons with disabilities in relation to other persons with disabilities due to commonly shared experiences (Dunn & Burcaw, 2013; Hahn & Belt, 2004). Although the shared experiences of persons with disabilities bring about communal attachment, Dunn and Burcaw (2013) acknowledge that the affirmation of a disability identity results from individual values, beliefs and attitudes as opposed to those of a collective. Therefore, unlike the passive awareness stage identified by Gibson (2006), where persons with disabilities deny their disabilities by disassociating from fellow persons with disabilities, communal attachment shows a desire and willingness to connect with others with disabilities. Through communal attachment, persons with disabilities feel free to express themselves and learn about the successes and struggles of other persons with disabilities, creating a sense of belonging and therefore attachment (Dunn & Burcaw, 2013; Putnam, 2005). Dawn (2019) explains how disability is labelled in society by stating that persons with disabilities are viewed as a devalued group that “remains on the social fringe ignored, mocked, disrespected and discredited” (p.16). In the media, the passive awareness stage and the medical model of disability are most prominently used to portray disability. Usually, an oppressive account of disability is depicted where the characters go through feelings of helplessness and suffering (O’Donnell, 1999; Barnes, 1992; Goggin, 2009), and by so doing these characters ascribe to a negative identity of disability that might be reproduced in society by the audiences watching.

#### *2.2.1.2 Realisation phase (reconciliation of relationships with society)*

The realisation phase is characterised by persons with disabilities’ reconciliation of relationships with society and occurs from adolescence or early adulthood (Gibson, 2006). It is during this stage that Erickson (1968) believes that the individual’s sense of

identity is formed and is considered a very important stage. Erickson's theory of identity development identifies eight stages, each characterised by a conflict and its resolution in order to become a psychologically healthy individual. If stages are not resolved successfully, this can result in problems such as self-doubt, role diffusion and role confusion (Erickson, 1968). For most individuals with disabilities, this stage is usually not successfully resolved as they become aware of themselves as a person with a disability but in a negative light by hating themselves and being angry (Gibson, 2006). In line with Erickson's theory, individuals in the identity versus identity confusion stage are usually preoccupied and concerned with how they are perceived by others. The negative media portrayals of disability based on damaging assumptions (Hunt, 1991) constantly reproduce and perpetuate disabling stereotypical and discriminatory beliefs and actions in society. This unfavourably means that viewers are exposed to disability as an undesirable concept.

Dunn and Burcaw's (2013) status of communal attachment in their disability identity model can be linked to Gibson's (2006) realisation phase, as both are concerned with finding a sense of community attachment, although with a difference. For example, with communal attachment, individuals with disabilities find meaning in interaction and shared experiences with other persons with disabilities. In Gibson's (2006) phase of realisation, however, the individual strives to fit into society by seeking the approval of non-disabled persons and does so by proving their worth through overachieving. The positive resolution of Erikson's (1968) identity versus identity confusion stage is the ability of individuals to assess their weaknesses and strengths in navigating the ways of life. For example, if television soap operas were to represent or portray disability in a manner which involves the rehabilitation process and show how characters deal with their disability identities, it might potentially teach viewers (both with and without disabilities) visionary ways of thinking about disability and disability identity. According to Gibson (2006), for individuals with disabilities to successfully feel a sense of integration into society, they need to accept their disabilities and find ways to overcome societal barriers. Once again, the role of the media in the creation of disability identity is undeniable, and Ellis (2015, p.21) highlight this by stating that "a key concern of disability media studies is the impact television representation can have on the public perception of people with disability and as a

consequence the lived experiences of this group". Furthermore, Ahmad (2019:139) emphasises this point by arguing that the "mass media influences the visibility of minorities and can have an impact on the broad social recognition of the problems of the groups."

#### 2.2.1.3 *Acceptance phase (embrace disability identity)*

According to Gibson (2006), the acceptance phase of disability identity usually occurs in adulthood and is characterised by individuals with disabilities who embrace their disabilities and no longer view themselves as different from non-disabled persons. In the view of Caldwell (2011), the individual feels confident and accepts their disability, and makes efforts to advocate for the eradication of disabling societal stigmas and barriers. Unlike in the passive awareness stage where individuals do not want to associate with others who have disabilities, in the acceptance phase they include others with disabilities in their lives (Hahn & Belt, 2004). The acceptance of disability as an identity for the individual affected and the acceptance of disability by non-disabled persons is important in creating a conducive world for everyone.

In the view of Dunn and Burcaw (2013), disability identity statuses such as communal attachment, affirmation of disability, self-worth, pride, discrimination awareness, and personal meaning of disability all serve as an equilibrium in disability identity, as they are aimed at deflating the prevailing negative attitudes and beliefs often held by some non-disabled persons about persons with disabilities. Having a good sense of self-worth and taking pride in an identity of disability while being aware of stereotypical discriminations and understanding why they occur assists persons with disabilities in repelling and defusing those negative associations of having a disability (Putnam, 2005; Linton, 1998; Goodley et al., 2012), leading to acceptance of disability. According to Putnam (2005), having disability pride promotes a sense of community and brings to the fore the revolutionary view of disability as a normal social and human occurrence (Oliver, 1996; Swain & French, 2000). The quest to find meaning in life resides within every individual regardless of disability. Individuals with disabilities are able to protect their disability identities and acquire resilience towards all the adversities present in society through a sense of belonging and perceived societal support (Marsac et al., 2013). In the views of

Dunn and Burcaw (2013) and Putnam (2005), personal meaning for persons with disabilities is an important part of disability identity because it denotes an acceptance of disability.

The media needs to cultivate and foster a media culture that assists their viewers in cultivating a positive personal meaning and disability understanding and identity. From the characters' interactions and dialogues in soap opera storylines, viewers should be able to derive a sense of personal meaning related to disability. The media therefore has to move away from negative stereotypical representation of disability (Ellcessor & Kirkpatrick, 2017; Goodley et al, 2012; Swain et al., 2013) and move towards representing persons with disabilities as equal, valuable and capable individuals who contribute positively to the economy and society.

### **2.3 Representing Disability in Soap Opera**

In general, seeing characters with disabilities in soap operas is an uncommon phenomenon (Ahmed & Bates, 2016) even though persons with disabilities are part of society and watch these soap operas on a daily basis. It is even less common to see persons with disabilities on South African soap operas. Many researchers (Ellcessor & Kirkpatrick, 2017; Ellis & Goggin, 2015; O'Donnell, 1999; Norden, 1994; Harnett, 2000) have shown that disability is more likely represented by non-disabled persons and in manners that are in line with pre-existing stereotypes of disability. Soap operas are very influential in constructing individual identities and perceptions (Damean, 2006), and serve as an important educational tool for their audiences. The representation of disability in soap operas has the potential to create positive disability identities and eradicate the stereotypical representations which influence the viewer's attitudes and behaviours towards disability (Haller & Zhang, 2013).

In 2018, the character of Brandon was introduced on GTL. The character had autism and was portrayed by an actor without a disability. In an article for TimesLive online (Zeeman, 2018), the actor had the following to say regarding the character he portrayed: "People live for TV. They sympathise with me and ask me if I am okay. They ask if they can help.

What frustrates them is that they don't understand I am playing a character. When they see that I don't have autism in real life they look at me as if I am trying to deceive them or that I am taking chances."

This article is mentioned to demonstrate that people take the content they consume through the media, particularly television, to heart. Therefore, both non-disabled persons and persons with disabilities internalise and derive meaning from what they watch on soap operas. The impact of television content is not always obvious, but it does have significant consequences (Toutellotte, 2015; Adaval & Wyer, 2004). As rightly put by Ellis and Goggin (2015), soap operas deal with representation of everyday life situations and aim to entertain and educate their audiences. Viewers thus identify with the storylines depicted in soap operas depending on the type of story being told. The manner in which disability is represented on television shapes the manner in which society views disability (Burns, 2011; Ellis, 2012). In addition, it is very rare that audiences are exposed to character with disabilities in soap operas and, when it does happen, it is usually subjected to stereotypes (Norden, 1994; Harnett, 2000; Rice et al., 2015).

According to O'Donnell (1999), the three main levels of narratives within a soap opera are as follows: the micro-narrative, the meta-narrative, and the macro-narrative. At the micro-narrative level, the audience is exposed to disability through characters who represent disabilities that are visually identifiable such as playing a blind person using a white cane or portraying paralysis by using a wheelchair. These representations are 95% of the time played by non-disabled actors (Woodburn & Kopic, 2016) which means that the representations are imagined experiences of disability. It is during the micro-narrative where disability is usually represented in a stereotypical manner (Wilde, 2007). Hunt (1991:2) identified ten stereotypes of persons with disabilities in the media: 1. "pitiable or pathetic", 2. "an object of curiosity or violence", 3. "sinister or evil", 4. "super-cripple", 5. "atmosphere", 6. "laughable", 7. "their own enemy", 8. "a burden", 9. "non-sexual", 10. "unable to participate in daily life". These media stereotypes are explored in more detail in section 2.4 below.

At the meta-narrative level of soap opera, disability is represented as resulting from a tragedy. The disability is not permanent and thus gets 'resolved' or 'cured' after some

time. The rehabilitation process which showcases how persons with disabilities can fully participate in society is usually neglected and the emphasis is more on characters with disabilities feeling and being helpless and socially dead (Ellis, 2012). During the meta-narrative level of soap opera, the medical model of disability is embraced, viewing disability as an impairment that needs to be cured in order for individuals to fit into society (Carlson, 2010). Persons with disabilities are therefore portrayed as having medical conditions and, in the view of Mitchell and Snyder (2014), usually added to storylines to serve a particular function. For example, the function could be to teach good moral values by using an accident which leads to the paralysis of an evil character so that the character can repent for their evil ways.

The third level of narrative is the macro-narrative, where disability is realistically represented to educate and inform viewers about the normality of disability (Wilde, 2004). It is a fact that most people have little or no social interaction with persons with disabilities and thus largely learn about disability from the media (Harris, 2002). As a result, the media, particularly television, serves as a social interaction guide, even though the representation of a particular group might not be desirable (Ellis, 2012). This emphasises the influence of media on disability identities and audience reception of disability. Furthermore, it has been proven that there is a direct correlation between the effects that the media has on its audience and the audience's attitudes, behaviour, and beliefs about disability identity (McQuail, 2010; Potter, 2012; Fortuner & Fackler, 2014).

## **2.4 Stereotypes of Disability in the Media**

The role of media as a critical information dissemination to the populace cannot be overemphasised. Instead of using its influence to promote positive responses to disability, however, the media in general continues to add to the discrimination of people with disabilities through stereotypical depictions that reinforce impairment and the use of the medical model of disability. Hunt (1991) identified ten stereotypes the media use in the portrayal of persons with disabilities. They are briefly explained below and form a core analytical tool in this study. To further emphasise the different portrayals of persons with disabilities in the media, the widely known and publicised former South African

Paralympian, Oscar Pistorius, will be used as an example under fitting media stereotypes.

### 1. *Pitiable and pathetic:*

The portrayal of persons with disabilities as pitiable and pathetic is usually done by painting the person with a disability as suffering hardships due to their disability, and thus placing emphasis on their limitations in an attempt to evoke sympathy from those without disabilities (Haller & Zhang, 2013; Barnes, 1992; Hunt, 1991). Although it is true that persons with disabilities are subjected to social discrimination and inequality, constantly portraying them as pitiable and pathetic has the consequence of maintaining the social barriers that exist in society. To belong to a marginalised group that is constantly painted in a negative manner (pitiable and pathetic) has consequences on the self-image of persons with disabilities. It also teaches non-disabled persons wrong ways of relating to persons with disabilities, especially because identity formation takes place through interaction and engagement with others (Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012).

For instance, Oscar Pistorius, a well-known and former South African Paralympian, has been a prominent fixture in different types of media for being a top sportsman and subsequently for the fatal shooting and murder of his model girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp. There were instances during the court case proceedings where his disability was made the centre of attention when he removed his prosthetic legs and walked on his stumps to show the courtroom his disability. This was done in order to portray Pistorius' psychological problems as stemming from having a disability (Harvey, 2015). It was also done to show vulnerability and to evoke sympathy from the judge and the South African public. The disability identity of persons with disabilities was compromised by Pistorius because he wanted to come across as pathetic and thus pitiable because he has an impairment.

Another example of disability being portrayed as pitiable and pathetic is through fundraising initiatives (Barnes, 1992). In South Africa, the National Council of and for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD), a non-profit organisation, successfully hosts an annual fundraising and awareness-raising initiative known as Casual Day. Casual Day is a

famous and widely-celebrated national campaign which happens annually on the first Friday in September. The aim of the campaign is to advocate for the full inclusion and equity of persons with disabilities. Members of society are encouraged to support this initiative by purchasing Casual Day stickers for R10 (Casual Day, n.d.). The fundraising initiative is advertised through various media platforms, including television. The essence of the fundraising initiative is a positive one, but it does have elements of subjecting disability to charity by placing the care of persons with disabilities on the goodwill and compassion of those without disabilities. As a result, this also has fundamental implications on the disability identity of persons with disabilities by subjecting disability to charity, thus identifying persons with disabilities as needing constant care and, as a result, being perceived as pathetic.

## **2. *An object of curiosity or violence:***

In reality, persons with disabilities are often subjected to violent abuse by non-disabled persons and this is frequently reflected in the media (West & Gandhi, 2006). These types of portrayals paint persons with disabilities as helpless victims who are at the mercy of those without disabilities. According to Hunt (1991) and Barnes (1992), such portrayals perpetuate such violence, instead of eradicating it, by showcasing persons with disabilities as unable to defend themselves. The stereotypical view of persons with disabilities as weak and defenceless is why the South African public and the world at large were so perplexed by the news that double amputee and former Paralympian, Oscar Pistorius, had killed his girlfriend. Television programmes or dramas that portray persons with disabilities as weak victims and objects of curiosity have negative consequences on how persons with disabilities view and think about themselves, thus negatively denting their disability identities (Haller & Zhang, 2013; Mitchell & Snyder, 2014).

## **3. *Sinister and evil:***

Persons with disabilities are often portrayed as sinners, as a curse or as being punished for some or other wrongdoing. According to Barnes (1992) and Shakespeare (1999), they are also sometimes portrayed as bitter and angry individuals who are out for revenge due to the hardships brought on by their disabilities. These types of portrayals have the

consequences of evoking further misunderstanding and social distance between persons with disabilities and non-disabled persons, as the latter might want as little interaction as possible with the former. The impact of such portrayals have dire consequences on the self-acceptance and disability identity of persons with disabilities (Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012) as it puts them in the undesirable position of living in a society that is afraid of their differences by ascribing them to evil. The moral/religious model of disability clearly indicates how certain religious and moral beliefs of society contribute to disability being viewed as punishment for the sinister and evil deeds of the individual with a disability or their parents (Retief & Letšosa, 2018).

#### 4. ***'Super cripple' (making it against all odds):***

Almost the polar opposite of portraying persons with disabilities as pitiable and pathetic is the portrayal of persons with disabilities as 'super cripple'. This type of portrayal paints persons with disabilities as phenomenal individuals who rise above their disabilities and live their lives to the fullest and achieve their dreams. The consequence of this type of portrayal is that it places persons with disabilities on a pedestal and turns them into inspiration for non-disabled persons (Toutellotte, 2015). It also has a negative impact on persons with disabilities as they develop an achievement syndrome in order to fit in and be part of society (Silva & Howe, 2012). The 'super cripple' representation of disability on television further creates the stereotypical view of persons with disabilities as possessing extraordinary abilities as a result of their disability. For example, blind people are represented as having extraordinary sensitivity to hearing as a replacement of their lost sense of sight (Mitchell & Snyder, 2014; Clogston, 1993).

Referring to Oscar Pistorius once again, the former South African Paralympian is an example of a person with a disability who was viewed by many as a 'super cripple' who overcame his disability and achieved beyond expectations. This view was held before he fatally shot his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp (Harvey, 2015). Pistorius was a frequent fixture on television screens as a Paralympian champion and was held in very high regard by many. The super-cripple view or portrayal of disability puts the individual with a disability under the pressure of having to overachieve (Gibson, 2006) in order to be on

equal standing with non-disabled persons or to be seen as significant. The disability identity of the person is thus compromised as they have to continuously do more than what is seen as average and they must also shy away from any wrongdoing as this is seen as unconventional in comparison to the super human status given to them.

#### **5. *Atmosphere or curio:***

Many times, when disability is portrayed in the media, it is usually to enhance a particular atmosphere (Hunt, 1991), which in turn subjects persons with disabilities to the curiosity of those without disabilities. Barnes (1992) provides the example of people with short stature or dwarfism who are prevalent in circuses being displayed as exotica. In terms of the preoccupation with the bodily differences of persons with disabilities, the media does not assist in bridging the gap between accepting and embracing differences in society. As a result, persons with disabilities continue to feel isolated and different, feelings that negatively impact their self-esteem and image.

#### **6. *Laughable or an object of ridicule:***

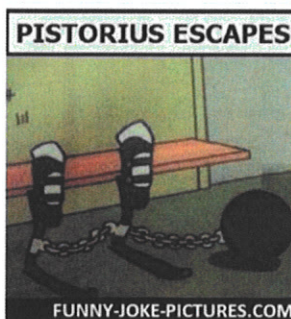
Hunt (1991) points out that disability has been used as amusement through jokes and pranks in the media for many years. An example of this is scenes from South African actor and comedian Leon Shuster's comedy movies where disability is portrayed as part of the joke in most pranks. In one of the scenes in the movie *Pay Back the Money* (2015), Leon Shuster pranks a bunch of people by pretending to be blind and the taxi driver responsible for taking them to their destination. As soon as the passengers realise that the driver is 'blind', they freak out and some jump out of the taxi. Another example is the 2009 movie *Millennium Menace*, where Shuster is in a motorised wheelchair and pretends that the wheelchair is controlled by a remote control which has fallen on the ground. He pranks passers-by by asking for their assistance in using the remote control while he operates the wheelchair from under the hand he has covered with a blanket, driving in the wrong direction to cause panic to the person holding the remote control.

During and after Pistorius' trial, there were many jokes about his disability in the media, especially on social media. Some of the jokes are shared below.

“His lawyer’s got a hard job ahead of him. Realistically, it looks like Pistorius hasn’t got a leg to stand on” (“More Oscar Pistorius Jokes”, 2013).

“Anyone making jokes about Oscar Pistorius is just prosthetic!” (“More Oscar Pistorius Jokes”, 2013).

*A visual representation of prosthetics chained to a prison ball but with no person seated on the bench. The title “Pistorius escapes” is written at the top of the picture.* (“More Oscar Pistorius Jokes”, 2013).



Reid et al. (2006) believe that disability humour presents disability as an interesting way to live, although it tends to perpetuate stereotypes and further isolate persons with disabilities from the general public. In opposition to this, however, Lockyer (2015) is of the view that disability stereotypes can be eradicated through the use of comedy, especially if done so by comedians who have disabilities. In general, making persons with disabilities the objects of jokes brings about the illusion that disability, and consequently persons with disabilities, should not be taken seriously. Identifying as disabled would thus mean identifying with a marginalised group that is not taken with the same seriousness as those in other groups.

#### **7. *Their own worst enemy:***

According to Hunt (1991), the media at times portrays persons with disabilities as feeling sorry for themselves and thus placing obstacles before themselves without even trying to live fully. Watermeyer (2014) says that “in the popular imagination, disability is firmly associated with loss. Persons with disabilities are viewed as lonely, depressed, and

struggling with feelings of inadequacy, damage and shame” (p. 99). The notion behind the media portrayal of persons with disabilities as their own worst enemy lies on the assumption that if persons with disabilities can overcome self-pity and embrace self-acceptance, then they could live a highly functional and fulfilling life. Swartz and Watermeyer (2016) argue that the reasons for self-pity on the part of persons with disabilities are never explored fully, and this impacts their self-image and self-esteem because they are not granted the leverage to freely work through their emotions in order to find meaning for themselves.

#### **8. *A burden:***

This stereotype is closely linked to the medical model of disability which views people with disabilities as helpless due to their impairments and in need of medical attention to be healed (Johnstone, 2012; Oliver, 2013). The burden therefore results from the assumption that persons with disabilities need to be taken care of by non-disabled persons due to their inability to do so themselves. The danger of such portrayals of disability in the media is that they dehumanise persons with disabilities and ignore the valuable contribution they make to society. Media portrayals of disability as a burden impact an individual's disability identity as the media contributes towards identity formation (Wallhagen, 2010; Gumpert & Cathcart, 1982).

#### **9. *Non-sexual:***

It is uncommon for persons with disabilities to be portrayed as being in caring love relationships; rather, they are often portrayed as asexual or unable to have sex (Barnes, 1992; Harris, 2002). This type of imagery creates the negative perception that people with disabilities are impotent and asexual beings and therefore incapable of having successful relationships (Harris, 2002), which negatively influences their disability identities. Although sex is viewed on Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) as one of the universal human needs, this need seems to be excluded from individuals who have disabilities. This view of disability is dehumanising and depicts the identity of those with disabilities as inferior (Haller & Zhang, 2013).

#### **10. *Unable to participate in everyday life:***

Due to the notion that persons with disabilities are the opposite of what is considered normal in society, it is also falsely believed that they can't function on an equal basis with non-disabled persons, therefore ascribing non-disabled persons superior status in relation to those with disabilities (Creamer, 2009; Johnstone, 2012). Due to this belief, persons with disabilities are mostly omitted from television dramas or rarely portrayed as part of society in a productive manner such as with other non-disabled characters (Hunt, 1991). This type of portrayal reinforces the segregation between persons with disabilities and non-disabled persons by primarily focusing on a medical model portrayal of disability. In the view of Mitchell and Snyder (2014), disability is generally viewed as negative due to the individual's deviation from what society regards as normal. As a result, many persons with disabilities opt to hide their disabilities in order to numb the strain that comes with living openly disabled (Wallhagen, 2010; Hahn & Belt, 2004; Becker, 1981).

## **2.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, disability and disability identity were defined and discussed. The three phases of disability identity as per Gibson's (2006) disability identity model, which was later extended by Dunn and Burcaw (2013), were explained with their relevance to media, specifically to soap opera representation of disability. The manner in which disability is represented in soap operas was also discussed, with a focus on the ten stereotypes of disability portrayal in the media according to Hunt (1991). The stereotypical representation of disability in the media does nothing but reinforce negative views about disability. The fact that there is very little literature on the representation of disability in soap operas indicates that the media still has a long way to go in terms of the meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities. The identity formation of individuals is influenced by the self, the society and the media (Cinoğlu & Arıkan, 2012). The humanisation of disability in society and the continual stereotypical portrayal of disability in the media have dire consequences not only on persons with disabilities but also on how they are

perceived and treated by others. The media, particularly soap operas, have a role to play in the portrayals of marginalised groups and their effects on audiences.

## **Chapter 3: RESEARCH METHOD**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the methodology used in this study. The chapter discusses and justifies the study design and method adopted for the study. It also describes the research process which includes the selection of soap opera episodes, sampling strategy, data collection, and data management and analysis. My philosophical standpoint and the position as the researcher are also covered, as are the steps taken to ensure rigor, and how the ethical considerations and potential risks associated to the study were addressed.

### **3.2 Philosophical Standpoint**

The philosophical standpoint for this study was guided by the interpretivist paradigm. According to Willis (1995; 2007), the interpretivist paradigm perceives realities as socially constructed. This means that realities are influenced and shaped by social interactions and that no single truth of knowledge exists because human beings are diverse in their thinking and reasoning (Smith et al., 2009). In terms of research, interpretivists collect information about occurrences and then derive meaning about them through interpretation. This means that the role that the interpretivist researcher plays in the construction and conveying of meaning derived from data is an important one (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The interpretivist paradigm is therefore appropriate for this current study to interpret and explore the meanings behind the portrayal of characters with disabilities in the chosen soap operas in terms of their given storylines and the implications thereof on disability identity.

### **3.3 Research Design**

The research design is a qualitative case study. In the view of Campbell (2015) and Gustafsson (2017), a case study can comprise of a specific person, group, organisation or entity for the purposes of gaining in-depth information. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, disability representation and/or portrayal as a single case is investigated in the

selected soap operas. This means that the group 'persons with disabilities' and their representation are the main focus of the study and that the selected soap operas are just secondary data from which representation information is derived. To be more specific, the research design used is a qualitative descriptive embedded case study used as an interpretive method. According to Scholz and Tietje (2002), a descriptive case study allows for the use of theories and models in directing case descriptions. In the case of this study, the media stereotypes by Hunt (1991) were used to ascertain if emerged themes and subthemes ascribed to them. Furthermore, the disability identity framework by Gibson (2006) was used to determine a connection between it and the way disability is portrayed in the soap operas. Without manipulating the variables (Yin, 2014), the embedded case study design enabled me to examine the why and how of disability portrayals in South African media, particularly soap operas, by focusing on the number of disability scenes and episodes over a period of a year, the type of disability, the importance of the character roles, and the range of disability issues presented. This is because an embedded case study allows for qualitative and quantitative data to be analysed and used to shed more information on the case under study (Scholz & Tietje, 2002). The use of a descriptive case study design allowed me to identify and document phenomena (characters portraying disability) for a deeper understanding of attitudes, behaviours and roles, and the meanings behind them in the context in which they occurred (soap opera episodes and scenes). This goes well with what Gustafsson (2017) argues about how a case study enables researchers to focus on one phenomenon, which in this case is the representation of a group of people under the category 'disability'. In this study, the descriptive case study approach made it possible to draw on both qualitative and quantitative evidence for data triangulation through content analysis. In order to interpret the soap opera episodes and scenes, qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was used as it allowed me to understand the social reality of persons with disabilities by exploring the underlying meanings of both implicit and explicit representation of disability from the soap opera contents. Content analysis is a research method used to analyse written, verbal or visual media messages (Krippendorff, 2018; Neuendorf, 2011; Cole, 1988) in order to discover their underlying meanings. According to Harwood and Garry (2003), this research method was first used in the 19th century to

analyse hymns, political speeches, advertisements, and articles in newspapers and magazines. The method has been and continues to be used in various social science disciplines such as marketing, media studies, sociology, and psychology. It is also a research method used to analyse a variety of media representation contexts such as race, gender, age, and language. For example, content analysis has generally been used in feminist studies to determine the representation of women in the media (Neuendorf, 2011; Courtney & Whippie, 1983; Tuchman et al., 1978). Therefore, content analysis is appropriate for this study to ascertain the nature of disability representation in 7dL and GTL for the duration of the 2016 year.

### **3.4 Sampling**

Sampling refers to a specific portion that is derived from a whole population based on the qualities it has that is suitable for a particular study (Maree, 2007; O'Leary & Campbell, 2015). Samples can be based on probability or non-probability sampling, and for this study, a non-probability sampling and purposive sampling method was used. This means that the units under investigation are not selected based on an equal equation criterion but are rather selected for a particular purpose (Maree, 2007). This is simplified by O'Leary (2017, p. 210) when mentioning that non-probability sampling is based on sampling that is "hand-picked" for a specific reason that will lead to answering the research question/s. This also ties in with purposive sampling which is a specific type of non-probability sampling based on the inclusion of study units which, in turn, are based on their unique attributes.

According to Patton (1990), the most important aspect of a study sample relates to its usefulness and credibility as well as the richness, depth and value of available data. I thus focused on "information-rich cases" to guide the research process (Patton, 1990, p. 171). The selection in this study is informed by this principle. The sample and the size were directly linked to the purpose of the research which focused on the representation of disability in two soap operas, namely GTL and 7dL for the year 2016. A particular focus of the study is on two South African soap operas aired on SABC which are longstanding and popular. GTL and 7dL are both watched by millions of viewers on a daily basis and

both have been airing on television for at least two decades (Zeeman, 2017). Given South Africa's history of diversity and the lingering impact of apartheid, the country remains mostly divided along racial and socioeconomic lines. It was crucial to select soap operas that aim to reflect the new demography in post-apartheid South Africa in terms of viewers. As it was not possible to find a single soap opera that has fully attained that mixed audience interest, the two selected soap operas together achieve this purpose.

- ***Generations: The Legacy (GTL)***

*Generations: The Legacy* was purposively selected because it has been one of the longest standing and most watched soap operas since it first aired on SABC1 in 1994. The target audience of the soap opera was predominantly the black youth and deliberately moved towards a majority black cast in a bid to feature and portray black people in a television genre that was previously predominantly white (Tager, 2010). The characters and storylines of the soap opera centred around the success and wealth of black families in a bid to showcase the South African transformation in terms of the rise of the black middleclass and wealthy (Motsaathebe, 2009).

- ***7de Laan (7dL)***

*7de Laan* was similarly introduced to South Africa in the year 2000 on SABC2, seven years after *Generations*. Initially, *7dL* was broadcast on Tuesdays only, then on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and eventually five days a week, from Monday to Friday at 18:00 (SABC2, n.d. b). Unlike *GTL*, *7dL* is primarily an Afrikaans soap opera, while similarly to *GTL*, is aimed at upper-income viewers. The programme's dialogue is primarily in Afrikaans and is subtitled in English with some code switching between other languages such as English and Zulu in order to cater to a broader and more diverse audience. According to Van der Merwe (2012), *7dL* now has a diverse audience from various socio-economic, racial and language groups. The storyline of the soap opera strikes a balance "between fantasy and reality" and enables viewers to relax by also including a "unique balance between humour, light heartedness and drama" (Van der Merwe, 2012, p. 46).

There are a few reasons for only focusing on soap operas from the SABC as opposed to those on the DSTV (Digital Satellite Television) subscription channels. Firstly, the SABC reaches audiences of over 30 million, with SABC1 reaching 89%, SABC2 91% and SABC3 77% of the public (SABC1, n.d. a). Secondly, the SABC strives to reach a diverse language audience. For example, the broadcasting languages of SABC1 are predominantly in Nguni languages (Zulu, Xhosa, Swati, Ndebele) and English, while the broadcasting languages of SABC2 are English, Afrikaans, Tsonga and Venda, and their target audience is mainly families with the channel placing a strong focus on family values (SABC2, n.d. a). Thirdly, unlike DSTV, where the viewers are liable for a monthly or sometimes annual fee for the channels they subscribe to, the SABC is a state broadcaster that provides television and radio stations to the general public for free. The unemployment rate of South Africa was at an average of 25.5% between 2000 and 2017 (StatsSA, 2017). This means that the majority of South Africans cannot afford paid television channels and therefore rely on SABC channels for news and entertainment.

In addition, the study focused solely on the episodes aired in the year 2016 based on the following grounds:

- The WPRPD (Department of Social Development, 2015) was signed in 2015. Therefore, the year 2016 was chosen to get an idea of how disability was included in soap operas a year after the commencement of this signed paper.
- The two selected soap operas have large viewership numbers which, according to Zeeman (2017), range daily from approximately 8.36 million viewers for GTL to 1.65 million for 7dL.
- According to the South Africa TV Ratings, both soap operas fall under the top 20 primetime programmes for SABC1 and SABC2 respectively and on SABC1, GTL is the only show indicated as falling under the genre of soap opera, likewise 7dL on SABC2.
- The target audience of the two selected soap operas is diverse.

### ***3.4.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria***

In terms of the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the soap opera content, the focus was only on episodes and scenes where disability representation appeared in the soap operas, 7dL and GTL, in 2016. Thus, the focus was largely on episodes and scenes of a character(s) representing disability and where other characters referred to disability or to the character(s) portraying the disability. All the other scenes in the episodes where there was no mention of disability or the character portraying disability were excluded from the study. In total, I watched and analysed ten episodes of GTL and two episodes of 7dL, which were the only of episodes received from the SABC. Each episode was approximately 30 minutes long, ranging from 28 minutes to 32 minutes in length. To establish coding consistency with the episodes, I introduced a structure table for my analysis with the following columns: episode, scene, time (duration), setting, characters, action/mood, dialogue (verbal), and dialogue (non-verbal).

### **3.5 Data Collection**

For this study, a total of ten episodes from GTL and two from 7dL which aired during 2016 were examined. In total, approximately 360 minutes, or a little over 5 hours, of episode footage were analysed for content that constructed messages about and described and represented disabilities. The episodes analysed were the only ones received from the SABC that represented disability for the year 2016. The scenes in these episodes in which disability was represented were selected following various themes on disability storylines so as to adequately monitor the progression of the show and have a clear understanding of how disability is represented on the two selected soap operas. Because of the scope of this study, after watching the ten episodes from GTL, the focus was subsequently only on four episodes that were selected as representing disability. Firstly, a daily schedule with times to watch and re-watch the four episodes from GTL and the two episodes from 7dL respectively was created. Then, according to the schedule, the focus would be on one specific soap opera where an entire episode of that soap opera would be watched in order to identify the scenes where disability appeared. Secondly, I would then re-watch the episodes to note down the relevant times, such as duration of the episode, time when the character with disability appears, and duration of the scene where the character appears. Thirdly, the episodes were re-watched for a third time but this time only the

scenes where the character with disability appeared in order to note down the dialogue and give a description of the scene. The whole exercise took approximately 120 minutes per day and continued until all episodes of the two soap operas had been covered (see example of description of scenes in appendix A). Table 1 below shows a sample of the data collection process.

*Table 1: Sample of Video tape coding of 7de Laan – Series 17 Episode 27-04-16*

<b>7DE LAAN – SERIES 17 – EPISODE AIRED ON 27 APRIL 2016</b>	
Duration of the whole tape	30 minutes
Duration of episode	23.47 minutes long
Duration of advertorials in-between episodes	6.53 minutes
Time of first appearance of character with disability during the scene	At 11:03 minutes into the episode
Time of end of character's appearance during the scene	At 11:35 scene ends
Duration of character with disability scenes	The scene is thus 32 seconds
Type of disability of character	Down Syndrome

### **3.5.1 Data collection challenges and resolutions**

The data collection process was quite a daunting task and not as easy as I had anticipated. The SABC makes their programmes available to the public through programme content sales and most programmes are also available on YouTube. As an objective, the SABC recognises the importance of being responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities (SABC News, 2017). It also states its determination to have material that displays the objectives of the SABC, which are available as archives to members of the public with or without a fee (Independent Broadcasting Act, No. 4 of 1999). This, however, did not make the acquiring of the specific soap opera content needed for this study any easier. Searching for South African soap opera episodes which depicted disability for any particular year was like searching for a needle in a haystack; it proved to be time consuming. This was mainly because soap operas are not archived according to what they represented in a particular year but are rather archived according to series and seasons. So even though the SABC was made aware that the soap operas

requested should contain episodes in which disability was depicted from the onset, it was difficult for them to establish which seasons and episodes of the soap operas for a specific year depicted disability. This thus led to a process of communication and negotiation by me with different people and departments from the SABC, trying to obtain the relevant soap opera content. In the end, in order to obtain the relevant content for the two soap operas, I had to mention the characters I recalled on 7dL and GTL representing disability. As a result, ten episodes for GTL and two episodes for 7dL for the year 2016 were received.

### **3.6 Position of the Researcher**

My position as a researcher and person with a disability gives room for bias. As a researcher for this particular study, I acknowledge my identity as a black woman with a disability who is part of the audiences that watch the soap operas investigated in this study. There is therefore no doubt that some of the interpretations and predictions that emerge from this study are also part of my own beliefs and values not only as a person with a disability but as a researcher as well. To address the potential bias, I approached the situation from both the positive and negative impact of my position. The positives ended up outweighing the negatives due to the measures that I instituted to help mitigate and minimise the negatives. The positives included my own unique life experiences as a person with a disability, which I believe help me to understand issues affecting persons with disabilities more than a person without a disability would. My having a disability and researching issues pertaining to disability also has the potential of minimising the risk of leaving important elements out from the study which might be overlooked by a person without a disability when doing the analysis of the soap opera scenes and episodes. At the same time, having a different disability pertaining to the disabilities under research (as it is in my case) also minimises potential bias. It is worth mentioning that the soap opera content analysed for this study was in no way manipulated as characters and the storylines follow a predetermined set of rules established by the scriptwriters and producers of the show.

### 3.7 Data Management and Analysis

Although the nature of this study does not require securing the data due to the fact that the data, which is the soap opera scenes and episodes, is available in the public domain, I adhered to the University of Cape Town's (UCT) requirements for data management by having the data saved on my personal computer under designated folders. My computer is secured with a strong password and has all the necessary anti-hacking security programs, including anti-viruses, anti-malware, and firewall installed and kept up-to-date for further security. Furthermore, the data is also stored on an external storage drive.

According to Mayan (2001), it is very important to make sense of the data obtained and this can be achieved by analysing the collected data through the use of systematic and logical techniques to test the authentic nature of the data. In addition to that, Struwig and Stead (2001) state that to make sense of the obtained data, it is advisable to summarise it by using a set of procedures. Therefore, in order to make sense of the data, I classified, compared and interpreted it by using the six processes involved in the analysis of qualitative content (O'Leary, 2017:331): (1) "identifying biases and noting overall impression"; (2) "reducing, organising and coding the data"; (3) "searching for patterns and interconnections"; (4) "mapping and building themes"; (5) "building and verifying theories"; and (6) "drawing conclusions while keeping the research question in mind". For this study, these six processes were followed when analysing the soap opera episodes to uncover how persons with disabilities are portrayed.

Firstly, as a person with a disability myself, as indicated above, and a serial soap opera viewer, it is understood that my position has the potential to impact the study sustainably. It was therefore important and necessary that I be as honest as I could be by critically reflecting on preconceived views I hold about disability portrayal in the chosen soap operas in order to avoid researcher bias. Some of these preconceived views are:

- Soap operas make use of non-disabled actors to portray disability.
- The portrayed disability is always temporary, and the character always finds healing.

- The character with a disability has no power for as long as they are in the 'state of disability'.
- The character with a disability is always depressed or unhappy.
- The character with a disability is always dependent on others for assistance.

I kept a reflective journal in order to keep track of all my thoughts, feelings and assumptions as the analysis process unfolded. This was done by scanning through the soap opera episodes and noting down the overall impressions about the content in my journal. Doing this assisted me to continuously re-evaluate and challenge the pre-existing assumptions held, and therefore bridged possible biases regarding the study subjects by creating transparency of the research process (Ortlipp, 2008). I also used the thoughts, feelings and assumptions noted in my journal by reflecting on it critically by referring to the literature on disability representation in the media in order to assist in understanding the data that emerged from the study. None of the pre-existing assumptions I held about disability representation emerged from the results of this study.

***An example of my journal reflection:***

*Analysis of 7de Laan scenes*

*I don't see Kosie displaying any other emotion other than being happy in both of the available scenes. He is also very friendly. Is it part of his storyline to be friendly and happy, but why? Are people with Down syndrome generally happy and friendly or could this be a stereotypical belief portrayed in the scenes? I need to read what the literature says about this*

Secondly, I transcribed the scenes where disability was portrayed for both soap operas and took screenshots of the disability scenes in order to simplify the transcription process. The screenshots assisted me to transcribe the dialogues verbatim and to capture exact actions in the scenes as they appeared. This assisted to ensure that I left nothing out from the scenes. I then analysed the transcribed scenes by taking note of the dialogue (e.g. words, phrases or sentences) between the character with a disability and the non-disabled characters, as well as the behaviour and interactions of the character with the disability. I read and re-read the transcribed scenes in order to scrutinise them for possible meanings and made notes of all the ideas that came to my mind while doing so. Thereafter, I coded the meanings derived from the disability scenes (see example of the

thematic coding in appendix B1). Following the process of coding, I analysed the codes for similarities between the two soap operas and connected similar codes into themes by using colour to highlight the themes that were similar. These themes were further broken down into subthemes where it was possible and necessary (See appendix B2 for an example of the themes which emerged between the two soap operas). After that, I looked for patterns between these themes and subthemes that emerged from the disability scenes to determine whether there were any similarities between the disability portrayals of the soap operas and Hunt's ten media stereotypes of disability.

The theoretical framework used in this study was expanded and verified by the results and findings which emerged from the scenes and episodes of both soap operas. For example, I applied Gibson's (2006) disability identity as theoretical frameworks in order to create a link between the portrayal of disability in the soap operas and the disability identity of persons with disabilities.

The conclusion of the overall findings was linked back to the main research question and objective. The research question is: What is the extent and significance of the representation of persons with disabilities and disability issues in the two selected South African soap operas? In forming the conclusion drawn, the study's objectives were realised by covering the types of disabilities in the soap operas, the roles of the characters with disabilities, and the frequency and duration of disability scenes and episodes during the course of a year. This was done in order to arrive at the outcomes of the research question.

### **3.8 Ensuring Rigor**

Rigor was observed throughout the study by ensuring that credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability are maintained.

#### **3.8.1 Credibility**

I adopted a reflective attitude to ensure the credibility of the study. By keeping and maintaining a reflective journal, I critically reflected on the research process itself as a focus of inquiry, by interrogating how the research question defined or limited the

research findings, as well as how the study design and analysis method could have constructed the data and findings. For instance, could the research question have been formulated differently to generate new or additional findings? This aided in further reflecting on the underlying assumptions of the research and its implications (Palaganas et al., 2017; Willig, 2001; Dowling, 2006). Similarly, content analysis as a data collection method strengthens the credibility of the findings because I cannot influence the data collection process where there are no participants. Soap opera dialogues were transcribed and read and re-read in order to derive meaning from them. The transcribed soap opera content was checked for accuracy, which is why screenshots of the soap opera scenes were taken in order to ensure nothing was left out. The transcribed data was used as a reference with backing from literature whenever inferences were made.

### ***3.8.2 Transferability***

According to Creswell (2003) and Krefting (1991), transferability is attained when researchers are able to draw enough rich and meaningful information from a study to make their own analysis for further research on a specific topic. In this study, transferability was ensured by firstly providing a quality description of the background of the data collected in order to enlighten future researchers on the process. Similarly, a detailed description of the findings is provided to allow for theoretical conclusions to be drawn concerning the applicability of the data in other contexts.

### ***3.8.3 Confirmability***

Confirmability in qualitative research refers to the extent to which the results of a study can be confirmed by other researchers (Krefting, 1991). Therefore, in order to ensure the confirmability of this study, I documented the research procedure from start to finish and did so by checking and rechecking the data. I made sure that the findings from this study were solely shaped by data from the scenes and episodes (e.g. character dialogues and storylines). Additionally, I acknowledged my predispositions as a researcher with a disability who is researching disability representation in the media. In order to minimise researcher bias, I drew insight from the reflective journal I kept in order to recognise

thoughts and assumptions during the analysis process in order to weigh them against existing literature. My reverting to the journal also created transparency which would assist future researchers who might want to replicate the study in understanding the research process.

#### **3.8.4 Dependability**

In order to ensure the dependability of the study, I ensured that the research process (data collection and analysis) was described in detail to make it easy for another researcher to understand it and repeat the research. I also engaged in code-recode for consistency, which means that I analysed and coded the soap operas more than once by watching the scenes and episodes where disability was represented over and over again.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

The research proposal was submitted to and received approval from the Faculty of Health Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Cape Town (See appendix C). From start to finish, this research adhered to the applicable ethical considerations as dictated by the UCT ethics requirements for the study. I understood the ethical implications related to the study. The ethical behaviour of researchers in conducting a study includes moral issues of right and wrong and is subject to legal and ethical regulations that need to be adhered to in research studies (Wiles et al., 2008). Before commencing with the study, I had to obtain ethical clearance from the ethics committee. The Declaration of Helsinki of 2013 (World Medical Association, 2018) emphasises the importance of obtaining clearance from an ethics committee before a research study can be executed.

Due to the data for this study being available in the public domain, no ethical issues emerged from this study. Wiles et al. (2008) remark that there is not much said about the ethical considerations pertaining to visual material because it emerged only recently as popular in social disciplines other than in its traditional area, anthropology. Nevertheless, consent for collecting and disseminating visual material and the copyright clearance

pertaining to it is mentioned, although not at length. Attention is also accorded the four common research ethics, namely: confidentiality, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice. These four common research ethics are however unnecessary in this study due to the fact that no consent was required because there were no participants in the study. Additionally, the selected soap operas are freely available on television and the internet, and there are no laws prohibiting the use of soap operas for study purposes. In order to obtain the soap opera episodes needed for the study, I had to fill in and sign a standard SABC once-off purchase agreement which regulated the terms by which a purchaser may obtain the right to use content provided by the SABC. The agreement allows for content to be used for private usage which includes education or research (See appendix D). The agreement states that “all rights in and to the Content, including, without limitation, all copyright and other intellectual property rights relating to the Content, shall be retained by the Seller.” It further also states that the content is not for commercial usage.

### ***3.9.1 Risk and benefits***

The findings of the research will be made available to the SABC as a tool to advocate for and encourage the inclusion of persons with disabilities in their programmes, especially soap operas. It is envisioned that the study will contribute to the ongoing debate about disability inclusion in everyday life as portrayed in popular soap operas and that the outcome of the study will promote:

- an increase in the representation and realistic portrayal of persons with disabilities in soap operas,
- an increase in the employment of persons with disabilities within the media industry,
- accessibility of all media forms for a variety of disabilities, and
- continuous monitoring and evaluation of policy implementations pertaining to disability and the media.

A possible burden of the study to the SABC could be the exposure of possible gaps in media construction and the portrayal of disability. The benefits of this study far outweigh any burdens, however, as the study aims to instigate positive change as opposed to causing harm.

---

## **Chapter 4: ANALYSIS OF EPISODES AND SCENES REPRESENTING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The following analysis offers insight into the representation of persons with disabilities in two of South Africa's most popular soap operas, namely Generations: The Legacy (GTL) aired on SABC1, and 7de Laan (7dL) on SABC2, in 2016. The episodes from GTL were received on two tapes with five episodes compressed onto each tape. There was no specific indication of the season or number of the episode for each episode, although the year '2016' was indicated on the tapes. For 7dL, two tapes were received, both with the dates indicated on them. Therefore, for analytical and description purposes, the scenes of the episodes were manually counted and the episode numbers self-generated. For example, for 7dL, the first tape according to its date was viewed as episode 1 (Ep. 1) and the second one as episode 2 (Ep. 2). The same principle was applied to GTL, in that the first tape was viewed as episode 1 (Ep.1), the second tape as episode 2 (Ep.2) and so forth. The abbreviation 'Ep' is used to indicate 'episode' followed by the number of the tape, and the letter 'S' is used to indicate 'scene'. Therefore, the number at which a disability scene started was used with the letter S to indicate the scene number (e.g. Ep.2, S3).

Scenes and episodes where disability is portrayed are unpacked and analysed in terms of their occurrence, storyline placement, dialogues and characters in order to derive meaning from them and also linking them to Hunt's (1991) categories of disability stereotypes in the media. My analysis seeks to show that as much as soap operas attempt to move away from stereotypical representations of disability, these stereotypes still feature to some degree and disability is still very much underrepresented.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section covers the frequency and duration of scenes and episodes of each soap opera in which disability was represented for the year 2016. Thereafter the chapter covers three broad themes that emerged from the data: 1) Economic participation of persons with disabilities (with the following subthemes: a) Persons with disabilities are capable of working and running businesses,

b) Cognitive ability and skills to participate in the economy, c) Rights to reasonable accommodation and assistive devices); 2) Social and societal participation of persons with disabilities; and 3) 'Super Cripple', one of the media stereotypes of disability according to Hunt (1991). The last section is the conclusion which provides an overview of what was covered in this chapter.

## **4.2 Frequency of Disability Scenes and Episodes**

Although this study primarily focuses on qualitative content analysis as an interpretation method, this section provides insight into the number and duration of disability scenes and episodes in the selected soap operas from the data gathered. This is deemed necessary as part of the content to illustrate the number of times soap opera audiences are exposed to disability and disability issues, and the significance of this exposure for both the disability and non-disabled communities of viewers. In addition to showcasing the manner in which disability is represented in the selected soap operas, focusing on the frequency and length of the disability scenes and episodes further illustrates the extent to which disability issues are prioritised in the transformation agenda of the media, particularly as it relates to disability presentation and representation in the two selected popular soap operas.

On average, South African soap operas, including the ones selected for this study, air throughout the year daily from Monday to Friday for 30 minutes each day, with a repeat omnibus on the weekends. A few minutes are allocated to advertisements during the 30 minutes. On average, there are 365 days in one year and 52 weeks. A workweek, Monday to Friday, is five days in a week. This means that there are approximately 260 workdays in one year (5 days x 52 weeks). Because the analysis of the selected soap opera content focused on the year 2016, there were approximately 260 episodes of 7dL and GTL respectively for that particular year. However, only ten episodes of GTL and two episodes of 7dL contained disability related scenes that year. There were slight variations of one or two scenes between the two soap operas when counted, however I managed to establish that for 2016, there were approximately 13 scenes per episode. This amounts to an average of 3380 scenes (13 scenes x 260 days) over the full year. This shows that

less than 10% of episodes (specifically 3.8% of GTL and 0.7% of 7dL episodes) were allocated to disability scenes, which is significant to note as it provides a clear picture in terms of the priority of issues in the soap operas. It also provides us with information on the level of exposure, as in how many times, the South African audiences were exposed to episodes and scenes where disability was represented in a year. There is clear evidence of a huge gap in proportion as illustrated in table 2 below.

*Table 2: Total number of episodes vs number of episodes representing disability for both GTL and 7dL in 2016*

Episodes and Scenes	Generations: The Legacy	7de Laan
Total number of episodes per year	260	260
Episodes representing disability	10	2
Total number of scenes per year	3380	3380
Scenes representing disability	27	2

Table 2 above clearly showcases the disparity between the number of scenes portraying disability and those without – for whole of 2016, disability episodes were near absent in GTL and 7dL. The frequency of disability episodes that appeared in 7dL was worse than in GTL. This is significant because for a vast number of individuals in society, one of their main sources of exposure to persons with disabilities is through what they see and hear on television (Klein, 2011; Harris, 2002; Ellis, 2012). It is a platform through which viewers engage daily with societal issues and create realities that are then reinforced in their larger societal engagement. The implication of the disability vacuum on screen is great because many of the stereotypes and discriminations which exist against persons with disabilities are partly due to lack of knowledge and understanding about disability and disability issues (Harnett, 2000; Rice et al., 2015; Barnes, 1992). The scanty appearance of disability scenes in both GTL and 7dL for the 2016 year contributed minimally to bridging the gap of discrimination and stereotypes against persons with disabilities. The poor rate of representation of persons with disabilities in these soap operas also has an influence

on how persons with disabilities view themselves (Sanchez, 2010; Inimah et al., 2012; Pirsl & Popovska, 2013) when watching these soap operas. Audiences are not afforded adequate time to see, learn about and understand disability and disability issues due to the limited number and short duration of disability scenes and episodes on the soap operas. In order for learning and understanding to take place, frequent encounters with an issue are critical for familiarity and integration. This is backed by the work of various learning theorists (Skinner, 1979; Sternberg & Williams, 2010; Piaget, 1969) who emphasise the importance of frequent recurrence and repetition in ensuring that learning takes place.

The acutely short and limited representation of disability in soap operas not only hinders opportunity and exposure to and influences perceptions of disability issues, but also impacts on disability identity. In this case, persons with Down syndrome and hearing impairment, for instance, might feel that, as persons with disabilities, they are not worthy enough to make a frequent appearance on soap operas. We need to bear in mind that the identities of many persons with disabilities are dented due to dehumanising attitudes and behaviours (Gona, Newton & Bunning, 2018; Goffman, 1963) from non-disabled persons. Added to this, the very same dehumanising view of persons with disabilities is also behind non-disabled persons being fearful and hesitant (Taylor, 2017) to interact with persons with disabilities. This creates a vicious cycle of dehumanisation and discrimination, which simply means that the insubstantial representation of disability in GTL and 7dL continues, failing to show that disability issues matter rather than narrowing the gap of understanding disability and disability issues for audiences. Equally sad is the reality that many persons with disabilities might be in possession of television sets but they seldom, if ever, see other people with disabilities on screen in their favourite soap operas, subjecting them to an identity of 'other' (Jensen, 2011; Smith & Hipper, 2010), which affects their self-worth (Putnam, 2005). The soap operas therefore need to revisit the number of episodes and scenes awarded to disability representation if the aim is to include and mainstream disability issues.

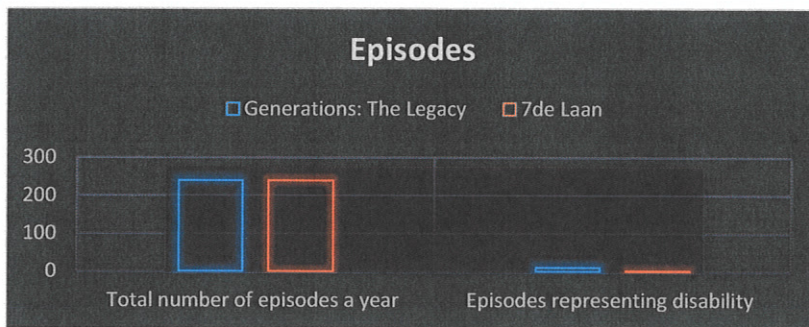


Figure 2: Total number of episodes vs number of episodes representing disability for both GTL and 7dL in 2016

Additionally, when comparing the duration of the scenes of the episodes in which disability is represented, the meek attention given to disability is equally appalling. In a day, 30 minutes is allocated to an episode, which translates into two and a half hours per week. The time allocation suggests South African audiences watch approximately 130 hours (2.5 hours x 52 weeks) of their preferred soap opera in a year. The ten episodes from GTL had a total of 27 scenes where the character with a disability appears and the total length of all the scenes amount to 47 minutes and 52 seconds all together – less than an hour. 7dL had two episodes with one scene each, and each lasted for 31 and 32 seconds respectively, amounting to 1 minute 3 seconds. Table 3 below shows the duration of the disability scenes.

Table 3: Duration of Disability Scenes

Number and duration of scenes	Average soap opera episodes
Duration of a single episode per day	30 minutes
Number of minutes/hours of episodes per week	2 hours 30 minutes
Number of minutes/hours of episodes per year	7800 minutes (130 hours)

	Generations: The Legacy	7de Laan
Total duration of disability scenes for the 2016 year	47 minutes and 52 seconds	1 minute and 3 seconds

Of utmost importance from table 3 is the number of minutes of the soap opera episodes in an entire year versus the number of minutes allocated to disability representation in that specific year. Out of the 7800 minutes in a year, only 47 minutes and 52 seconds were dedicated to disability representation in GTL, and only 1 minute and 3 seconds in 7dL. These time allocations are just a drop in the ocean and, just like the number of episodes and scenes allocated, the duration of these scenes prove to be grossly insignificant. The two soap operas combined aired for 1200 minutes and, out of this, only 48 minutes 55 seconds were devoted to disability narratives, meaning that the audience is exposed to a severely restricted time allocation of disability on the soap operas. To emphasise it again, these minimal representations of disability mean a lack of opportunities for viewers to meaningfully engage and learn about disability. As indicated by Sternberg and Williams (2010), people forget where there is no repetition to reinforce recollection. These short episodic scenes are too brief and make little or no difference in terms of transformation and change. For instance, in a week where disability is represented for less than an hour, it would be very difficult to remember those scenes or the issues if those are the only scenes one is exposed to for an entire year. Unlike all other general scenes and issues, the reinforcement is lacking and/or restricted. The amount of time dedicated to disability representation over the whole year in both 7dL and GTL was less than an hour, which is less than the 2 hours and 30 minutes time allocation for a soap opera per week.

The limited number and duration of disability episodes and scenes in these soap operas are disturbingly insignificant in terms of the desired impact, so much so that its likely audiences won't remember those scenes at all. This is an injustice to the disability course and community, especially because there has been growing advocacy towards the inclusion of persons with disabilities into society and the eradication of barriers which hinder full participation.

It is also critical to note the manner of these representations. The next section of the analysis looks at how the identified scenes and episodes portraying disability were represented in the soap operas and the possible implications this might have on disability identity, as well as the potential impact on viewers' perceptions. The section starts with a

---

brief description of the roles and representation of the characters with disabilities, and then examines the disabilities depicted, before moving on to unpacking the themes which emerged from the soap opera data.

### **4.3 Role and Representation of Characters with Disabilities in the Soap Operas**

Although their appearance is minimalistic as shown in the preceding section, actual persons with disabilities are used in the GTL and 7dL scenes and episodes for the 2016 year. This is a departure from the traditional stereotypical approach of depicting the disability narrative through portraying non-disabled persons as having a disability (Woodburn & Kopic, 2016). The use of actual persons with disabilities in the soap operas is empowering as it provides a platform for self-representation of persons with disabilities and is also overall transformative for both persons without and persons with disabilities in and outside of the entertainment business. Such a shift is emancipatory and promotes disability empowerment for the individual as well as for the collective (Burns, 2011; Shakespeare, 1999). It also encourages accountability by the media to persons with disabilities in terms of inclusion.

The UNCRPD stresses the role of the media as a powerful force or instrument in raising awareness, and countering stigma, misconceptions and misinformation about disability. South Africa is a signatory to disability inclusive legislative papers such as the UNCRPD and the WPRPD which advocate and encourage media entities to include disability meaningfully (UN, 2006; WPRPD, 2015). Apart from those disability inclusive legislatives, the SABC as a public broadcaster is mandated by a number of regulations and policies, and the Independent Broadcasting Act No. 4 of 1999 is one of the core acts by which they abide (Independent Broadcasting Act, 1999). There is no doubt that the SABC is making strides in the integration of persons with disabilities in the workplace as well as in dealing with disability issues through their programming. Their 2017/18 annual report indicates that not only does the SABC intend to meet the needs of audiences with disabilities but they also strive to make their own working environment disability inclusive (SABC annual report, 2017/18). In their annual report, it shows that persons with disabilities make up 2%

of their workforce and that they intend to increase the percentage to 5% by 2019. Through to their word, the SABC's 2019 annual report, the SABC had met and implemented all their Employment Equity targets and as was nominated for the Gauteng Disability Rights Excellent Award (SABC, 2019 Annual Report). Furthermore, the SABC in conjunction with the Deaf Federation of South Africa (DEAFSA) decided to include sign language in all "major events of national importance such as the state of the nation address etc." (SABC, 2019 Annual Report, p. 58).

Creating platforms for disability scenes in traditional mainstream soap operas such as 7dL and GTL in South Africa is an achievement. Such a move not only highlights the plights of the disability community but also creates a space to begin to challenge disability stereotypes in the larger society, through the soap operas' viewers. The type of disability(ies) represented in each soap opera also gives voice to those specific disabilities. More importantly and powerfully is the shift to featuring actual persons with disabilities as actors, which is the case in both 7dL and GTL.

In the soap opera 7dL, a decision was made to include a character with Down syndrome as a bit player (a person given a small acting role with few lines) in an attempt to advocate for the employment of persons with Down syndrome. The soap opera's publicity manager posted the following on their official Facebook page posted on 18 June 2013: "To celebrate Youth Day 7de Laan partnered with Down Syndrome South Africa (DSSA). The idea is to create awareness to private companies to employ these young adults living with Down syndrome. We have taken a step in that direction by having Kosie Schoeman who has Down syndrome, as a call actor on 7de Laan" (7de Laan, Amptelik, 2013). Significant to note is that this started off with a visit to the DSSA (7de Laan, Amptelik, 2013). This inclusion of scenes and episodes in the soap operas where disability is depicted is a step in the right direction as it fosters the inclusion of disability in the larger society. (See figure 3 below taken during the 7dL visit to DSSA.)



Figure 3: 7de Laan cast and members of DSSA during the Youth Day celebration of 2013 (7de Laan (Amptelik), 2013)

### Kosie (7de Laan)



Figure 4: A screenshot of the character Kosie in 7de Laan

True to the commitment made by 7dL, the South African audience was introduced to the character, Kosie, who has Down syndrome. The character of Kosie is played by Kosie

Schoeman, a bit player. He plays the role of a young man with Down syndrome who works at a local butchery where he delivers meat to customers. The general role he represents in the soap opera creates the image that despite his disability, he is part of society as the character has a job, holds conversations with the other characters and carries knowledge of important events which shaped the history of South Africa. As already mentioned, the character has Down syndrome, which is a developmental disability easily identified by some common physical features (Gee, 2012). Those familiar with the disability would easily notice that the character has Down syndrome but equally those who might not be familiar with the disability might be able to see and hear that the character differs from his average non-disabled peers due to his distinct physical features and slurred speech (see figure 4 above). The physical characteristics associated with Down syndrome include a flat face and slanted eyes, a short neck and small ears, as well as small feet and hands with a single crease across the palm of the hand (Buckley & Sacks, 2001; Christianson, 1996). According to McGill and Cummings (1990), developmental disabilities practically receive no attention in the media when compared to other disabilities such as physical and learning disabilities. This might be due to erroneous belief that persons with Down syndrome think and behave like kids and are unable to effectively perform tasks which require intellectual ability (Pueschel, 1996). The role of the character 'Kosie' is a departure from the stereotypical traditional role of dependence and childish behaviour (Gee, 2012) commonly assigned to people with Down syndrome of all age groups.

### Uncle Tebogo (GTL)



Figure 5: Screenshots of the character Uncle Tebogo in *Generations: The Legacy*

In GTL, the character of Uncle Tebogo is played by the late well-known and multiple award-winning South African actor, writer, producer, director, singer and businessman, Joe Mafela. The character assumes the role of a feared and respected elder who is also the head of the family. He cherishes the family name and legacy and strives to protect it by reprimanding family members or any other person who aims to tarnish it. The actor appears under the names of supporting cast. Upon close inspection (see figure 5 above), the character is seen with hearing aids in both ears which might mean that his hearing loss is alleviated by the use of the aids (Foss, 2014). According to Wallhagen (2010) the very hearing aids that enhance a person's hearing are sometimes viewed negatively due to hearing impairment being associated with a negative identity, causing people to deny their hearing loss. The scenes and episodes where the character appears mostly centre on gender roles and the family business. There is no mention or focus on the character as having a disability. Just like with Down syndrome, hearing loss is very rarely if ever represented on television (Foss, 2014), which means that stereotypes about these disabilities persist, therefore diminishing the importance and recognition of the disability (Lind, 2004). An inaccurate and stereotypical belief about people with hearing loss is that they are less intelligent than those who do not experience any hearing loss (Lash & Helme, 2020; Becker, 1981). Therefore, the storyline of the character, Uncle Tebogo, in GTL is a departure from such stereotypes by casting the character as a prominent family figure who is respected and a business-minded man. With that said, however, it is worth mentioning that persons with disabilities are perceived differently by society based on their age, the severity of their impairment, and whether or not they were born with a disability or acquired it later in life (Ayalon & Tesch-Romer, 2018; Bogart, 2014; Dawn, 2019). For instance, aging is an expected and accepted part of life and so is the deterioration in physical and mental health for older people (Ayalon & Tesch-Romer, 2018). This makes disability a reasonable existence in old age but not in youth. This is particularly true with disabilities such as hearing impairment. This perception puts a strain on the identity of youth with such disabilities and negatively impacts their satisfaction with life, especially if they feel isolated from their communities (Daley, Phipps & Branscombec, 2018). Therefore, the audiences of the two soap operas respectively might perceive the

hearing aids used by the character, Uncle Tebogo, as a normal part of life because he is an older person. Whereas for Kosie, his disability might be perceived differently because he is youthful and deviating from what society believes about disability and age. Thus, the limited scenes and episodes assumed by Kosie also limit the chance for audiences to change their minds about disability and age. It also give audiences that are youth with disabilities very little time to see that disability is ageless and but a normal part of life.

During 2016, both soap operas only represented one type of disability each. Contrary to the focus on only representing physical disabilities, such as for example a person in a wheelchair, both soap operas represented disabilities that are not commonly seen on South African screens, that is, Down syndrome and hearing loss. Although the disabilities portrayed in the two soap operas are visible, they are not severe. This might have implications for the identity of persons with more visible and severe or multiple disabilities, such as deaf-blind or quadriplegia, because they seldom, if ever, get to be represented on television. A severe disability is classified by the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) in terms of high and extreme difficulty relating to body function and structure, activities and participation, as well as environmental and personal factors (WHO, 2001). Dawn (2019) highlights this idea by claiming that television programmes are more inclined to exclude severe disabilities from being seen on air and are sometimes “limited to specific forms of disabilities such as mental illness, drug addiction, emotional disturbance etc.” (p. 18). Again, this is found to be driven by the perception that disability is a deviation from the norm and therefore the more severe the disability, the deeper the deviation (Gona et al., 2018; Darling & Heckert, 2010). Similarly, these types of perceptions contribute to society being more receptive and acceptable of those who acquire a disability later in life than those who are born with a disability because the former had the ‘privilege’ of living a ‘normal’ life before the disability (Bogart, Rosa & Slepian, 2019). Consequently, because of the negativity associated with having a disability, those who acquire it have a difficult time adapting to and accepting their disabilities in comparison to those who have lived with a disability from birth (Bogart, 2014). This perhaps explains Uncle Tebogo’s (in GTL) attitude in real life to his hearing impairment.

Nonetheless and more importantly, the soap operas moved away from the classic notion of casting non-disabled persons to represent disability (Woodburn & Kopic, 2016), instead using persons with actual disabilities, even though the casting of the character with hearing loss in GTL is debatable in terms of the visibility of the disability to viewers given the fact that there was no focus on his disability. It is necessary to once again emphasise the fact that these two characters are, however, not frequently seen by the audience, as indicated in the previous sections. Likewise, the characters are only listed as support cast or bit player actors, which means that they are not a part of the soap operas' main cast.

#### 4.4 Subduing Stereotypes of Disability on Soap Operas

This section focuses on three broad themes (the economic participation of persons with disabilities, the social and societal participation of persons with disabilities, and 'Super Cripple') which emerged from the data gathered on scenes and episodes representing disability. The focus on the scenes and episodes was on the dialogue, behaviour and attitudes of all the characters in those specific scenes. For instance, a character with disability in the soap opera was viewed in terms of what they do and say, and the reactions of others around them, and then a descriptive term was used to reflect this. For example, the theme of "economic participation of persons with disabilities" was derived from the meaning assigned to the characters' actions and dialogue with other characters, and is further broken down into subthemes. Table 4 below summarises the themes and subthemes which emerged from the data which was analysed to understand how the selected South African television soap operas represent and portray disability issues daily to their viewers. As much as the soap operas are part of a paradigm shift by representing disability in an inclusive manner, the 'super cripple' stereotype does appear slightly in 7dL (Ep. 2, S5).

Table 4: Summary of themes from the episodes

7de Laan	Generations: The Legacy
Similar themes and subthemes in the two soap operas	
Themes	Subthemes

1. Economic participation of persons with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persons with disabilities are capable of working and running businesses</li> <li>• Cognitive ability and skill to participate in the economy</li> <li>• The right to reasonable accommodation and assistive devices in the workplace</li> </ul>
2. Social and societal participation of persons with disabilities	No subtheme
Theme that only emerged from 7dL	
3. Super Cripple' (A description used to refer to a person with a disability that achieves ordinary life goals in spite of having a disability (Toutellotte, 2015).	No subtheme

#### **4.4.1 Economic Participation of Persons with Disabilities**

The first broad theme to be discussed is the economic participation of persons with disabilities. Under this theme, the following subthemes emerged: (1) persons with disabilities are capable of working and running businesses, (2) cognitive ability and skill to participate in the economy, and (3) the right to reasonable accommodation and assistive devices in the workplace.

##### *4.4.1.1 Persons with disabilities are capable of working and running businesses*

In one of the scenes of 7dL aired on 5 April 2016, the character Kosie is delivering meat to the local coffee shop known as Oppiekoffie. The dialogue between the characters in the scene suggests the character Kosie works at a butchery.

**Charmaine:** *Hello, Kosie. Thanks for bringing the meat*

**Kosie:** *Oom (Uncle) Swannie also sent a leg of venison. It's a gift.*

**Charmaine:** *Hm. Was it your idea? Last time you hinted that I should make a venison pie.*

**Kosie:** *Yes, it was me.*

**Charmaine:** *I'll let you know when you can fetch some.*

**Kosie:** *That'll be very nice. Thanks Charmaine (Ep. 1, S4)*

In another scene aired on 27 April 2016, the character known as Matrone is in dialogue with the character Kosie at the local deli. During the dialogue, Matrone asks Kosie how things are at the butchery where he works, to which Kosie answers that he is off because it's Freedom Day, which is a public holiday in South Africa. The dialogue indicates that the character Matrone is aware that Kosie is employed. It also provides the viewers with information that Kosie is well-known as a worker at the butchery. The following dialogue takes place between the characters:

**Hilda:** *Afternoon, dearie. What can I get you?*

**Kosie:** *A toasted ham and cheese sarmie, please*

**Matrone:** *It's good to see you, Kosie. How are things at the butchery?*

**Kosie:** *Good, thank you. I am off today, because it's Freedom Day. In 1994 everyone could vote for the first time.*

**Matrone:** *Most youngsters think it's a day to sleep in. At least you realise how much it means to our country. I'm impressed.*

**Kosie:** *Thank you (Ep. 2, S5)*

As a marginalised group of people, persons with disabilities have largely been excluded from the world of work due to societal barriers to participation. There have been various efforts toward rectifying and minimising these stereotypes globally, including South Africa being a signatory to the UNCRPD (UN, 2006), among other countries. Article 27(1) of the UNCRPD (Work and Employment) states that "Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities". Additionally, goal 1 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015) is to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030. One of the ways in which poverty can be eradicated

is by ensuring that everyone receives an income. The two scenes from 7dL which aired on 5 and 27 April 2016 respectively demonstrated to the viewers that people with disabilities (including those with developmental disabilities such as Down syndrome) are capable of working. The scenes do away with the stereotypes and assumptions that persons with disabilities, especially those with Down syndrome, are unable to work and need constant care from others (Buckley, 2000, 2004). This is particularly powerful because the actor has Down syndrome in real life and viewers can see this, and at the same time see the strengths of this character. Furthermore, it provides the viewers with the opportunity to reconsider inaccurate beliefs they might hold about persons with Down syndrome and their abilities to work and interact with other members of society. The portrayal of the character with Down syndrome as working and leading a 'normal' life helps in breaking disability stereotypes and encouraging equal work opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Similarly, looking at excerpts from dialogue between the character Uncle Tebogo and other characters in GTL, we see the portrayal of a hearing-impaired person actively involved in the family business. It shows that persons with disabilities are able to run and lead businesses and therefore participate successfully in the economy.

**Uncle Tebogo:** *It's our quarterly statements on our investment portfolio*

**Karabo:** *Oh, that.*

**Uncle Tebogo:** *The trust is losing a lot of money.*

**Karabo:** *The economy is in a slump*

**Uncle Tebogo:** *Stop making excuses. We've been steadily increasing our revenue... but in the last quarter, you've made bad decisions.*

**Karabo:** *It'll pick up. The last few months have been tough. I'm doing the best I can (EP.2, S3).*

The following extract is from another scene of the same episode, where the character is portrayed as an expert in business as he provides guidance and direction on business investment. Persons with disabilities are not eminently seen as business-minded people

or as people capable of running businesses. Such portrayals position persons with disabilities on an equal footing with non-disabled persons.

**Uncle Tebogo:** *You can use our financial advisor and talk about our investment portfolio. Try to salvage the situation.*

**Mazwi:** *Great-Uncle is it that bad?*

**Uncle Tebogo:** *If the elders see the figures, they'll lose faith in Karabo*

**Mazwi:** *I've always said we need to invest overseas. The interest rate in Asia...*

**Uncle Tebogo:** *Whoa! Please let's be conservative. We're talking about the family's wealth. We cannot gamble with it.*

**Mazwi:** *Okay, fine. (EP.2, S11).*

The medical model (Kanter, 2011; Oliver, 2013) holds the view that persons with disabilities are in constant need of care and therefore unable to participate successfully in societal and economic activities. The representation of disability in the selected soap operas as illustrated in the above dialogues tries to address this type of stereotype by showing that persons with disabilities can be employed, hold positions of power in businesses and other establishments, and contribute meaningfully to the economy and society at large.

#### 4.4.1.2 Cognitive ability and skill to participate in the economy

In one of the scenes of 7dL aired on 5 April 2016, Kosie refers to the extra meat he delivers by stating, *"It's a gift"* (Ep.1, S4). This is an indication of Kosie's negotiation skills in promoting and attracting customers for the butchery. He negotiated with the owner of the butchery to provide the customer (Charmaine) with extra meat as a gift. This enhances customer satisfaction with the services of the butchery where Kosie works, illustrating a shift from the erroneous belief that persons with Down syndrome are childlike and all suffer restricting cognitive abilities (Gee, 2012).

From a biomedical standpoint, most children with Down syndrome have an intellectual disability although to varying degrees (Buckley, 2000, 2004; Dykens et al., 2006). The stereotypical beliefs of the strengths and capabilities of persons with Down syndrome

based solely on their intellectual functioning is however not an indication of their strengths and capabilities as persons that are part of society. There is evidence that some persons with intellectual disabilities are able to remember stored information (Weeks et al., 2000). Therefore, the portrayal of Kosie as a person with Down syndrome who is capable of negotiating and reasoning challenges stereotypical assumptions of the abilities of persons with DS.

Another example is from the 7dL scene aired on 27 April 2016 in which Kosie orders a toasted ham and cheese sandwich for himself in a coffee shop (Ep. 2, S5). This again challenges the dependency notion ascribed to persons with developmental disabilities, because no one ordered the sandwich for him. He also engages another character, Matrone, in a discussion about Freedom Day, to which Matrone states that, unlike his peers, Kosie is aware of the significance of Freedom Day in the history of South Africa. This shows that Kosie is aware and knowledgeable about important issues relating to his country and the day. These interactions between Kosie and the other characters strive to break the stereotypes associated with the cognition of persons with Down syndrome, which tend to undermine their abilities and capabilities by equating their level of thinking to that of children's, even if they are adults.

The character Uncle Tebogo is the head of a wealthy family in GTL. In one of his interactions with the character Karabo, he is seen with a document. As derived from the dialogue between these two characters, the document in Uncle Tebogo's hand is the family quarterly statements of their investment portfolio. He reprimands Karabo for failing to keep from losing money in the family business. The business knowledge and reasoning of the character comes into play as an indication that the world of business is a known field to him. These types of representations create distance from the historical view that hearing impairment is synonymous with mental disability (Lash & Helme, 2020; Becker, 1981).

These interactions involving the characters with disabilities (Kosie and Uncle Tebogo) break the stereotypes which deem persons with disabilities to be less intelligent than the average person without a disability. Breaking these stereotypes has the potential to show prospective employers that persons with disabilities are capable of thinking and reasoning

by and for themselves, and that generalisation of the abilities of those with disabilities is flawed. People may fall under the same type of disability, but their needs and abilities differ.

#### 4.4.1.3 *Reasonable Accommodation and Assistive Devices*

With the signed disability legislatures also came policies and guides which serve to educate employers on the type of assistance they can provide to their employees with disabilities in order to ensure they are able to execute their work effectively and efficiently. The South African Department of Labour published the revised 'Technical Assistance Guidelines (TAG) on the Employment of People with Disabilities' in 2005 (Department of Labour, 2005). In chapter 3 of the TAG, employers are encouraged to advance the needs of persons with disabilities in the workplace. One of the ways in which this can be done is to provide employees with disabilities with the necessary reasonable accommodation (e.g. building a ramp in order to ensure access to a wheelchair user) and assistive devices (e.g. buying talkback computer software for blind employees). The characters with disabilities in these two soap operas are portrayed by actors with actual disabilities and it is important to note the type of reasonable accommodation and assistive devices they use during the episodes to enhance their ability to perform the assigned roles.

In the 7dL scenes, the character with Down syndrome appears to be given dialogue that is short and in simplified language. The character also makes use of his real name and does not have a screen name. This is significant because some people with Down syndrome have a mild or moderate intellectual disability, while others have severe intellectual disability (Buckley, 2000). This is where the stereotype that persons with Down syndrome are deemed unable to perform the same intellectual tasks as non-disabled persons (Pueschel, 1996) originates. These stereotypes fail to take into account individual functioning and rather use a one-size-fits-all approach. As much as some (not all) persons with Down syndrome are diagnosed with intellectual disabilities (Buckley, 2000; 2004), it has been shown that they have good visual-spatial reasoning and thus the ability to use their imagination and images to acquire knowledge (Dykens et al., 2006). With regards to language use and communication, persons with Down syndrome sometimes make use

of simplistic grammar, limited vocabulary, and impaired articulation (Kumin, 1994). In order to accommodate persons with Down syndrome in communication, Giles et al. (1991) are of the opinion that speech can be modified by using simplification and exaggerated carefulness. When examining the dialogue between Kosie and Charmaine, it seems simplified as the focus is only on the meat Kosie has brought. During Kosie's dialogue with Matrone, the focus is briefly on Freedom Day. Close-ended and suggestive questions are asked during the dialogues, such as: *"Hm. Was it your idea? Last time you hinted that I should make a venison pie."* Kosie can only reply in the positive or negative to this, and he answers: *"Yes. It was me"* (See figure 6 below). According to Giles et al. (1991), the speech adjustments made during communication are primarily to positively create, maintain, or negatively decrease social distance in interactions. In 7dL, the speech adjustments could be ascribed to reasonable accommodation measures that seek to foster social interactions.





*Figure 6: Screenshots of the dialogue that took place between the characters Kosie and Charmaine*

Through a close analysis of the interaction between the character with the hearing impairment in GTL and other characters, I was able to detect that elements of reasonable accommodation, although very subtle, are at play in the scenes where the character appears. For instance, when interacting with Uncle Tebogo, the character with a hearing impairment, the other characters in most cases face him and look him in the eyes. The characters also move in such a way that they can be in close proximity to Uncle Tebogo when interacting. They either stand facing each other or are seated opposite or next to each other (See figure 7 below). Although the character makes use of hearing aids, he has a loud voice, which might be due to his hearing loss, and in most episodes, his loud voice is used when he reprimands his family members. The pitch and tone of his voice thus blends in well with the role that he is playing.



Figure 7: Screenshots of the character Uncle Tebogo facing the other characters when engaging in dialogue

Nowhere during the episodes in GTL and 7dL is there mention of the type of disabilities of the characters. As indicated above, the characters were reasonably accommodated in order for them to be part of the cast and to execute their acting job effectively. The economic participation of persons with disabilities is essential for their full integration and inclusion in society. In the following section, the theme is the societal participation of persons with disabilities which coincides with the first theme of economic participation. The economic participation of persons with disabilities could potentially enhance the societal participation of persons with disabilities while also giving the non-disabled community an opportunity to learn from them and understand disability as a part of life.

#### **4.4.2. Social and societal participation of persons with disabilities**

Due to the social exclusion experienced by persons with disabilities brought about by stereotypical attitudes, behaviours and inaccessible infrastructures (Heymann et al., 2014), gaining social status and being integrated into society is a very important element in their lives. In the context of this study, social and societal participation refers to the

interactions between non-disabled persons and those with disabilities and their participation in societal activities. In the scenes where the characters with disability appear, they are not shown as isolated from society but rather as part of it. The characters with disabilities interact with different characters in different settings such as, for example, the character with Down syndrome is seen at the local coffee shop and at the local deli as opposed to sitting alone in his room at his house. Likewise, the character with hearing impairment is seen at a family event and at a political rally, for example. Social interaction is important in the quest for social inclusion and participation. The social participation of persons with disabilities is mostly also influenced by the severity of their disabilities (Gannon & Nolan, 2006). It has been shown that non-disabled persons are most likely to have positive effects from contact with persons with disabilities who they perceive as competent and able to communicate (Farnell & Smith, 1999). With that in mind, persons with Down syndrome are not often successfully integrated into society due to exclusion based on their communication style and perceived level of intelligence (Pueschel, 1996). This means they are likely to be excluded from mainstream schools and the workplace. Exclusion from social institutions like school and the workplace is problematic for the personal development and well-being of an individual (McVilly et al., 2006). It is therefore very important for any individual, including those with disabilities, to connect with others and participate in social activities (Hall, 2005). To make the full inclusion of persons with disabilities into society a reality, all the barriers which block inclusion must be dealt with and uprooted.

In the two scenes from 7dL aired on 5 and 27 April 2016 respectively, the character with Down syndrome is seen interacting with different characters. In figure 8 below, Kosie interacts with his acquaintances, Hilda, at the local deli where he orders a sandwich, and then Matrone, who asks him about work. Correspondingly, the character with hearing impairment in GTL is seen in interaction with different characters in all the episodes. In figure 9 below, the character is seen among family members during a traditional event in one of the scenes and at a political rally in another scene. These scenes are steps towards bridging the gap in social interactions between non-disabled persons and those with disabilities. Persons with Down syndrome and hearing impairments often find themselves isolated from aspects of life which involve social interactions with others, such

as friendships (Reinders, 2008). This has the potential to result in negative emotional and behavioural problems (Reis, 1990), which also influence their identities as persons with disabilities negatively. In order to enhance the self-confidence of persons with disabilities, it is important to view them as useful and integral parts of the societies we live in (Pueschel, 1996).



Figure 8: Screenshots of Kosie interacting with the characters Hilda and Matrone at the local Deli



Figure 9: Screenshots of Uncle Tebogo at a family gathering and at a political rally

#### 4.4.3 'Super cripple'

According to Hunt (1991), people with disabilities are overly commended for doing or saying ordinary things. It often surprises non-disabled people when persons with disabilities are able to do ordinary everyday things such as studying, working or even cooking and cleaning. They see it as inspiration and motivation to do better with their own lives since they don't have any disabilities. In one of the scenes of 7dL aired on 27 April 2016, Kosie speaks about Freedom Day and the character Matrone is noticeably impressed and even states it. This again breaks the stereotypes which deem persons with disabilities as less intelligent than the average person without a disability. On the flip side, Matrone's being impressed by Kosie's knowledge about the significance of Freedom Day creates the impression of a 'super cripple', thus subscribing to one of the stereotypes of persons with disabilities in the media as depicted by Hunt (1991). One might argue that Matrone was not expecting Kosie to know this kind of information because he has a developmental disability that is most often associated with intellectual limitations (Cohen et al., 2002; Kumin, 1994; Buckley, 2000). It is as if she is suggesting that even though Kosie has Down syndrome, "at least" he realises the importance of Freedom Day and "most youngsters" ought to do better than think it's a day to sleep in, which might imply that the other youngsters should be doing better than Kosie because they don't have impairments.

In summary, the frequency and duration of disability scenes and episodes in both 7dL and GTL are limited when compared to general episodes aired throughout the entire year, exposing the audiences to very short stints of disability. Nonetheless, the episodes and scenes where disability was represented made use of actors who have actual disabilities, which is a move away from the use of non-disabled actors to portray disability. As much as persons with disabilities are part of the storylines, the focus is not on the disabilities. There is no mention of the disabilities, which on its own also poses challenges in terms of educating the audiences without necessarily hiding or highlighting the disability (Tallent, 2007). The data that emerged from the scenes showed that, in 2016, disability was depicted in one of the ten stereotypical ways identified by Hunt (1991), namely 'super cripple'. This stereotypical depiction of disability has consequences for persons with disabilities as it continues to place them on the spectrum of 'other', creating inequality between non-disabled persons and persons with disabilities. At the same time, credit must be given for the depiction of disability as a normal part of life. Important themes related to the social status and economic participation of persons with disabilities came into play from the emerging themes which are important and relevant even today as the quest for disability inclusion continues. The limited number and short duration of the scenes and episodes, however, might have defeated the purpose, which is to encourage and promote inclusion. The next chapter is the discussion which dives further into the matter of disability representation in the selected soap operas.

## **Chapter 5: DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The findings from this study suggest that persons with disabilities are almost invisible to South Africa television viewers because they are minimally seen on the two primetime soap operas selected for this study. The occurrence of disability scenes and episodes is very restricted and limited over the course of an entire year. As much as there seems to be a positive shift in terms of the inclusion of actual persons with disabilities in the soap operas that are based on the everyday life of ordinary South Africans, it is done so minimally and in turn indirectly perpetuates disability stereotypes. This is also displayed by the roles assigned to the characters with disabilities (when featured), which seem to render them invisible on the screen. For instance, 7dL subtly denotes the stereotype of a 'super cripple', a key media stereotype identified by Hunt (1991). The actor who portrays Uncle Tebogo in GTL is well known to South African audiences through his music and acting, which makes it interesting to note that his hearing impairment takes a silent presence in the soap opera. Generally, although both the soap operas seem to aim for meaningful inclusion of disability and persons with disabilities in their storylines, it appears to be tokenistic and therefore reinforcing the traditional stereotypes about persons with disabilities through the shortness of appearance, frequencies and roles in the scenes and episodes. This chapter underscores the key findings of this research by firstly discussing the research findings under the umbrella term 'marginalisation of disability identity in the selected South African soap operas', and then more specifically about uncommon scenes, character roles, work type, and limiting social interactions.

### **5.2 Marginalisation of Disability Identity in the selected South African Soap operas**

Disability is a normal and continuous occurrence that cannot be minimised or switched on and off. The research objectives of this study centre primarily on the nature of disability representations in the two South African soap operas, GTL and 7dL, for the year 2016 in

terms of disability stereotypes in the media and disability identity. The analysis of the scenes and episodes of the two selected soap operas in terms of their frequency of disability representation, character roles and storylines indicate that disability and disability issues are an infrequent occurrence, subjecting disability to marginalisation. As much as characters with disabilities are included in some of the scenes and episodes, their appearance and dialogues are limiting in comparison to those of other characters who do not have disabilities. Although the intention to include disability into the soap operas is a positive move and should be applauded, the uncommon disability scenes, the roles of the characters, and the type of work (especially referring to the character in 7dL) they do as well as some of their limited social interactions in the soap operas all carry the potential to perpetuate certain disability stereotypes. The discrimination against and stereotypes associated with disability are maintained by the status of marginalisation created by society and have negative consequences on the perceptions that persons with disabilities have about themselves (Wayermeyer & Swartz, 2016; Dunn & Burcaw, 2013).

### **5.2.1 Uncommon Scenes**

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the findings presented in chapter 4 which address the research objectives, including the types of disabilities covered, the difference in disability coverage between the two selected soap operas, and the implementation of policy frameworks with regards to representation of disability and disability issues. The results indicate that both the soap operas maintained the status quo (Linton, 1998) of rare representation of disability through infrequent and minor scenes and episodes aired over an entire year. This suggests a lack of importance and recognition of disability and disability issues in the soap operas. As illustrated in chapter 4, section 4.2, less than 10% of the episodes in an entire year included disability representation. In addition, in comparison to the airtime given to cast members without disabilities, persons with disabilities are seen or represented insignificantly, thus extending the marginalisation of this group in real-time. The analysis revealed that, in 2016, only 47 minutes and 52 seconds of airtime was given to disability representation across both soap operas combined. This shows the “relative lack of attention to issues of disability” in the selected

South African soap opera (Swartz, 2013, p. 1158). For the viewers, this means that they are occasionally exposed to disability and disability issues in soap operas. More specifically, it means that that non-disabled viewers do not receive adequate time to engage with disability and disability issues and are therefore also unable to challenge any stereotypical beliefs and attitudes, especially for those who have no direct contact with persons with disabilities (Klein, 2011).

Certain disability stereotypes are potentially reinforced by the sense of insignificance created by the limited appearance and showing of disability scenes. It seems to feed into the detrimental impression that persons with disabilities should not be seen but rather hidden away from society because they are considered less human (Edwards, 2005; Wallhagen, 2010; Dawn, 2019; Goffman, 1963). Also stressed by Dawn (2019) is that as much as disability already receives little attention in television programmes, specific disabilities, especially those deemed severe, tend to get even less or no coverage at all. In this case, it takes place on screen and in our living rooms. Furthermore, dismissing disability and disability issues as 'irrelevant' even in everyday life situations does very little to contribute to the inclusion of persons with disabilities into the mainstream society, instead prolonging disability stereotypes and delaying the correction of the rift of 'othering' (Jensen, 2011) that exists between non-disabled persons and persons with disabilities.

The media, particularly primetime soap operas, has the potential to contribute to this inclusion by frequently showcasing disability in their scenes and episodes to challenge the existing dichotomy. This can occur through the parasocial relationships that are formed by the audience with the fictional characters in the soap operas (Whitenack, 2015; Bond, 2018; Kreuter et al., 2007; Horton & Wohi, 1956). In other words, balancing the frequency of scenes and episodes where disability is represented with those with non-disabled persons could potentially 'normalise' disability as an everyday part of society, thereby creating familiarity with and understanding of issues related to persons with disabilities in our very diverse society. For example, in the world's most watched, most distributed and longest running soap opera (Russell, 2015), *Days of our Lives*, audiences from different countries formed a relationship of dislike towards one of the soap operas' well-known villains, Stefano DiMera, an indication of how viewers form attachments to the

characters they encounter daily through soap operas. This once again highlights the need for the number and duration of scenes and episodes representing disability to be revisited and addressed as a matter of urgency by the media, if indeed it is committed to disability inclusion and fair representation.

### ***5.2.2 Limiting Roles of Characters***

Directly linked to the frequency of appearances is that the characters representing disability in the selected soap operas were listed under support actors and call out actors (also known as bit players), which means that they receive small roles to play and do not appear too often in the soap operas. The implication of this is that the soap opera industry may have failed to create a long-time soap opera celebrity who has a disability that is well-known to the viewers and carries the same star status as the main characters. For a person with a disability as an audience, it gives the impression that persons with disabilities are not important or do not deserve the limelight. This type of barrier to inclusion results in persons with disabilities feeling invisible and irrelevant (Swartz & Watermeyer, 2008).

It is important and good to note that the characters with disabilities in the two soap operas have different disabilities to each other, are differently aged, and belong to different racial groups. In 7dL, the audience is exposed to a youthful, white character who has Down syndrome. The character was scouted from an NGO (DSSA) and plays bit parts in the soap opera. The main aim of the character's existence in the soap opera is to encourage employers to employ persons with Down syndrome (7de Laan Amptelik, 2013). However, this raises not only the issue of tokenism but also capability because it presupposes that the character was included solely for his disability, not necessarily that he has the skills to act or be an actor. As much as the inclusion of a person with a disability in the soap opera is a step in the right direction in terms of advancing the employment rights of persons with disabilities, the character's short storylines and not being part of the main or regular cast members are a downside. Although the aim of 7dL was to show potential employers in the audience that they can (and should) hire persons with disabilities (7de Laan Amptelik, 2013), the message may not adequately filter through with a minimalist

representation approach to disability scenes and episodes. This arguably does little to nothing to encourage potential employers to hire persons with developmental or any type of disabilities. Potential employers are not exposed to the abilities/capabilities of persons with disabilities and their daily interactions with different members of society in a manner which reflects everyday real-life situations.

At the end of the day, the laudable initiative of advocating for the employment of persons with disabilities by including them in the soap opera is critically hindered or nullified by those limited and restricted scenes. In addition, the infrequent occurrence of disability scenes also has implications on the perceptions of viewers who may be current or future colleagues of a person with a disability. It could be said that the negligible appearance of disability does little to nothing to combat historical assumptions about the inabilities of persons with disabilities (Oliver, 2013; Erickson et al., 2012) to contribute meaningfully to the world of work. This means that there is a possibility that potential colleagues and employers alike do not see much of or learn more about persons with disabilities in the media in order for them to familiarise themselves with disability issues that could help facilitate a disability-inclusive working environment. Yet again, this suggests that the audience could be deprived of the opportunity to form parasocial bonds with the characters, and therefore doing nothing to create potential employer-colleague bonds between persons with disabilities and non-disabled persons.

Apart from the 7dL scenes and episodes representing disability being trivial, they are interestingly charged with some disability stereotypes. For instance, Kosie appears happy, friendly and smiling in both of the scenes in 7dL, which plays directly into the stereotype (Dykens et al., 2006) that persons with Down syndrome don't show or experience any hostile emotions. If Kosie was given more appearances with different themes in which he displays diverse emotions, it could potentially disabuse this particular stereotype. Once again, this highlights how the minimal appearance and storyline of the character pose a danger of prolonging and entrenching stereotypical ideas about disability through the soap opera.

Additionally, the 'super cripple' stereotype shows up slightly in 7dL when the character Kosie is admired for delivering extra meat to the owner of the local deli, and he is asked

in a childlike tone and with a smile, "Hm, was it your idea?" The character interacting with Kosie does not use a childlike tone when she interacts with other characters. The question she asks Kosie seems to suggest he did something extraordinary. In another scene of 7dL, one of the characters is impressed with Kosie for alluding to the significance of Freedom Day in South Africa: "...At least you realise how much it means to our country. I'm impressed." The risk with this type of representation is that individuals with the same disability who do not possess the same abilities as the one represented in the soap opera might be excluded by this portrayal. According to Hunt (1991) and Barnes (1992), the 'supercrip' stereotype is the representation of persons with disabilities in the media as being extraordinary human beings for doing and saying everyday things. This type of representation, which is used so often by the media, has serious consequences on the disability identities of individuals (Tallent, 2007), as it has the potential to ignore the issues experienced by persons with disabilities by only focusing on the individual and how they have to overcome their impairments (Watermeyer, 2014). It also has the potential of continuing to widen the gap between persons with disabilities and non-disabled persons, as the focus on the achievements of persons with disabilities implies that persons with disabilities first need to achieve extraordinarily (that is, do and say the ordinary) in order to be accepted in society (Barnes, 1992).

If soap operas feel the need to use stereotypes in their storylines, they should rather do it in such a way that the stereotype shows the impact it has on persons with disabilities and the stereotype should be resolved to a desired outcome. There is a need to contest all stereotypes relating to Down syndrome and instil the understanding that a one-size-fits-all approach relating to the needs and abilities of persons with Down syndrome does not work. What might work for one person with Down syndrome might not work for another person with Down syndrome, and this needs to be made clear in the message to the audience. Just as gender issues cannot be generalised, because every man and woman experiences issues uniquely, likewise disability issues cannot be generalised. Other than the uncommon disability scenes and episodes and the limiting roles given to characters with disabilities, it is interesting to note that even though Down syndrome was featured in 7dL, it is not very common to see people with Down syndrome on television. It is particularly rare to see black people or people of colour and women with Down syndrome

on television, an absence which could possibly be due to the intersection of different categorisations assigned to them as individuals, leading to further levels of discrimination and isolation (Gee, 2012; Taylor, 2017).

In GTL, the audiences were already acquainted with the actor who played the character with hearing impairment, as he was a well-known actor, producer and musician. Differently from the character in 7dL, this character is an older black man and the actor was not cast because of his hearing impairment but his known acting skills and popularity with the audience. Whether the audience noticed the hearing aids or associated them with hearing impairment is unknown. Despite this ambiguity, it is regarded in this study as an example of disability inclusion, even though perhaps not for the benefit of the viewers. It is important to point out that the audience's possible lack of awareness of the character's disability and the implications thereof are not addressed in this study. In addition to the visibility of the hearing aids the character uses, there are other sources that backup the fact that the character has a hearing impairment. In an online article written for *Sowetan Live* (Bambalele, 2013), Joe Mafela (the actor who played the character, Uncle Tebogo) was among 349 people who had received hearing aids. In the article, he described his situation as "not that bad" but also alluded that: "I hated that I have to constantly ask people to speak up whenever we are having a conversation. I would increase the volume of the television set. It was only then that I realised that I needed to boost my hearing. But I would not use this when acting." In another online article (Francis, 2015) in *The Citizen*, the author describes how they, as journalists, arrived at Joe Mafela's house to interview him and they knocked on the front door without receiving any answer initially. The door was eventually opened, and Joe Mafela asked them to speak up, gesturing to his hearing aid. It is interesting to read through these direct quotes from the actor, how he requested people to speak up during conversations and how he would increase the volume of the television in order to hear. However, he did not identify as an individual with a hearing impairment and only realised after some time that he needed to enhance his hearing through the use of hearing aids. Even after using hearing aids, he still asked people to speak up, pointing out the severity of his hearing loss. This gives an indication of how Joe Mafela interacted in real life, which is totally different from his on-screen behaviour, not implying that the two should be the same. Off-

screen, he made people aware that he had a hearing impairment by pointing to his hearing aids and requesting people to speak up. He would have been a powerful advocate for creating awareness around hearing aids and hearing impairment and a force for social change if he had done the same on-screen. The shame (Wallhagen, 2010; Edwards, 2005; Goodley et al., 2012) associated with using hearing aids and having an impairment would have been challenged by such storylines, more so because the individual acting out the role was a well-known and loved celebrity. Instead, apart from the hearing aids he wore on screen, there was no indication of him having a hearing impairment from the interactions he had with other characters in the soap opera scenes. To the audience, this could mean that it is more acceptable in society for older people to experience hearing loss (Wallhagen, 2010; David & Werner, 2016); Becker, 1981, an association which has consequences on the hearing loss of younger people who might feel ashamed for having a disability that is associated with older people.

Another example of a famous older person needing to use hearing aid is the world renowned and first black President of South Africa, the late Nelson Mandela, who acquired hearing loss during his old age. He spoke at the Baragwanath Hospital Hearing Aid Project in Soweto on 23 May 1997, saying: "I would like to tell you that I also wear hearing aids, just as you do. These little instruments made a big difference to my life. Wherever I go, they help me to listen better, to understand better" (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 1997). This openness further adds to the notion that hearing loss is associated with older people. Although the two people mentioned above respectively played important parts in the lives of South Africans, they were more known for their work than for having hearing loss and using hearing aids. This is not to imply that it should have been the other way around, but instead that they would have been powerful advocates of change for persons with hearing impairment.

Similarly, the famous South African DJ Black Coffee, who is known in Africa and abroad, performs with his left hand in his pocket while operating the sound decks with his right hand. It was not until recently (in 2016) that the public learnt this was because he has paralysis in his left hand, which he acquired during a childhood motor accident. In 2017, he shared a picture on his Instagram account where his hand was revealed for the very

first time (Black Coffee, 2017). The picture was accompanied by a message in which he mentioned the accident and how as a kid he decided not to wear a hand brace, especially in public, due to people's own version of his story. His reluctance to wear a hand brace in public implies that he felt uncomfortable to do so as he did not want to draw attention to his hand and bear the potential brunt of being stigmatised. He also mentioned that showing his hand and not overthinking it was a big step for him. Due to the perceived negative views associated with disability in society, it was difficult for Black Coffee to hold a positive view of his hand for a long time. The fact that he acquired the disability through an accident (Darling & Heckert, 2010) means that taking pride in his hand is not an easy process. This is backed by Bogart (2014), who mentions that people who acquire a disability struggle to adapt to their disabilities more than those who are born with it. If society were more receptive and accommodating of all types of disabilities, then maybe people would not feel the need to hide their disabilities. This brings to the fore the question of whether celebrities with disabilities hide their disabilities with the aim of not associating with the disability identity due to the negative connotations attached to it. This could be explored more in further research.

### **5.2.3 Work Type**

Persons with disabilities have generally been excluded from the world of work due to the historical assumptions and beliefs that they cannot work, also citing their disabilities as a barrier (Erickson et al., 2012; Oliver, 2013). The lens of perception being used here is grounded in dependence theory and need of care from non-disabled persons (Shuttleworth et al., 2012; Barnes, 1992; Dawn, 2019; Mitchell & Snyder, 2014; Goffman, 1963). This lens carries with it the belief that persons with disabilities have nothing of value to add to the workplace except financial burdens (Domzal et al., 2008). As a result, they are deprived of work opportunities, and the valuable contributions that persons with disabilities could and do bring to the workplace are (and always have been) overlooked. A great example of such valuable contributions is the influence on the field of science by the legendary scientist, Stephen Hawking (Cropper, 2001). He had motor neurone disease (Cropper, 2001), which led him to use a motorised wheelchair for mobility as well

as a communication system which enabled him to communicate with others. Despite his disability, he not only worked in a field of science where persons with disabilities are very seldom seen but led a number of ground-breaking research studies.

The scenes and episodes of both the soap operas show that the characters are working (7dL) or into business (GTL). For the character in GTL, being involved in the family business is a move away from stereotypical ideas about disability and work, and yet, due to the silence of his disability in the soap opera, it doesn't do much to advocate for the economic rights of persons with disabilities. Had his disability been known or declared, without necessarily pinning the focus on it, the common adverse beliefs about persons with disabilities and their capabilities of work would have enjoyed a platform for challenging such beliefs.

As much as the character with Down syndrome in 7dL is portrayed as having a job, the character's portrayal does carry the danger of associating persons with Down syndrome with only being able to do manual work because the character delivers meat to clients. With many options available of showcasing that persons with Down syndrome can work and potentially be owners of business, the soap opera settled for a low-skill job, which could potentially perpetuate the stereotypical belief that persons with Down syndrome have mental problems (Pueschel, 1996; Buckley, 2004). This further suggests that they are only able to do mundane, unchallenging jobs which require no skills. Portraying persons with disabilities, in this case persons with Down syndrome, as doing only manual jobs has the potential of making the person, who can do so much more than what is believed, feel demoralised and bored because of the unchallenging nature of the job (Cohen et al., 2002).

This also has the potential to negatively affect the self-esteem of persons with Down syndrome because "in order for individuals with Down syndrome to build self-confidence it is of paramount importance that they not be viewed as helpless" (Pueschel, 1996, p. 94). Therefore, it is advisable to provide persons with disabilities with jobs that are in line with their capabilities and skills rather than assuming that they can only perform mundane jobs. For the audience watching the soap opera, it paints the picture that persons with Down syndrome are only good for manual mundane jobs which require little effort. This

kind of imposed role might have far-reaching consequences in terms of employability, given that potential employers might be misled by such stereotypical roles. The importance of showcasing different abilities and interests of persons with disabilities as opposed to showing them doing only one specific ability cannot be overemphasised. Cohen et al. (2002, p. 226) affirm that “people who have more choices and opportunities in their work, social, and recreational spheres are less likely to be seriously affected by limitations and stigma in their lives.” Script writers must consciously guard against playing into certain stereotypes which evidently continue to marginalise persons with disabilities and their inclusion into the world of work. There is still much to be done in terms of the inclusion of characters with disabilities in the selected soap operas. Characters need to be included on a much more regular basis in order to give the message of inclusion to the audiences.

#### ***5.2.4 Limiting Social Interactions***

Persons with disabilities are too often exposed to limited social interactions which stem from wrongly held beliefs about disability (Olsen, 2018; Gannon & Nolan, 2006). Historically, due to these beliefs, it was not common or easy for persons with disabilities to make friends or interact with non-disabled persons other than their family members (Olsen, 2018; Wilson, Jaques, Johnsen, & Botherton, 2017); Reinders, 2008). The pervasive perception was that disability is an undesirable condition, thus subjecting persons with disabilities to the incorrect notion that they are lower in humanness to non-disabled persons (Dawn, 2019; Johnstone, 2012). In addition to attitudinal barriers in society, inaccessible transportation and infrastructure further contribute to the injustice of separating persons with disabilities from non-disabled persons in society (Olsen, 2018; Heymann et al., 2014). In order to deal with the consequences of the social interaction gap that exists between non-disabled persons and persons with disabilities, it is important to mainstream and include disability in all spheres of society in a meaningful way. The media, and particularly television soap opera portrayals of characters, usually suggests a reflective societal and cultural message (Kort-Butler, 2016). In other words, these portrayals contain elements of how people are, behave and think in society and can

therefore perpetuate a negative stereotype or rectify it based on the portrayals communicated to them.

In the analysis of both the soap operas, the characters with disabilities are seen interacting with various characters. The character with Down syndrome, Kosie, is seen interacting with the owner of the coffee shop where he delivers meat, a context in which he is an employee, rendering a service to a client. He is also seen briefly interacting with the shop assistant at the local deli when he orders something to eat and engages other customers. The scenes and episodes in which Kosie appears indicate that he is capable of engaging in meaningful social interactions with other people other than his family. Interestingly, in the scenes, Kosie is only seen interacting with older women. He is not seen with his peer group, which might play on a stereotype that seeks to reinforce the idea that persons with Down syndrome remain childlike forever (Pueschel, 1996). In contrast to the interactions of Kosie, non-disabled characters in the soap opera interact with a diverse group of characters from both genders and different age groups. Seeing the character only interacting with older women is suggestive of the nurturing and caring roles ascribed to women by society (Sharma et al., 2016). More than that, the interaction might also suggest that he does not belong with the 'young and healthy' because disability is more common in older people due to their deteriorating health (Daley, Phipps & Branscombe, 2018).

The limited appearance of the character was further restricted by the type of dialogues and themes and the type of people involved in the dialogues. In addition to exposing the viewers to only seeing him interacting with older female characters, the topic of their conversations was oversimplified as illustrated earlier – it is small talk. It has been established that women are more likely than men to be socialised and seen as caregivers of persons with disabilities, and that unlike men, women feel more obliged to ensure the wellbeing of others (Sharma et al., 2016). Thus, there is a need to diversify the character's interactions with others by including him in scenes with other characters in his age group and from different gender and racial groupings.

The character with the hearing impairment in GTL is seen interacting with different characters, young and old, male and female, which is good in highlighting the fact that hearing impairment does not hinder effective communication with others. The message, however, is lost to the audience, because the disability of the character is a buried feature. Overall, the scenes and episodes from both the soap operas are positive indicators of inclusion and social interaction. To make these iterations more meaningful to audiences, the characters would need to appear more frequently in scenes and episodes and in different storylines with characters from diverse racial groups and genders.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The inclusion of characters with disabilities in the soap operas is a positive way to educate and familiarise the larger audience with disability and disability issues. This inclusion should be done in a proficient manner that confronts discriminatory beliefs and attitudes about disability. Although persons with disability are featured in the 7dL and GTL, they remain marginalised due to the amount of airtime accorded to them in terms of when, where, and how they are seen. In other words, their visibility in the selected soap operas remains a challenge and inadequate, in spite of inclusive efforts. The inclusion of disability in the scenes and episodes of the soap operas is done in moderation, as if it has been included only to tick off a disability inclusion box of compliance. The limited disability scenes and episodes also include very limited roles and dialogue given to characters, which perpetuates the status quo of disability stereotypes rather than creating disability inclusion. The next chapter, which is the last chapter of this thesis, provides a summary of the entire thesis and suggestions for further research.

## Chapter 6: CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Summary of Findings

Soap opera viewers are very seldom exposed to characters with disabilities, and when they are, it is often too brief and not sustained long enough to make a meaningful impact on viewers' perceptions (Haller & Zhang, 2014). This is combined with the fact that persons with disabilities are underrepresented in the media, which diminishes the power of representation in challenging conventional stereotypical norms about disability (Ellcessor & Kirkpatrick, 2017). The underrepresentation and presentations are intertwined, as shown in this study. If more than one character with a disability was included in each of the soap operas over a period of time, their appearance in the scenes would have been more significant in the creation of an understanding of disability and disability issues. Additionally, it would have created a more adequate frame of reference about disability for the viewers. The inadequate inclusion of disability and disability issues widens the gap of holistically understanding how society came to be (Ellis & Goggin, 2015). This is significant because the representation of disability in the media influences both viewers' perceptions about disability as well as the self-image of persons with disabilities (Zhang & Haller, 2013).

This research examined the representation of disability in two selected South African television soap operas. The soap opera scenes and episodes were examined by focusing on the attitudes and dialogues around the storylines of characters with disabilities. In addition, the frequency and duration of the scenes and episodes were also explored in order to determine how often disability was represented in GTL and 7dL during the year 2016.

The findings show that disability and disability issues are underrepresented in the selected soap operas are suppressed, partly because disability is scarcely seen or heard about on daily selected soap operas and maybe a societal taboo. The results of this qualitative descriptive case study also show that the two selected South African soap operas represented only one disability each and presented the type of disabilities that are not commonly seen on soap operas, specifically, Down syndrome and hearing loss. It is

a step in the right direction to showcase uncommon disabilities in the soap operas, as it shows the diverse nature of disability. However, it is unfortunate that not enough airtime was given to disability scenes in order to have a serious impact in terms of creating awareness about disability for the audiences. On the one hand, there is no mention of the disabilities in both soap operas, which makes the character in GTL's hearing impairment open for debate in terms of considering it a disability because he was not cast as such. Hearing aids are not always easily visible and could be missed, and thus if the soap opera wanted to show the struggles of the character in terms of his hearing, it would have been easy to link the character to having a disability. On the other hand, it is easy to detect that the character in 7dL has a disability due to the physical attributions of having Down syndrome, and not explicitly announcing or showcasing the disabilities seems to positively normalise disability. The general roles played by the characters in both the soap operas steer away from Hunt's (1991) disability stereotypes in the media, with the exception of 7dL very subtly denoting the stereotype of a 'super cripple'. Diverging from stereotypical portrayals of disability in the soap operas is a step closer to including disability as an equal and ordinary part of the societies that we live in. In the broader sense, this would mean that the societies we live in are conducive to the needs of persons with disabilities and barriers are challenged in order to sustain inclusion. The possible implications of use of the 'super cripple' stereotype in 7dL is threatening in that it extends the discriminatory belief that persons with Down syndrome are superhuman when they undertake ordinary tasks or share common knowledge. This subjects them to the idea that they are sub-humans who need to keep up with non-disabled persons. The implications of not openly showcasing the hearing impairment of the character in GTL has possible implications of sweeping the issues faced by persons with hearing impairment under a rug, which in turn has the consequences of prolonging instead of challenging those issues.

## **6.2 Contribution and Recommendations of the Study**

Although studies on issues relating to media representation of disability are ongoing (Goggin, 2009; Hunt, 1991; Haller & Zhang, 2010; Ellcessor & Kirkpatrick, 2017), research investigating disability and disability issues portrayals in soap operas is scarce,

especially in the context of South Africa and the rest of Africa. This study is significant because it contributes to filling this gap with this explorative case study that tackles the representation of disability in two popular South African soap operas. It also contributes to the existing global literature pertaining to disability representation in television series and media in general by providing a South African perspective. In order to further facilitate and foster the rights and inclusion of persons with disability in the selected soap operas and by extension the larger society, the following recommendations are made:

- More persons with disabilities need to be included and hired as actors in soap operas and be given regular ongoing appearances in scenes and episodes.
- Apart from regular appearance slots, persons with disabilities should also be given a chance to play main character roles and not just bit parts or supporting roles.
- Persons with disabilities should be represented as realistically and fairly as possible in order to challenge stereotypes and thereby facilitate disability inclusion in the larger society.
- Celebrities with disabilities (hidden or visible) should be cast as persons with disabilities instead of concealing or being silent about their disabilities. Doing so has the potential to shift unsolicited and misinformed perceptions about the abilities of persons with disabilities.

### **6.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Study**

While the findings of this study are significant, the study was not without limitation. The importance of this study is undeniable, however, as already alluded to in the above section, disability remains largely a taboo in society, a fact which contributed significantly to the limitations of this study.

A major limitation (indirectly) was that the sample sizes (disability episodes from the soap operas) received from the SABC were very limited, as were the scenes and the duration thereof. Larger data sources of disability episodes and scenes might have provided a broader view of the general representation of disability in the soap operas. This is nonetheless not a disadvantage but rather suggestive of the attention the selected soap

operas give to disability and disability issues within a year, which is significant for this study. There is room for further research in order to determine how other SABC soap operas, apart from the ones selected for this study, include and represent disability over a period of one year or more. The potential for further research also exists in terms of investigating whether short scenes and a limited number of episodes representing disability has an influence on non-disabled audiences' understanding of disability and disability issues. This will provide information on whether such uncommon scenes and episodes are positively or negatively impactful in terms of disability inclusion in the soap operas.

As I am a researcher with a disability researching issues pertaining to disability, the fear of marginalisation or possible disability restrictions concerned with generally acceptable issues from non-disabled perspectives is removed. This is done by approaching the study through a broader perspective that engages the issues more holistically, and by shifting the focus away from the individual and medical model view that describes disability as the root cause of the problems faced by persons with disabilities. This gives recognition to disability identity, like all other identities that are socially constructed in our societies (Oliver, 1990, 1996; Gibson, 2006). In all types of research, the most common concern is bias. The data analysis employed an existing tool for categorising disability representation, specifically Hunt's (1991) media stereotypes of disability representation categories. Similarly, the discussion draws on the disability identity by Gibson (2006) to ascertain the possible impacts of stereotypical media representation on an identity of disability.

The thesis produced some information on the frequency and length of disability scenes and episodes as well as disability representation in the soap operas. It would be interesting to find out from persons with disabilities themselves how they perceive soap opera representation of disability. More research is needed on how soap operas generally shape and influence public perceptions about disability representations. While the two characters identified in the selected two soap operas are part of the disability minority group due to their disabilities, they are black and white respectively, and they are both men. Further research that interrogates viewers' perception of the disability segment in

terms of the intersection of their race, disability and gender is encouraged. This could provide additional information regarding the impact of these intersections as they carry their own unique stigma and stereotypes.

In conclusion, it is important to reiterate that South Africa is a signatory to various legislative policies and regulations which advocates for the meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities in the media (UN, 2006; WPRPD, 2015; SABC Editorial Policies, 2004; Independent Broadcasting Act, No. 4 of 1999). Disability and disability issues are slowly but surely being added to and highlighted in the selected soap operas, but in a minimalistic manner as shown through this study. The radical inclusion of persons with disabilities in the selected soap operas is a necessary step in redressing the injustices of the past which were perpetuated by the media. Furthermore, disability and disability identity need to be understood, known and seen as regularly and realistically as other societal issues.

## Reference List

- 7de Laan (Amptelik). (2013, June 18). *Making a difference is what it is all about. The youth of 1976 took to the streets* [Image attached] [Status update]. Facebook.  
<https://www.facebook.com/7deLaanAmptelik/photos/a.409900835766767/459897344100449/?type=3>
- 7de Laan (Amptelik). (2019, Oct 2019). The recent storyline around Rickus's accident that left him paralysed [Image attached] [Status update]. Facenook.  
<https://www.facebook.com/7deLaanAmptelik/photos/a.409900835766767/2519157231507773/?type=3>
- Adaval, R., & Wyer, R.S. (2004). Communicating about a social interaction: Effects on memory for protagonists' statements and nonverbal behaviours. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 40(4), 450-465. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2003.08.001>
- Ahmed, R., & Bates, B. R. (Eds.). (2016). *Health communication and mass media* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Asim, A., Kumar, A., Muthuswamy, S., Jain, S., & Agarwal, S. (2015). Down Syndrome: An insight of the disease. *Journal of Biomedical Science*, 22(1), 41.  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12929-015-0138-y>
- Ayalon, L., & Tesch-Römer, C. (2018). *Contemporary perspectives on ageism*. Springer Nature.
- Bambalele, P. (2013, January 16). *349 to receive hearing aids*. Sowetan Live.  
<https://www.sowetan.co.za/good-life/2013-01-16-349-to-receive-hearing-aids/>
- Barker, C. (2011). *Cultural studies: Theory and practice* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Barnard, I. (2006). The language of multiculturalism in South African soaps and sitcoms. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 1(1), 39-59.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10382040608668531>
- Barnes, C. (1992). *Disabling imagery and the media: An exploration of the principles for media representation of disabled people*. The British Council of Organisations of Disabled People & Ryburn Publishing Limited.
- Barnes, C. (2012). Re-thinking disability, work and welfare. *Sociology Compass*, 6(6), 472-484. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2012.00464.x>
- Becker, G. (1981). Coping with stigma: Lifelong adaptation of deaf people. *Social science and Medicine*, 15, 21-24

- Berger, G. (2002). Theorising the media-democracy relationship in South Africa. *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication Studies*, 64(1), 21-45.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/17480485020640010201>
- Black Coffee [@realblackcoffee]. (2017, August 26). *While here in Berlin I went to see this great artist @yohnagao yesterday in his Studio*. [Instagram photo]. Instagram.  
[https://www.instagram.com/p/BYPx3ZngCVS/?utm\\_source=ig\\_mid=D094FF45-B4C2-43F2-B02B-DAE1D73DB](https://www.instagram.com/p/BYPx3ZngCVS/?utm_source=ig_mid=D094FF45-B4C2-43F2-B02B-DAE1D73DB)
- Bogart, K. R. (2014). The role of disability self-concept in adaptation to congenital or acquired disability. *Rehabilitation Psychology*, 59(1), 107-115. doi:10.1037/a0035800
- Smart, J. (2012). *Disability across the developmental life span: For the rehabilitation counselor*. Springer publishing company.
- Bogart, K. R., Rosa, N. M., & Slepian, M. L. (2019). Born that way or became that way: Stigma toward congenital versus acquired disability. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 22(4), 594-612.
- Bond, B. J. (2018). Parasocial relationships with media personae: Why they matter and how they differ among heterosexual, lesbian, gay, and bisexual adolescents. *Media Psychology*, 21(3), 457-485.
- Brodie, N. (Ed.). (2014). *The Joburg book: A guide to the city's history, people & places*. Pan Macmillan.
- Bucaro, S. (2010). A black market for magical bones: The current plight of East African albinos. *Public Interest Law Reporter*, 2(15).  
<https://lawecommons.luc.edu/pilr/vol15/iss2/8>
- Buckley, S. J. (2000). *Reading and writing for individuals with Down syndrome – an overview*. The Down Syndrome Education Trust.
- Buckley, S. J. (2004). Social inclusion and a full life is still a challenge. *Down Syndrome, News and Updates*, 4(2), 41-41. <https://doi.org/10.3104/practice.329>
- Buckley, S. J., & Sacks, B. (2001). *Down syndrome issues and information: An overview of the development of children with Down syndrome (5-11 years)*. Down Syndrome Education Enterprises CIC.
- Burns, S. (2011). *An exploration of the adherence of journalists in Australia to established media guidelines on the depiction of people with disabilities* [Unpublished master's thesis]. University of Wollongong.
- Burns, S. (2016). Diversity and journalism pedagogy: Exploring news media representation of disability. *Journalism and Mass Communicator Educator*, 71(2), 220-230.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077695815598436>
- Caldwell, J. (2011). Disability identity of leaders in the self-advocacy movement. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 49(5), 315-326.

- Campbell, S. (2015). Conducting Case Study Research. Focus: Conducting qualitative research. *Clinical Laboratory Science*, 28(3), 201-205
- Carlson, L. (2010). Who's the expert? Rethinking authority in the face of intellectual disability. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 54(1). <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2788-2009.01238.x>
- Casual Day. (n.d.). *About casual day*. Casual Day. <http://www.casualday.co.za/what-we-do/>
- Christianson, A.L. (1996). Down syndrome in sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Medical Genetics* 33(2), 89-92. <https://doi.org/10.1136/jmg.33.2.89>
- Chuma, W., Wasserman, H., Bosch, T., & Pointer, R. (2017). Questioning the media-democracy link: South African journalists' views. *African Journalism Studies*, 38(1), 104-128. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2017.1292703>
- Cinoğlu, H. & Arikan, Y. (2012). Self, identity and identity formation: From the perspectives of three major theories. *International Journal of Human Science*, 9(2), 1114-1131. <https://j-humansciences.com/ojs/index.php/IJHS/article/view/2429>
- Clogston, J. S. (1990). *Disability coverage in 16 newspapers*. Avocado Press
- Clogston, J. S. (1993). *Changes in coverage patterns of disability issues in three major American newspapers, 1976-1991*. Paper presented to the Association of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Kansas City, Mo.
- Cohen, W., Nadel, L., & Madnick, M. (2002). *Down Syndrome: Vision for the 21st century*. Wiley.
- Cole, F.L. (1988). Content analysis: process and application. *Clinical Nurse Specialist*, 2(1), 53-57
- Cooperman, S. J. (2003). Communicating disability: Metaphors of oppression, metaphors of employment. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 27(1), 337-394. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2003.11679030>
- Courtney, A.E., & Whipple, T.W. (1983). *Sex stereotyping in advertising*. Lexington: Lexington Books
- Creamer, D. (2009). *Disability and Christian theology: Embodied limits and constructive possibilities*. Oxford University Press.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). *Demarginalising the intersection of race and sex. A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics*. University of Chicago Legal Forum, 139-167.
- Creswell, J.W. (2003). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage.

- Cropper, W.H. (2001). *Great physicists: The life and times of leading physicists from Galileo to Hawkings*. Oxford University Press.
- Daley, A., Phipps, S., & Branscombe, N. R. (2018). The social complexities of disability: discrimination, belonging and life satisfaction among Canadian youth. *SSM-population health*, 5, 55-63.
- Damean, D. (2006). Media and gender: Constructing feminine identities in a postmodern culture. *Journal for the Study of Religious and Ideologies*, 5(14), 89-94. <http://jsri.ro/ojs/index.php/jsri/article/view/360/358>
- Dant, T., & Gregory, S. (Eds.). (1991). *The social construction of Deafness in Open University. Issues in Deafness*. Open University Press.
- Darling, R. B. (2013). *Disability and identity: Negotiating self in a changing society*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Darling, R.B., & Heckert, D.A. (2010). Orientations towards disability: Differences over the lifecourse. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 57(2), 131-143. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10349121003750489>
- David, D., & Werner, P. (2016). Stigma regarding hearing loss and hearing aids: A scoping review. *Stigma and Health*, 1(2), 59.
- Davis, N. (1975). *Sociological constructions of deviance: Perspectives and issues in the field*. Brown.
- Dawn, R. (2019). Role of Culture and Media in Disability Studies: A Medium of Social Construction of Disability. *Journal of Disability & Religion*, 1-22.
- de Swardt, W. (2019). #TuksTennis: Venter might get to "act out" her dream at the Tokyo Paralympics. [https://www.up.ac.za/tennis/news/post\\_2832645-tukstennis-venter-might-get-to-act-out-her-dream-at-the-tokyo-paralympics](https://www.up.ac.za/tennis/news/post_2832645-tukstennis-venter-might-get-to-act-out-her-dream-at-the-tokyo-paralympics)
- Department of Labour. (2005). *Technical assistance guidelines on the employment of people with disabilities*. Department of Labour, South Africa. <http://www.labour.gov.za/SearchCenter/Pages/results.aspx#k=Employment%20of%20persons%20with%20disabilities>
- Department of Social Development. (2015). White paper on the rights of persons with disabilities. *Government Gazette*. (No. 39792)
- Dolnick, E. (1993). Deafness as culture. *The Atlantic Monthly*, 272(3), 37-53. <http://people.uncw.edu/laniers/Dolnick.pdf>
- Domzal, C., Houtenville, A., & Sharma, R. (2008). *Survey of employer perspectives on the employment of people with disabilities: Technical report*. McLean: CESSI.
- Dowling, G. (2006). Reputation risk: It is the board's ultimate responsibility. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 27(2), 59-68. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02756660610650055>

- Dunn, D. S., & Burcaw, S. (2013). Disability identity: Exploring narrative accounts of disability. *Rehabilitation Psychology, 58*(2), 148-57. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031691>
- Dykens, E.M., Hodopp, R.M., & Evans, D.W. (2006). Profiles and development of adaptive behaviour in children with Down syndrome. *Down Syndrome, Research and Practice, 9*(3), 45-50. <https://doi.org/10.3104/reprints.293>
- Edwards, S.D. (2005). *Disability: Definitions, values and identity*. Radcliffe.
- Ellcessor, E., & Kirkpatrick, B. (2017). *Disability media studies*. New York University Press.
- Ellis, K. (2012). Captions on, off, on TV: Online accessibility and search engine optimization in online closed captioning. *Television & New Media, 13*(4), 329-352. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476411425251>
- Ellis, K. (2015). Disability in television crime drama: Transgression and access. *The Journal of Popular Television, 3*(2), 243-259.
- Ellis, K., & Goggin, G. (2015). *Disability & the media*. Palgrave.
- Emmett, T. (2006). Disability, poverty, gender and race. In B. Watermeyer, L. Swartz, T. Lorenzo, M. Schneider & M. Priestley (Eds.), *Disability and social change: A South African perspective* (pp. 207-233). HSRC Press.
- Erickson, E.H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. Norton.
- Erickson, W., Lee, C., & von Schrader, S. (2012). *2010 Disability status report: United States*. Cornell University.
- Farnall, O., & Smith, K.A. (1999). Reaction to people with disabilities: Personal contact versus viewing specific media portrayals. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 74*(4), 659-672. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769909907600404>
- Fortuner, R. S., & Fackler, P. M. (Eds.). (2014). *The handbook of media and mass communication theory*. Wiley.
- Foss, K.A. (2014). Constructing hearing loss or "Deaf gain"? Voice, agency, and identity in television's representation of d/Deafness. *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 31*(5), 426-447. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2014.968603>
- Francis, F. (2015, July 18). Mafela's good – and nice. *The Citizen*. <https://citizen.co.za/news/south-africa/426801/joemafela/>
- Gannon, B., & Nolan, B. (2006). *The dynamics of disability and social inclusion*. Equality Authority. <http://nda.ie/nda-files/The-Dynamics-of-Disability-and-Social-Inclusion-PDF-413KB-.pdf>
- Gee, C. (2012). *Down syndrome and self-esteem: The media's portrayal of self-esteem in characters who have Down syndrome* [Unpublished master's thesis]. University of

Northern Texas.

[https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc177198/m2/1/high\\_res\\_d/thesis.pdf](https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc177198/m2/1/high_res_d/thesis.pdf)

- Gibson, J. (2006). Disability and clinical competency: An introduction. *The California Psychologist*, 39, 5-9. <http://www.disabilitypsychology.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Disability-and-Clinical-Competency-Article.pdf>
- Giles, H., Coupland, N., & Coupland, J. (1991). Accommodation theory: Communication, context, and consequence. In H. Giles, J. Coupland & N. Coupland (Eds.), *Context of accommodation: Development in applied sociolinguistics* (pp. 1-68). Cambridge University Press.
- Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers*. Sage.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma and social identity. Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity* (pp.1-40). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Goggin, G. (2009). Disability, media, and the politics of vulnerability. *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, 19, 1-13. <http://ro.uow.edu.au/apme/vol1/iss19/2>
- Gona, J. K., Newton, C. R., Hartley, S., & Bunning, K. (2018). Persons with disabilities as experts-by experience: using personal narratives to affect community attitudes in Kilifi, Kenya. *BMC international health and human rights*, 18(1), 1-12.
- Goodley, D., Hughes, B., & Davis, L. (Eds.). (2012). *Disability and social theory: New developments and directions*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gumpert, G., & Cathcart, R. (1982). *Inter/media: Interpersonal communication in a media world*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gustafsson, J. (2017). Single case studies vs. multiple case studies: A comparative study.
- Hahn, H.D., & Belt, T.L. (2004). Disability identity and attitudes towards cure in a sample of disabled activists. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 45(4), 453-464. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002214650404500407>
- Hall, E. (2005). The entangled geographies of social exclusion/inclusion for people with learning disabilities. *Health & Place*, 11(2), 107-115. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2004.10.007>
- Hall, S. (1980). Recent developments in theories of language and ideology: a critical note in *Culture, Media, Language*. Hall, S., Hobson, A., Lowe & P Willis (Eds.) pp.147-153. London: Hutchinson
- Haller, B., & Zhang, L. (2010). *Stigma and empowerment? What do disabled people say about their representation in news and entertainment media?* Towson University.
- Haller, B., & Zhang, L. (2013). Consuming image: How mass media impact the identity of people with disabilities. *Communication Quarterly*, 61(3), 319-334. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01463373.2013.776988>

- Haller, B., & Zhang, L. (2014). Stigma or empowerment? What do disabled people say about their representation in news and entertainment media?.
- Harnett, A. (2000). Escaping the evil avenger and the supercrip: Images of disability in popular television. *The Irish Communications Review*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.21427/D7271M>
- Harris, L. (2002). Disabled sex and the movies. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 22(4), 144-162. <https://dsq-sds.org/article/view/378/503>
- Harvey, C. (2015). What's disability got to do with it? Changing constructions of Oscar Pistorius before and after the death of Reeve Steenkamp. *Disability and Society*, 30(2), 299-304 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2014.1000511>
- Harwood, T.G., & Garry, T. (2003). An overview of content analysis. *The Marketing Review*, 3(4), 479-498. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1362/146934703771910080>
- Henderson, G., & Bryan, W. (2011). *Psychosocial aspects of disability*. Charles C Thomas Publisher.
- Heymann, J., Stein, M. A., & Moreno, G. (Eds.). (2014). *Disability and equality at work*. Oxford University Press.
- Horton, D., & Wohl, R.R. (1956). *Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction*, 19:3, 215-229, DOI: 10.1080/00332747.1956.11023049
- Hsieh, H.F., & Shannon, S.E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277-1288. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>
- Hunt, P. (1991). Discrimination: Disabled people and the media. *Contact*, 70, 45-48. <https://disability-studies.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/library/Barnes-Media.pdf>
- Ikaneng, T. (2018, March 30). *African governments urged to fight albino killings*. SABC News. <http://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/african-governments-urged-fight-albino-killings/>
- Inimah, G. M., Mukulu, E., & Mathooko, P. (2012). Literature review on media portrayal of persons with disabilities in Kenya. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2(8), 223-228. [https://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol\\_2\\_No\\_8\\_Special\\_Issue\\_April\\_2012/27.pdf](https://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol_2_No_8_Special_Issue_April_2012/27.pdf)
- Jensen, S.Q. (2011). Othering, identity formation and agency. *Qualitative Studies*, 2(2), 63-78. <https://doi.org/10.7146/qs.v2i2.5510>
- Jeppsson Grassman, E., & Whitaker, A. (Eds.). (2013). *Ageing with disability: A lifecourse perspective*. Policy Press.
- Johnstone, D. (2012). *An introduction to disability studies*. Taylor and Francis.

- Kanter, A. (2011). The law: What's disability studies got to do with it or an introduction to disability legal studies. *Columbia Human Rights Law Review*, 42(2).  
<https://ssrn.com/abstract=1822439>
- Khumalo, Z. (2015). Generations 16 saga timeline. Retrieved from:  
<https://citizen.co.za/lifestyle/your-life-entertainment-your-life/308343/generations-16-saga-timeline/>
- Khupe, W. P. (2010, April 12). *Disabled People's Rights... Where Does Zimbabwe Stand? The Zimbabwean*. <https://www.thezimbabwean.co/2010/04/disabled-peoples-rights-where-does-zimbabwe-stand/>
- Klein, B. (2011). Entertaining ideas: Social issues in entertainment television. *Media, Culture & Society*, 33(6), 905-921. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443711411008>
- Kort-Butler, L.A. (2016). Content Analysis in the study of crime, media, and popular culture. *Oxford Research Encyclopedias: Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 1-15.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264079.013.23>
- Kotze, H., & Loubster, R. (2018). Christian ethics in South Africa: Liberal values among the public and elites. *Scriptura*, 117, 1-10.
- Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 45(3), 214-222.  
<https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.45.3.214>
- Kreuter, M. W., Green, M. C., Cappella, J. N., Slater, M. D., Wise, M. E., Storey, D., Clark, E. M., O'Keefe, D. J., Erwin, D. O., Holmes, K., Hinyard, L. J., Houston, T., & Woolley, S. (2007). Narrative communication in cancer prevention and control: A framework to guide research and application. *Annals of Behavioural Medicine*, 33(3), 221-235.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02879904>
- Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Sage publications.
- Kübler-Ross, E. (1969). *On death and dying*. Macmillan.
- Kumin, L. (1994). Intelligibility of speech in children with Down syndrome in natural settings: Parents' perspective. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 78(1), 307-313.  
<https://doi.org/10.2466/pms.1994.78.1.307>
- Kuperus, T. (2011). The political role and democratic contribution of churches in post-apartheid South Africa. *Journal of Church and State*, 53 (2), 278-306.
- Lane, H. (1992). *The mask of benevolence*. Knopf.
- Lane, H. (1999). *The mask of benevolence* (2nd ed.). Knopf.

- Lash, B. N., & Helme, D. W. (2020). Managing Hearing Loss Stigma: Experiences of and Responses to Stigmatizing Attitudes & Behaviors. *Southern Communication Journal*, 85(5), 302-315.
- Lind, R.A. (2004). *Race gender media: Considering diversities across audiences, content, and producers*. Pearson Education Inc.
- Linton, S. (1998). *Claiming disability: Knowledge and identity*. New York University Press.
- Lockyer, S. (2015). From comedy targets to comedy-makers: Disability and comedy in live performance. *Disability & Society*, 30(9), 1397-1412. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2015.1106402>
- Mangena, A. (2014, August 19). *Generations actors sacked: Auckland Park – 16 Generations fired for demanding better salaries*. Northcliff Melville Times. <https://northcliffmelvilletimes.co.za/182247/generations-actors-sacked/>
- Marsac, M.L, Donlon, K.A., Winston, F.K., & Kassam-Adams, N. (2013). Child coping, parent coping assistance and post-traumatic stress following paediatric physical injury. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 39(2), 171-177. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2214.2011.01328.x>
- Martin, S. (2017). Madness in the Media: Demystifying the Emergence of an OCD Trope in Television.
- Maseko, C. (2018, April 30). 'Fake sangoma murderers' target albino body parts for rituals. health24. <https://m.health24.com/News/fake-sangoma-murderers-target-albino-body-parts-for-rituals-20180430-3>
- Maslow, A.H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychology Review*, 50(4), 370-396. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346>
- Mayan, M. J. (2001). *An introduction to qualitative methods: A training module for students and professionals*. University of Alberta: International Institute for Qualitative Methodology.
- McGill, P., & Cummings, R. (1990). An analysis of the representation of people with mental handicaps in a British newspaper. *Mental Handicap Research*, 3(1), 60-69. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-3148.1990.tb00081.x>
- McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's mass communication theory* (6th ed.). Sage.
- McVilly, K., Standiffe, R., Parmenter, T., & Burton-Smith, R. (2006). 'I get by with a little help from my friends': Adults with intellectual disability discuss loneliness. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 19(2), 191-203. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-3148.2005.00261.x>
- Miles, M. (2002). Some influences of religions on attitudes towards disabilities and people with Disabilities. *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health*, 6(2-3), 117-129. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J095v06n02\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1300/J095v06n02_12)

- Millers, F. P., Vandome, A. F., & McBrewster, J. (Eds.). (2010). *Medical model of Disability*. Alphascript Publishing.
- Milton, V.C. (2008). 'Local is lekker': Nation, narration and the SABC's Afrikaans programmes. *Communicatio*, 34(2), 255-277. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02500160802456197>
- Mitchell, D. T., & Snyder, S. L. (2014). *Narrative prosthesis: Disability and the dependencies of discourse*. University of Michigan Press.
- Modisane, C. (2017, March 5). *The history of gay kisses on South African TV*. news24. <https://www.news24.com/news24/xarchive/voices/the-history-of-gay-kisses-on-south-african-tv-20180719>
- Moodley, J., & Graham, L. (2015). The importance of intersectionality in disability and gender studies. *Agenda*, 29(2), 24-33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2015.1041802>
- Moodley, J., & Graham, L. (2015). The importance of intersectionality in disability and gender studies. *Agenda*, 29(2), 24-33.
- More Oscar Pistorius Jokes*. (2013, February). Silly Bunt. Retrieved (Oct,22,2019) , from <https://www.sillybunt.com/2013/02/funny-news-pistorius-escape-joke.html?m=1>
- Motsaathebe, G. (2009). Gendered roles, images and behavioural patterns in the soap opera Generations. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 1(3), 429-448. <https://doi.org/10.1386/jams.1.3.429/1>
- Ndayi, V., & du Plooy, B. (2019). Gendered differences in the representation of men's and women's relationship to marriage and childbearing in business and economic context. A reading of the South African television soap opera Generations: The Legacy. *Agenda*, 33(4), 111-121.
- Nelson Mandela Foundation. (1997, May 23). *Address by President Nelson Mandela at the Baragwanath Hearing Aid Project*. [http://www.mandela.gov.za/mandela\\_speeches/1997/970523\\_baragwanath.htm](http://www.mandela.gov.za/mandela_speeches/1997/970523_baragwanath.htm)
- Neuendorf, K. A. (2011). Content analysis—A methodological primer for gender research. *Sex roles*, 64(3-4), 276-289.
- Ngwenya, O. (2014). *Generations going off air for two months following strike by main actors*. Retrieved from: <https://www.publicnewshub.com/generations-going-off-air-two-months-following-strike-main-actors/>
- Norden, M. F. (1994). *The cinema of isolation: A history of physical disability in movies*. Rutgers University Press.
- O'Donnell, H. (1999). *Good times, bad times: Soap operas in Western Europe*. Leicester University Press.
- O'Leary, Z. (2017). *The essential guide to doing your research* (3rd ed.). Sage.

- Olaiya, K. (2013). Commodifying the 'sacred', beatifying the 'abnormal': Nollywood and representation of disability. *The Global South*, 7(1), 137-156.  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265840771\\_Commodifying\\_the\\_Sacred\\_Beatifying\\_the\\_Abnormal\\_Nollywood\\_and\\_the\\_Representation\\_of\\_Disability](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265840771_Commodifying_the_Sacred_Beatifying_the_Abnormal_Nollywood_and_the_Representation_of_Disability)
- Oliver, M. (1990). *The politics of disablement*. Macmillan and St Martin's Press.
- Oliver, M. (1996). A sociology of disability or a disablist sociology? In L. Barton (Ed.), *Disability and society: Emerging issues and insights*. Longman.
- Oliver, M. (2013). The social model of disability: Thirty years on. *Disability & Society*, 28(7), 1024-1026. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2013.818773>
- Olsen, J. (2018). Socially disabled: the fight disabled people face against loneliness and stress. *Disability & Society*, 33(7), 1160-1164.
- Ortlipp, M. (2008). Keeping and using reflective journals in the qualitative research process. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 695-705. <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol13/iss4/8>
- Palaganas, E.C., Sanchez, M.C., Molintas, M.P., & Caricativo, R.D. (2017). Reflexivity in qualitative research: A journey of learning. *The Qualitative Report*, 22(2), 426-438.  
<http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol22/iss2/5>
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Quantitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Piaget, J. (1969). *The mechanisms of perception* (G. N. Seagram, Trans.). Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. (1969)
- Pirsl, D., & Popovska, S. (2013). Media mediated disability: How to avoid stereotypes. *International Journal of Scientific Engineering and Research*, 1(4).  
<https://www.ijser.in/archives/v1i4/SjIwMTM2NA==.pdf>
- Potter, W. J. (2012). *Media effects*. Sage.
- Pueschel, S. M. (1996). Young people with Down syndrome: Transition from childhood to adulthood. *Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Research Reviews*, 2(2), 90-95. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1098-2779\(1996\)2:2<90::AID-MRDD6>3.0.CO;2-0](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1098-2779(1996)2:2<90::AID-MRDD6>3.0.CO;2-0)
- Putnam, M. (2005). Conceptualizing disability: Developing a framework for political disability identity. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 16(3), 188-198.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/10442073050160030601>
- Qukula, Q. (2016). *Generations: The Legacy returns to number one spot*. 702.  
<http://www.702.co.za/articles/14397/generations-the-legacy-returns-to-number-one-spot>
- Reid, D., Stoughton, E., & Smith, R. (2006). The humorous construction of disability: 'Stand up' comedians in the United States. *Disability & Society*, 21(6), 629-643.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590600918354>

- Reinders, H. (2008). *Receiving the gift of friendship: Profound disability, theological anthropology, and ethics*. Wm. B. Eerdmans.
- Reis, H.T. (1990). The role of intimacy in interpersonal relations. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 9(1), 15-30. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.1990.9.1.15>
- Republic of South Africa. (1983). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 110 of 1983.
- Republic of South Africa. (1993). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 200 of 1993.
- Republic of South Africa. (1999). Independent Broadcasting Act, No. 4 of 1999. Government Printers.
- Retief, M., & Letšosa, R. (2018). Models of disability: A brief overview. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 74(1), a4738. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i1.4738>
- Rice, C., Chandler, E., Harrison, E., Liddiard, K., & Ferrari, M. (2015). Project Re-Vision: Disability at the edges of representation. *Disability & Society*, 30(4), 513-527. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2015.1037950>
- Roets, A. (2017, March 9). 7de Laan reaches new milestones: 4000 episodes aired in 17 years on SA TV screens. *The Citizen*. <https://www.pressreader.com/south-africa/the-citizen-kzn/20170309/281814283660730>
- Russell, M. (2015). *Days of Our Lives: A complete history of the long-running soap opera*. McFarland & Company.
- SABC (2017/18). Annual Report 2017/18. Retrieved from <https://www.sabc.co.za/sabc/annual-reports/>
- SABC (2019). Annual Report 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.sabc.co.za/sabc/annual-reports/>
- SABC News. (2017, July 11). *SABC 2004 Editorial Policies*. <https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/sabc-2004-editorial-policies/>
- SABC1. (n.d. a). *About SABC1*. SABC. <http://www.sabc1.co.za/sabc/home/sabc1/aboutus>
- SABC1. (n.d. b). *About Generations*. SABC. <http://www.sabc1.co.za/sabc/home/sabc1/shows/details?id=c4b9d096-1f71-4c32-8bf7-cbb9850608d9>
- SABC2. (n.d. a). *About SABC2*. SABC. <http://www.sabc2.co.za/sabc/home/sabc2/sabc2aboutus>
- SABC2. (n.d. b). *Show profile: 7de Laan*. SABC. <http://www.sabc2.co.za/sabc/home/sabc2/shows/details?id=de4b173f-9141-42a9-b215-f95734f26123&title=7%20de%20laan>

- Sage. Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Intersectionality and feminist politics. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 13(3), 193-209. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506806065752>
- Samsel, M., & Perpa, P. (2013). The impact of media representation of disabilities on teachers' perceptions. *Media and Disability*, 28(4), 138-145. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9604.12036>
- Sanchez, J. (Ed.). (2010). *Media guidelines for the portrayal of disability*. International Labour Organization. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_emp/@ifp\\_skills/documents/publication/wcms\\_127002~2.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_emp/@ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_127002~2.pdf)
- Scholz, R. W., & Tietje, O. (2002). *Embedded case study methods: Integrating quantitative and qualitative knowledge*. Sage.
- Scholz, R. W., & Tietje, O. (2002). *Embedded case study methods: Integrating quantitative and qualitative knowledge*. Sage.
- Settles, I. H., & Buchanan, N. T. (2014). Multiple groups, multiple identities, and intersectionality. In V. Benet-Martinez & Y.-Y. Hong (Eds.), *Oxford library of psychology. The Oxford handbook of multicultural identity* (p. 160–180). Oxford University Press.
- Shakespeare, T. (1999). Art and lies? Representations of disability on film. In M. Corker & S. French (Eds.), *Disability Discourse Buckingham* (pp. 164-172). Open University Press.
- Shakespeare, T., Gillespie-Sells, K., & Davis, D. (1996). *The sexual politics of disability*. Cassell.
- Sharma, N., Chakrabarti, S., & Grover, S. (2016). Gender differences in caregiving among family-caregivers of people with mental illness. *World Journal of Psychiatry*, 6(1), 7-17. <https://doi.org/10.5498/wjp.v6.i1.7>
- Shuttleworth, R., Wedgwood, N., & Wilson, N. J. (2012). The dilemma of disabled masculinity. *Men and Masculinities*, 15(2), 174-194. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X12439879>
- Silva, C. F., & Howe, P. D. (2012). The (in)validity of *supercrip* representation of Paralympian athletes. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 36, 2, 174-194. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723511433865>
- Singleton, J. L., & Tittle, M. D. (2000). Deaf parents and their hearing children. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 5(3), 221-236. <https://doi.org/10.1093/deafed/5.3.221>
- Skinner, B. F. (1979). *The shaping of a behaviorist*. Knopf.
- Smith, J.A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. Sage.
- Smith, R. A., & Hipper, T. (2010). Label management: Investigating how confidants encourage the use of communication strategies to avoid stigmatization. *Health Communication*, 25(5), 410-422. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2010.483335>

- Smith, R. J. H., Shearer, A.E., Hildebrand, M., & Van Camp, G. (2008). *Deafness and hereditary hearing loss: Overview*. Gene Reviews. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/221964327\\_Deafness\\_and\\_Hereditary\\_Hearing\\_Loss\\_Overview](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/221964327_Deafness_and_Hereditary_Hearing_Loss_Overview)
- Sokoloff, N. J., & Dupont, I. (2005). Introduction—Domestic violence: Examining the intersection of race, class, and gender. In N.J. Sokoloff (with C. Pratt; Eds.), *Domestic violence at the margins: Readings in race, class, gender, and culture*. Rutgers University Press.
- Solheim, J., Kværner, K. J., Sandvik, L., & Falkenberg, E. S. (2012). Factors affecting older adults' hearing-aid use. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 14(4), 300-312.
- Statistics South Africa (StatsSA). (2017). *Quarterly labour force survey 2017*. Statistics South Africa. <http://www.statssa.gov.za>
- Sternberg, R. J., & Williams, W. M. (2010). *Educational psychology* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education.
- Storbeck, C., & Martin, D. (2010). South African Deaf education and the Deaf community. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 155(4), 488-490. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26235087>
- Struwig, F., & Stead, G. (2001). *Planning, designing and reporting research*. Pearson Education South Africa.
- Swain, J., & French, S. (2000). Towards an affirmation model of disability. *Disability & Society*, 15(4), 569-582. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590050058189>
- Swain, J., French, S., Thomas, C., & Barnes, C. (Eds.). (2013). *Disabling barriers – Enabling environments* (3rd ed). Sage.
- Swartz, L. (2013). Oscar Pistorius and the melancholy of intersectionality. *Disability & Society*, 28(8), 1157-1161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2013.808085>
- Swartz, L., & Watermeyer, B. (2008). Cyborg anxiety: Oscar Pistorius and the boundaries of what it means to be human. *Disability and Society*, 23(2), 187-190. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590701841232>
- Swartz, L., & Watermeyer, B. (2016). Disablism, identity and self: Discrimination as a traumatic assault on subjectivity. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 26(3), 268-276. <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2266>
- Tager, M. (2010). The black and the beautiful: Perceptions of (a) new Generation(s). *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies*, 24(1), 99-127. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02560040903509226>
- Tallent, R. (2007). Reporting on disabilities: Putting people first. *Quill*. <https://www.quillmag.com/2007/08/07/reporting-on-disabilities-putting-people-first/>

- Taylor, B. (2017). *Are you down with that? An examination of public reactions to media representations of individuals with Down syndrome*. Presented at the National Communication Association (NCA) 103<sup>rd</sup> Annual Convention: Our Legacy, Our Relevance, Dallas: Texas.
- The Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. (1996). *Government Gazette*. (No.17678).
- Tomaselli, K., & Dunn, H. (Eds.). (2001). *Critical studies on African media and culture: Media, democracy and renewal in Southern Africa*. International Academic Publishers.
- Toutellotte, J. (2015). *Guys and dolls: Constructing disabled teens on television* [Unpublished master's thesis]. University of Illinois at Chicago.
- Tuchman, G., Daniels, A. K., & Benet, J. W. (1978). *Heart and home: Images of women in the mass media*. Oxford University Press.
- United Nations (UN). (2015). *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>
- United Nations. (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.  
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html>
- Van der Merwe, N. (2012). The appeal of 7de Laan: Selected viewers' self-identified reasons for watching. *Communicare*, 31(1), 36-58. <http://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC123805>
- Wadula, P. (2018, April 17). *Treat people with albinism with utmost respect*. Sowetan Live.  
<https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/sundayworld/lifestyle/talk/2018-04-17-treat-people-with-albinism-with-utmost-respect/>
- Wallhagen, M. I. (2010). The stigma of hearing loss. *The Gerontologist*, 50(1), 66-75.
- Watermeyer, B. (2014). Disability and loss: The psychological commodification of identity. *Psychology Journal*, 11(2), 99-107.
- Weeks, D. J., Chua, R. & Elliott, D. (Eds.). (2000). *Perceptual motor behaviour in Down syndrome*. Human Kinetics.
- Weis, R. (2018). *Introduction to abnormal child and adolescent psychology* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- West, B., & Gandhi, S. (2006). Reporting abuse: A study of the perceptions of people with disabilities (PWD) regarding abuse directed at PWD. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 26(1).  
<https://dsq-sds.org/article/view/650/827>
- Whitenack, S. (2015). *An Examination of Parasocial Relationships and Loneliness among People with Down Syndrome* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Cincinnati).

- Wilde, A (2017) Are You Sitting Comfortably? Soap Operas, Disability and Audience. In: Disability and the Media. Routledge. ISBN 9781138848047
- Wilde, A. (2004). *Disability fictions: The production of gendered impairments and disability in soap opera discourses* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Leeds.
- Wilde, A. (2007). Are you sitting comfortably? Soap operas, disability and audience, Dis:cover! 2. In *Disability and the media*. Routledge.
- Wiles, R., Prosser, J., Bagnoli, A., Clark, A., Davies, K., Holland, S., & Renold, E. (2008). Visual ethics: Ethical issues in visual research. *ESRC National Centre for Research Methods Review Paper*. University of Southampton.
- Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method*. Open University Press.
- Willis, J. W. (1995). A recursive, reflective instructional design model based on constructivist-interpretivist theory. *Educational Technology*, 35(6), 5-23.  
<http://www.jstor.com/stable/44428302>
- Willis, J. W. (2007). *Foundations of qualitative research: Interpretive and critical approaches*. Sage.
- Wilson, N.J., Jaques, H., Johnson, A., & Brotherton, M.L. (2017). From social exclusion to supported inclusion: Adults with intellectual disability discuss their loved experiences of a structured social group. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 30 (5), 847-858.
- Wohlmann, A., & Harrison, M. (2019). To be continued: Serial narration, chronic disease, and disability. *Literature and medicine*, 37 (1), 67-95
- Woodburn, D., & Kopic, K. (2016). *The Ruderman white paper: On employment of actors with disabilities in television*. Ruderman Family Foundation.  
<https://www.rudermanfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/TV-White-Paper-7-1-003.pdf>
- World Health Organization (WHO). (2001). The international classification of functioning, disability and health (ICF). <https://www.who.int/classifications/icf/en/>
- World Health Organization (WHO). (2011). World report on disability.  
[https://www.who.int/disabilities/world\\_report/2011/report.pdf](https://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report.pdf)
- World Medical Association (WMA). (2018). *WMA Declaration of Helsinki – Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (2013)*. <https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-declaration-of-helsinki-ethical-principles-for-medical-research-involving-human-subjects/>
- Worldometer. (n.d.). *South African population (Live)*. <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/south-africa-population/>

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case Study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.).

Zeeman, K. (2017, January 23). *Uzalo remains most watched TV show in SA, according to statistics*. TimesLive. <https://www.timeslive.co.za/tshisa-live/tshisa-live/2017-01-23-uzalo-remains-most-watched-tv-show-in-sa-according-to-statistics/>

Zeeman, K. (2018, March 6). *Generations star Donovan on autistic character: People ask me if I'm okay*. TimesLive. <https://www.timeslive.co.za/tshisa-live/tshisa-live/2018-03-06-generations-star-donovan-on-autistic-character-people-ask-me-if-im-okay/>

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

**Example of description of a scene:**

DESCRIPTION OF SCENE	DIALOGUE OF CHARACTERS
The character known as Kosie walks in at <b>The Hillside Deli</b> and stands at the counter	
<b>THE DIALOGUE</b>	
Hilda	Afternoon, dearie. What can I get you?
Kosie	A toasted ham and cheese sarmie, please
Hilda takes note of the order and walks to the back of the Deli (presumably the kitchen)	
Matrone	It's good to see you, Kosie. How are things at the butchery?
Kosie	Good, thank you. I am off today, because it's Freedom Day. In 1994 everyone could vote for the first time.
Matrone	Most youngsters think it's a day to sleep in. At least you realise how much it means to our country. I'm impressed.
Kosie	Thank you
Scene ends	

## APPENDIX B1

### An example of coding into themes:

<b>Transcribed scene</b>	<b>What does it mean?</b>	<b>Possible Themes</b>
Hello, Kosie. Thanks for bringing the meat	Kosie delivered meat (He works)	Economic participation
Oom Swannie also sent a leg of venison. It's a gift.	Kosie mentions the extra meat as a gift	Communication
Hm. Was it your idea? Last time you hinted that I should make a venison pie.	Charmaine asks a rhetorical question; it seems like she already knows that the extra meat was Kosie's idea	Cognitive ability
Yes, it was me.	Kosie confirms the extra meat was his idea	Cognitive ability
Charmaine laughs	Charmaine is happy, she laughs	Positive emotions
I'll let you know than you can fetch some	Charmaine will inform Kosie when to fetch some venison pie.	Social interaction
That'll be very nice. Thanks Charmaine	Kosie is good-mannered	Pleasant person
Kosie shows both thumbs up in excitement. Charmaine laughs. Kosie goes out of the coffee shop	Kosie is happy	Positive emotions

## APPENDIX B2

**An example of the differences and similarities of themes which emerged between the two soap operas**

<b>GENERATIONS: THE LEGACY</b>			<b>7DE LAAN</b>		
<b>Transcribed scene</b>	<b>What does it mean?</b>	<b>Possible Themes</b>	<b>Transcribed scene</b>	<b>What does it mean?</b>	<b>Possible Themes</b>
My boy, I need your help	Uncle Tebogo is reaching out for help	Social interaction	Hello, Kosie. Thanks for bringing the meat	Kosie delivered meat (He works)	Economic participation
Did something happen?	Mazwi is concerned	Social interaction	Oom Swannie also sent a leg of venison. It's a gift.	Kosie mentions the extra meat as a gift	Communication- Good for social interactions
No. I've been going through our investment portfolio. We're losing a lot of money.	Uncle Tebogo is knowledgeable about investment	Economic participation Cognitive ability and business minded	Hm. Was it your idea? Last time you hinted that I should make a venison pie.	Charmaine asks a rhetorical question; it seems like she already knows that the extra meat was Kosie's idea	Cognitive ability
It's been a tough few months. The economy is bad.	Uncle Tebogo raises his concerns regarding the economy	Cognitive ability and business minded	Yes, it was me.	Kosie confirms the extra meat was his idea	Cognitive ability
In the past, your aunt has a strategy to counter	Uncle Tebogo continuous to raise his concerns	Business minded – Economic participation	Charmaine laughs	Charmaine is happy, she laughs	Positive emotions – Good for social interaction

it...but now she's losing it. I don't think she is coping.	regarding the family business and the inability of one of the family members to do something beneficial for the business				
I agree. She's up and down. Overemotional. She even has Nolwazi worried.	Mazwi also shares the same concerns as Uncle Tebogo's	Shared concerns – social interaction	I'll let you know than you can fetch some	Charmaine will inform Kosie when to fetch some venison pie.	Social interaction
It will take time for her to get back to her old self. That's why I need your help.	Uncle Tebogo needs help regarding the family business and realises that the person who has been in charge will take time to get back to her old self	Business minded- Economic participation	That'll be very nice. Thanks Charmaine	Kosie is good-mannered	Pleasant person- Good for social interactions
			Kosie shows both thumbs up in excitement Charmaine laughs.	Kosie is happy	Positive emotions - Good for social interactions

			Kosie goes out of the coffee shop		
--	--	--	--	--	--

## APPENDIX C

### Ethics approval letter



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN  
Faculty of Health Sciences  
Human Research Ethics Committee



Room 5B3-46 Old Main Building  
Groote Schuur Hospital  
Observatory 7928  
Telephone [021] 406 6492  
Email: [gun@vh.arts@uct.ac.za](mailto:gun@vh.arts@uct.ac.za)  
Website: [www.health.uct.ac.za/fhs/research/humanethics/forms](http://www.health.uct.ac.za/fhs/research/humanethics/forms)

05 September 2018

HREC REF: 367/2018

Dr BI Ige  
Education Development Unit (EDU)  
E52, OMB

Dear Dr Ige

**PROJECT TITLE: REPRESENTATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SOUTH AFRICAN SOAP OPERAS (MPhil candidate - Ma E Swarts)**

Thank you for your response letter dated 03 September 2018, addressing the issues raised by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

It is a pleasure to inform you that the HREC has formally approved the above-mentioned study.

Please note the following: -  
Synopsis

P4: change project information sheet to research information sheet  
Move references from end of synopsis to the end of the proposal references.

Proposal

P9: review the first sentence of the first paragraph under data collection, as content analysis belongs Under Data analysis section. The second paragraph doesn't seem to fit here as it is not about the process of data gathering but justification for the study. So, it should be in introduction section.

Data management: Proofread paragraph as some sentences are not clear.

**Approval is granted for one year until the 30 September 2019.**

Please submit a progress form, using the standardised Annual Report Form if the study continues beyond the approval period. Please submit a Standard Closure form if the study is completed within the approval period.

(Forms can be found on our website: [www.health.uct.ac.za/fhs/research/humanethics/forms](http://www.health.uct.ac.za/fhs/research/humanethics/forms))

*We acknowledge that the student: Mg Elsonia Swarts will also be involved in this study.*

**Please quote the HREC REF in all your correspondence.**

Please note that the ongoing ethical conduct of the study remains the responsibility of the principal investigator.

Please note that for all studies approved by the HREC, the principal investigator **must** obtain appropriate Institutional approval, where necessary, before the research may occur.

# APPENDIX D

## SABC Agreement

### NON-COMMERCIAL AND/OR PRIVATE USE

This Standard SABC Content Once-Off Purchase Agreement regulates the terms by which a Purchaser may obtain the right to use content provided by the SABC.

<b>LICENSOR</b>	<b>SOUTH AFRICAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION</b> <b>SABC LOCAL CONTENT SALES</b>  Registration number: 2003/023915/30 Vat number:
<b>SABC CONTACT PERSON</b>	6650
<b>LICENSEE</b>	Elsonia Swarts
<b>REFERENCE NUMBER</b>	Elsonia Swarts
<b>LICENSED CONTENT</b>	Various Episodes
<b>PURPOSE</b>	Private use
<b>PURCHASE DATE</b>	20/03/18
<b>TERRITORY</b>	Bloemfontein
<b>AMOUNT/COSTS</b>	R1800.00

### TERMS AND CONDITIONS

#### OWNERSHIP OF CONTENT

All rights in and to the Content, including, without limitation, all copyright and other intellectual property rights relating to the Content, shall be retained by the Seller.

#### USAGE OF THE CONTENT

The Purchaser is permitted to use the Content provided by the Seller for **Private or Non-Commercial Usage**.

**Non-Commercial usage** means use in or for news reporting current events or editorial purposes (i) in a newspaper, magazine or similar periodical or (ii) through broadcasting platforms. Use excludes any illegal, immoral or defamatory purposes. For clarification, "Editorial" of Content in this context means use relating to events that are newsworthy or of general interest. Non-Commercial Usage excludes broadcasts and television shows, online or otherwise, that levy a charge or are supported by advertising or sponsor.

#### PURCHASER PROHIBITED USES OF THE CONTENT

The Purchaser may not do the following with the Content for commercial gain. For clarity purposes, the following is a non-exhaustive list of some "Prohibited Uses".

The Purchaser may not:

- use the Content in design template applications, whether on-line or not, including, without limitation, website templates, Flash templates, business card templates, electronic greeting card templates, and brochure design templates;
- use in or for publications that are sold, or supported by advertising, or used to promote a business. This includes journals, books, e-books, websites, e-publications, apps, blogs, magazines, theatrical presentations;
- use in or for events that levy a charge, or are supported by advertising, or intended to promote a business. This includes exhibitions, shows, events. Use excludes any illegal, immoral or defamatory purposes;
- use in or for news reporting that levies a charge, or is supported by advertising, or is intended to promote a business. Use excludes any illegal, immoral or defamatory purposes;
- use in or for media that levies a charge, or is supported by advertising, or is intended to promote a business. This includes films, DVDs, CDs, downloads, or other encodings. Use excludes any illegal, immoral or defamatory purposes;
- use in or for broadcasts or television shows, whether online or otherwise (such as OTT services);
- use in or for any products, goods, or services that are sold or supported by advertising, or intended to promote a business;
- use or display the Content on websites or other venues designed to induce or involving the sale, license or other distribution of "on demand" products, including postcards, mugs, t-shirts, posters and other items;
- use any of the Content as part of a trade-mark, design-mark, trade-name, business name, service mark, or logo;
- incorporate the Content in any product or website that results in making the Content available in a manner such that a person can extract, access or reproduce the original or derivative Content as an electronic file;
- use the Content in a fashion that is considered by Seller (acting reasonably) as or under applicable law is considered pornographic, obscene, immoral, infringing, defamatory or libellous in nature, or that would be reasonably likely to bring any person or property reflected in the Content into disrepute; Use excludes any illegal, immoral or defamatory purposes;
- use Content featuring a model or property in connection with a subject that would be unflattering or unduly controversial to a reasonable person. Licensee must accompany each such use with a statement that indicates that: (i) the Content is being used for illustrative purposes only; and (ii) any person depicted in the Content, if any, is a model.