
**Gender performativity in South African films with
reference to Leon Schuster's comedies (1993-2012)**

**By
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I submit this dissertation in memory of my loving father.

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ABSTRACT

Gender performativity in South African films with reference to Leon Schuster's comedies (1993-2012)

It is against the social and cultural backdrop of South Africa that I investigate gender performativity in South African films with reference to Leon Schuster's comedies; *There's a Zulu on my Stoep* (1993), *Mr Bones* (2001); *Mama Jack* (2005) and *Mad Buddies* (2012). Leon Schuster is responsible for the most commercially successfully films produced in Africa. The significance of this research lends itself to the notion that the trends and tendencies of contemporary culture are defined by what is represented and learnt through constructed representations in mainstream media such as film. For the purpose of this study, gender representation and comedy within the framework of South African film are the main foci. There appears to be very little written on comedy and gender, specifically in a South African context. Judith Butler's performativity theory forms the methodological foundation of analysis of the representation of gender in Schuster's films. In addition, visual textual and constant comparison analysis are used as part of the methodological framework of this study. Due to the lack of literature on South African film comedy, the general understanding of comedy refers to the film genre as being a catalyst for transformation. It is also suggested that social control is reinforced and therefore, upholds societal and cultural ideologies in comedy. Satire is also found to postulate a preferred comedic mechanism to criticise ideologies in countries with repressive regimes. South African comedy is also understood to contribute towards tension relief in such countries through the means of facilitating laughter. In a general framework, as well as Schuster's film comedies, gender representation and therefore that of gender performativity is found to conform to stereotypical conventions of males and females which ultimately maintains the ideals of the creators and the contextual ideologies they stand to represent and serve. By making representations of gender and that of gender performativity laughable, Schuster's comedies can be said to raise awareness of the gender differences and inequalities in representations. The stereotypes which ultimately highlight gender inequality in the films, follows that of cultural, social and traditional norms.

Keywords; gender; performativity; South African film; Leon Schuster; comedy.

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CHAPTER ONE

Background understanding and problem statement

1.1 Introduction

As the initial chapter of this research, the background and preliminary understandings of the subject matter of gender performativity in South African film, with reference to Leon Schuster's comedies (1993-2012), outlines the nature and contextual framework of this investigation. Identification of key concepts and themes and insight into the respective composition of each also contributes to the primary comprehension of the research.

1.2 Background

Having a history rich in strife and a culture opulent in diversity, South Africa provides a significant landscape for inquiry into the cultural positions of our time. Not only has South Africa overcome racial segregation and cultural oppression, but has also adopted a more liberal approach to gender subjugation thanks to women's liberation. It is against the backdrop of South Africa's societal and cultural development that I investigate gender performativity in South African films with reference to Leon Schuster's comedies from 1993-2012 including; *There's a Zulu on my Stoep* (1993), *Mr Bones* (2001); *Mama Jack* (2005) and *Mad Buddies* (2012).

Film and television have become a fundamental part of our lives. In many ways, television and film have become the parents, peers and teachers of modern society. Signorielli (1990:50) explains that "television is our nation's most common, constant, and vivid learning environment. It is first and foremost a storyteller and as such is the wholesale distributor of images and the mainstream of our popular culture." To this end, the trends and tendencies of contemporary culture are defined by what is represented and learnt through representations in mainstream media such as film.

For the purpose of this study, gender representation, Leon Schuster films and comedy within the framework of South African film will be the main focus. Within the broader terrain of film

studies, comedy, which elicits laughter as a response, takes on many different forms and functions (Kuhn & Westwell, 2012:92).

With the complexity of identifying and confining comedy genre, Kuhn and Westwell (2012:92) acknowledge that “classifying something as ephemeral as laughter, constitutes something of a dilemma for film studies.” Comedy is also produced and received in various historical, political, social and cultural contexts, constructing and producing different meanings. Roome (1999: 62) validates this point in her statement: “[h]umour is ambivalent, and its meaning changes according to the circumstances of its utterances.” Therefore, the analysis of the gender performativity in Leon Schuster’s films is examined within the comedic contexts in which they are produced, disseminated and received. The importance of film in South Africa not only refers to film being an influential and powerful medium for communicating the thoughts, values and ideals of society, but it also captures and records historical moments. Incidentally, the history of film in South Africa provides significant insight into the political and cultural landscape of the country.

For instance, although film first started captivating South African audiences in 1895, it was only in 1910 that theatre facilities were introduced to cater for coloured people, known as “coloured only theatres”. Significant insight into the cultural landscape of South African film was seen when British culture and economic imperialism were negatively portrayed in Joseph Albrecht’s *Sarie Marais & Moedertjie* in 1931, which represented Afrikaner nationalism as an emerging force through the defiant representation of the dominant culture at the time (A History of the South African Film Industry, 2014).

Moreover, in 1939 a move towards producing more culturally specific films was at the fore after the Anglo Boer War accelerated Afrikaner nationalism. However, culturally specific films aimed at the black South African audience were not paid much attention. To add insult to injury, in 1964 when Cy Endfield’s *Zulu* (a worldwide success) was released, it was banned for screening to black people in South Africa (A History of the South African Film Industry, 2014).

The 1970s saw further fragmentation in South African film when the Bantu film industry was established. Black films in African languages were of poor quality and were screened to communities in churches, schools and beer halls. This is a clear distinction between black and white people; audiences were separate, viewing different films in vastly different surrounds (A History of the South African Film Industry, 2014).

After years of controversy, the 1980s presented a new decade for independent cinema which was highly critical of apartheid, due to escalated tensions between the races in South Africa (A History of the South African Film Industry, 2014).

In the early 1990s, Botha (2012:15) states that a significant development took place in which the perception changed “from all sectors of the South African Film industry that cinema has a vital role to play in the forging of social cohesion and the process of democratization and development”. With the advent of the democratic elections, Botha (2012:15) regards the year 1994 “as a landmark for the South African Film Industry” and explains that its significance refers to the fact that “a comprehensive study by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) on the restructuring of the entire South African film industry was completed and forwarded to the newly formed Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology.”

As a result, thanks to the South African Film and Video Foundation (SAFVF) as well as other associations, in an effort to improve and standardise the South African film industry, the National Film and Video Foundation Bill was accepted by the South African Parliament in 1997 (Botha, 2012:17).

With specific reference to comedy, South African comedy film dates back to the 1950s. The first South African comedies were produced in Afrikaans and were tailored at the Afrikaans community such as Pierre de Wet’s, *Alles Sal Regkom* (1951) and Jamie Uys’ *Daar Doer in die Bosveld* (1951). One of the most popular South African comedies produced was by Jamie Uys: *The Gods Must be Crazy* (1980). Uys’ film proved to be so popular that it warranted a sequel; *The Gods must be Crazy II* (1989). Other earlier comedies include Pieter-Dirk Uys’ *Skating on Thin Uys* (1985), not forgetting Leon Schuster’s comedies; *You Must be Joking! Too* (1987) and *There’s a Zulu on my Stoep* (1993). What is significant to note is that these comedies, produced before the democratic elections in 1994, were mostly geared towards entertaining a white and predominantly Afrikaans audience to support the white dominant rule.

However, after the democratic elections in 1994, comedy was seen to play a vital role in helping facilitate peace and reconciliation in South Africa. Comedic relief in the form of 104 episodes of the sitcom, *Suburban Bliss* were commissioned and screened on SABC in effort to promote “nation-building and cultural reconciliation” (Roome, 2000:61). “[U]sing humour as a catalyst, transcends the aftermath of apartheid to address sensitive social and cultural issues” Roome (2000:61). Therefore, this study which looks at Leon Schuster comedies is significant and appropriate.

Due to the nature of this study as being primarily concerned with genders in ‘culture,’ it is significant to note analysing gender in the culturally and ethnically diverse setting of South Africa, especially given its history, does not pose any problems. As evidence, Butler (1999:xvi in Valkonen, 2013:212) acknowledges that “race and gender always function as background for each other, and they are articulated most powerfully through one another.” However, what Butler does advise is that given the “historical, political and social contexts, some differences and social divisions may be more significant than others” (Valkonen, 2013:212). Given South Africa’s background, it is clear that one cannot view gender as independent from culture and in this way, although I look specifically at gender performativity in Leon Schuster’s films, cultural representation also plays a significant role in this research.

When looking at South African comedy, it is fitting to analyse the work of the foremost filmmaker in the country, Leon Schuster, who according to the *Mail and Guardian* (18 November, 2005) was awarded a lifetime achievement award for his contribution to the South African film industry (as cited in Mamatu, 2006). Few South African films are commercially successful, however “the slapstick-humour of Schuster films are the only local films to command reliable profits. They are also the only films to garner more than R2 million at the box office” (Tuomi, 2006:92). Before, *Mr Bones* (2001) became the highest grossing film in South Africa, Leon Schuster’s *Panic Mechanic* (1997) held the record (Tuomi, 2006).

1.3 Problem statement, rationale and research objectives

The research question for this study may be stated as follows:

How is gender performed in the comedies of Leon Schuster (1993-2012)?

The following research questions will help guide my investigation:

1. What is the place of comedy in the South African film history?
2. What is the nature and history of gender performativity in South African film and more particularly comedy?
3. What is the structure and nature of Leon Schuster’s comedies?
4. Gender performativity in Schuster’s comedies?

There appears to be very little written on comedy and gender, specifically in a South African context. To the best of my knowledge, no other work has been done on what this study is focused on and in this way, this study fills a gap and contributes to the understanding of gender performativity in South African comedies. A gap is presented in the analysis of Schuster's comedies. As my study analyses Schuster's comedies, I also contribute to the understanding of one of South Africa's most prominent filmmakers.

The power of media and the influence of film and its ability to instil and reinforce social and cultural ideals is what initially sparked my interest in the investigation. Cultural studies, which ultimately analyses "how social meanings are generated through culture – a society's way of life and system of values as revealed through such apparently ephemeral forms and practices as television, radio, sports, comics, film, music and fashion," (Turner, 2009:59) is an subject which has always been intriguing to me.

Gender, a notion that is socially acquired, has always interested me. By understanding the ways in which mass media such as film, especially in South Africa, produce social and cultural constructions, such as gender performativity, this study contributes to current literature focused on gender and film studies.

The significance of understanding representations of gender performativity in film refers to Oyěwùmr (2011:4) who states that "[i]n the age of modernity, the impact of the dominance of gender constructs in everyday life cannot be overstated." Thus, understanding gender representation in local film comedies is essential in defining gender constructs.

Since films play an essential role in the way in which gender is constructed through its representation of behaviour and attitudes; focusing on films is, therefore, central to understanding cultural forces (Panayiotou, 2010).

To make clear the relevance of this investigation in culture and media studies, as it is the study field I am ultimately concerned with, would be to state that examining the socially constructed nature of men and women represented in local film comedy is specifically important in recognising the impact of the media dominated culture in which we live today.

This study is of significance to anyone interested in understanding the constructed nature of gender in South Africa, the significance of media and film in contributing to gender constructs specifically; culture and media students, sociolinguists, psychologists and film scholars.

1.4 Understanding key concepts

1.4.1 Introduction

This study involves a series of fundamental concepts and in order to grasp the nature of this research it is necessary to come to terms with the meaning and theory behind such concepts. This section will provide a background of what concepts such as film, gender and representation entail and sheds light on the significance of each concept in relation to this research.

1.4.2 The significance of film as a medium

As mentioned previously, media such as film play an essential role in contributing towards societal and cultural norms and understandings. Media influences many aspects of cultural and societal development and the power of media such as film should not be understated.

When looking at research exploring the effects of media exposure, the findings illustrate that the consumption of media influences and impacts societies perception of reality and that of the real world and “regardless of the accuracy of these perceptions, they are used to help guide subsequent attitudes, judgements and actions” (Behm-Morawitz & Mastro, 2008:131).

To reinforce this view, Roome (1999:322) refers to Tomaselli and van Zyl (1992) who also acknowledge that media such as film “reflect how emerging social relations in imaginary situations conceal the underlying processes through symbols, and justify prevailing conditions to affirm the dominant ideas of society.” It is clear that media harness the ability to shape and manipulate cultural and societal standards.

It can be said that media acts as an ideological tool capable of persuading people to buy into a certain value system or idea. Douglas Kellner, a cultural studies scholar, provides significant insight into this thought. Kellner (1995:2 in Holtzmann, 2000:34) suggests that media “recreates images of dominance, repression and oppression; a critical perspective of media that advances democracy” and states that “ideology is the understanding of the potential that media culture has to advance the interests of oppressed group.”

It should also be understood that not only may film present and reinforce ideological views, but it may also bring about awareness, as Madsen (1973:9) states; “film may introduce and define ideas to which many viewers have given little or no attention”. Madsen (1973:9) explains that “once an audience has been instilled with an opinion, however ill-founded, it tends to be inoculated against later programming which presents evidence to the contrary.” Madsen (1973:9-10) claims that “the thrust and focus of a nation permeated by the media may be shaped by film and television programming on those new issues about which people are unlikely to have opinions. And little by little, a nation’s character may be changed by the film and television programming to which it is exposed, for good or ill.” Therefore, not only do media such as film reinforce ideological views, but it also acts as a means to convey and promote revolutionary views.

To support the above, through visual media representation such as that seen in film, Mee and Dowling (2003:185) state that films “provide powerful maps of meaning that simultaneously challenge and sustain the status quo (Briam, 2010:395)”. What is significant for the purpose of this study is to note that “although film can be regarded as a commercial product, it should also be seen as a product of culture” (Botha, 2012:159). Essentially, culture can be thought of the “processes which construct a society’s way of life: its systems produce meaning, sense, or consciousness, especially those systems and media of representation which give images their cultural significance” (Turner, 2009:59).

In further explanation of the interconnectedness of film and culture, Fourie (2009:60) acknowledges previous records that show film being analysed as a product of culture as well as a “social practice” which is significant in that it provides insight into the “systems and processes of culture.” Ironically, however, Fourie (2009:60) deduces that the notion of the confinement of film within culture which downplays the significance of film being a “social practice”, facilitates a more complex understanding of media such as film. Investigating Fourie’s insight further, in order to distinguish how film became part of cultural systems, Turner (2009:60) acknowledges that probing enquiry into the deeper level of meaning of film was necessary as film became thought of as a “means of producing and reproducing cultural significance.”

A significant deduction Turner (2009:173) makes is that although much can be argued about what a film ‘really’ means, it is now conventional in film and cultural studies to acknowledge

that film serves the creator's interest and that the meaning of any film is interpreted differently by various formations of identity.

Tomaselli & Shepperson (2007:9) agree with Turner and state that “no film can ever offer a complete view of a situation.” Many films are based on similar topics. However, the interpretations and descriptions in these films may complement or contradict each other. Films are ultimately “somebody's statements about the world” which are generated by textual codes which are essentially “interpretations of situations already pre-determined by the filmmaker's own ideological positions” (Tomaselli & Shepperson, 2007:9).

With specific reference to the nature of this study, which looks at gender performativity in films, Bandura's social cognitive theory should also be understood. A significant understanding in relation to this investigation is that behaviour such as gender is acquired through media such as film. Behm-Morawitz and Mastro (2008:132) state that “media messages serve as a meaningful source for acquisition of gender-linked knowledge and competencies and the development of expectations of gender roles and conduct, self-evaluate standards, and self-efficacy beliefs.”

Therefore, the significance of film as a medium refers to its ability to reinforce dominant ideology as well as functions to introduce revolutionary views. Film, a cultural product, relies on various forms of representation to convey influential messages which may shape people's behaviour, attitude and beliefs.

1.4.3 Humour, comedy and satire

With specific reference to humour and comedy, as it is the genre of film this study is ultimately concerned with, it should be understood that “comedy and humour are terms often used interchangeably, but each has a unique meaning and application” (Madsen, 1973:291).

Humour in its simplest form is defined as “a comic utterance or a comic appearance or mode of behaviour” (Abrams, 2005:340). In another light, humour as Fry (1987) acknowledges “the communication of paradox.” Humour is referred to by Finney (1994:1) as a “human activity” which “crosses- and double crosses – many lines and boundaries, including those of gender.”

As an introduction to the concept of comedy, I refer to Hanke (1998:74) who quotes Elis Costello (1994):

“It is a dangerous game that comedy plays. Sometimes it tells you the truth; sometimes it delays it.”

For the most part it can be said that comedy, essentially a mode which instils laughter, is not taken entirely seriously, a fact which King (2002:2) claims gives “it licence to tread in areas that might otherwise be off-limits.”

To reinforce this notion, Hanke (1998:74) states that comedy typically “involves a departure from a norm, whether the norm be one of action, appropriate behaviour, conventional dress, or stereotypical features.” To define comedy, Tcheuyap (2010:29) describes it as a “form, a posture, a gesture, a situation, an action, a word which displays syntactic (narrative), linguistics, cultural and discursive components.” In order to make people laugh, comedy needs to employ a variety of tactics. Hanke (1998:74) refers to Neale and Krutnik (1990) who state that comedy “traffics in the surprising, the improper, the unlikely, and the transgressive.”

In addition to the above strategies, comedy, based on human fables according to Madsen (1973:291-292), comprises essentially of “self-delusions and weakness.” In further explanation, Madsen (1973:291-292) recognises that “comedy pokes fun at duplicity, hypocrisy and vanity, a parody of the little man pretending to be more than he really is, it is the tale of a confident approach to a situation, an unexpected fall, a realisation of what has happened and a sense of humiliation.”

To strengthen the understanding of comedy as a tactical device that insinuates laughter through contradictions, Hanke (1998:75) refers to Palmer (1987) who suggests that comedy raises “background expectations of plausibility and implausibility, which in turn, stem from the discourses of the social formation.” As Hanke (1998) explains “jokes create comic impact... by the contradiction of discursively defined expectations.” It can, therefore, be said that comedy deliberately goes against the grain in an effort to instil laughter. However, it is significant to note that comedic articulation is thought of as a semiotic process which Palmer (1987 in Hanke, 1998:75) states is both “subversive and conservative, offensive and inoffensive, serious and ridiculous” which suggests that comedy functions to create laughter in many ways, either conforming to conventional ideals or subverting away from these ideals.

A noteworthy consideration when understanding comedy is that it is timeless (Madsen, 1973:291:291). Comedy is also a subjective activity (Finney, 1994:6). Although comedy is subjective, with awareness of South Africa’s history, heritage, cultures and traditions, many

people, for many years, may relate to the context of comedy in South African films such as those produced by Leon Schuster.

A popular theme throughout literature on humour and comedy is the thought that it has the power to form resistance. According to Weaver (2010:36), theorists acknowledge comedy for this ability and “sought to control the subversive potential of ridicule and mockery when it was directed at those in power.”

The term satire should also be identified and understood as it is satire which populates most of the content of Schuster’s films. Madsen (1973:294) states that “satire is a world of ideas – a humorous lampoon flung at the pretensions of society, puncturing the cushion between what pretends to be and what really is.” Therefore, it can be said that Schuster’s films, although made up of satirical representations, in fact represent reality. Satire according to Birthisel and Martin (2013:68) is “humour that mocks human folly and vice and that challenges or ridicules part of a culture in order to critique it (Gary, Jones and Thompson, 2009; Haggins, 2009; Thompson, 2009).” Knight (2004 in Holbert *et al.*, 2001:187) claims that satire’s tendency is to attack. In explanation, Hight (1962:21 in Holbert *et al.*, 2001:187) suggests that “the attacking of an object within a piece of satire is often done with “a blend of amusement and contempt” and in so being, the satirist has been described as typically taking on the role of a “sceptical and bemused observer.” However, in much the same way comedy is a subjective activity, satire is largely dependent on “one’s personal beliefs and background (Durlin & Tate, 1976; Thompson, 2009)” (Birthisel & Martin, 2013:68). Therefore, satire is only effective when the audience can identify and relate to it.

Delving deeper into the nature of satire, it is significant to note that in film particularly, satire, according to Birthisel and Martin (2013:68) “has a history of misrepresentation.” In explanation, Fische (2011 in Birthisel & Martin, 2013:68) refers to this as “excess as hyperbole” which allows “excessively exaggerated characters to represent both a “straight meaning” that represents dominant ideology at face value and a second oppositional meaning that undercuts the straight meaning.” To this end, it can be said that satire is ultimately dependent on the meaning generated by the audience’s subjective experience. Satire is a very complex and diverse comedic form. In emphasis, Sander (1971 in Holbert *et al.*, 2011:187) states that a satirist has many “rhetorical figures and devices,” so many in fact that it is “nearly inexhaustible.”

There are several different classifications of satire to take into consideration. However, for the purpose for this study, only two of the most prominent types of satire; juvenalian and horatian, will need to be defined. Sandler (1971 in Holbert *et al.* 2011:192) puts it simply; “if we look at the dichotomy of tragedy versus comedy, juvenalian would best be classified as tragedy and horatian would best be defined as comedy.”

Therefore, for the purpose of this study, horatian satire would be applicable. As an introduction to this form of satire, the term ‘horatian’ stems from a roman Poet and satirist, Quintus Hoatius Flaccus. According to Hight (1962 in Holbert *et al.*. 2011:193) horatian satire instils “its arguments in everyday activities and is often presented as a form of self-satire but is ultimately used to serve as commentary on the ruling elite and macrolevel norms of social behaviour.” Hight (1962 *et al.*, 2011:235) claims that this type of satire endeavours to “tell the truth with a smile, so that he will not repel audience members.”

What is fundamentally important to acknowledge is the relationship between the satirist and the satire. Essentially, Holbert *et al.* (2011:235) suggest that “the satirist must come to believe that the subject of the satire is worthy of being satirized and that the satirist is warranted in the tone and line of attack he or she has taken in the piece of satire (Knight, 2004; Simpson, 2003).” In this way, for the purpose of this study, the satirist, being Schuster, who intentionally creates satirical moments in his films, cannot be overlooked. Precluding the many forms and function of satire, it is clear that satire endeavours to educate and entertain while it persuades. (Holbert *et al.*. 2011:192)

In summary, humour and comedy are closely linked in that they both endeavour to incite laughter, however, humour is a comedic mode of behaviour while comedy employs many different strategies in its effort to create laughter, for different reasons (Abrams, 2005). Comedy is a very hard concept to confine to one particular definition as there are many different genres, forms and functions. The comedic device employed by many filmmakers is one that employs contradiction and controversy to shock and incite laughter. Comedy, through its use of mockery, departs from the conventional status quo and is a powerful form which can create resistance. Not only is comedy timeless as well as subjective, but is confined to the context in which it is created.

Satire, the comedic mode employed in so many of Schuster’s movies can be thought of as representations of reality which critique culture. The action satire employs is one that attacks with a ‘smile’ while commentating on social relations. Horatian satire, being that which is

focused on everyday social behaviour is appropriate for this study as I intend to analyse gender representations in Schuster's films. Finally, in the context of the satirist, Schuster's contribution to creating satire in his films cannot be ignored.

1.4.4 Representation in film

The following demonstration provides a fundamental understanding of representation: "R is a representation of some object O if and only if R is intended by a subject S to stand for O and an audience A (where A is not identical to S) can recognise that R stands for O" (Davies 2007:128). In this way, three conditions of representation exist. Firstly, "if something is a representation of some object, it must stand for the object." Secondly, if something is a representation, it must be intentionally used as a representation" which Davies acknowledges as the "intentionality condition". And thirdly, "nothing is a representation of an object unless it can be recognised as standing for an object by someone other than the person (or persons) who intends that it be a representation of the object". Davies (2007:128) acknowledges this as the "recognition condition".

To reinforce the conditions above, Christopher Prendergast provides additional insight. Webb (2009:8) acknowledges Prendergast (2000) who refers to two understandings of representation. First is the understanding that representation is "the notion of making or rendering presence", which Prendergast (2000) regards to be "representation as *Darstellung*." Webb (2009:8) suggests that this mode refers to representation as "the sense of represent as re-present, to make present again, in two interrelated ways, spatial and temporal." For Webb (2009:8) this understanding of representation "cites, or 'quotes', a presence, referring to something that is not there, but is assumed to be authentic and potentially present."

The second thought on representation is what Prendergast (2000 in Webb, 2009:8) refers to as *Vertretung*; representation as delegating presence: "the substitution of something or someone else." This form, according to Webb (2009:8) is mostly found "in language and politics".

However, representation is a broad term used in many different applications and schools of thought. In many ways, representation is created through the meanings associated with signs, which Webb (2009:1) claims are "made through the production and organisation of signs". In most disciplines, representation is considered to be a process of uncovering "embedded, underlying meanings of texts" (Webb, 2009:1). Because many aspects of representation are

processed unconsciously, representation has also been linked to cognitive behaviour (Webb, 2009:6).

For the purpose of this study's analysis of gender representation in film, Webb (2009:1) provides a noteworthy example of representation in practise: "how women are represented in a film [...] can be seen to convey both the attitude of the filmmaker to women, and the general way women are viewed, understood, or 'known' in a particular context – the context in which the film was made and distributed." In this way, representation is fully dependent on context.

Much like comedy, representation is also dependent on our knowledge of the world, our background and our experiences. Webb (2009:5) gives credit to neuroscientists, social scientists and philosophers who he claims "argue that rather than representation being a straightforward matter of signs standing in for, and communicating, real things, it is an epistemological process". To this end, "representation is considerably more than a simple matter of standing in for, it is also productive of what we know, and how we know it: that is to say, it is constitutive – it makes us." On the other hand, other scholars argue, according to Webb (2009:6), that "representation is ontological: that is, it is about the nature of being; it is tied up with what something actually is, of what it is constituted, its status as a thing, property, object or experience." Representation does not only stand for the underlying message but it may also stand for the obvious.

In a further attempt to understand representation, I refer to Tomaselli & Shepperson (2007) who draw on C.S. Pierce's conception of iconicity to help define representation in film. Tomaselli & Shepperson (2007:10) argue that once an "image is analysed in its iconicity, then the representation that one forms in the viewing of a film, as a whole, is a species of argument in which audiences' interpretations "represent" something in much the same way as a lawyer represents a client or an elected politician represents a constituency." It can be said that representation is therefore, a reflection of a certain entity. However, Turner's (2009:178) argument that films do not "reflect or even record reality; like any other medium of representation" but rather "constructs and re-presents its pictures of reality by way of the codes, conventions, myths and ideologies of its culture as well as by way of the specific signifying practices of the medium." In this way, films can be referred to as a medium of representation.

In conclusion, Turner (2009:178) states that "just as film works on the meaning systems of culture – to renew, reproduce, or renew them – it is also produced by those meaning systems. Representation stands for an object, experience, thing or behaviour which is dependent on

context. Representation can be intentional and obvious as well as unintentional and unobvious. However, all representation is subject to the viewer's knowledge and own personal experience, whether consciously or unconsciously deciphering representations.

1.4.5 Sex, gender and stereotypes

As this study aims at identifying the extent to which gender performativity is represented and constructed in local film, it is crucial to distinguish between the use of terms such as 'sex' and 'gender'. In this research, although I will be analysing males and females who are biologically different in terms of their 'sex', I will need to refer to the culturally-based category 'gender' which "refers to everything else associated with an individual's sex, including the roles, behaviours, preferences, and other attributes that define what it means to be a male or a female in a given culture" (Baron and Byrne 2000:185).

An important consideration when comprehending the nature of gender would pertain to Crawford's (1995:xi) notion of gender being "what culture makes of the (perceived) dichotomy of sex – is a complex system of classification and social control operating at social structural, interactional, and individual levels". It should also be understood that gender is ultimately a construction.

It is significant to note that terms such as "male" and "female" and "masculine" and "feminine" are often used interchangeably, however, do not, for the purpose of this study, mean the same thing. In today's society, these markers may not always be appropriate descriptors of people. Holmes (2009:2) describes it well in that "some people may have bodies and/or act in ways that do not neatly fit the labels male/masculine or female/feminine." Holmes (2009:2) argues that "whether sex really describes something different from gender is open to question" and states that an important starting point is "to think of sex as about the bodily bit we have and gender as about the social meanings."

As a background to the distinction between sex and gender, Wiesner-Hanks (2011) identifies four principal directions which led people to question the discrepancy between sex and gender. Wiesner-Hanks (2011:3) refers the first principle as "biological scientists attempting to draw an absolute line between male and female" and that "given the uncertainties in most biological markers, the intensity of the search for an infallible marker of sex difference suggests that cultural norms about gender are influencing science."

The following principle which questioned the difference between gender and sex is of ethnography and anthropology. Due to cultures having a dichotomous understanding of gender, Wiesner-Hanks (2011:4) suggests that cultures may “develop a third or even fourth gender”. In some cultures, according to Wiesner-Hanks (2011:4), gender is based on biology and/or one’s age, for example, and as such cultures may determine gender differently given different contexts and circumstances and as a result distinctions are evidently displayed in behaviour, language and clothing. Wiesner-Hanks (2011:4) states that “comparative ethnography thus indicates that in some of the world’s cultures, gender attribution is not based on genitals, and may, in fact, change throughout a person’s life.” The third source of doubts about the distinction between sex and gender alludes to “the arbitrary and culturally produced nature of gender [which] has also been challenged by transsexual and transgender individuals” (Wiesner-Hanks, 2011:4). The fourth principle, according to Wiesner-Hanks (2011:5) came about when women emphasised differences due to differences in nationality, class, race and religion, to name only a few influential factors.

Regarding the analysis of gender performativity in this study specifically in chapter five, a definition of stereotypes should be clear. Donelson (1999:40) identifies stereotypes as “generalisations about people on the basis of their group membership, often maintaining and reinforcing the power of the in-group while subordinating members of out-groups (Fiske, Xu, Cuddy, & Glick 1999).” Donelson (1999:40) asserts that “traditional gender stereotypes posit that men represent the ideal or norm against which women are judged. As such, women become the perpetual other, valued primarily in their relations to others, men in particular (Donelson, 1999)” (Lauzen *et al.*. 2008:201). The nature of stereotypes is significant in this research as it provides substantial insight into the nature of socially and culturally constructed gender conventions.

To grasp the concept of gender performativity, an understanding of gender roles is necessary. Gender applies to stereotypical roles associated with maleness and femaleness in a specific culture, as Bem states: “gender roles are the traits, expectations, and behaviours associated with men and women and what it means to be ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’” (Lee, 2005:6).

Kessler (1978:11) also sees gender roles as a behavioural construct and states, “a role, as the concept is used in society, is a set of prescriptions and proscriptions for behaviour – expectations about what behaviours are appropriate for a person holding a particular position

within a particular social context. A gender role, then, is a set of expectations about what behaviours are appropriate for people of one gender”.

In further explanation of the concept of gender and gender roles, we may also refer to ‘sex-typing’ which Maccoby (1967:57) claims to be the “process by which the individual acquires sex-typed behaviour patterns”. Nielson is referred to by Berryman-Frink *et al.* (1993:3) as stating that “the attribution of sex-appropriate behaviours, personality characteristics, emotional responses, and attitudes is called sex-typing”. Furthermore, Maccoby (1967:57) states that this process is first seen when individuals learn to discriminate between sex-typed behaviour patterns, who then generalises from these specific learning experiences to new situations, and who then finally performs the sex-typed behaviour. It is clear that men and women are culturally constructed to adhere to a certain gender roles. For this reason, it can be said that men and women unconsciously perform their gender roles and revert to gender performativity.

With specific reference to gender performativity, as it forms the basis for my analysis, although in-depth insight into the nature of gender performativity is provided in the theoretical framework of this study in chapter two, it is necessary to note a definition of gender performativity here.

Essentially, gender performativity is the act of “doing gender”. In much the same way as a cross-dresser performs the ‘gender’ they are representing, they will act in ways which are associated with masculinity or femininity, or behaviour in ways that are typically ascribed to either female or male gender roles. Butler (1990:140) describes it well in her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity* in her explanation that “because there is neither an “essence” that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires, and because it is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all.” Further insight into this concept is explained in chapter two and demonstrated in South African film, with reference to Schuster’s comedies in the findings and discussion in chapter four and five.

In summary, for the purpose of this study, I will make use of the term “gender” as it refers to the roles, behaviours, attitudes and actions and/or performance associated with males or females. The term “stereotype”, being generalisations about a specific group of people, will undoubtedly be used in the context of this study as it defines gender roles; being behaviours, roles, attitudes and actions associated to maleness or femaleness that this study is concerned

with. Gender roles are cultural constructs which are acquired and reinforced through society and media. Thus, analysing and understanding the way in which gender performativity is produced in media such as film is relevant and necessary.

1.5 Research design and methodology

This study is of an empirical nature and analyses textual data such as the comedies of Leon Schuster which I have gathered, observed and analysed. I employ Butler's performativity theory as the methodological foundation to analyse the selected films and its representation of gender. However, due to the difficulty in the application of performativity as an analytical approach, visual textual analysis will form the methodological framework to which I analyse the data, using Butler's performativity theory to understand the gender representations.

The primary data I have collected is from the films I analyse, including; *There's a Zulu on my Stoep* (1993), *Mr Bones* (2001); *Mama Jack* (2005) and *Mad Buddies* (2012). Additional data I have gathered is the further investigation of relevant literature on the different aspects of the study.

By employing comparison as an approach to analyse the various films, I am able to thoroughly examine the areas of interest concerning this investigation. As this study focuses on a visual textual analysis of films, issues such as content, background and context (who, what, where, when, why and how) of the auteur, and represented characters in the film come into play.

It should also be understood that analysing the gender representations in the films entails interpretation which is a subjective activity. Therefore, analysing performativity in the films is done through my understanding of what has been demonstrated by the film producers and the representations of the male and female characters, and it should be made clear that it is not the only possible understanding and analysis.

The structure of the study, given the conceptual (chapter one), theoretical (chapter two) and literature background (chapter three) is based on first identifying, in chapter four, the nature of comedy in the history of South African film after which I investigate the state of gender performativity in South African film, more specifically in the context of comedy film. In continuation of chapter four, once an understanding of these two significant concepts has been reached I move on to look more specifically at Schuster's comedies to understand the structure

of his films. This is done through identifying the plot, characters and context of his comedies. Thereafter, I am able to investigate gender performativity thoroughly in Schuster's films in the hope of better understanding South Africa's views of gender. As part of the discussion contributing to the framework of chapter five, I examine the findings according to the literary and theoretical framework on which this study is based to uncover gender performativity in South African films with reference to Leon Schuster's comedies.

CHAPTER TWO

Gender performativity: Theory and application

2.1 Introduction

As this study aims to analyse gender performativity in Schuster's comedies, it is appropriate to acknowledge the theoretical context of gender, specifically performativity theory as this forms the basis of my analysis. This chapter aims to provide insight into how gender is constructed and portrayed with reference to Butler's performativity theory as to determine the way in which the male and female character's in Leon Schuster's films display their gender. As Butler's theory forms a background of analysis employed in this research it is noteworthy to comprehend the subject matter in relation to how it came about, the developments in the theory and how it can be applied.

2.2 Theoretical framework

As a background, it is clear that what sets men and women apart are their biological differences; however, history and the conventions of society as well as representations in the media provide evidence that men and women are different in terms of their duties and functions – predominantly showcased by the distinctive gender roles of males and females.

It is said that in the late 1970s the concept of gender came to the forefront of knowledge as researchers tried to understand the concept of masculinity and femininity. Through various disciplines; most notably in Marxist and anthropological circles, the consensus was that gender is ultimately a social construction (Meena, 1992:34).

According to these studies, the analysis of gender looked at the ways in which society and the identities given to men and women, individually and collectively, were influenced and impacted on by status and class, race, age and ethnicity (Meena, 1992:34). What is significant to note is that the analysis of gender was no longer a matter of the personal domain but was now considered a matter of the social domain, where “the construction of gender in the community, the school, the government and the economy” needed to be explored (Meena, 1992:34).

In further investigation into the context of gender roles, Risman (2004:430) identifies four distinct social scientific theoretical traditions or phases which have been developed to explain gender. Where and how gender differences are formed, whether biological (Udry 2000) or social in origin (Bem 1993) became the focus of the first phase. As a response, “how social structure (as opposed to individual learning) creates gendered behaviour” became the second focus to explain gender. The third phase which also reacts to the first tradition of “individualist thinking”, Risman (2004:430) says “accentuates the impact of “social interaction and accountability to others’ expectations, with a focus on how “doing gender” creates and reproduces inequalities” (West and Zimmerman 1987, Risman, 2004:430).

The fourth phase, a more recent provocation, “treats gender as a socially constructed stratification system.” Risman refers to Lober (1994) who argue that “gender is an institution that is embedded in all the social processes of everyday life and social organisations” (Risman, 2004:430). Gender is, therefore, inescapable as a product of society. Gender analysis is dependent on the biological, social and cultural contexts of an individuals’ portrayal or ‘doing of gender’ in everyday life.

Referring back to ‘doing gender’, a pertinent consideration in gender theory, particularly when understanding performativity theory, was first defined in an article by Candace West and Don Zimmermann, “Doing Gender”, in 1987. The significance of this work is identified as “arguably one of the most important writings in the contemporary study of gender” (Deutsch, 2007:106).

West and Zimmermann’s concept altered the course of literature on gender as it shifted the focus away from “socialization as the basis for gendered difference between men and women” and instead looked at the impact of men and women’s actions and performance of gender (Deutsch, 2007:107).

The notion of “doing gender” can be identified as the way in which males or females act/do their gender. In explanation, West and Zimmermann argue that “gender is not something we are, but something we do” and [...] “must be continually socially reconstructed in light of “normative conceptions” of men and women” (Deutsch, 2007:106).

Moreover, “doing gender” as Deutsch (2007:106-107) gathers, is the notion of people who “act with the awareness that they will be judged according to what is deemed appropriate feminine or masculine behaviour.” However, according to Thorne (2002) what is deemed “appropriate

gendered behaviour changes over time” (Deutsch, 2007:107). It can be said that what was considered feminine behaviour in the 1960s, for example, where women spent a vast amount of energy grooming themselves, is now not limited to being associated with feminine behaviour but is now also associated with men’s behaviour.

With the above background on the context of gender, we can now look into the nature of the framework for my analysis, Judith Butler’s performativity theory. In an effort to realign bodily categories more accurately, Butler (1990:xi) who draws on the work of Mary Douglas and Julia Kristeva, proposes using ‘gender acts’ to identify and define “categories of the body, sex, gender and sexuality”. This ultimately forms the basis of performativity theory. Trying to identify and categorise “true sex, discrete gender, and specific sexuality,” is what has fundamentally constituted the departure point for many theories and literature on gender (Butler, 1990:128). Butler is famed for introducing a theory that not only looks at one’s biological, societal or cultural point of reference as a means to explain gender, but rather looks to performativity as a means to explain, define and categorise one’s gender.

An important consideration in understanding performativity theory is that “the notion of an original or primary gender identity is often represented and parodied within the cultural practices of drag, cross-dressing, and the sexual stylization of butch/femme identities” (Butler, 1990:137). Therefore, performativity theory describes that in much the same way as the a cross-dresser performs and acts in ways that make him/her appear to be either male or female, any person who performs and acts within certain gender characteristics in mind is a reflection of their true gender. However, Butler (1990:137) states that “the relation between the “imitation” and the “original” is [...] more complicated than that critique generally allows.” This may be due to the fact that the ‘original’ nature of gender has a diverse history rich in different influential factors, as discussed earlier.

Moreover, Butler (1990:137) discloses that “as much as drag creates a unified picture of “women” (what its critics often oppose), it also reveals the distinctiveness of these aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence.” What is significant is that Butler (1990:137) states that by “imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitation structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency.” Gender is largely dependent on imitation. However, the basis for what is imitated is questionable.

According to Butler (1990:137) there are “three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance.” Butler (1990:137) explains that “if the anatomy of the performer is already distinct from the gender of the performer, and both of those are distinct from the gender of the performer, then the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance but sex and gender, and gender and performance.” Therefore, it can be said that all three dimensions, sex, gender identity and gender performance play a part in distinguishing one’s gender, however, the gender performance ultimately defines one’s ‘true’ gender.

To conceptualise and define gender performativity, Butler (1990) makes reference to Jean-Paul Sartre and Michael Foucault. According to Sartre (as cited in Butler, 1990:139), gender performativity would refer to this ‘act’ as “a style of being,” [and] Foucault “a stylistic of existence” that gendered bodies are so many styles of the flesh.” According to Butler (1990:139) “these styles are never fully self-styled, for styles have a history and those histories condition and limit the possibilities.” In this way, it can be said that historical, societal and cultural contexts of gender shape, influence, impact and limit the performance/act or style of gender.

Butler (1990:139) explains the concept of performativity well when she clarifies; “consider gender, for instance, as a corporeal style, an “act”, as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where “performative” suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning.” What is significant is that performativity is a form of representation in that the very presence of performativity suggests the production of meaning.

Furthermore, Butler (1990:140) explains that “the effect of gender is produced through the stylisation of the body, and hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.”

According to Butler’s theory, gender is a performance that is repeated. Baron and Kotthoff (2001:9-10) make reference to her performativity theory and state that gender relates to “the repeated acts within a rigid regulatory frame which congeal over time to produce the appearance of a natural kind of being”. Therefore, the performance of gender can only be considered natural through continuous repetition.

To reinforce the above, in questioning what sense then is gender an act, Butler (199:140) advocates that “as in other ritual social dramas the action of gender requires a performance that is repeated [and] this repetition is at once a re-enactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established, and it is the mundane and ritualised form of their legitimation.” Butler (1990:140) discloses that gender is ultimately a construction and a production which cannot be credible. However, due to society’s ability to conform to these productions and the punishments associated with not agreeing or conforming to these productions, “compels our belief in its necessity and naturalness.”

A crucial factor when understanding Butler’s performativity theory is the distinction between expression and performativity. Butler (1990:141) declares “that gender attributes are not expressive but performative.” In explanation, performativity effectively constitutes gender identity which then ‘expresses’ its gender (Butler, 1990:141). Butler explains it well in her argument that “if gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which a body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no pre-existing identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction” (Butler, 1990:141).

In summary, the notion of gender and male/female difference, a topic of interest for many decades, was initially thought of as a consequence of biological and social details. Gender is commonly regarded as a social construct where society facilitates the acquisition of gender through social organisations such as media, schools and government. Although society provides insight into male and female identities, it is also acknowledged that factors such as race, class, age and ethnicity play a significant role in influencing gender. Ultimately, there are four theoretical contexts which are used to explain gender. The ‘where’ and ‘how’ of gender, be it biological or social, is the first dimension. How social structures which create gendered behaviour is the second and the third dimension, emphasising the impact of social interaction and the need to conform to the expectations of gender. The fourth dimension looks at gender as an institution which involves all aspects of everyday life and social processes to create gender. “Doing gender”, an important concept in understanding the theoretical nature of gender, moved away from looking at socialisation as the cause of gendered differences and instead moved towards looking to male and female actions as the source of gender difference. Essentially, doing gender is something we continuously ‘do/act’ in favour of the set parameters of male/female behaviour. However, these parameters change over time. What it means to be

male now, the ways in which males act now, might not mean the same in 10 years. Not only does Butler's performativity theory acknowledge the biological, societal and cultural implications on gender but also looks at the actual act/performance/behaviour to explain gender. The aim of Butler's performativity theory is to reposition or reorganise gender categories with a more effective method which identifies the performance or act of gender as the true defining factor of gender. Butler's theory acknowledges that gender is reflected accurately by one's performance of gender, however, she acknowledges that the relation between 'imitation' and the 'original' is a complex subject. Butler claims that there are three dimensions for corporeality; sex, gender identity and gender performance. However, gender performativity defines one's true gender. In definition, gender performativity can be defined as the repeated, ritualised style/act of being which is the way in which bodily gestures and movements constitute the gendered self. In closing, it is essential to distinguish between the 'expressive' and 'performative'. Performativity ultimately constitutes gender identity which then expresses.

2.3 Application of performativity theory

Although Butler's performativity theory provides significant insight into gender, the application of the theory is in many ways lacking. In this case, it is necessary to investigate other works which apply Butler's performativity theory to decipher the appropriate methodology and application to successfully analyse gender performativity in Leon Schuster's comedies.

Morison and Macleod (2013) acknowledge that the application of Butler's theory is deficient and suggest a supplementation of what they refer to as a performativity-performance approach to qualitative inquiry which integrates Butler's performativity theory with a narrative-discursive analysis. The narrative-discursive method defined by Taylor & Littleton (2006) essentially "draws attention to subject positioning and interactional troubles within the micro-politics of particular localized discursive contexts" (Morison and Macleod, 2013:567).

Morison and Macleod (2013:575) argue that the use of both the theoretical views of Butler's theory and analytical application of a narrative-discursive methodology needs careful consideration of performance and performativity, an "understanding that does not undermine

the anti-essentialist nature of Butler's work but simultaneously allows for an active, reflexive and imaginative subject."

In explanation, Morison and Macleod (2013:567) suggest that to apply performance theory, supplementation of the "notion of performativity with that of narrative performance" is required "in a manner that allows for the inclusion of relational specificities and the mechanisms through which gender [...] occurs." The argument posed is that "'performativity' and 'performance' each captures different dimensions of the process of 'doing' gender" (Morison and Macleod, 2013:567).

Furthermore, performance according to Morison and Macleod (2013:567) is a fundamental part of performativity and in analysing performance; gender construction may be investigated more efficiently.

Nentwich (2008:212), who's work looks at 'the discursive constructions of heterosexual parenthood and their subversive potential', also uses Butler's performativity theory and agrees that performativity theory is lacking in its analytical approach towards discourse practices (Speer, 2005:82). In application, Nentwich (2008:212) builds on Butler's performativity theory with discursive psychological and more specifically discourse analysis.

In conclusion, it should be made clear that Butler's performativity theory cannot stand alone in its objective of analysing gender representations. Performativity theory needs to function in conjunction with the suitable methodology to successfully examine gender behaviours. Therefore, gender performativity analysed in Schuster's films is determined through the process of content analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

Literature review

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate literature concerning the fundamental aspects of this research based on gender performativity in South African film, specifically comedy. As no particular study, to the best of my knowledge, has done what my research intends to do, I will base my review on the different concepts associated with my study. Therefore, this section will be divided into revisions of African film; film comedy and gender and representation in film.

3.2 African film

Only a small contribution has been made to literature on South African filmmaking, (Gutsche 1972; Tomaselli 1989; Hees 1991, Blignaut and Botha 1992; Botha and van Aswegen 1992; and Davis 1996) (Balseiro and Masilela, 2003:1).

One of the most prominent and significant contributors to the literature on African film is Keyan Tomaselli. However, it is important to note that his contributions make little reference to comedy which ultimately validates the necessity for this study.

What is noteworthy is that Tomaselli & Shepperson (2003:3) through their analysis of many African films, found that films are products of a historical circumstance and cannot be viewed as separate from social, economic, political, psychological, ideological and historical processes. Tomaselli & Bobster (1993:6) also note that films refer “to an ‘idea’ which ‘encoded in the use of this word, ‘idea’, are complex, abstract political concepts arising directly out of the history of struggle in South Africa.” To this end, the historical context of Leon Schuster’s films I analyse play a significant role in helping identify the state of cultural identities such as those of men and women at the time.

Tomaselli & Shepperson (2000:4) found that the division of black and white in terms of privilege is the most common form imagery of South Africa that is portrayed to other societies. In terms of taking the context into account, through my analysis of the films I have selected, the historical and political background of South Africa will need to be analysed and aspects

such as the racial and cultural divide of the men and women represented in the films I have selected will be looked at.

Tomaselli & Shepperson (2000:7) state that films provide more insight into the filmmakers' ideals and societal understanding than they do of the subjects they represent. In support of the above argument, Tomaselli & Shepperson (2000:7) declare against conventional anthropological views, that Jamie Uys' *The Gods must be Crazy films* (1983, 1989) are more focused on Afrikaner social traditions than they are about the 'Bushman'. In explanation, Tomaselli and Shepperson (2000:7) acknowledge that the 'Bushmen' are symbolic representations which enabled Jamie Uys to recreate what Afrikanerdom was before its demise. In this way, Tomaselli & Shepperson (2000:7) explain that it would be a hard task to accuse Uys of blatant racism in his representations, apart from a reflective kind. The context of the creator plays a vital role in establishing the scene for South Africa's view on male and female gender.

As an example, Tomaselli & Bobster (1993:6) explain that the American Civil Rights movement, personified by Dr Martin Luther King, represents a reduction, and helps simplify issues enough for people to comprehend them without having to investigate the actual situations. As a result, a problem arising, according to Tomaselli & Bobster (1993:6) is that the complexity of the political processes is hidden by such media constructed personalities. Although my study is focused on general male and female characters in Schuster's films, a topic for further investigation might be the intentional use of specific well-known personalities in local film to represent the social and cultural positions of the time.

Moreover, Tomaselli & Shepperson (2010:325) in their cultural-political approach to the study of social transformation, uncover the relationship between film culture and local developments in the South African experience. The approach of Tomaselli & Shepperson's study of 'social transformation' falls short in that it does not look to gender as a condition to which also requires social transformation.

Tomaselli & Shepperson (2010:338) acknowledge that a 'new cinema culture' is not yet represented although efforts have been made through alternative ethico-political and socio-political forms of cinema have been supplied to previously disadvantaged communities. And although claims have been made that "mediated culture constitutes the primary symbolic experience of the postmodern age," Tomaselli and Shepperson (2010:338) argue that people do not experience cinema alone. To this end, Tomaselli & Shepperson (2010:338) argue that

cinema may contribute significantly to people's cultural experiences but it is implausible to credit cinema for one's "language acquisition, ethical maturation and other facets of acculturation." In terms of gender acquisition, this finding contradicts much of what has been written on media such as film being a significant contributor to gender acquisition as it is media and other social institutions which reinforce gender ideals.

Martin Botha is another prominent figure in light of literature focused on South African cinema, however, he too makes little reference to comedy, or for that matter gender in film, specifically comedy, which again reinforces the significance of the proposed study.

Botha (2012:10) acknowledges that although contributing significantly to studies on the depiction of race and class in South African cinema, scholars such as Tomaselli (1989), Davis (1996) as well as Balseiro & Masilela (2003) fail to take into account the artistic practices of films and focused more intently on the social, economic, and political contexts seen in cinema before and during the apartheid regime. In order to understand the social, cultural, economic and political histories in cinema, it is necessary to look to the artist as well as the processes employed to represent/convey these contexts in the films in order to better understand South African cinema which is what this research intends to do.

With reference to the history of South African cinema, Botha (2012:12) acknowledges cinema as being predominantly geared to satisfy the white Afrikaans middle class which contributed towards a large and stable cinema audience. These films, according to Botha (2012:12) were required to cement the views and ideals of the Afrikaner in a way that was also entertaining. In return, the films were guaranteed a run long enough to cover costs. Botha (2012:12) refers to Fourie (1981) who attributes the success and popularity of this local cinema to the "conservative attitude of contemporary Afrikaners towards the films". Representing the ruling party in South Africa at the time, it is evident that Afrikaners wanted to maintain the dominant ideology through media such as films. Botha (2012:12) explains that "this idealistic conservation was characterised by an attachment to the past, to ideals of linguistic and racial purity and to religious and moral norms." As an example, homosexuality was condemned and prohibited from being associated with the Afrikaner worldview and as such films had to conform to these worldviews to be successful. (Botha, 2012:12) To this end, Botha (2012:12), in his analysis of South African cinema from 1896-2010, found that "films seldom attempted to explore a national cultural psyche [and] as such, they were a closed form, made by Afrikaners

for Afrikaners with little or no attention to their potential to say something important about their society to an international audience.”

Furthermore, Botha (2012:12) states that South African film reinforced stereotypes which portrayed the Afrikaner as “chatty, heart-warming and lovable in a comedy tradition, or as beset by emotional problems that had little to do with society but much to do with the mainsprings of western melodrama.” Therefore, South African film, particularly comedy, was used to typify expected ideals of the dominant ideology.

I have identified one study that focused on Leon Schuster films. Mamatu (2006) looks at Schuster films with reference to ‘colonising laughter’ in *Short and Sweet* (1991) and *Mr Bones* (2008). Mamatu (2006), who investigates how laughter contributes to the representation of black people in Schuster’s comedies, finds that Schuster’s portrayals of black people are negative and argues for more affirming representations of blackness. Ultimately, Mamatu (2006:78) finds that “racist ideologies such as that of white supremacy are alive and well” in Schuster’s films. Through the analysis of black and white characters in Schuster’s films, this research provides insight into racial and cultural ideologies which contributes to Mamatu’s understanding. It proves an intriguing investigation, looking to the cultural context of gender representation, specifically performativity in Schuster films, to determine whether the cultural contexts of the characters refer to racial ideologies to explain gender.

3.3 Film comedy

With reference to another aspect this study is primarily concerned with, the phenomenon of comedy – with its many forms and functions which can be found in and applied to any object, in film or elsewhere – has been a topic of enquiry for many centuries (King, 2002:3). Many theories of comedy, King (2002:4) acknowledges, dates as far back as the world of ancient Greece and recognises the ‘great thinkers’ from Plato and Aristotle to Kant, Nietzsche and Freud as reflecting on the nature of comedy at some time.

A common thread throughout studies on comedy is that it is culturally specific. Johns (2009:92) explains that much research has been done on comedy film in a national context using genre criticism, however, although comedy is known to be universal, comedies are found to be specific to a national framework. To reinforce this notion of comedy being nationally and culturally specific, Tcheuyap (2010:27) states in his writings on the ‘Comedy of Power, Power

of Comedy’ that “what a spectator finds ‘entertaining’ is inevitably personal, as well as cultural/national.” Furthermore, Roome (2000:61) confirms that representations of absurdity in events and relationships evoke comedic situations but acknowledges that laughter is brought about through understanding related to the audiences’ status, class, race or gender. In earlier research, Madsen (1973:292) also shares this view in his findings that humour is successful because it is relevant to the context in which it is produced and received. Madsen (1973:292) states that “[n]ot all things are funny – laughter is unique to a given event and its perception by the viewer.” In this way, the context of the comedies, its audience, auteurs, and societal and political backdrop are essential in contributing to the success of a film.

Although context is a significant factor in comedy in almost all areas of analysis, Andrew Horton claims that “like language and like “texts” in general, the comic is plural, un-finalized, disseminative, dependent on context and the intertextuality of creator, text and contemplator” (quoted in Tcheuyap, 2010:30). Therefore, comedy is interdependent and bound by context; context of the situation, context of the author and context of the viewer.

Since comedy is found to be based on a shared context, Tcheuyap (2010:30) suggests that the comedic tactics used in films can be considered as cultural elements much like music, language and dance might be deliberated as such within films. Therefore, it can be said that comedy is contextualised by culture. Furthermore, Horton (1991:8 as cited in Tcheuyap, 2010:30) raises a significant point in his view that the production of comedy is done at both a local level which he views as cultural and at a global level which he considers to be cinematic. Horton explains that comedy is entrenched in the “traditions of the cultures in which it is produced as well as in the tradition of film comedy itself” (1991:8 as cited in Tcheuyap, 2010:30). For film comedy to be successful, it needs to depend on both culture and cinematic devices.

An additional reoccurring theme noted in the study of comedy is the issue around identifying and confining comedy genre. Due to the complexity in the nature of comedy in that it encompasses many genres and sub-genres, Tcheuyap (2010:30) acknowledges that it is simply not possible to confine comedy to an all-encompassing theory. Tcheuyap (2010:30) argues that on account of comedy’s dependency on context, the comedic genre employs not only assumed cultural conventions to be effective but also predicates a target audience. Looking at South African comedies will, in this case, provide interesting insight into the multifaceted contextual basis of South African culture.

In a South African context, comedy has been largely associated with nation building. Tcheuyap (2010:25) provides evidence that “in contemporary cultural productions, nation building is not incompatible with laughter, buffoonery and carnival life which all liberate postcolonial subjects from various anxieties.” Roome (2000:61), on her work on ‘humour as cultural reconciliation’, looks at the South African situation comedy, *Suburban Bliss* and examines how humour promotes the ability to address delicate cultural and social issues transcending the aftermath of apartheid for the show’s target audience of female viewers. The purpose of Roome’s (2000:61) study is to assess whether it is possible for “cultural reconciliation” to occur by identifying the cultural and ethnic differences and making them laughable and relatable to the viewer’s own perceptions of identity and differentiation. In her findings, Roome (2000:84) notes that “as the dislocation occurred between the ideological and structural conventions in *Suburban Bliss*, the intentionality of the producers was to make humour the catalyst in that “gap” between signifier and signified.” In explanation, Roome (2000:62) acknowledges that by inviting black audiences through the use of situation comedy, writer Gray Hofmeyr and producer Carl Fischer were able to facilitate an environment where viewers could laugh at both old and new structures of South African civil society. In continuation, Roome (2000:62) explains that with the South African political context changing in 1994 due to the first democratic elections, through the facilitation of laughter, South Africans were now able to question and laugh at all representations of South Africa and its diverse community. Viewers were essentially being forced to interpret what Roome (2000:62) states is “the excessive stereotyping of racial, class and sexual differences.” Roome (2000:62) believes this interpretation, generated through the sitcom genre, to be the fundamental basis of instilling “cultural change and difference.”

As it is clear that all comedic modes involve semiotic accounts of understanding through the interpretation of various signs and their meanings, Roome (2000:62) acknowledges that the implications brought about through trying to understand what is represented may indicate certain expectations which are contradictory in practice. In this way, it is important to understand that humour is uncertain, undefined and unlimited in its capability and its “meaning changes according to the circumstances of its utterances.” (Roome, 2000:62) What the viewer perceives as comical today, may change tomorrow depending on the context of the producer, text and viewer.

With reference to the socio-political agenda instilled through such programming, Roome (2000:126) notes that *Suburban Bliss* functioned to maintain ideological views on racial and culture divisions. In comparison, Roome (2000:126) refers to news programming being

specifically geared to convey government's ideological values which at the time referred to the apartheid policy. As a result, it can be said that the more overt programming such as news and commentary is expected to be ideological in its construction, however, that which is meant to entertain is less likely to be viewed as a means to instil ideological values. In addition to this finding, Boughedir (as cited in Tcheuyap, 2010:25-26) criticises the comic genre within African cinema and argues that the ideology conveyed is likely to be thought of as conservative "because it is always 'Man' rather than the institution which is at fault." We can deduce that not only is it imperative to look at the producer as constructing ideological views, but the establishment he/she stands to represent is as equally important in constructing meaning. A significant note here would pertain to the fact that *Suburban Bliss* was commissioned by the SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation), a government organisation which upholds views and policies in support of post-apartheid liberation. What is significant in terms of this research is that films do not need to conform to such governmental views as it is the producer, director and writer who are ultimately responsible for the creation of ideological values.

In light of Roome's finding that comedy has the power to bring about cultural reconciliation, it is clear that the power of humour is undeniable. Frank Scheide (as cited in Horton and Rapft, 2013:479) emphasises this point and explains that while comedy is able to pacify social and cultural anxieties it also has the ability to aggravate them. As a result, comedy ultimately "works towards social advancement" while also prolonging grievances of past prejudices. However, a contradictory view is one held by Boughedire and Tcheuyap who argue that comedy promotes 'powerlessness.' Boughedir (in Tcheuyap, 2010:26) argues that comedy is powerless in its representations as it sidesteps "explicit condemnation of socially produced evils." Although comedy is powerful in its capability to bring about awareness of such 'socially produced evils', it is ineffective in its criticism of such representations.

Tcheuyap (2010:26) makes reference to Nwachukwu Frank Ukadike who is among the first thought-leaders on African cinema and criticises Ivorian director Henry Duparc's most successful film – *Bal Poussiere* (1988), who is of the view that comedy is powerless. According to Tcheuyap (2010:26), Ukadike criticised the film for being a social comedy which focuses on polygamy, "making reference to corruption, contradictions of the tradition of culture." This form of social comedy Tcheuyap (2010:26) explains is focused entirely on creating laughter and amusement and as such the issues represented in the film cannot be taken seriously. What is significant to note is that Tcheuyap (2010:26) identifies Ukadike's thinking on African film

as being set on the presumption that the purpose of African film is meant to facilitate a deeper level of understanding and is not intended to create amusement.

Tcheuyap (2010:26) asserts that “every film has a superficial and deeper function that is the result of the intentions of the filmmaker, and if the deeper function is amusement, then any alternative and coexistent functions are to be dismissed.” If the intention of the filmmaker is to provide amusement to spectators, any representation will be ineffective in producing a deeper meaning other than laughter.

African cinema and Western cinema are positioned parallel to one another as Boughedir (in Tcheuyap, 2010:25) argues that Western Cinema evades reality and the problems associated with it. This notion is what Tcheuyap (2010:25) recognises as a cinema which distracts you from reality and in a sense “lulls you to sleep” which is why film is widely considered to be primarily a form of entertainment. Tcheuyap (2010:25) asserts that “to entertain also means to distract, to divert from reality, to allow a temporary escape that slows down the raising of awareness.” However, a significant consideration here would pertain to the South African comedies such as those of Schuster which are known for being based on ‘real world South African dilemmas’ although the films are produced to entertain. This prompts the suggestion for further investigation into comedy, specifically South African film comedy in the extent to which it functions to either entertain and/or raise awareness.

In other views, the creation of social and political transformation in comedy is a fundamental conclusion in literature on comedy. Kuhn & Westwell (2012:92) state that research conducted on satirical film comedy and politics views these devices as a form of social and political critique, especially in countries like South Africa which have suffered as a result of repressive regimes like apartheid. Tcheuyap (2010:25) acknowledges that African filmmaking was first thought to be “an instrument of social and political transformation”, according to Franz Fanon’s cultural theories and other African film discourses. In consideration of the historical context of South Africa, it is surprising then that little has been investigated on South African film comedy as a means to bring about transformation.

Comedy genre is a very scarce topic in literature on African film and Tcheuyap (2010:26) acknowledges Ngangura who provides insight into a possible reasoning behind comedy not being expanded on in African cinema:

[...] in Africa, for many years now almost all African film-makers have regarded themselves as authors, as people with a mission, charged with carrying a mission to their people. In fact, the infatuation with a ‘cinema of authors’, because it did not emanate from broad, mainstream cinematographic current (which did not exist anyway) address to the African audience from its own cinema, which even today it tends to regard as too ‘cultural’ in the pejorative sense and too didactic rather than a spectacle. It is revealing for instance, that comedies, a popular genre, if there ever was one, in Africa just as much as elsewhere, have only been rarely attempted in African cinema (1996, 61-62).”

What is significant to note is that although African films are generally supported by the local audience, comedy especially that of social parody is proven to be the most preferred film genre. (Tcheuyap, 2010:27) Mike Dearham, director of M-Net’s African film library, reiterates the preference for comedy film genre and states that “film content that is slapstick, comedic and trivial [is] the most successful.” (Tcheuyap, 2010:27) As a background to comedy in the African film context, directors such as Henri Dupac and Jean-Pierre Bekolo are widely known for their comedic work, however, Tcheuyap (2010:28-29) argues that the ‘will to do comedy’ started with Sembene Ousmane himself.” Since the start of African filmmaking, what is evident in the structure of the comedic form it is that humour is present in the “verbal, visual, performative and rhetorical elements of many films.” (Tcheuyap, 2010:28) However, what is also evident in African film comedy is the interrelation and co-dependency between comedy and politics in that African film comedy thrives on the continuous representation of patriarchy and autocracy (Tcheuyap, 2010:28).

An additional concept that is reiterated in literature on comedy is that it is involved with not only social but economic influences due to its inclusion of subjects belonging to the lower classes of society. Aristotle is referred to in his conception of comedy being based on subjects who inhabit fault or defect, or “who become implicated in laughable disgrace” (Tcheuyap, 2010:29).

In many ways, comedy genre is found to be dependent on a number of factors to be efficient in delivering entertainment, most of which are attributed to the context of the social, political and cultural landscape in which a narrative is produced, not forgetting the context of the text, its subjects, the creator, and the audience.

3.4 Gender and representations in film

When coming to understand literature on representations in film, it is significant to understand that representations such as gender performativity have only become a topic of discussion over the last 30 years. Turner (2009:170) acknowledges that over this period within the context of film and cultural studies, much has been written on representations based on those who are perceived to be in lesser positions in society either due to class or economic status, or ethnicity, race, sexuality and gender positions. Turner (2009:170) attributes the arising prominence of the literature of these representations to the fact that they are believed to play a significant part in “maintaining and justifying the very processes which support existing social inequalities.”

Some deliberations on literature based on examining such representations in film object specific representations due to the implications of identity it reflects on certain sectors of the community and the consequential ramifications it has on those sectors (Turner, 2009:170). However, there is also the opposite approach to discussions on the components of such representations in film which refer to the more positive depictions of society (Turner, 2009:170). As a whole, analysing representations such as gender in film, concentrates on revealing that which is not blatantly obvious which ultimately helps identify why representations are or become ‘desirable or credible’. Although analysing representations of cultural identities in popular cultural forms such as films is relatively new, cultural and media studies have enabled a comprehensive discussion and insight into the meanings and implications behind such representation (Turner, 2009:170).

Delving deeper into actual literature based on understanding cultural identities through the analysis of film, Turner (2009:171) gives credit to a number of studies such as “Stacey’s study of female cinema audiences, Bobo’s account of the black audiences’ reading of the Colour Purple as well as Hansen’s histories of the female public sphere in the silent cinema.” In addition to these works, contributing significantly to this field of study is Julien and Mercer (2002) who conclude in their investigation on how Asian migrants are represented in the United Kingdom, that even when representations are portrayed honestly in popular films, the mere fact that they are representations suggests that they are still strategically positioned based on societal views and norms (Turner: 2009:172). Gender performativity seen in film is still tactically confined to the conditions of culture and society.

The women’s liberation movement was a significant era in the understanding of gender portrayal. Nelmes (2001:274) explains that in the early feminist period film was the catalyst of

ideological values. As such the feminist movement employed film, a male-dominated media, as a means to counteract typecast images of women and bring to the forefront the inferior positions held by women in the subservient roles they characteristically portrayed. Nelmes (2001:274) describes this view and acknowledges that as prescribed by this history, women customarily took on supportive roles, rather than influential and commanding ones. This understanding is significant for the purpose of this research and is investigated further in chapter four and five, contributing towards the framework of female performativity recognised in Schuster's comedies.

Nelmes (2001:297) acknowledges Claire Johnston's "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema" (1973) as one of the earliest articles on feminist film theory and practice. According to Nelmes (2001:297) Johnston's work is significant because it casts light on the way in which film as early as the silent cinema typecast women and rather suggests for a cinema that defies such representations yet still functioning ultimately to entertain viewers. In support of the notion of using film as means to both entertain and satisfy political consensus, Nelmes (2001:276) acknowledges Johnston who advocates a dual purpose cinema which relies on both the traditional and non-traditional conventions of mainstream film to service segments of society with little hierarchy.

Regarding the representations of gender in film, Nelmes (2001:297) claims that fundamentally in conventional cinema, women are portrayed as an addition to or an extension of the male ideal. Johnston (1973) scrutinises the portrayal of women and film and acknowledges that the roles of women are constricted and despite women being made a spectacle of in cinema, "woman as woman is largely absent" (Nelmes, 2001:297). Moreover, Nelmes (2001:279) motivates the necessity for films to be the catalyst for feminism which provide alternate portrayals of gender categories. What is noteworthy is by the end of the 1970s, there had been a shift in the rationale that media representations of women need not be directly associated to a woman's place in society as representation involves a complex context of which all aspects need to be taken into consideration. Nelmes (2001:279) concludes that media ultimately provides a "window on the world" and that changes in media representations would ideally reflect changes in society. Nelmes (2001) adds significantly to the understanding of gender and that of gender performativity identified in this research, and as such, chapter four and five of this investigation contribute to Nelmes' views.

Annette Kuhn, according to Turner (2002:12) asks how television and film facilitate the construction of female viewers and propose that film studies find it challenging and problematic trying to address this discussion. With specific reference to gender roles in comedy, Finney (1994:6-7) recognises the concurrence of Bergsin and Barreca's theories of male and female comedy, which allude to comedy being social and in this way agree that the assumed society is restricted to its associated conventions. Moreover, Finney (1994:6-7) suggests that "comedy acts as a form of social control."

Specifically looking at a central function of the way in which comedy mocks social customs and stereotypes, Finney (1994:7) claims that comedy in this sense represents a double-standard or 'palimpsest discourse'. Golbert and Gubar, who are credited by Finney (1994:7) refer to this 'palimpsest discourse' as texts which appear straightforward on the surface but ultimately mask deeper meanings which may not necessarily be socially acceptable in which case constitutes for a text that is both compliant and challenging in its approach to social literacy.

What is significant in the representation of gender stereotypes in comedy is that the most effective way to reinforce gender differences and typecasts is through the role reversal of both men and women (Finney, 1994:8). Comedy's mockery of stereotypes, Finney (1994:9) poses a question of either being traditional or revolutionary with regards to the typical conventions of society. Finney (1994:9) who refers to Lorence Redding Jessup's analysis of female roles in the Spanish film *Mujeres al borde un ataque de nervios* (*Women on the verge of a nervous breakdown*) (Pedro Almodóvar, 1988), concludes that humour is used to create awareness of the macho gender portrayals and as such ultimately creates distance from preserving the 'status quo'.

According to Lauzen *et al.* (2008:201), the mere act of the repetition of gender roles through film, for example, instantaneously constructs convincing and believable representations. Lauzen *et al.* (2008:201) claim that conventional representations of women, therefore, provide grounds for stimulating both what appears to be "natural and normal" while also satisfying "gender hegemony." In continuation, Lauzen *et al.* (2008:201) make reference to the social role perspective which they suggest confronts the idea that the notable circulation of gender roles such as those relating to work or interpersonal functions basically underpin gender stereotypes. Lauzen *et al.* (2008:201) state that due to viewers' observation and interpretation of gender activities, ultimately being predetermined by social roles, gender stereotypes are noticed when men and women are seen to display noticeably different social roles. Lauzen *et*

al. (2008:201) suggest then that social roles are the cause and underling feature of gender stereotypes. Therefore, with specific reference to prime-time television, Lauzen *et al.* (2008:201) claims that this finding suggests male and female characters that are given fundamental social roles by producers and directors are essentially catalysts in the process of the construction and preservation of gender stereotypes.

A significant finding refers to Vande Berge and Streckfuss (1992) analysis of primetime television 1986-1987. Lauzen *et al.* (2008:202) acknowledges Vande Berg and Streckfuss (1992), who unlike other scholars who look at character occupation, rather investigate the various behaviours of male and female characters in the workplace. According to Lauzen *et al.* (2008:208), this study found that conduct relating specifically to interpersonal affairs and that focused on garnering and maintaining relationships in the form of socialising, counselling and motivation were specifically performed by female characters. Van den Berg and Streckfuss's study found females also participated in less political, operational and decision-making roles than that of the male characters. Lauzen *et al.* (2008:208) In conclusion, Lauzen *et al.* (2008:202) acknowledges that while female characters were seen to be represented in the workplace, women are still represented as fulfilling "domestic and interpersonal roles."

Lauzen *et al.* (2008:202) refers to Signorielli and Kahlenberg (2001) who analysed primetime programming airing 1990 to 1998 and concede through their investigation that compared to female characters, male characters were more dominant and established in the workplace, occupying a diversified range of professions. Lauzen *et al.* (2008) builds on this previous research by analysing whether female and male characters continue to inhabit traditionally sex-typed roles. Lauzen *et al.* (2008:203) exclaims that conducting such research is significant considering that popular media often transcends the development of gender representation. In their findings, Lauzen *et al.*, (2008:211) recognise that the previous findings of female character representation remains intact and that women continue to play roles which reinforce shared traits which are focused on nurturing relationships and frequently display empathy and care towards others. It is noted that female roles frequently consisted of interaction with family or potential/current romantic partners. In contrast to female characters, Lauzen *et al.* (2008:211) found that character roles focused on the workplace and demonstrate determination and ambition to succeed are predominately male. According to Lauzen *et al.* (2008:211) this alludes to the tendency for producers and networks of primetime television to display male and female characters in very general and as such very stereotypical terms.

Lauzen *et al.* (2008:211) declares that their findings contradict well-liked claims that conventional typecasts female characters traditionally represent are outdated and have been displaced by the progressive representations of the modern woman. In conclusion, Lauzen *et al.* (2008:211) suggest that such literature falls short of acknowledging the incessant nature of representation.

In terms of female representation in media settings, Collins (2011:290) also supports the view that women are underrepresented and claims that female characters often depict roles which are confined and restricted to inferior positions. Collins (2011:290) argues that female characters tend to be sexualized by being ‘typically’ portrayed as provocative, in their dress and their nature. Furthermore, Collins (2011:290) acknowledges that female characters are represented as subordinate which is reinforced through facial and bodily expressions, among others. This deduction is expanded on in chapter five of this research. In closing, Collins (2011:290) deducts that women are stereotypically portrayed in traditional typecast roles such as that referring to non-professionals, wives, mothers, homemakers and objects of affection and arousal. In the analysis of this investigation in chapter five, contribution to these findings is evident.

3.5 Summary

In summary, it is clear that comedy is culturally specific, and what makes people laugh is subjective. Moreover, the creation of comedy is found to be related to class, gender and race and should be analysed as a cultural element. Not only is comedy seen as ‘disruptive’ and difficult to confine and identify but in a South African context the genre is found to be in direct correlation to ‘nation-building’. Furthermore, the power of comedy is rooted in social and political transformation.

With reference to Mamatu’s analysis of ‘colonising laughter’ in Schuster films, the idea that racist ideologies are still prevalent is something I wish to challenge in my analysis on gender performativity in Schuster’s films. Mamatu’s (2006) study falls short in that only two films were analysed in two vastly different eras which are not a fair account of Schuster’s films. Since my study looks at a variety of films over a period from 1993-2012, it presents a more accurate account of developments in Leon Schuster films in terms of performativity and gender. Due to the lack of research focused on comedy and gender in South African film, I

hope to contribute to this area of film studies. With comedy being found to “act as a form of social control” the relevance of looking at the ways in which film represent gender is appropriate in understanding cultural, social and political ideologies and constructs (Finney, 1994:6-7). What is significant in the case of studies on gender and film, is that film is also seen as an influential medium which is used as a political and social tool.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings on gender performativity in South African film with reference to Leon Schuster's comedies (1993-2012)

4.1 Introduction

The intention of this chapter is to define and identify findings related to the specific research questions posed in this study in chapter one. I will identify key elements which make up the context of comedy within South African film history, after which I will identify the perspective and history of gender performativity in South African film, specifically comedy. Subsequent to identifying the fundamental features of the structure of Schuster's comedies, I will look specifically at key aspects relating to depictions where gender performativity is evident in Schuster's films. This chapter functions to acknowledge the various elements at play in this study and does not aim to analyse or discuss these findings. The discussion on these findings will come about in chapter five.

4.2 The place of comedy in South African film history

With regards to identifying findings on South African film history in respect of the place of comedy, outlined in chapter one of this study, it is evident that comedy is one of the most popular forms of film entertainment in the country, proven by the fact that in 1996 Leon Schuster's *Panic Mechanic* became the highest grossing film in South Africa's history. Surpassing this record was another Schuster slapstick comedy film, *Mr Bones* (2001), which generated R33 million at the box office in 2001 until the sequel, *Mr Bones 2: Back from the Past* was released in 2004 and produced R35 million in revenue (Burggraaf, 2012).

Although comedy is favoured by the South African public, the filmic genre does not have a rich background in literature on South African film, leaving much still to be uncovered on the nature and place of film comedy. What is clear though in African filmmaking is that comedy is "first and foremost perceived to be an instrument of social and political transformation" (Tcheuyap, 2010:25). It is evident that film comedy produced for countries with repressive regimes, such as South Africa under apartheid, employs satire as a means to critique these regimes (Khun & Westwell, 2012:92).

From my investigation into the literature on comedy in South African film, it is evident that comedy's place has been one that fulfils a tension relief function as well as a nation building role¹. (Roome, 2000) Comedy is used to satirically juxtapose the many different cultures, traditions and beliefs that South Africa as a multicultural community embodies in the hope of bringing about relief of racial and cultural tension (Tcheuyap, 2010).

It can also be said that comedy serves as an ideological tool which either maintains or diverges from political, cultural and racial societal views and norms Hanke (1998). In this sense, the nature of comedy is one of power thanks to its "ability to ease social tensions as well as inflame them" which essentially contributes to "social advancement while perpetuating injury" (Horton & Rapft, 2013:479). However, there is the view that comedy is powerless in that it "avoids explicit condemnation of socially produced evils" (Tcheuyap, 2010:26). The comedy genre within African cinema has been criticised for being conservative because it is always "man rather than the institution which is at fault" (Tcheuyap, 2010:25-26).

Leon Schuster films, representing the most successful South African comedies, all have the following commonalities, cultural representations; misunderstanding brought about by cultural differences (gender/race/religion/age, etc.) and reconciliation – there is always a resolution, brought about through laughter. This was also the case in the series *Suburban Bliss* (aired on SABC after 1994) when it was thought that by making cultural differences identifiable and laughable, reconciliation would be facilitated.

Comedy is culturally specific according to John (2009:92) and the nature of comedy in South Africa reaffirms this due to the fact that many of the comedic elements are entertaining because the audience relates either personally or culturally to it. An important consideration in the context of South African comedy is that South Africa is a culturally diverse community, and the success of South African comedies, with specific reference to Schuster's films, relies heavily on its appeal to the South African masses which constitutes many different cultures. However, it is significant to note that Schuster's films predominantly portray the white South African perspective and therefore it can be said that the films' success, for the most part, is due to the support of a white audience who relate specifically to the films.

South African comedy, with specific reference to Schuster's comedy, is also directly linked to understanding South Africa's social understanding of status, class, power, gender and race

¹ The concept of nation building is a complex subject matter and its assumptions are not innocent.

relations. Comedy is highly dependent on context, creator, text and viewer (Tcheuyap, 2010:30). Madsen (1973:292) states “laughter is unique to a given event and its perception by the viewer.” In this way, South African comedies are positioned strategically in given contexts to pose critical views of societal norms, culture, traditions, politics, gender, age, etc. to incite laughter and to initiate thought on various aspects of culture and society. What is more is that comedies function as a “form of social control” (Finney, 1994:6-7).

The genre of comedy also suggests its nature. However, whether it be a local or global production, it would have to depend largely on the audience’s knowledge of the world around them (Tcheuyap, 2010:30). Tcheuyap (2010:27) states that because “comedy is difficult to confine to one particular genre, the nature of comedy would also be difficult to confine to a set structure/recipe.” What is significant to note is that the most popular comedic genre is what Tcheuyap (2010:27) refers to as social parody.

It is evident that comedy’s function is to entertain which is said to ultimately distract from prevailing reality. However, what is significant to note is that although Schuster’s films are successful at entertaining and distracting the audience, his films reference “reality” in the South African context. Schuster’s films do not distract from reality, instead they function to entertain through acknowledgement of “real” issues and situations and in this way it can be said that his films act to ‘raise awareness’, be it intentional or not.

In conclusion on the nature and place of comedy in South African film, it is evident that much is yet to be learnt about South African film comedy. However, most significantly, comedy’s function is highly dependent on its context and creator. Due to the complexities of the various comedy genres, it has proven difficult to confine comedy to a set of prescribed functions. A fundamental conclusion in the literature on comedy refers to comedy having the ability to facilitate social and political transformation. Moreover, comedy acts as an ideological tool which functions to uphold, maintain or diverge from social and/or cultural views; however, this is dependent on context and creator. Most significantly, in the context of South African history, comedy acts as a powerful means of bringing about cultural resolution and nation building through laughter.

4.3 The nature and history of gender performativity in South African film, more specifically comedy

With reference to the second critical question defined in chapter one, from my research, it is evident that little has been investigated on gender performativity in South African film, especially that of comedy. To the best of my knowledge, there is no such research. There is, however, a wealth of information on the inequality of the number of female verse male representations in film and the roles both genders have been assigned, namely in work, relationships, family relations and the household. However, the research on the inequality male and female representations does not however have significance to my research as it does not refer to gender performativity and only confirms that gender portrayal is confined to the context of the storyteller and the conventional assumptions of what society generally deems to be male or female roles. The complexity of gender performativity is noteworthy in there being little limitation to its application, giving reason to little being recorded on the subject matter in film, specifically South African film and that of comedy.

From my findings and understanding, based on the films reviewed, gender performativity in South African film is limited to the social and cultural roles traditionally assigned to women and men in a particular era. For a detailed explanation on this, refer to the discussion on gender performativity in Schuster's films in chapter five.

As no literature is recorded on gender performativity in South African film, specifically comedy, the history and nature of gender performativity will be confined to a general understanding of the concept; details which have been acknowledged and touched on in the preceding chapters. Gender performativity, according to Turner (2009:170), functions to highlight and maintain social inequalities. From my investigation, gender performativity represented in Schuster's comedies portrayed by male and female characters, acts to emphasise differences in the societal, cultural and traditional roles of males and females making up the country's multi-cultural community.

The early feminist period provides significant insight into the history of gender portrayal in media. Nelmes (2001:297) explains that "film was seen as one area of the media that would become a battleground for the women's liberation movement." Film being a means to convey

ideological² views, could be used as a tool to confront stereotypical representations of “women’s inferior positions in patriarchal society, where women generally take a subservient role” (Nelmes, 2001:297). It can be said that gender performativity as seen in films such as Schuster’s comedies functions to challenge stereotypical ideas and raise awareness of the gender perception in culture and society. Therefore, the nature of gender performativity is one that highlights world views of what it means to be either male or female in a given social order.

To reiterate, because “media represents a window on the world”, what is represented cannot be confined to fiction. Representation, a complex area of understanding such as gender performativity, is significant in that it provides insight into the general consensus on male and female functions in society (Nelmes 2001:279).

With specific reference to the nature of gender performativity in comedy, which relies on the mocking of norms and stereotypes to elicit laughter, Finney (1994:7) states that comedy is known to “conceal less socially acceptable levels of meaning, both conforming to and subverting patriarchal standards at the same time.”

Role reversal, according to Finney, (1994:8) “is the most effective means of mocking gender stereotypes.” This can be attributed to the fact that when a male character performs the behaviour, attitudes and beliefs of a female, emphasis is drawn to the vast difference between the two genders. With this in mind, gender performativity is emphasised when role reversal occurs, as acknowledged in the discussion on the findings of gender performativity identified in Schuster’s comedies, which uses role reversal as a comedic device quite predominantly.

According to Finney (1994:10) comedy distances itself from the status quo through the success of its mockery of stereotypes which begs the question of whether comedy is “ultimately conservative or subversive with regards to the status quo”. Therefore, the nature and place of gender performativity in comedy is one that serves to highlight gender differences through the creation of laughter.

A noteworthy consideration is that the repetition of gender roles in film leads to an assumption that they are truthful and credible (Lauzen *et al.*, 2008:201). Therefore, the more gender

² Ideology, being a multifarious notion, should be clearly defined. Ideology in this research refers to a set of ideals, values and belief systems by those in power and refers to a “system of meaning that helps define and explain the world and that makes value judgements about that world.” (Croteau *et al.*, 2011)

performativity is noticeable and repeated, the more emphasis is placed on the ‘act’ of gender differences.

According to Lauzen *et al.* (2008:201), the creators’ assignment of basic social roles to male and female characters are “important contributors to the construction and maintenance of gendered stereotypes.” In this way, gender performativity, as represented by the acts and performance of roles and behaviours of male and female characters, function to maintain gender stereotypes.

Concerning the nature and place of gender performativity in film, it has been found that female characters “perform more interpersonal/reactional actions and fewer decisional, political, and operational actions than male characters” (Lauzen *et al.*, 2008:208). Female characters remain confined to roles that are more family orientated, more romantic and roles that showcase care for others (Lauzen, *et al.*, 2008:211). Findings on male characters in prime time television on the other hand, refers to males being more likely to work, and occupy a broader career scope with bigger goals and more desire for success than female characters (Lauzen *et al.*, 2008:202-211). Therefore, the nature of gender performativity in comedy film functions to highlight such differences.

In conclusion, although there is very little to work with in terms of identifying the history and nature of gender performativity in South African film, specifically concerning the comedy genre, what is evident is that gender performativity acts to raise awareness of the differences between the gender and in turn through the representation of gender performativity, ultimately maintains gender stereotypes, while also diverging from the status quo. The contrast brought about through role reversal functions to highlight gender performativity through the creation of laughter.

4.4 The structure and nature of Leon Schuster’s comedies

In an effort to comprehend the structure and nature of Schuster’s comedies, outlined in chapter one of this study, the common themes linking the films in terms of its genre, sub-genres, setting, plotline, context and characters will need to be identified. Since the rest of the chapter presupposes familiarity with Schuster’s comedies, plotlines and character details will not be discussed here. For a full summary of the plot, setting and context as well as character outline of each film refer to Appendix A at the end of this study.

As an initial comprehension to this section it is significant to note that the views expressed in the comedies are based on the perspectives of the director (Gray Hofmeyr) and storyteller (Leon Schuster), as learned in chapter one (Tomaselli & Shepperson, 2000).

In terms of genre, Schuster's films evidently employ the comedic mode as its foundation through its ability to inspire laughter; however, it is the interplay of sub-genres such as romantic comedy, slapstick comedy, satiric comedy and farce which all contribute to the films' framework. As identified in each film, romantic comedy, although not a particularly significant sub-genre in Schuster's comedies, is evident through the occurrence of the 'boy meets girl' love interest scenario represented in each film. Examples of romantic comedy are found in *Mr Bones* when Vince Lee meets Laleti. Vince, in particular, encounters and overcomes various comedic obstacles for romantic resolution with Laleti to transpire. In the case of *Mama Jack*, the protagonist Jack, played by Leon Schuster, meets his love interest, Angela, when disguised as Mama Bolo and Doctor Donald. It is Jack's comedic predicament and the humorous incidents which he is able to overcome that allow for a romantic resolution to occur. It is significant to note that romantic comedy as a sub-genre contributes more predominantly to the plotline of *Mr Bones* and *Mama Jack* compared to Schuster's other films which feature in this investigation. Romantic endeavours and love interests are identified and presented in *Mad Buddies* and *There's a Zulu on my Stoep* but do not contribute significantly to the films' structural makeup. In *Mad Buddies*, for example, romantic resolution is only evident in the case of Beast and Goodness, who meet towards the end of the film. However, in light of a potential love interest, Kelsey represents a charming and provocative character whom both Beast and Boetie are attracted to and compete for. Conversely, Kelsey is not pursued as a serious love interest. *There's a Zulu on my Stoep* is mainly centred on friendship and does not end in a romantic resolution. There is however, a love interest acknowledged in the opening scenes of the film in the case of Rhino's affection towards Rowena although it is short lived and ends in divorce.

Schuster's films rely on the slapstick genre, which by definition provokes laughter through the clumsy and comical non-verbal actions of the characters (Abrams, 2005). Slapstick is apparent in each film as in the case of Captain Diehard and Rowena's encounter with the booby traps set up by Tinkie and Prince William in *There's a Zulu on my Stoep*, as well as in the case of Jack's embarrassing actions after being drugged in *Mama Jack*. Moreover, slapstick is also identified in *Mad Buddies* when Beast and Boetie are seen engaging in a constant flurry of spiteful actions which see them get in harm's way, as well as in *Mr Bones* when Vince and Fats

are the victims of their own ignorance and stupidity which ultimately provide cause for laughter.

In terms of conforming to satirical comedy, each film is critical of social, cultural and political orders, ridiculing them through various comedic tactics such as role reversal displayed most evidently in *There's a Zulu on my Stoep* and *Mama Jack*. As an example, the fact that Zulu performs the conventional ideals of an arrogant elitist white man who is prejudice towards his 'servant', Moses, is satirical in that he mocks the social order of white rule by exaggerating his performance as a white man (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*). With reference to *Mama Jack*, the fact that it is a white man, Jack, performing a black woman's role as a domestic housekeeper criticises both the political and social ideal that black women are confined to domestic positions as well as highlights the idea that it is women and not men who belong in the kitchen.

Satire, explained in chapter one, is evident in the verbal and non-verbal gags of the films' characters as well as is represented by the plotline of each comedy. To illustrate this understanding, in terms of the plotline of *Mad Buddies* for example, it is evident that due to the initial misunderstanding between Beast and Boetie that contrast between the men and the respective black and white social and cultural perspectives they stand to represent are emphasised and made laughable. In explanation of how satire is demonstrated verbally, I refer to *Mama Jack*, where Jack disguised as Mama Bolo, in an attempt to avoid Angela discovering the truth about what happened to the dog, dunks Innocence's head into the bucket of water and says: "It is part of our culture Madam". It is satirical in that Jack is a white man pretending to be a woman, excusing his actions based on 'his' black culture. In terms of illustrating how Schuster's comedies employ satire in non-verbal actions, I refer again to Jack performing 'Mama Bolo' who displays physicality, commonly associated with males, in 'her' ability to jump over high walls, skateboard and punch John, which is in contrast to conventional understandings of females (*Mama Jack*). Satire in Schuster's films will be discussed in further detail in chapter five.

Farce is marked by highly exaggerated characters showcased in each of Schuster's films and the absurd scenarios they find themselves in. In illustration of this finding, farce is seen in the role reversal displayed in the characters of Zulu and Rhino in *There's a Zulu on my Stoep* and the character of Mama Bolo in *Mama Jack* as well as the unconventional character of Bones in *Mr Bones*. Farce is also noticed in the outlandish situations in which Beast and Boetie find themselves in *Mad Buddies*, for example, their drunken encounter with two love-struck policy

officers who they are able to chase away thanks to a snake. The physical misconduct, verbal references and the awkward situations of the characters also constitutes farcical endeavours in Schuster's films.

Moreover, what is noteworthy is the use of low comedy throughout each of Schuster's films. To demonstrate this finding is to note that all the comedies do not intend to stimulate intellectual thought, which is said to be the defining factor of low comedy according to Abrams (2005), but rather undertake to bring about laughter through the various comedic strategies mentioned above.

To comprehend the structure and nature of Schuster's comedies, it is essential to note that there are several commonalities in the plotlines of Schuster's films. Most notably is the outrageousness of the storylines. For example in the case of Bones surviving a plane crash, scaring off a lion and growing up in a village to become a traditional soothsayer which is an unlikely scenario however it serves the comedic nature of the film, *Mr Bones*. Jack's experiences in *Mama Jack* after being drugged and the success of his disguise as Mama Bolo, landing and job at his arch enemies' house and falling in love is non-realistic and patently absurd. With reference to *There's a Zulu on my Stoep*, the irrationality of the organisation TIRD (Threatened Immigrants Right-Wing Defence) and its members; Zulu stealing a winning scratch and win ticket and then winning the jackpot with Rhino, not to mention the unlikelihood of the success of the booby traps set up by Tinkie and Prince William, all contributes to an outlandish plotline. The plotline of *Mad Buddies*, involving Boetie and Beast's many misunderstandings and mishaps which ultimately make them the stars of a successful reality TV show, is implausible.

With reference to plotline themes contributing to the structure of Schuster's comedies, it is evident that the films' plotlines are based on a theme of progression. Schuster's films' main characters are first seen going about their daily lives after which a dramatic event disrupts and propels them into taking on a journey which ultimately leads to resolution. It is through the process of the film's plotline that characters are able to progress and become better people, in better positions in their lives. As examples, Jack's character in *Mama Jack* progresses from a film grip who fears speaking to women; lives a simple life with his friend and dreams of acting, to going on to meet and speak to Angela; acting in the film 'Bird of Freedom' and going on to clearing his name and marrying Angela. In addition, Zulu and Rhino show progression in

There's a Zulu on my Stoep in that they are first portrayed as having a broken friendship and are struggling financially, and go on to win R500 000 and restore their friendship.

Black and white friendship also prominently contributes towards the commonalities of the plotlines of Schuster's films, as illustrated by the friendships of Zulu and Rhino (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*); Jack and Shorty (*Mama Jack*); Boetie and Beast (*Mad Buddies*); and Bones and Vince Lee (*Mr Bones*). The concurrency of black and white perspective is apparent in the verbal and nonverbal cues of the respective black and white characters. This is most evident in the case of *There's a Zulu on my Stoep* when Zulu compares black and white standpoints through his explanation of 'black' being perceived and used to represent and define 'bad' things, such as a 'blackhead' and the 'black plague' whereas white perspective is definitive of 'purity' and refers to 'white Christmas' as one example. *Mama Jack* showcases the theme of black and white perspective well too through role reversal displayed by Mama Bolo. *Mad Buddies* provides reference to the theme of black and white perspectives by the mere nature of Boetie and Beast and what they stand to represent as well as is showcased by the audience seen engaging in the reality TV show. Evidently, what is significant is that Beast and Boetie's fundamental perspectives are more similar than they are different, apart from that pertaining to their religious and cultural beliefs. Moreover, *Mr Bones* comments on the theme of black and white perspective through showcasing the greedy and power hungry nature of white perspective while portraying the black African perspective as morally inclined and centred on traditional and family values.

A reoccurring theme noted in each film's plot which contributes to the framework of Schuster's films is that of the modern vs. traditional. *Mr Bones* does well to showcase the contrast between the African traditional village of Kuvukiland and its people and that of the modern world depicted by Sun City and its international visitors. *Mama Jack* also makes use of this comparison in the way of Mama Bolo's traditional character, emphasised particularly by her clothing, compared to Angela who represents the modern woman, illustrated by her appearance and her attitude towards modern dilemmas. In the case of *There's a Zulu on my Stoep*, an example of how tradition is showcased would refer to the African dancers, dressed in the customary animal skins who welcome Prince Charles and Prince William on arrival at Sun City. The modern world, on the other hand, is represented by the guests and characters of Zulu, Rhino, and Tinkie. In *Mad Buddies*, the traditional is showcased by an African village man whom Boetie stops to ask for directions.

Money and greed also contribute to the framework of each film's plot. The entire plotline of *There's a Zulu on my Stoep* is based on this theme as Rhino and Zulu venture out to Sun City to redeem the scratch and win prize money while Rowena and Captain Diehard fight to claim the money for themselves. In *Mad Buddies*, money is the motivation behind Beast and Boetie's journey together and it is the greed of Kelsey who initiates the reality TV show. *Mr Bones* also uses money and greed to carry the storyline in the way of Zach's bet on Vince winning the golf tournament at Sun City. Although Zach is represented as a wealthy man, his greed for money and relentless attitude towards obtaining it by provoking Vince and Fats to ensure that they win the tournament plays a big role in the film's plot. *Mama Jack's* plotline is not overtly concerned with money as it is with status and power, but does make reference to lower paid characters, such as Jack who is a film grip, who are essentially viewed as having a lower level of significance compared to the likes of John who is a film director.

With reference to the above, the plotlines of Schuster's films also involve the importance of power, class and status as a theme. As mentioned above, *Mama Jack* employs this theme most notably in the way of John's acknowledgement of his status as a film director, assuming power over other characters such as Jack, who, according to John are less significant because of their lower position. *Mr Bones* depicts the theme of power, class and status through the case of Zach's dominance over others due to the power he holds given the money he has. With reference to *There's a Zulu on my Stoep*, what is evident is that Rowena and Captain Diehard command power over other characters due to their social status and class position given the context of the apartheid era. *Mad Buddies* also makes use of this theme in its plotline by way of including government officials such as Minister Mda to assert power over and command of characters such as Kelsey, Boetie and Beast who due to their social class and status which is viewed as less significant.

Identity and role reversal also significantly add to the recurring themes contributing to the plots' structure of Schuster's comedies. Most noticeably, identity and role reversal are found in *Mama Jack* in the case of Jack acting in disguise as Mama Bolo and Doctor Donald. Moreover, *There's a Zulu on my Stoep* employs role reversal of black and white characters in the case of Zulu's disguise as the Baron and Rhino's enactment of Moses. The character of Bones in *Mr Bones* also refers to role reversal in that it is a white man who acts African due to his upbringing as well as is seen in Bone's enactment of Laleti. A noteworthy finding is that the only film not to employ identity and role reversal is *Mad Buddies*.

Contributing further to the structure and nature of Schuster's comedies is the plotline theme of romantic interest. Romantic interest is recognised in each film in the case of Rowena and Rhino (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*), Jack and Angela (*Mama Jack*), Laleti and Vince (*Mr Bones*); and Beast and Goodness (*Mad Buddies*), to name only the most significant.

Moreover, the *mise en abyme* effect, referring to the multidimensional layers of reality, is evident in the plotlines of Schuster's films. This tactic is represented by the presence of media such as the television game show in *There's a Zulu on my Stoep*, the reality TV show in *Mad Buddies*, acting and film production in *Mama Jack*, and the people of Kuvukiland watching Vince play in the US Golf Championship on television in *Mr Bones*.

Additional subordinate themes contributing to the plot should also be acknowledged as contributing to the structure and nature of Schuster's comedies. To this end, criminal acts and behaviour are seen in each film and are often cause for the plot as illustrated by Jack's criminal behaviour after being drugged (*Mama Jack*), Zulu's thievery of the scratch and win ticket (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*); Zach's criminal intimidation tactics (*Mr Bones*) and Boetie and Beast's shoplifting as consequence of their desperate plight (*Mad Buddies*).

Another consistent theme is the use of mixed local languages, which gives credit to Schuster's films for being true to the diverse and multi-cultural make-up of South Africa and its people. Authority is also recognised as a theme in the comedies plotline as represented by the presence of government, police and security. However, although these figures of authority are represented in Schuster's films they hardly contribute to the plot as they are predominantly outwitted by the protagonists.

Furthermore, Schuster's films all feature animals which play a significant role in the plot and the creation of laughter. Lions; snakes; crocodiles; elephants and dogs are all portrayed as potentially dangerous animals. Conquering these animals, as demonstrated most noticeably by Bones and Vince's encounter of 'chasing the lion into the cave' (*Mr Bones*) and Beast's capture of the tortious (*Mad Buddies*), is also significant in the structure and nature of the films.

Concerning commonalities in the setting of Schuster's comedies, iconic local venues, scenery and landscape specific to South Africa are evident in each film. This is found in the case of Sun City seen in *There's a Zulu on my Stoep* and *Mr Bones*; Table Mountain's Cable Way, Robben Island and the Cape Town Waterfront seen in *Mama Jack*; and the grasslands of Free

State as well as the bushveld of the Pilansberg are also recognised in *Mad Buddies* and *Mr Bones*.

The context of the setting also plays a significant role in Schuster's comedies. *Mama Jack*, for example, set in Cape Town, features coloured policemen and other subordinate characters who make up the majority of the population in that area. More significantly, *Mama Jack* is based on the consumption of a drug which is appropriate in Cape Town's context as it is known for being the drug capital of South Africa. Films such as *Mad Buddies*, *Mr Bones* and *There's a Zulu on my Stoep*, which are located and set in the grasslands and bushveld of South Africa, feature encounters with traditional locals and wild animals who inhabit those areas.

In terms of the Schuster's films' context, factors contributing towards the fundamental nature of his comedies refer to the political context of pre- and post-apartheid; the racial divide in South Africa and working towards building a rainbow nation. These three factors evident in the context of each of Schuster's films are seen in the case of Zulu's acknowledgement of times having changed in South Africa with regards to the treatment of black people; the differences acknowledged by the both Rhino and Zulu in the treatment of black and white people in South Africa and the resolution between Zulu and Rhino becoming friends once again. In *Mad Buddies*, this contextual theme is clearly evident in the representations of the racial divide in the audiences' behaviour and support of Beast and Boetie. The behaviour and attitude of the men; Boetie, representing the white context, and Beast, representing the black context, showcase this theme. In terms of *Mr Bones*, the context of a new South Africa is represented by all who visit Sun City as well as Zach and Laleti's interracial relationship. Regarding *Mama Jack*, the political context of South Africans having domestic workers is acknowledged by Angela, who apologises for referring to Mama Bolo as a 'servant.'

In addition to all of the above it should be understood that commonalities in the character outlines are significant and contribute largely to the structure and nature of Schuster's films. Each film consists of good and bad characters, the protagonist being good and the subordinate characters often being bad. Characters are also portrayed as absurd in their appearance and their behaviour. Furthermore, male characters are found to demonstrate and engage in mischievous conduct by performing practical jokes.

In terms of the theme of the racial divide in the context of Schuster's comedies, black characters are all similarly portrayed as being scared of animals, being more likely to engage in criminal conduct, and they are always portrayed to be fundamentally good characters. However, white

characters, on the other hand, are represented as being more knowledgeable of nature and animals and constitute the race of all fundamentally bad characters in the comedies. In demonstration of this finding, the bad characters in the films such as Zach (*Mr Bones*), Rowena and Captain Diehard (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*); Kelsey (*Mad Buddies*); and John (*Mama Jack*) are all white characters.

Moreover, money; class; power and status, although acknowledged for contributing to the plotlines of the films, also contribute to the character outlines Schuster's films. The protagonists of Schuster's comedies are often not in well-off positions regarding money, class, power or status and, as a result, are not portrayed as corrupt. What is significant to note is that the bad characters represented in the films, all of which are white, are perceived to be in better positions concerning money, class, power or social status and as a result are corrupt, with greed becoming their downfall.

In each film, the female characters represent love interests and are found to play supportive roles to male characters. However, male characters, on the other hand, play a more significant part in Schuster's films and are seen to function without the help of their female counterparts.

In summary, the foundation on which the structure and nature of Schuster's comedies rests refers to the perspectives of the director (Gray Hofmeyr) and storyteller (Leon Schuster) as deduced from their filmic products. Although it is clear that the films conform to the comedic mode, sub-genres evident in the comedies involve romantic comedy, slapstick, satire and farce. Schuster's comedies also make use low comedy. In terms of the storylines contribution to the structure of Schuster's films, it is apparent that there are various commonalities in the plots' themes. The themes identified refer to outrageousness; progression; black and white friendship; modern versus traditional; money and greed; power, class and status; as well as identity and role reversal; romantic interest; and the *mise en abyme* effect, which all contribute to the plot and the makings of a Schuster comedy.

Additional sub-themes within the plotline are also identified and refer to criminal behaviour; the use of mixed local languages; the presence of authority and the occurrence of animals. With regards to the setting of Schuster's films, it is evident that local and iconic scenery and landscape are used to situate the comedies. It is found that the context of the locations come into play and contributes to the structure of Schuster's films.

It is the similarities in the context of Schuster's films, which includes the context of pre- and post-apartheid, the racial divide and the common goal towards building a rainbow nation, which adds to the framework of Schuster's comedies. Contributing towards the structure and nature of Schuster's films is the commonalities in the character outline identified in each film. A similarity across all films is that there are good and bad characters in which case bad characters are always white. Black characters are commonly portrayed as being afraid of animals whereas white characters do not fear animals and generally display a good understanding of nature. Money, class, power or social status are found to contribute to character outline commonalities. Moreover, it is evident that female characters consistently represent a love interest and play more supportive roles whereas male characters are more dominant and significant characters in Schuster's comedies.

4.5 Gender performativity in Schuster's comedies

4.5.1 Introduction

As a fundamental understanding to this section in chapter four, it is imperative to note that the gender performativity identified in Schuster's comedies refers to the performance of gender and gendered acts of male and female characters represented in each film. It is necessary to look at the character's representation of gender, through the display of behaviours and roles associated to their identity as either male or female. Therefore, I will identify key themes evident in each of Schuster's films which refer specifically to the gender performance represented by male and female characters. Moreover, the examination will include various cultures, which will need to be considered with regard to their gender performativity. The discussion of these findings will take place in chapter five.

4.5.2 Gender performativity in Schuster's comedies

In terms of identifying reoccurring themes of gender performativity in Schuster's films, it is apparent that competitive behaviour is displayed by male characters. This is observed in Rhino and Zulu's behaviour as young boys when they race against one another, and when Rhino competes against Jumbo for Rowena's affection by shooting a tin off Zulu's head (*There's a*

Zulu on my Stoep). In *Mama Jack*, Jack displays competitive behaviour when interacting with John on the set of the film, 'Bird of Freedom' in terms of showing John up in front of the film crew. With reference to *Mad Buddies*, the film is focused almost entirely on the competitive behaviour between Beast and Boetie. *Mr Bones* showcases competitive behaviour between Vince and Zach in their efforts to gain the affection of Laleti. What is also evident is that the golf tournament, comprised of male contestants, is representative of the theme of competitive behaviour amongst males. Female characters, on the other hand, do not display competitive behaviour but rather are represented as motivating competitive behaviour amongst men. This is found in the case of Rowena where she plays Rhino up against Jambo (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*); Kelsey who prompts Beast and Boetie to compete for her affection (*Mad Buddies*); Laleti who is cause for the competition between Vince and Zach (*Mr Bones*); and Angela, although not directly associated with being the catalyst for the competition between Jack and John, does contribute to the escalation of the competitive behaviour displayed by Jack.

What is apparent is that male characters demonstrate jealousy. With regards to *Mad Buddies*, the jealousy enacted by both Boetie and Beast is evident in the non-verbal cues directed at one another such as outperforming and outsmarting each other. This is recognised in *Mama Jack* when John and Jack display jealous behaviour in their reactions to one another. Captain Diehard *There's a Zulu on my Stoep* displays jealous behaviour towards Rhino who was previously married to Rowena, now engaged to Captain Diehard. In the case of *Mr Bones*, Zach's jealousy is identified through his rage at the developing relationship between Vince and Laleti.

The male characters present in Schuster's films are portrayed as mischievous in their efforts to amuse themselves by performing practical jokes. The finding of male performativity as demonstrating mischievous behaviour is noticed on many occasions throughout the comedies but specifically in the case of Rhino and Zulu's actions which see them removing Rhino's uncle's feaces (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*). Moreover, Jack initiates many practical jokes to the detriment of John's character, for example; pouring hair removal into John's hat (*Mama Jack*). In *Mad Buddies*, Beast and Boetie outperform each other through mischievous behaviour which for the most part refers to practical jokes seen in the case of Boetie urinating in a stream of water Beast is drinking from; pushing over a portable toilet occupied by Beast not to mention Beast's mischievous deed of placing cow dung on Boetie's hand who then smacks the dung into his face while trying to scratch a tickle. Although no direct or intentional practical jokes are found to be performed in *Mr Bones*, the character of Bones employs comical tactics such

as using a gwara gwara stick to hit Vince in the genitals, thereafter threatening to do it again if Vince fails to perform well in golf. What is significant to note is that female characters do not perform or engage in mischievous behaviour other than in the case of Tinkie, who sets up booby traps in *There's a Zulu on my Stoep*. Female characters, for the most part, tend to display serious, non-humorous character traits.

In Schuster's films, men are found to act irrationally, especially concerning female characters. As evidence of male performativity as illogical behaviour, Rhino shoots a tin off Zulu's head to prove his 'love' for Rowena (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*); and Beast and Boetie accept to take on a journey in the hope of gaining Kelsey's attention (*Mad Buddies*). In *Mama Jack*, male performativity as being irrational is displayed by Jack who pretends to be someone he is not in the disguise of Doctor Donald to win the heart of Angela. Furthermore, in the case of *Mr Bones*, Vince displays irrational behaviour in his plight to scare off a lion to protect Laleti. However, a noteworthy finding is that female characters, on the other hand, display rational behaviour in that they hardly ever behave in an arbitrary manner. To illustrate this finding, I refer to Angela in *Mama Jack* who although acknowledges John's adulterous actions, still supports him and remains rational in her actions towards him. With reference to *Mad Buddies*, Kelsey displays shock at the irrational behaviour of the practical joke Beast and Boetie perform on her and in reaction is still able to reason with the men, agreeing to pay them more money. These findings are significant because it defies conventional assumptions of male and female character traits which will be discussed in chapter five.

A further feature is that male characters are found to show more aggression than female characters. This is evident in the case of Rhino's aggressive actions displayed by pushing and shouting at Rowena's lawyer as well as his aggressive commands directed at the make-up artist (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*). Captain Diehard also displays aggression towards Rowena by raising his voice when speaking of his frustration with not having had a cigarette in three days (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*). Beast and Boetie in *Mad Buddies*, showcase their aggression towards one another, especially noticed in the fight scene at Minister Mda's daughter's wedding. With reference to *Mama Jack*, John demonstrates aggressive behaviour when he yells at the audacity of Jack interrupting the filming of his movie and reinforces his aggression by hitting the bars of the prison cell on set. Zach in *Mr Bones*, shows aggression towards Fats in hospital when Zach learns that Fats is unable to coach Vince as well as displays aggressive behaviour towards Laleti when he confirms that she has disappeared with Vince (*Mr Bones*).

It is significant that male characters engage in confrontation and as a result it can be said that male performativity is confrontational. In demonstration, confrontational behaviour is displayed by Zulu and Rhino's efforts to inflict harm on each other when they meet again for the first time in 25 years as well as is displayed by Captain Diehard's endless pursuit of confronting and capturing Zulu and Rhino (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*). *Mr Bones* showcases male characters' engagement in confrontation in the way of Zach's conflict with Vince and Laleti. Moreover, Jack demonstrates confrontation in his altercation with John on the set of the film they are working on by calling John out as an "arsehole" (*Mama Jack*). The characters of Beast and Boetie also display confrontational behaviour towards one another on many occasions on their journey together; however confrontation is specifically noticed in the case of the two male characters confronting Kelsey about the fact that they are the stars of a reality TV show they know nothing of.

In contrast to male performativity, female characters, on the other hand, are found to be more passive and do not show aggression, apart from Rowena's character in *There's a Zulu on my Stoep*. With reference to the other female characters, Laleti (*Mr Bones*), Angela (*Mama Jack*) and Kelsey (*Mad Buddies*) are very calm and composed characters and do not act irrationally.

What is also evident in Schuster's films is that white male characters are found to act fearless whereas the black male characters act fearful, most notably when concerning animals. In explanation, Rhino fearlessly hangs out the helicopter in an effort to dart a rhino and instructs the pilot to go lower in spite of it being dangerous, whereas Zulu demonstrates fear in his reaction towards Rowena's dogs (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*). Boetie in *Mad Buddies* is unafraid of a snake he finds in a barn, whereas Beast is fearful of the animal. Furthermore, in *Mama Jack*, Jack is fearless in his efforts to win Angela back and proves this by jumping down Table Mountain's cableway to speak to her. What is significant in the case of *Mama Jack*, is that Mama Bolo, who is being performed by Jack, displays fear for the neighbour's dogs as she is seen running away from the dogs. Therefore, because Jack is enacting the role of an African woman, the fearfulness displayed by Mama Bolo is essentially received as a performance.

Moreover, in terms of male characters' performance of gender, what is clear is that they use their strength and physicality to dominate others. This is evident in the case of Rhino, who shouts and pushes Rowena's lawyer in an effort to show dominance over him and the situation (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*). With regards to *Mama Jack*, dominance brought about by physical actions is displayed by Jack's punching of John when disguised as Mama Bolo. The

fact that Mama Bolo showcases her physicality in punching John emphasises the uncharacteristic like nature of the incident given the fact that Mama Bolo is perceived to be a 'female'. Regarding *Mad Buddies*, the two male characters of Beast and Boetie often use their physicality to dominate each other which ultimately lead to their fighting. In *Mr Bones*, the character of Bones uses his strength to knock out Vince, essentially dominating him to fulfil his duty to the King Tsonga and take Vince to Kuvukiland.

Male characters in Schuster's comedies are found to behave in ways that are domineering and belittling to women giving credit to male performativity as being domineering. In illustration of male performativity as domineering, it is apparent in the case of Zulu's interaction with Tinkie when he says: "Shut up, Pinkie!" In this performance, Zulu asserts dominance over Tinkie by belittling her by not calling her by her name but instead calling her 'Pinkie', with reference to the colour 'pink' a conventional colour typically associated with girls. With reference to *Mr Bones*, Zach's ill-treatment of Laleti by suggesting that she would be nothing without him advocates Zach's superiority over Laleti. John's behaviour towards Mama Bolo is belittling in the way of him hitting her and shouting insults at her the very first time he meets 'her' in *Mama Jack*. In *Mad Buddies*, the most recent of Schuster's comedies, it is not simply a case of male characters displaying domineering and belittling behaviour towards female characters but rather it is the male creators' portrayal of female characters in the film which is in itself belittling. The provocative behaviour of Goodness's character promiscuously pole dancing and going home with Beast to engage in sexual behaviour on the very night she meets him is suggestive and belittling to the female characters (*Mad Buddies*).

An addition to the above insight, it is evident that female characters perform their gender in ways that suggest they are the pursuers of men. This behaviour is found on a number of occasions in *There's a Zulu on my Stoep* in the case of Rowena's pursuit of Rhino, Rowena's domestic's pursuit of Moses/Rhino, and Bridgette's pursuit of the Baron/Zulu. Moreover, in the case of *Mad Buddies*, Goodness' perusal of Beast provides evidence that female behaviour is conducive to pursuing men. Although not obvious in *Mr Bones*, Laleti's character pursues Vince by making it known that Vince is her hero. With regards to *Mama Jack*, the characters of Mama Bolo and Angela are found to be more traditional in their approach to men and do not evidently pursue male characters, instead it is the male characters of Stanley and Jack who pursue the female characters.

A finding is that male characters do not display concern for their appearance whereas female characters are found to perform in ways that suggest they are conscious of their image and appearance. Demonstrating the repetitive behaviour that constitutes female performativity, the performance of females being concerned with image is evident in *There's a Zulu on my Stoep* when Rowena excuses herself to go and get changed for her guests whereas the male characters are seen in the same outfit bar the change of clothes in the disguises of Rhino and Zulu. Moreover, in *Mr Bones*, Laleti excuses herself to get changed for dinner whereas the male characters do not. In *Mama Jack*, on the occasion of spilling coffee on her shirt in the car, Angela specifically drives home for a change of clothes. In *Mad Buddies*, Beast and Boetie remain in the same outfit for the duration of the film whereas Kelsey is seen in a variety of different outfits, especially those that flaunt her figure. In addition to female performativity as being found to display image consciousness, a significant finding in *Mama Jack* refers to Jane's job as a stylist on the set of the 'Bird of Freedom'. Not only are female characters found to perform image consciousness but also suggests that female characters are stereotypically associated with positions deemed 'typically female'.

Contributing further to the male performativity identified in Schuster's comedies is that male characters react to and are motivated by money and power. To this end, Captain Diehard's character behaves in ways that show his relentless pursuit to obtain the scratch and win prize money (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*). With regards to *Mr Bones*, Zach's bet on Vince winning the golf tournament, given the reassurance of Fats, is cause for Zach's behaviour throughout the film. Moreover, Boetie and Beast in *Mad Buddies* react and behave more positively and more assertively when motivated by the possibility of winning money. What is significant to note is that money plays a far less significant role in the *Mama Jack* and the male characters of John and Jack are more concerned with power and status and as a result behave in ways that reinforce their power struggle in the quest to attain power and status.

In the case of male performativity, it is evident that the more traditional male characters such as King Tsonga and Captain Diehard are found to display patriarchal behaviour. To this end, patriarchal male performativity is identified in the case of King Tsonga's rule over Kuvukiland and his conduct towards his many wives in his dissatisfaction with their inability to bear him a son (*Mr Bones*). With reference to *There's a Zulu on my Stoep*, Captain Diehard displays patriarchal behaviour in his position as Commander in Chief of TIRD as well as in his domineering behaviour towards Rowena by commanding her to: "Hurry up, woman!"

A significant finding in the performance of gender in Schuster's films is that male protagonist characters undertake role reversal highlighting the duties, responsibilities and conventional traits that are stereotypically associated with males and females. With reference to black and white male role reversal, performed by Rhino and Zulu in *There's a Zulu on my Stoep*, it is evident that Rhino who acts the role of Moses, an African servant, performs the perceived subservient nature of a black man who is soft-spoken and passive compared to Zulu's portrayal of a traditional elitist white man, the Baron, who is performed as superior, domineering and arrogant. With regards to male/female role reversal showcased in *Mama Jack*, Jack who performs the role of Mama Bolo, a traditional African domestic worker, acts in ways that conform to stereotypical views of African females being caring, compassionate, good in the house and kitchen and caretaker of the family. It is important to note that it is Jack, acting the part of Mama Bolo, who performs the duties and functions typically associated to that of an African woman. Jack's performance of Mama Bolo being inefficient in the kitchen, letting the pot boil over; accidentally loading the dog in the washing machine and setting the washing basket on fire; highlights the fact that men are represented as not being associated with fulfilling household duties and it is rather typically associated to the duties and responsibilities of women. Another contrast is identified in the case of Mama Bolo being able to skateboard, which is a physical activity predominantly displayed by young males. With reference to *Mr Bones*, the fact that Schuster is white, playing the part of Bones whose character is synonymous with that of a traditional African man, is in itself a disparity which acts to emphasise the performance of an African male.

Male characters perform in ways that are evidently more physical than female characters. Engaging in physical activities are the characters of Vince, who is a professional golfer and Bones who shows off his physical abilities on a number of occasions such as climbing a building (*Mr Bones*). Jack, in the role of Mama Bolo, highlights the difference between males and females' physical abilities by jumping effortlessly over a wall as well as skateboarding (*Mama Jack*). Furthermore, the characters of Rhino and Zulu display physical and athletic ability in their race against one another as children. Zulu's claim to fame as the best mud thrower in the world is evidence of males' being more physically skilful than females (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*). With reference to *Mad Buddies*, the two men display physical ability in their actions towards one another whereas Kelsey is never shown performing any physical activity. It is evident that male performativity is centred on being physical whereas female characters seldom perform and engage in physical activity.

When analysing female characters, it is evident that they play supportive roles to the male characters in Schuster's comedies. Laleti's character in *Mr Bones*, for example, is shown to provide help and support to Vince on his journey to Kuvukiland as well as provide moral support to him at the US Golf Championship. Moreover, Laleti's mother's role is significant in that she plays the role of a nurse who attends to Fats in hospital which gives credit to the finding that female characters play supportive roles in Schuster's comedies. Regarding *There's a Zulu on my Stoep*, Thandi's character is seen comforting and supporting Zulu after Rhino shoots a tin off his head. Furthermore, Tinkie's character in the film supports both Rhino and Zulu in helping them by setting booby traps for Captain Diehard and Rowena. Rowena's character is found to provide Captain Diehard with affection and support. In *Mama Jack*, Shorty's sister supports Jack by offering him insight into what might have taken place on the night of his reaction to the drugs. Gladys' support of Mama Bolo/Jack also alludes to female characters supporting male characters. In the case of *Mad Buddies*, Kelsey's character plays a less supportive role and a more independent role in the film. It is evident that the more recent representations of female characters have moved towards a state of independence, although only predominantly showcased in *Mad Buddies*, released in 2012.

When identifying the female characters' performativity in Schuster's comedies, a fundamental difference is recognised between white and black female characters. White female characters such as Rowena (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*) and Kelsey (*Mad Buddies*), for example, overtly display more confidence and arrogance towards their male counterparts. With reference to Angela's character in *Mama Jack*, although she plays a supportive role in the film as do the other female characters irrespective of race, her character is confident and assertive in her confrontation with John who she claims is having an affair. The black female characters of Thandi (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*), Laleti (*Mr Bones*) and Mama Bolo (*Mama Jack*) perform more emotional, affectionate, supportive and subservient qualities. Therefore, white female characters are found to employ more domineering, assertive and less emotional roles than black female characters.

In each of Schuster's films, female characters are found to display submissive qualities in their approach to men. Female performativity is, in the case of Rowena, who although reprimands Captain Diehard for smoking, uses words of affirmation to do so: "Poopsie: Don't smoke" (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*). Laleti displays submissive behaviour towards Zach by being compliant to his requests (*Mr Bones*). With regards to Kelsey in *Mad Buddies*, she demonstrates submissive behaviour to Minister Mda, although it is apparent that she pretends

to do so. Mama Bolo displays submission to John by apologising profusely for her actions, although intentional (*Mama Jack*). Females are found to perform their gender in ways that appear to be subservient although it is evident that it is an act and performance.

An additional finding of the gender performativity of female characters is that they draw on their political context to assert authority over others. It is noted particularly in the case of Rowena who, given her context of being an American white female having grown up in a wealthy family living in the apartheid regime South Africa, uses her position to assert dominance over African characters such as Zulu and Moses, given their context in the apartheid regime. With reference to Angela in *Mama Jack*, she acknowledges the political context of South Africa's history by referring to Mama Bolo as a "slave" after which she apologises. Angela asserts dominance over Mama Bolo by the merely acknowledging the political context of black people having been "slaves". In *Mad Buddies*, Kelsey does not use the political context to dominate others but rather brings it into play for personal gain by creating a reality show centered on the political context of the country. What is evident is that while white female characters are found to use their political context to dominate others, the political context of black female characters only influences the positions they hold in the films and does not contribute to their performance of gender.

Female characters showcase their awareness of their physical attributes and use their femininity to charm and manipulate male characters to get what they want. With reference to *There's a Zulu on my Stoep* manipulation is evident in the following scene at the beginning of the film where Rhino is manipulated by Rowena in shooting a tin off Zulu's head:

Rowena says to Rhino:	"If you hit the tin off Zulu's head you can kiss me with my mouth open."
Rowena continues:	"You're the best shot in school Rhino."
Rhino replies:	"This is not right!"
Rowena responds:	"Don't you love me?"
Rowena continues:	"Oh Jumbo, you do it!"
Rhino asserts:	"No, I'll do it."

This scene proves how cunning and manipulative Rowena's character is. What is significant is that when Rowena sees that Rhino is not willing to take the shot she plays the two white boys up against each other after which Rhino gives in and takes the shot. In the case of Mama Bolo, it is evident that she manipulates Stanley by using his interest and affection for her for personal gain to play the part of Madiba's angel in the film, 'Bird of Freedom' (*Mama Jack*). With reference to *Mr Bones*, Laleti is acknowledged by Zach as using her good looks to gain affection. Furthermore, Kelsey in *Mad Buddies* uses her femininity and charm to coax Boetie and Beast into participating in the race on a number of occasions.

Female characters are found to perform roles that function to entertain, host and accommodate male characters. Rowena displays her hosting capabilities at the dinner party held for the members of TIRD. Rowena attends to the Baron by enlightening him on the customs of TIRD and introduces him to the members once they arrive (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*). Laleti displays this performativity by way of singing and entertaining a crowd at Sun City as well as the village of Kuvukiland at a traditional ceremony evening (*Mr Bones*). Moreover, Mama Bolo hosts and entertains John and Stanley at a dinner at John's house by serving them drinks and singing and playing the drums (*Mama Jack*). Kelsey is an entertainer by nature, producing and starring in the reality TV show as well as hosting and entertaining both Beast and Boetie in the way of accommodating for their needs throughout their journey (*Mad Buddies*).

The traditional female characters found specifically in *Mama Jack*, and *Mr Bones*, act according to the roles conventionally associated with women being caretakers of the home in the case of Angela and Mama Bolo (*Mama Jack*), caregivers in the case of Nomsa, the mother of Laleti and nurse to Fats (*Mr Bones*), entertainers in the case of Laleti (*Mr Bones*) and stylists, in the case of Jane who is the stylist on the set of the movie 'Bird of Freedom' (*Mama Jack*).

Female characters in Schuster's films are portrayed as objects of amusement evidently showcased by Mrs Wildlife contestants who greet Prince Charles and Prince William on arrival at Sun City (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*). In *Mama Jack*, Rivonia Ryder only performs a role of portraying beauty in her participation in the film, 'Bird of Freedom'. In *Mr Bones*, female characters are viewed by King Tsonga and Bones as objects of amusement in that their breasts are desirable.

In addition to the above, female characters are found to conduct themselves in a provocative manner which alludes to being catalysts of sexual behaviour. Rowena's provocative clothing and actions to seduce Captain Diehard while he is on the telephone, as well as Camila's

provocative position on the bed while seductively talking to Prince Charles is representative of female characters being the catalysts of sexual behaviour. In *Mama Jack*, Angela is seen in her underwear in the bathroom which ultimately provokes Jack to pursue her as Doctor Donald. In the case of Kelsey's seductive performance of motivating Boetie and Beast gives credit to females conducting themselves in a sexual manner (*Mad Buddies*). Bones uses Laleti's wig and clothing to coax and entice Vince to approach 'her' (*Mr Bones*).

Female characters are found to react well to power, status and money. Rowena displays responsive behaviour when she learns of the scratch and win a ticket, and reacts to the Baron when she learns of his position and status and immediately invites him to join in the dinner festivities. In the case of Rowena's domestic worker, it is clear that she becomes interested and acts on pursuing Moses when she learns he has wealth and holds the title 'Prince' (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*). In the case of Kelsey in *Mad Buddies*, she only approaches Minister Mda because he holds a position of power and status and has the ability to fund her reality TV show. With reference to *Mr Bones*, Laleti is only seen to react to Vince once she learns of his intention to give his winnings to the local orphanage. However, *Mama Jack's* protagonists do not show this inclination.

In summary, the gender performativity displayed by male characters is that of competitive, jealous and mischievous behaviour. Furthermore, male characters also display irrational behaviour, specifically when concerning female characters, and show aggressive tendencies and willingness to engage in confrontation.

The male characters perform in ways that are domineering over others, particularly over women, as well as act in ways that are belittling to females. In terms of image, male characters in Schuster's films do not display behaviour that suggests they are concerned with their appearance. It is evident that male characters react to money and power and use their physical ability to conduct themselves as well as showcase their physical strength to dominate and assert their power over others. Traditional characters found in Schuster's comedies evidently display patriarchal behaviour.

When analysing white and black male characters, it is apparent that black male characters display fear whereas white male characters display fearlessness in their actions. In terms of the role reversal identified in white and black male gender performativity, it is clear that black male characters perform subservience and are passive than their white male character counterparts who display superiority, arrogance and domineering behaviour.

With regards to the female characters identified in Schuster's films, it is clear that they display non-competitive behaviour, however, act in ways that motivate competition between male characters. Moreover, female characters display non-humorous and more serious natures compared to male characters. What is more, female characters are found to display rational and passive behaviour and are highly aware of and concerned with their appearances. Female characters also act in ways that are belittling, they are portrayed as promiscuous and are often found to exhibit behaviour that suggests that they are the pursuers of men.

Although, female characters are found to display submissive behaviour to male characters, they are seen to use their physical attributes to manipulate men. In terms of the roles of female characters, it is evident that they function to entertain, accommodate and host male characters and are viewed as objects of amusement.

Traditional female characters are seen to fulfil conventional roles of keeping house and attending to the family as well as caregiving. From the findings of gender performativity identified in Schuster's films, it is clear that female characters demonstrate a high regard for money, power and status and are found to act on these factors. With reference to the differences noticed in the performativity of white and black female characters, it is clear that white female characters display more assertive and domineering behaviour whereas black female characters display more emotional, caregiving and compassionate traits. Black female performativity showcases more aptitude for being concerned with the household and the family whereas white female characters draw on their political context to assert dominance over others.

The findings identified in this chapter will be investigated and discussed further in chapter five with specific reference to the theoretical framework and key concepts on which this research is based.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion of findings on gender performativity in South African film

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will look at understanding the findings identified in the preceding chapter with reference to the literary and theoretical background acknowledged in this study. On a broader level, the discussion will analyse the history and nature of South African film comedy and the performance of gender in South African films, particularly film comedy. Following the insights of the broader scope of the history and nature of this study, a closer examination into South Africa's most popular films with reference to Schuster's comedies will be conducted according to Butler's performativity theory.

5.2 Comedy in South African film history

Given that comedy is proven to be one of the most popular forms of film entertainment in the country given the success of Schuster's films at the box office, the rationale behind its success should be understood. According to John (2009:92) comedy is culturally specific and given the context of Schuster's films being based on local perspectives with a backdrop true to South Africa's social and political landscape, South African audiences identify with the characters, setting, context and plotlines of the films, enabling them to laugh. To reinforce this understanding, Madsen (1973:292) claims that humour is successful because it is relevant to the context in which it is produced and received. Furthermore, Mike Dearham, according to Tcheuyap (2010:27), found that comedies that are trivial and slapstick are the most popular and Schuster's films are just that. The success of comedy ultimately rests in its ability to entertain and distract the audience from reality Tcheuyap (2010:25). With the continuous support and buy-in from audiences of Schuster's comedies, it is clear that his films do well to amuse the South African audience. Although Schuster's films do well to entertain audiences, which is effective in distracting from reality, his comedies make reference to reality in the social and cultural contexts represented in the films. Therefore, it should be argued that Schuster's films and that of South African comedy, in general, act to 'raise' awareness, be it intentional or not, in an effort to criticise and make laughable the social and cultural contexts of South Africa.

The context of Schuster's comedies, and that of South African films, in general, as well as its creators, audience, and societal and political backdrop, are essential in contributing to the success of the films.

In acknowledging film comedies' unrivalled success in the country, it is cause for concern then that little has been investigated on this film genre in South Africa, providing evidence supporting the need for further research.

Due to the lack of literature on the nature and place of comedy in South African film history, identified in the literature review and findings in the preceding chapters, it is necessary to uncover and examine findings on the broader scope of comedy. To this end, the finding of comedy as a catalyst for social and political transformation (Tcheuyap, 2010:25) suggests Schuster's films are a means to instil awareness of the social and political predicament in South Africa, which ultimately functions to promote transformation. However, Finney (1994:6-7) claims that comedies' role is to promote social control. Therefore, it can be said that due to comedies' ability to initiate awareness and bring about a movement towards transformation, the mere act of facilitating this process is a form of social control as it confirms to the ideology of a rainbow nation.

It is evident that film comedy produced for countries with repressive regimes, i.e. Schuster's films targeted at a South African audience within the political context of pre-apartheid regimes; namely *There's a Zulu on my Stoep*, is primarily considered to be satirical as it critiques the political and social climates of those countries (Khun & Westwell, 2012:92). However, all Schuster's films are satirical and are found to comment on pre- and post-apartheid regimes. Therefore, it can be suggested that Schuster's comedies employ satire as a means to convey social and political representations given the context of South Africa's history.

With reference to the understanding that comedy fulfils a tension relief function as well as a nation building role (Roome, 2000), it is appropriate to then look to Schuster's films as being catalysts for these functions through its ability to create laughter. Therefore, because comedy, specifically that of Schuster's, is able to poke fun at the many different social, political and cultural standpoints represented in South Africa, perceived differences become laughable which brings about tension relief and ultimately works towards nation building.

South Africa film comedy, represented in this case by Schuster's comedies, is based on differences and misunderstandings after which reconciliation occurs which is made possible

through the creation of laughter as identified in chapter four. In this way, South African comedies function to facilitate social, cultural and political reconciliation considering the context of South Africa's history.

Comedy is found to be a conservative ideological tool that is both powerful and also powerless (Horton & Rapft, 2013:479; Tcheuyap, 2010:26). In this case, South African comedies, such as Schuster's films, can be said to convey an ideology that is synonymous with the white dominant ideology, given that it is the creators' values and ideals that are conveyed in the films. In terms of comedy being powerless, films such as Schuster's are powerless in that they do not blatantly criticise 'socially produced evils' (Tcheuyap, 2010:26). However, South African comedies, particularly Schuster's films, are powerful in the fact that they are able to ease social tensions through the facilitation of laughter (Horton & Rapft, 2013:479).

Furthermore, given that the nature of comedy is dependent on genre, and due to the complexities of the variations associated to comedy genre, as outlined in the preceding chapter, it is clear that there is no set structure for the success of a comedy. However, it is evident that South African comedy, specifically Schuster's comedies, employ a specific mix of comedy sub-genres namely, satire, slapstick and farce, in order to achieve success Tcheuyap (2010:27).

5.3 Gender performativity in South African film, more specifically comedy

Proving the necessity for the analysis of gender performativity in South African films with reference to Schuster's comedies, it is apparent that there is little, of any evidence of literature on gender performativity in South African film history, above all comedy. Insight into the lack of such research may refer to the fact that gender is a relatively new concept only coming into question in the late 1970s with the wake of the woman's liberation movement which ultimately considered gender to be a social construction (Meena, 1992:34). Given the substantial history of South African film with records of its inception in 1895 and the notion of gender performativity only have come to fruition in 1987, it can be said that it is because of the disparity in years with gender constituting a more novice subject matter which is complex in its application that there is cause for little being done on analysing gender, specifically in the local context of South African film comedies.

In the case of little literature being available on gender performativity in South Africa film, specifically comedy, it is significant to examine the general findings on the context of gender performativity.

As outlined in chapter four, what is evident is that much has been investigated on the inequality of female versus male representations in films (Nelmes, 2001). Insight into the nature of this research may allude to the significance that the associated roles play in the societal positioning of female versus males. Nelmes (2001:274) suggests that female characters often portray supportive roles rather than leading roles as history prescribes. To this end, given the historical context of women's oppression, the inequality of female and male roles represented in films makes for a significant investigation. Lauzen *et al.* (2008:208) also acknowledges that male and female characters remain typecast in stereotypical roles. It should also be understood that although the represented roles of males and females, provide insight into social views of males and females, there cannot be viewed separately from the context, views and ideals of the creator and storyteller. Therefore, gender representation in film is limited to the social and cultural roles traditionally assigned to females and males. According to Lauzen *et al.* (2008:201), it is the creator who assigns basic roles to characters. Gender performativity as represented by the actions, roles and behaviours of male and female characters functions to maintain the gender stereotypes.

Looking at findings on gender performativity more holistically, it is evident that gender representations serve to highlight and maintain social inequalities (Turner, 2009:170). This is evident in Schuster's comedies as the male and female characters display differences in terms of their duties and functions, which highlights and reaffirms the standpoint of males and females being typecast according to societal, cultural and traditional roles. Films according to Nelmes (2001:279) provide a 'window on the world', and, in this case, showcase the roles of male and female characters as a reflection of societal norms. With regards to the history of gender, representations in media such as film are found to present an opportunity to contrast stereotypical images of gender. However, film as an ideological tool conveys the creator's ideals. The nature of gender performativity in film is one that acts to highlight societal and cultural views of what it means to be either male or female in a given social order.

As identified in chapter four, it is found that the nature of gender performativity in comedy relies specifically on the mocking of stereotypical gender representations to facilitate laughter (Finney, 1994:7). It is apparent that gender representation in comedy diverts from as well as

conforms to patriarchal standards (Finney, 1994:7). While gender representations in comedy function to raise awareness of socially acceptable gender roles by the mere presence of these representations, ultimately maintaining these social and cultural views, it also diverges from the norm by making the gender representations laughable. Therefore, it can be said that the nature of gender performativity in comedy raises awareness while emphasising the need for the divergence from these stereotypes.

Role reversal is identified as the most effective means of mocking gender typecasts (Finney, 1994:8). The success of role reversal in the context of gender performativity in film comedy can be attributed to the fact that it acts as a means to emphasise differences which is essentially a cause for laughter. In the case of South African comedies, specifically Schuster's comedies, role reversal is employed on a number of occasions to highlight the contextual differences between black and white as well as male and female characters. This is evident in the case of Zulu's enactment of Baron and Rhino's performance as Moses in *There's a Zulu on my Stoep* as well as Jack's portrayal of Mama Bolo in *Mama Jack*, identified in chapter four. The role reversal in Schuster comedies acts to contrast and highlight cultural differences in the case of black and white male and female representations. Role reversal is effective because it has the ability to contrast more than one context, in terms of social, cultural, political, and gender and racial contexts.

A significant understanding of the nature of gender performativity in film is that the repetition of gender representations gives credit to the performance as being truthful (Lauzen *et al.*, 2008:201). It is a noteworthy consideration to look at the representations of gender displayed in Schuster's comedies in terms of the how these representations are conveyed and how they are reinforced through the various films. What is significant is that the same gender performance themes are found in every Schuster film between 1993-2012 although they span over different time periods. The more gender performativity is noticeable and repeated, the more emphasis is placed on the 'act' of gender differences.

Ultimately, the nature and place of gender performativity in film, specifically comedy, is one that conforms to stereotypical representations, maintaining the dominant ideology. Through the mockery of these gender representations and the creation of laughter, gender differences are highlighted and the performance raises awareness of the inequalities. It can also be seen as a means of promoting a departure from conventional ideologies.

5.4 The structure and nature of Leon Schuster's comedies

To initiate the discussion on the structure and nature of Schuster's comedies, it is significant to note the context in which the films are created. It should be understood that the comedies are rooted in the South African context given that they are produced in South Africa for South African audiences. Therefore, the historical and current contexts of the social, cultural and political landscape come into play. The context of Schuster's films refer to pre- and post-apartheid perspectives in which the racial divide, gender inequalities, cultural differences and social class distinctions set the backdrop of the films. The contexts of the films are represented and reinforced in the different racial and cultural perspectives displayed by Zulu and Rhino in *There's a Zulu on my Stoep*; Boetie and Beasts' contrasting social representation in *Mad Buddies* and the role reversal of male and female as well as black and white in the case of *Mama Jack* and *Mr Bones*.

Due to the understanding that each of Schuster's films are composed by the same auteurs, Gray Hofmeyr (director) and Leon Schuster (storyteller), it can be said that the fundamental ideals and principles of the auteurs will be reiterated in each film as recognised by reoccurring themes in the comedies. It is, therefore, necessary to comprehend the themes which will form the basis of this discussion referring to the films' composition, context, plotline, setting and character commonalities.

With reference to the fundamental ideals of the films seen to be reiterated by the auteurs, it is evident that traditional, cultural, racial, gender and social class differences are emphasised and resolution is facilitated when characters are able to work and function together despite these differences as it forms the framework of the comedies' plotline. Comedy with the influence of satire, farce, slapstick and romantic subgenres are used as instruments to highlight these fundamental ideals which acknowledge differences and create resolution. The fact that Schuster not only creates the story but also acts the leading roles in each of the films suggests that he effectively instils thoughts, values and ideals originally intended.

With reference to the plotline commonalities in each film, the theme of progression contributes to the foundation of each film in that it showcases the films' development of main characters who are first identified in relation to their context, overcoming significant life changing events in order to find resolution as illustrated in chapter four, page 49-50. With reference to the context of the films being produced in South Africa for the local audience, it can be said that the context of South Africa's progression is reflected through the plotlines of Schuster's

comedies. Therefore, the plotlines of Schuster's comedies ultimately function to represent the context of South Africa. Due to comedy being predominantly thought as a catalyst for nation building and cultural reconciliation, according to Roome (2000) and Tcheuyap (2010), it can also be said that the theme of progression in the plotlines of Schuster's films act as a means to facilitate nation building³ through representations which show societal and cultural advancement. Therefore, Schuster's comedies facilitate a construct of a prosperous South African society more commonly known as the 'rainbow nation' through the resolution evident in each film.

With reference to the absurdity of the plot evident in each of Schuster's films, it should be understood that given the comedic nature of the comedies, the more outrageous a film is, the more it is likely to elicit laughter (Hanke, 1998 and King, 2002). It should be noted that the absurdity of the plot gives credit to the films being a form of entertainment which distracts from reality (Tcheuyap, 2010:25).

The commonality of the theme of black and white friendship contributing to the plotlines of the comedies, exemplified in chapter four, page 50, adds to the understanding of the fundamental basis of Schuster's films which function to facilitate cultural reconciliation given the context of apartheid by showcasing a rainbow nation where black and white work together. This theme displays an effort to bridge the racial divide which is still prevalent in South Africa today. In accordance with Tcheuyap (2010:25) and Roome (2000:61) on the matter of comedies being closely linked to cultural reconciliation and nation building, it is apparent then that the ideals of the creators of the films are to facilitate cultural and social resolution.

With reference to an additional theme in the plotlines of Schuster's comedies, it is clear that modern representations are contrasted to traditional representations as illustrated in chapter four. It is significant to note that given the ideals of Schuster in facilitating cultural reconciliation, this contrast, in the case of Vince and Bones/King Tsonga in *Mr Bones*, for example, display the multifaceted society of South Africa which is made up of many cultures, both modern and traditional.

³ As indicated in chapter four, the concept of nation building is in itself a complex construct and as such would need further deliberation. However, it should be made clear that this investigation only points to a primary understanding of the notion, namely the moulding of people of different backgrounds into a political whole, and does not aim to do more than that.

Money, greed, power, class and status all contribute to the plotlines in each film and in this way provides evidence that the ideals of Schuster are to showcase the discrepancies in the values, attitudes and beliefs of those in positions of power compared to those who are not, illustrated in chapter four in the case of Jack's position as a film grip compared to John's position as film director in *Mama Jack*, for example. What is significant is that for the most part, characters who are in less fortunate positions are represented as being more successful in terms of the progression of the films as is the case with Jack who goes on to marry Angela at the end of *Mama Jack* whereas John is shown trying to escape from jail. It can be said that money is represented as a negative attribute as it is cause for discrimination. To this end, by making money, class, status and power negative associations in the character representations, cultural reconciliation and progression are more likely to occur in the case of characters who are not associated with these positions as these characters who progress and are able to overcome situations. The theme of power, class, money and greed is representative of superiority and Schuster's films do well to reject this thinking by making these representations frowned upon. To showcase this understanding, as acknowledged in chapter four, the likes of Captain Diehard and Rowena (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*); Zach (*Mr Bones*); John (*Mama Jack*) and Kelsey (*Mad Buddies*), all represent bad characters due to their demonstration of superiority, arrogance and greed given their current positions relating to social class and power.

Additional reoccurring themes include identity and role reversal which act as means to allow for the emphasis of cultural, racial and gendered distinctions. These differences highlighted by role reversal can be said to represent the efforts of the creators to put the proverbial shoe on the other foot as seen in the case of Zulu enjoying his experience as the Baron (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*) and Jack having to comprehend female life as Mama Bolo (*Mama Jack*). Role reversal is seen to allow for the facilitation of cultural reconciliation which eliminates the difference between black and white or male and female due to the mere reversal of roles. A method employed to further highlight these differences is the juxtaposition of characters who do not obviously switch roles. In demonstration, juxtaposition is not blatant but is clearly evident in Bones being a white man having grown up to become a traditional black man (*Mr Bones*). Juxtaposition is also found in the only film not to employ role reversal, *Mad Buddies* (2012), which tells of two opposite men, whose differences are highlighted by the mere presence of being next to one another. With regards to the context of this study, it is significant to note that the showcased identity and role reversal displayed in the films facilitate an

understanding of how gender is performed, from a cultural and traditional perspective. Essentially, through role reversal, the act of performing gender is highlighted.

A reoccurring theme in the plot and structure of Schuster's films refers to the predominance of love interests and romantic relationships acknowledged in chapter four of this study. A fundamental ideal understood by this theme is the paternal framework on which the South Africa family is founded. Therefore, it can be said that the support displayed by the female characters of the male characters in the romantic relationships is based on patriarchal ideals where females function to provide support while males function to provide and carry out significant duties.

In addition to themes in the plotlines of Schuster's comedies, the presence of media such as film in the comedies, referring to the multidimensional layers of reality known as the *mise en abyme* effect, suggest the creators' awareness of the significance of media and the influence it exudes over society.

With reference to the sub-themes identified in the plotlines of the films, their respective functions should be understood. It can be said that the comedies' reoccurring themes of wildlife, mixed local languages and popular locations in South Africa helps construct a relatable and believable South African film context. The reference to criminal activities, authority, money, power and class, identified in chapter four, act as a means to build convincing perceptions of characters and the South African context. With specific reference to the sub-theme of mixed local languages, credit is given to Schuster's films for being true to the diverse and multi-cultural make-up of South Africa. The use of different languages personalises the films and warrants for a specific South African context. To emphasise this point it is apparent that when characters from overseas are represented, in the case of Prince William and Prince Charles in *There's a Zulu on my Stoep* and Vince and Fats in *Mr Bones* the distinction between the accents and language is such that it almost distorts reality and appears false. Regarding the locations showcased in the films, it highlights various cultures, traditions and histories. In doing so Schuster's films do justice in showcasing South Africa as the multifaceted landscape and community that it is known for in reality.

Authority is another theme in the comedies' plotline as represented by the presence of police and security guards. However, these figures never contribute much to the plot as they are for the most part, outperformed by the protagonists. Therefore, it can be said that authority is ridiculed and in this way suggests that the ideology of the text is fundamentally not supportive

of authority in South Africa. This understanding encourages the suggestion for further research into the place and nature of authority in Schuster's comedies, and that of South African film comedy.

Schuster's films all evidently feature animals which play a significant role in the creation of laughter. To this end, lions; snakes; crocodiles; elephants and dogs are all portrayed as potentially dangerous animals. What is significant to note is that animals are seen to either work together or against characters where the fear of animals often leads to animals working against the characters. Moreover, it is apparent that the fear of animals is often associated with black characters. This is found in the case of Zulu's reaction to Rowena's dogs in *There's a Zulu on my Stoep*; Beast's reaction to the snake Boetie finds in the barn in *Mad Buddies*; Vince's reaction to the snake and lion in *Mr Bones*; and Mama Bolo's reaction to the neighbours' dogs in *Mama Jack*. This finding provides evidence that Schuster's films make use of stereotypical conceptions of black people being naturally afraid of animals. At the same time, though, it also undermines the notion of black people being 'nature's children'.

With reference to the context of the settings of the films it is also significant in that it provides insight into the multi-cultural identities in South Africa, again giving credit to the films for being true to the multicultural landscape of the country. In discussion, this theme makes reference to the intention of Schuster's films as representing a believable context of South Africa in which many perspectives, male and female, black and white, young and old, and modern and traditional all take precedence. What is significant to note is that film, a medium of representation, constructs reality through the depiction of codes, conventions and ideologies (Turner, 2009:178). Therefore, it can be said that the contexts of the films, through its various representations, are ultimately constructs.

It is significant to note the commonalities in the character outlines which contribute to the structure and nature of Schuster's films. The commonalities again make reference to the fundamental ideals of Schuster's films. As identified in chapter four, there are good and bad characters as well as black and white characters, all of which are represented according to stereotypical social and cultural categories. Money; class and power as identified in the plotlines of Schuster's films also contribute to commonalities in the character outlines making reference to the significant roles these factors play in South African society. In explanation, bad characters are white and it is due to their obsession with power, money, status and class which make them fundamentally bad. This alludes to the comedies' critic of 'white' social and

political orders, stemming from the apartheid regime. Therefore, it can be said that Schuster's comedies, through the use of satire, making 'white' notions of power and class allied to bad characters, the films are able to resist these social orders. This finding supports Birthisel and Martin's (2013:68) understanding that comedy, and satire, in particular, functions to challenge social conventions by critiquing it.

The commonality of female characters being epitomised as the love interest who most noticeably only play supportive roles as identified in chapter four is again representative of patriarchal views of females being subordinate and less significant than males. Male characters are repeatedly seen to represent the protagonists and dominant characters in the films, whereas female characters are commonly represented as subordinate and do not take on significant roles. This discussion conforms to historical views of female roles and supports Nelmes (2001:274) who argues that given the historical context of women's subordination, females are typically confined to supportive rather than significant roles. With reference to this finding, female characters are only either represented as manipulative, cunning and power hungry as seen in the characters of Rowena (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*) and Kelsey (*Mad Buddies*) or are represented on the opposite end of the spectrum as family orientated, supportive, nurturing and loving as portrayed by Angela (*Mama Jack*) and Laleti (*Mr Bones*), and in this way do not constitute significant characters in Schuster's films. Female characters are seldom the cause for humour as it is the men who create cause for laughter. Therefore, it is apparent that although female characters are often taken seriously in the films as they do not facilitate laughter - i.e. the core business of comedy – they do not occupy serious positions, while it is clear male characters hold substantial positions and yet are not taken seriously as they are found to facilitate laughter.

5.5 Gender performativity in Schuster's comedies (1993-2012)

For the purpose of this section, I will discuss Butler's performativity theory, with reference to the actions and behaviour of male and female characters in Schuster's films identified in the preceding chapter. Gender performativity is further dependent on the social and cultural contexts of the black and white characters in the films. Ultimately, this discussion will determine the hypothesis for the research investigation which aims to uncover gender performativity in comedy, with reference to Schuster's films from 1993-2012.

Firstly, the period from 1993-2012 is representative of changing contexts in South Africa's political and social landscape with the apartheid era coming to an end in 1994. The context of the creators Gray Hofmeyr (1949) and Leon Schuster (1951) are white males who grew up in the apartheid era and therefore it may be expected that the representations identified in the films will respond to their fundamental beliefs and values (Lauzen *et al.*, 2008 and Tomaselli & Shepperson, 2007). Reoccurring themes with respect to performativity acknowledged in chapter four, such as females as subordinate characters attending to family and household duties, and males as dominant, competitive and physical characters provide evidence that the dominant ideology of patriarchal thinking is reflected in the structure of the films as well as in the character representations. Webb (2009:1) in defining representation acknowledges that how characters are portrayed in films conveys both the thinking of the filmmaker and the general way the character is understood or known in a given context. It is therefore important to note that not only is it the ideology of the creator which comes into play when representing characters, but it is the general social and cultural contexts of those representations that contribute towards the character representation. To demonstrate this understanding would be to refer to the actors' understanding of what it is to be male or female which is ultimately learned from general acquisition of constructions displayed in culture and society, in the case of Schuster's interpretation of being female when acting the part of Mama Bolo in *Mama Jack* or black or white in the case of Schuster's understanding of being black in acting the part of Moses in *There's a Zulu on my Stoep* and Bones in *Mr Bones*.

The fact that the characters in the films are 'acting' specific roles, for specific purposes in the films, with reference to gender performativity, refers to the fact that the characters are acting their gender. All behaviour, attitudes and actions displayed by the characters will be 'performativity' (Butler, 1990:139). She (1990:137) suggests that although biologically a person is predetermined to be either a male or a female, how they act is more significant in terms of determining whether a person is either male or female. The mere act of a film character being either male or female conforms to gender being a constructed performance. An important consideration is that performativity is 'acted' in the verbal and non-verbal cues of the characters, as seen, for example, in the case of Captain Diehard's character verbally acting dominant by commanding Rowena to: "Shut up woman!" (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*). In terms of Captain Diehard displaying non-verbal behaviour that is domineering, he uses commanding gestures, such as pointing and giving his hand out to get Rowena to hand him the

smoke patch (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*). As such the construction of gender reoccurs in themes noticed in the words and actions of the films' characters.

Regarding the themes of gender portrayal identified in the comedies, it is noteworthy to acknowledge that gender refers to a performance that is repeated (Butler, 1990). The actions and behaviour of females as compassionate and caring, for example, in the case of Rowena's compassionate and affectionate attitude towards Captain Diehard when he gets hurt in *There's a Zulu on my Stoep*; Laleti's portrayal of care and concern for Vince's whereabouts and well-being in *Mr Bones*; Angela's compassion shown to Doctor Donald in *Mama Jack* and Kelsey's compassion for Beast and Boetie's well-being in *Mad Buddies*, is continuously repeated. Because the themes identified in chapter four are evident throughout each film, it is clear that the gender performance is repeated through the actions and behaviour displayed by the male and female characters. Baron and Kothhoff (2001:9-10) reference Butler's performativity theory and state that gender relates to "the repeated acts within a rigid regulatory frame which congeal over time to produce the appearance of a natural kind of being". The performance of gender identified through the themes of male and female character representation is made to appear natural on the condition that those representations are repeated. However, it is significant to comprehend that although these gender displays are repeated and come across as natural, gender is ultimately a construction and it cannot be considered credible (Butler, 1990:140). It should be understood that the audiences' acceptance of these representations as credible, in that they are able to identify or conform to these gender ideals, gives rise to the understanding that gender is a social construct (Meena, 1992:34). This coincides with the fourth phase Risman (2004:430) identifies, acknowledged in the theoretical framework of this study in chapter two, as a means of understanding gender which views "gender as a socially constructed stratification system." A significant observation refers to the "naturalness" of performance, seen specifically when role reversal takes place, being ultimately a construction. It is evident that gender, with regard to the constructed performativity displayed in Schuster's comedies, is an establishment exemplified in "all social processes of everyday life" including institutions such as media and that of film (Risman, 2004:430).

It is important to distinguish between expression and performativity in that gender is not expressive but is viewed as performative (Butler, 1990:141). It can be said that performativity effectively constitutes gender identity which then expresses all that is associated to that identity. The themes identified in the characters' representation of gender in their capacity to act out the roles of the characters is not in any way associated to expression, as the characters

are merely conforming to the required actions and behaviours set out by the plot and the creators' views, and therefore conforms to the idea that the themes identified are representative of the gender performativity of characters.

In terms of the gender performances of male characters, it is evident that they are competitive. As identified in chapter four, competitive behaviour is displayed by Beast and Boetie's constant endeavours to 'win' (*Mad Buddies*); John and Jack's behaviour in the workplace (*Mama Jack*); Zulu and Rhino's competitive sporting activities (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*) as well as Vince's professional career in competitive golf (*Mr Bones*). What is significant, is that male characters also display competitive behaviour which is found to be motivated by the presence of female characters as identified in chapter four. This evident in the case of Jack's rivalry with John in gaining the affection of Angela (*Mama Jack*); Rhino's competitive reaction to Rowena's prompt for Jumbo to shoot the tin off Zulu's head in effort to gain her affection (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*); and Beast and Boetie's efforts to outperform and compete against one another to gain Kelsey's attention (*Mad Buddies*). Therefore, it can be said that male gender performance is provoked and is seen as a reaction to female gender displays. Engaging in sport is also viewed as a male performance which suggests that being physical and competitive is a predominantly male attribute. What is significant in the display of male competitiveness is that it is apparent that this behaviour is spurred on by the social and racial context as seen in the case of *Mad Buddies* where Beast and Boetie always compete against one another due to their social and political background.

Male gender performance is acknowledged for displaying jealous tendencies which is evident in the verbal and non-verbal cues of the male characters as referred to in chapter four, displayed by John's malicious actions towards Jack in *Mama Jack*; Zach's cruel behaviour due to the apparent attraction evident between Vince and Laleti in *Mr Bones*; for example. What is significant here is that again, this gender performance is spurred on as a reaction to female performance. The social and political context of South Africa can be said to form the backdrop of males' jealous behaviour in the case of Beast and Boetie, who represent two different cultural and political frameworks, who display jealous behaviour through spiteful actions against one another in *Mad Buddies*. In the act of outsmarting and outperforming others, not forgetting the intention displayed to inflict harm onto others, gives credit to male gender performance as being representative of jealous behaviour. A significant understanding is that female gender display is not found to display jealous behaviour; however is found to be the cause for jealousy displayed between males.

As identified in chapter four, male characters are also found to be more reactive, irrational and erratic than female characters. This is evident in Vince's irrationality of fending off a lion to save Laleti (*Mr Bones*); Rhino shooting a tin off Zulu's head to impress Rowena (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*) and Beast and Boetie accepting the challenge of travelling from Kwa-Zulu Natal to Gauteng to impress Kelsey (*Mad Buddies*). Due to the distinction between the male and female performativity identified in chapter four, it can be said that irrationality is a predominantly male performance while rationality is principally a female performativity in these films. In consideration of stereotypical views of male and female behaviour, this finding contrasts the stereotype that males are thought to be more rational than females as females in Schuster's films are found to be rational characters, who seldom show erratic behaviour, possibly due to the fact that they do not feature significantly in the films. In addition, what is noteworthy is that male performativity as irrational is induced by the presence of female characters which suggests that males react irrationally around females.

Male gender performativity is identified as mischievous as the male characters are constantly seen engaging in practical jokes as acknowledged in the findings chapter of this study. Given the fact that the films are comedies, it provides motive for the male characters to engage in practical jokes, however what is significant is that the female characters are seldom found to engage in this behaviour which substantiates the finding that mischievous behaviour is predominantly a male performance. This is evident in Jack's pranks on John (*Mama Jack*) and Rhino's prank on a poacher (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*), for example, whereas the characters of Angela and Rowena in the respective films seldom laugh or engage in light-hearted jokes. Therefore, male performativity is seen to facilitate laughter, and given the power of comedy and laughter according to Roome (2000) and Tcheuyap (2010) it can be said that male performativity as mischievous through efforts to create laughter, ideally gives males power over others, making them more significant than females. Female gender performativity is serious, non-humorous and non-powerful. A significant insight in this context refers to the understanding that it is due to the historical social context of females being typecast to subordinate roles in society that they perform in ways that are insignificant, non-powerful and therefore, non-humorous which agrees with traditional gender stereotypes which Donelson (1999:40 in Lauzen *et al.*; 2008:201) claims position men as the 'ideal' and "as such, women become the perpetual other, valued primarily in their relations to others, men in particular."

Maleness is also displayed in more physically expressive behaviour, unlike females who show little physically expressive behaviour unless it is provocative or used to entice and manipulate

male characters. With reference to the outline of these findings in chapter four, physical behaviour is displayed by Bone's athleticism (*Mr Bones*); Zulu's claim to fame for being the 'mud throwing champion of the world' (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*); and Jack's ability to skateboard (*Mama Jack*). With reference to female performativity showcasing sexualized physical behaviour, identified in chapter four, Rowena's provocative mannerisms (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*); and Kelsey's blatant seduction through sexualized behaviour (*Mad Buddies*) provide examples of such female performances. In comparison, male characters are acknowledged as physically more skilful than females. Therefore, it is apparent that the stereotypes associated with males as being stronger and more physical than females are reinforced and conformed to. However, this is not to say that male characters are more adept in their physic, as it is the females who clearly showcase more tact in the use of their physical attributes.

Male gender performativity showcases aggression through shouting and physicality shown towards others. What is evident, as highlighted in chapter four, is that there are various triggers which are seen to facilitate aggression displayed by males, but most noticeable is the need to protect their livelihood and integrity. This is evident in Rhino's aggression towards Rowena's lawyer when defending his property and livelihood (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*); and John's aggression towards Jack on the set of 'Bird of Freedom' as to defend his status as the director (*Mama Jack*); for example. The stereotype of males being more aggressive in their defence of their territory and positions is reinforced and conformed to through the gender representation and performativity of male characters in Schuster's films. On the other hand, female characters display passive behaviour, as identified in chapter four in the portrayal of Laleti (*Mr Bones*); Angela (*Mama Jack*); and Kelsey's (*Mad Buddies*) even-tempered and placid natures. It can be said that male gender performances are confrontational based on their desire to find resolution, as is the case of Jack's confrontational behaviour towards John in order to find out the truth and clear his name of any wrongdoing in *Mama Jack*, for example, whereas female characters display non-confrontational and passive behaviour, as identified in chapter four, in their desire to maintain peace. It can be suggested that male performativity conforms to old ideals of males being 'fighters' whereas female performativity is confined to ideals of the 'peacekeeper.'

The finding that male performativity is domineering and belittling, as acknowledged in chapter four, page 59, where, for example, Zulu dominates Tinkie by shouting: "Shut up, Tinkie!" (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*), it should be understood that it is not simply a case of male

characters displaying domineering and belittling behaviour towards female characters but rather it is the male film creators' portrayal of female characters in the films which is in itself belittling. The provocative behaviour of Goodness's character pole dancing and going to sleep with Beast on the very night she meets him is suggestive of females being sexually promiscuous which is belittling to the female characters.

Moreover, male performativity is motivated by a means to gain power and money. By acting relentless and determined, as outlined in chapter four in the case of Captain Diehard's persistent attitude in obtaining the scratch-and-win ticket in order to obtain money and power (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*) and Zach's insistent approach to ensure he wins the bet (*Mr Bones*), the male characters perform in specific ways to ensure they benefit from power and money. What is significant is that money, power and status are cause for male performativity which is relentless in nature. It can be said that male performativity as being relentless is representative of the male position in society being pressured to provide for the family and succeed in obtaining money, power and status, therefore, conforming to stereotypical ideals of men being the providers of the family. It is significant to note that in contrast to male performativity, female characters do not perform their gender in ways that are reactive to power. Therefore, it can be said that that female gender performativity is unreactive to power as a result of having been subjected to suppression for many centuries. Although it is imperative to note that female characters are seen to perform in reaction to money, as noticed in the findings chapter in the case of Rowena's obsession with money (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*) and Kelsey's drive to produce a profitable reality TV show (*Mad Buddies*), as money can be said to provide a means for female characters to inevitably gain power and status.

With regards to the more traditional male characters such as King Tsonga (*Mr Bones*) and Captain Diehard (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*) being found to display patriarchal behaviour as pointed out in the findings chapter, it is apparent that the older representations of male characters are representative of older male stereotypes as the leader and head of the house, in the case of the two male characters mentioned above. What is significant to note is that although the other male characters are representative of more modern gender displays, in terms of Vince's approach to Laleti as being an equal rather than superior compared to King Tsonga's superior approach to his many wives in *Mr Bones*, not much difference is noticed in their gender displays as men still perform in ways that are confrontational, for example.

With respect to the cultural and racial implications on gender performativity, differences noticed in black and white male characters such as those outlined in chapter four, is significant in the fact that it proves culture impacts gender performativity and because culture is a social system of traditions, values and ideals, it also points to gender being ultimately a social construction (Meena, 1992:34). In support of the understanding that culture and gender go hand in hand, Butler (in Valkonen, 2013:212) acknowledges that culture and race work together with gender as a backdrop for each other and in this way “they are articulated most powerfully through one another”.

What is evident is that white males display bravery as is the case in Jack’s fearless pursuit of Angela (*Mama Jack*); and Bones’s fearless encounter with the lion (*Mr Bones*), whereas black characters display fearfulness in the case of Vince’s fear of animals (*Mr Bones*) and Zulu’s fear of Rowena’s dogs (*There’s a Zulu on my Stoep*), explained in the findings chapter of this research. Given the context of South Africa, what can be deduced from this finding is that this white male performativity comes from a context in which they have not been oppressed and never had to fear anything, whereas black male performativity as fearful is constructed within the context of white rule during the apartheid period. Context, in this sense, determines gender performativity.

Role reversal in the films’ highlights the differences between black and white male gender performativity which conforms to their stereotyped duties, responsibilities and conventional traits. With regards to the male gender performance of black characters noticed in Rhino’s performance as Moses (*There’s a Zulu on my Stoep*), it is clear that black characters are thought to be subservient and passive. This view arises from a perception of black people’s social position as politically suppressed. Given the context of the films, which was released a year before apartheid was formally relinquished, apartheid social patterns still dominated the creative process. The films’ and the creators representation of gender is subjective given the context of South Africa at the time where differences between white and black were in flux. Furthermore, the Baron, who is played by Zulu, a black character, highlights white supremacy through his characterisation which displays superior, domineering and arrogant tendencies (*There’s a Zulu on my Stoep*). This performativity is representative of the ideals and belief system of the social and political landscape of South Africa at the time. By highlighting these differences, the creators are diverging from the dominant ideology in that they are facilitating reconciliation. In the case of Bones’ performing a traditionally African role, is in itself a contrast to the perceived differences between black and white.

With regards to male/female role reversal, what is evident in this performance, showcased predominantly in Jack's performance as Mama Bolo (*Mama Jack*), is that male characters are seen to emphasise African female character performance as specifically related to traditional and cultural performances particularly in the social framework of South Africa's political context in the case of apartheid. Due to the fact that it is a white male performing the role of a black female, the performance highlighted by this role reversal is that black female performativity is limited to the domestic role of attending to housework, taking care of the family unit and serving white men and women. The performance displayed also accentuates the perceived subservient, compassionate and caring nature of the African female through the compassionate verbal and non-verbal actions. With reference to the duties and functions performed by Mama Bolo, it is evident that the context of white supremacy is the cause for this performance, where Mama Bolo is essentially an African female performance by Schuster (Jack) (*Mama Jack*). The fact that it is a man who performs the gender behaviour of an African woman emphasises the differences between both males and females as well as black and white characters. To highlight the differences, the male behaviour and attributes of Jack's character are performed in the guise of Mama Bolo which contrasts the performance of males and females, specifically in the case of males being represented as more physical and skilful than females.

What is identified in the themes of female performativity, is that female characters perform and function to support and serve male performativity, as identified in chapter four in the case of the roles of Laleti (*Mr Bones*); Angela and Mama Bolo (*Mama Jack*), for example. The fact that female characters do not play significant roles in the films, as illustrated in chapter four, page 62, provides evidence that female roles are considered insignificant in relation to those performed by males since they do not appear to serve any purpose in society other than to serve and support. What is noteworthy is that female support for male characters is significant given the context of South Africa's oppression of race and gender. It furthermore highlights the perception that the creators are seen to conform to the dominant ideology.

However, a considerable undertaking is that the most recent of Schuster's films investigated in this research, *Mad Buddies*, represents a shift away from the racial and patriarchal ideology in casting a female as a lead character and portraying her in a position of power. If it is taken into account that films represent a "window on the world" (Nelmes, 2001:279) then it is evident that *Mad Buddies* provides insight into the changing times in South Africa, represented by the efforts to deliver equal representations of black men and women and elevate the perceptions

and roles of females. This also reflects the shift in perceptions of the creators be the representations intentional or not. We are able to deduce that there is a shift in the gender performativity showcased in Schuster's films which now conformed to representations and perceptions of females. To reiterate this conclusion, where women were previously considered subordinate, it is evident that they are now considered relevant and powerful. However, I should make clear that female performativity – even in this new context – is limited to sexualised perceptions where females are idealised through serving the male gaze. It can be said that female characters intentionally perform in a sexualised manner as a means to benefit from male characters. Therefore, although modern gender performativity of females is representative of gender independence and assertiveness, the fact that female characters react to their sexuality to manipulate alludes to a situation where they are still limited and confined by social conventions.

With regards to white and black female performativity identified in Schuster's films, outlined in chapter four, what is evident is that white female characters, in the case of Rowena (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*), Kelsey (*Mad Buddies*) and Angela (*Mama Jack*) perform their gender in ways that showcase them as confident, assertive and arrogant, especially towards their male counterparts. However, the black characters, in the case of Laleti (*Mr Bones*); Tinkie and Thandi (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*), for example, are recognised as more emotional, affectionate, supportive and subservient. The differences recognised in the white and black characters allude to the social and political context of the characters where white females were seen as superior to black people in the apartheid era. Black characters, on the other hand, are seen as less confident and more emotional which can be said is a result of their less significant positions in society.

With reference to female performativity, in general, it is evident that female characters perform and act in ways that are submissive in their nature, through the act of apologising and demonstrating fear, especially concerning males. Therefore, it can be said that gender performativity is submissive due to the context of woman's subordination in South Africa's history, especially that of black females. Moreover, it is suggested that due to this observation, female performativity conforms to conventional stereotypes of females being submissive to their male counterparts.

As for the concern displayed by females for image, outlined in chapter four with reference to Angela (*Mama Jack*), Rowena (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*) and Laleti (*Mr Bones*), identified

essentially as female performativity as men do not display this behaviour. It is significant to note that it represents female gender as being idealised as the fairer gender and as such alludes to the fact that they are subjected and limited to stereotypical perceptions of being only a means of entertainment and amusement. A considerable undertaking is to acknowledge that the idealised 'female' occupations and roles of the characters are indicative of the typecast gender performativity displayed in Schuster's films. Although gender roles in terms of the occupations females characters assume in the films do not relate to this research it is evident that female characters are still restricted in the represented occupations in the films. Due to the fact that the film creators are males, it can be said that the male gender bias is reflected in the representations of the female characters.

Female performativity is showcased through the characters' pursuit of male affection and admiration as explained previously with reference to Laleti (*Mr Bones*), Rowena (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*) and Kelsey's (*Mad Buddies*) actions and behaviour being directly associated with attempting to gain the attention of the male characters. To this end, female performativity is again limited to being centred on males. However, it is interesting to note that the more conservative and traditional female characters in the case of Angela in *Mama Jack* lets the male characters pursue them.

As touched on previously in the case of role reversal, female performativity, in general, is highlighted by awareness shown by female characters of their physical attributes which they actively use to charm and manipulate male characters. Female performativity is, therefore, showcased as non-verbal. See for instance the case of Rowena (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*) and Kelsey (*Mad Buddies*) as defined in chapter four. Males, in contrast, display verbal persistence, in the case of Rhino and Zulu's constant verbal expressions in *There's a Zulu on my Stoep* and in Beast and Boetie's insistent use of verbal communication in *Mad Buddies*. Moreover, female characters are found to perform in ways that entertain where they host and serve their male counterparts as portrayed specifically by Rowena's hospitality at her dinner party (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*); Mama Bolo's (*Mama Jack*) entertainment and attendance of John and Stanley at a dinner, and Laleti's entertaining performance at Sun City and Kuvukiland (*Mr Bones*). Therefore, it can be said that females display more supportive functions than significant ones in their duties and roles. It should be reiterated that female performativity noticed in Schuster's comedies is typecast to serve the dominant 'male' ideology.

Female performativity is found to be reactive based on the high regard displayed towards power, status and money, most noticeably in the case of Rowena (*There's a Zulu on my Stoep*) and Kelsey (*Mad Buddies*). A noteworthy insight into this female gender performance is that due to the context of female subordination, money is able to secure a position of power and status. What is more, female performativity is evidently conditional on such factors and female characters are seen to perform their gender in order to obtain independence from male characters.

5.6 Conclusion

Given the context of Schuster's comedies, it is apparent that themes relating to the racial divide and gender inequalities as well as cultural and social distinctions form the backdrop of his films. Due to the fact that all the comedies are directed by Gray Hofmeyr and written and played by Leon Schuster, the context and ideals of the creators are evident and reiterated in each film, ultimately cementing fundamental themes in Schuster's comedies. To this end, shared commonalities in the structure of Schuster's films which refer to the plot, setting, context and characters, provide significant insight into the context of the creators as well as that of the cultural and societal framework to which they serve. What is clear is that ultimately, the films' contextual themes relate specifically to promoting progression, nation building and cultural reconciliation given the films' social and political backdrop. In terms of Schuster's films being comedies, it is evident that the comedic themes, referring to the commonality of absurdity, juxtaposition and identity and role reversal in the films' plotlines, employ slapstick and satire as a means to provoke laughter. With regards to the themes in character commonalities, males function to perform dominant roles whereas females perform supportive roles which alludes to patriarchal and conventional ideals of gender underlying Schuster's films. Moreover, commonalities identified in the films' setting allow for a believable framework which adds credibility to the films' representations.

In terms of the gender performativity identified in Schuster's films, it is clear that these representations function to maintain gender stereotypes and highlight social inequalities. The differences referenced by the characters' male and female duties and functions suggest the films representations conform to cultural, social and traditional norms as films ultimately represent reality.

Identity and role reversal employed in Schuster's comedies function to highlight differences through making racial and gender differences recognisable. Identity and role reversal contribute considerably towards the understanding that gender is ultimately a performance. The characters in the films are acting their roles, performing their gender and conforming to specific gender norms. However, the actions displayed by the characters are considered credible if they are repeated. Therefore, the gender performativity identified in Schuster's films refer to the themes recognised in the repeated actions and behaviours of the male and female characters. Ultimately, gender performativity in the films is evident in the verbal and non-verbal actions of the characters.

Male performativity in Schuster's films is ultimately constructed as relentless in the pursuit of obtaining money, power and status. In addition, male characters perform their gender in displaying the following behavioural traits: competitive; physical; jealous; protective; mischievous and humorous. Male performativity evidently displayed in Schuster's comedies also refers to irrational, aggressive and domineering actions. Reference should also be made to traditional male performativity, identified by more traditional male characters, which displays blatant patriarchal behaviour. Regarding differences in black and white male gender performativity, black males are found to perform in more passive and subservient ways due to the repressive political context of the apartheid regime. White males, on the other hand, are found to perform in ways that are superior, domineering and arrogant a result of their dominant position in the ideology of apartheid. It is clear that the male performativity recognised in Schuster's comedies is synonymous with stereotypical views that being male means to conform to behaviour that is predominantly representative of strength and power.

With reference to female performativity, it is found that supportive, submissive, caring and nurturing behaviour is performed by the female characters which ultimately conforms to social ideals and conventions. Female performativity is also identified as being rational, non-humorous, and reactive not to mention manipulative and image conscious. In this instance, in the case of comedy, rationality represents exclusion from the centre of the genre. In the case of black female performativity it is evident that compared to white female performativity, the characters display more caregiving, subservience, compassion and loving actions whereas white females perform in ways that are confident, assertive, arrogant and manipulative. The contrast between white and black female performativity is again representative of the influence of the social and political context of South Africa. The female performativity displayed in Schuster's films conforms to and upholds conventional female typecasts and in this way

suggests that female performativity is primarily concerned with caretaking and attending to others.

A significant insight brought about through this research refers to the most recent of Schuster's films identified in this study, *Mad Buddies*. It is recognised that there is a shift away from conventional gender performativity in that the female performativity appears to play a more significant role in the film through displaying more domineering behaviour which seems superior to male performativity, although it is somewhat subtle and inconspicuous. Therefore, it is clear that gender inequalities and differences, although still evident, are in the process of becoming less conspicuous.

In conclusion, it is evident that looking to film comedy as a means to understand gender performativity in the South African context, with reference to Schuster's popular comedies, is significant as it suggests, through comedy's intention of making representations laughable, that in many ways South Africa is plagued by stereotypes relating specifically to culture, race and gender. Given the historical context of the country and the period over which the Schuster's films span (1993-2012), it is noteworthy to conclude that little progression is identified in the gender representations of the characters in the films. For the most part, it is apparent that old ideals of black and white, male and female are still alive and well in Schuster's films. However, with reference to gender performativity in Schuster's comedies, a significant understanding identified in this study is that if comedy is a catalyst for transformation and progression then Schuster's films function to highlight the various gender contexts, through making gender representations laughable as a means to promote transformation, see also Tcheuyap (2010:25). Schuster's comedies ultimately raise awareness and promote the need for gender, as well as cultural, racial and societal transformation. Therefore, it is then appropriate to acknowledge Schuster's comedies for being both powerful in its ability to convey dominant ideology through the creators' ideals and powerless in its inability to overtly criticise the dominant ideology portrayed through the representations in the films see also, Tcheuyap (2010:26).

A fundamental understanding in the context of this research is that gender and that of gender performativity is ultimately a social and cultural construction (Crawford, 1995).- To illustrate the significance of gender as a construction, I again make reference to a significant understanding provided by Butler (1990:140) in chapter two of this study: "Because there is neither an 'essence' that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires, and because it is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and

without those acts, there would be no gender at all.” Therefore, it can be said that the gender performativity in Schuster’s films, produced and constructed by the creators, is ultimately a reflection of the cultural constructions of gender in South Africa represented and reinforced through social institutions, such as media.

~~Moreover, to focus on the notion of constructed gender roles we may refer to Maccoby (1967:57) who states that “most research on the development of sex differences has been guided by such Freudian derived concepts as “identification”, “internalization”, and “introjections””. To add, Maccoby (1967:57) declares that these terms refer to “the tendency for a person to reproduce the actions, attributes, and emotional responses exhibited by real life or symbolic models”. Therefore, when we consider gender roles we should also consider notions of identity as identity is a constructed notion which is learnt and acquired through the systems of societies and cultures. It is here, where we take into consideration what gender identity pertains to, which is referred to by Martin and Nakayama (2007:171) as “The identification with cultural notions of masculinity and femininity and what it means to be a man or a women”. With this idea it is clear that gender roles and gender identity are interrelated.~~

~~on the gender performativity in South African film with reference to Schuster's comedies~~

~~(199~~CHAPTER SIX

Summary and conclusion

6.1 Introduction

In the final chapter of this investigation, I conclude significant outcomes in relation to the theoretical questions set out in this study, forming the framework of this research in determining how gender performativity is represented in South African film, with reference to Leon Schuster's comedies (1993-2012).

6.2 Conclusion

In terms of the background context of the investigation, with regards to the place of comedy in South African film history, it is evident that comedy is the most preferred film genre given the box office success of films like Schuster's. In order to be successful, film comedy relies significantly on being culturally specific, reflecting common understandings in relation

to social and political contexts as to make the representations in the films identifiable, relatable and ultimately laughable. The function of comedy, specifically in a South African context is to raise awareness and in so doing, criticise contextual representations through laughter. Context is vital to the production, dissemination and reception processes of comedies to ensure that they are successful. Due to the lack of literature on South African film comedy, the general understanding of comedy refers to the film genre as being a catalyst for transformation. With reference to comedies' role in creating awareness, it is also suggested that social control is reinforced and therefore, upholds societal and cultural ideologies. Satire is also noteworthy in that it postulates a preferred comedic mechanism to criticise ideologies in countries with repressive regimes. South African comedy is also understood to contribute towards tension relief in such countries through the means of facilitating laughter. It is apparent that comedy is dependent on a complex assortment of genres in order to be successful in a given context.

With regards to the history of gender performativity in South African film and more particularly comedy, it is acknowledged that the lack of literature on the subject matter is conceivably due to the understanding that enquiry into gender is a relatively new concept only evolving in the 1970s. With reference to universal understandings of gender representation in film, gender performativity is viewed as typecast to stereotypical roles. The context of the creator is acknowledged as limiting gender representation to his/her understanding of males and females. Role reversal, in terms of gender performativity, is also recognised as the most effective means of creating contrast. Significantly, it is the repetition of gender behaviour and actions which ultimately gives credibility to the representations as being conceived as believable. In a general framework, it is apparent that gender representation and therefore gender performativity in South African film comedy is found to conform to stereotypical conventions of males and females which maintain the ideals of the creators and the contextual ideologies they stand to represent and serve. By making representations laughable, comedy can be said to raise awareness of the gender differences and social inequalities. Given this understanding, comedy could function as a means to initiate the departure from norms as it sheds light on gender inequalities.

To conclude the structure and nature of Leon Schuster's comedies, it is evident that the context and ideals of the creators are instilled throughout the films as reoccurring themes are cross-referenced throughout each comedy. Concerning the contextual framework of Schuster's films, it is recognised that cultural reconciliation forms the fundamental basis of the films'

resolutions. Comedic devices such as juxtaposition, identity and role reversal as well as slapstick, farce and satire genres contribute towards Schuster's recipe for comedic success. Schuster also conforms to stereotypical representations of males and females in males playing dominant roles while females are limited to subordinate roles. It is the repetition of these conventional representations which make them believable.

In concluding gender performativity in Schuster's comedies, it is identified that stereotypes of male and female behaviour conform to the behaviour of the films' characters. The stereotypes which highlight gender inequality in the films, follow that of cultural, social and traditional norms. As a means to emphasise gender performativity, identity and role reversal are employed as a successful measurement of this and the specific ways in which gender is performed. Given the fact that the actors are 'acting' their parts means that they are conforming to social perceptions of gender even as they enact these perceptions. In terms of showcasing gender performance as conforming to stereotypical representations, male performance is showcased as dominant; superior; strong and aggressive which conforms to conventional male stereotypes. What is significant is that male performativity is shown to have a weakness when it comes to female interaction. In terms of the stereotypical black male performativity and stereotypical white male performativity, black males are more passive and subservient which is viewed as credible due to the suppression of black males during the apartheid period. White males, on the other hand, conform to conventional gender performativity as being arrogant and domineering which again is credible given the dominant position of white males during apartheid. With reference to females as being supportive, caring, nurturing, promiscuous and manipulative, the performativity is stereotypical in that it associates them with subordinate and nurturing positions. To this end, the stereotypical gender performativity evident in Schuster's comedies serve the ideologies of the creators and the social, cultural and political systems they serve to represent. By making such stereotypes recognisable, it can be said that the intention is to raise awareness of inequalities and therefore functions to promote transformation. Given that the most recent film, *Mad Buddies*, represents a shift towards more fair and accurate female performativity in the case of Kelsey, although ever so slight, it is clear that there is a move towards transformation.

In terms of further research, cComedy is essentially the most popular form of film entertainment in South Africa and its success is based fundamentally on the various applications of the comedy genre and its ability to communicate the context of the creators,

audience and social, cultural and political standpoints. Given the lack of research identified on comedy in South African film, it ~~is~~ ~~should be~~ suggested that additional research be undertaken on the subject matter as it raises awareness of the social and cultural contexts of the country. As identified in chapter three, a topic for further investigation also includes looking to well-known personalities and their intentional presence in local film to represent the social and cultural positions of the time. Suggestions for further research relates to the lack of knowledge on gender representations in South African film and although this research aims to close the gap in providing an understanding on the performance of gender identified in South African film, specifically comedy, it would be a significant contribution to conduct additional research on gender representations in other genres of South African film.

Appendix A

Summary - plot, setting and context of Schuster's comedies and its main characters

There's a Zulu on my Stoep (1993)

Plot, setting and context

Released in 1993, the film is set in the farmlands of South Africa and tells of two friends from different racial and cultural backgrounds, Rhino Labuschagne and Zulu Mashebela, who grow up in the apartheid era. After being torn apart by Rowena, Rhino's cruel American girlfriend, the film showcases how the men rekindle their friendship 25 years later. The context of the comedy is based on the views of an apartheid society, dominated by white rule with a view of a prospective racially tolerant society.

As children, Rhino, a white South African farm boy, befriends an African boy, Zulu, but their friendship end after Rhino tries to impress Rowena by shooting a tin off of Zulu's head. It is 25 years later and Zulu is shown in an American county jail for stealing cars in New York and

due to his bad behaviour in prison, gets deported back to South Africa. On arrival Zulu is met by a racist German man named Captain “Diehard”, leader of an organisation entitled; Threatened Immigrants Right-wing Defence, or TIRD. Rhino, on the other hand, has gone on to become a struggling farmer and adoptive father to a young African girl named Tinkie (the daughter of Thandi). After arriving in South Africa, Zulu is transported by Captain Diehard, who is now engaged to be married to Rowena. After scratching a ‘scratch-and-win’ ticket, Captain Diehard reveals he is the winner of R500 000 after which Zulu steals the winning ticket and escapes to claim the money as his own. Through a chance encounter, a misunderstanding in the broadest sense of the word, Zulu and Rhino meet again. Rhino learns of the winning ticket and the pair negotiate on splitting the winnings evenly. After an eventful trip to Sun City, Rhino is recognised by Captain Diehard and Rowena when he appears on the reality TV game show to claim the prize money. Rowena and Captain Diehard search endlessly for the two men, who in an attempt to avoid being captured, dress up in disguise which transform Zulu into an elite white man (Baron) and Rhino into an African Servant (Moses). Acting the parts of their new identities, the Baron (Zulu) and Moses (Rhino) get introduced to Rowena, who invites them to a dinner party she is hosting for the members of TIRD.

After much drama Rowena and Captain Diehard realise who the Baron and Moses are and lock them up in a cell to ensure they hand over the prize money. However, Tinkie, Rhino’s adopted daughter, has been given half the ticket for safe keeping. Tinkie, who befriended Prince William earlier at Sun City, who is there with his father Prince Charles, calls on him to help her plot against Rowena and Captain Diehard in an effort to save Rhino and Zulu.

After much time together, Rhino tells Zulu that his long lost lover Thandi had a child a few months after Zulu left for America. After Thandi’s death Rhino explains that he took in Thandi’s child, Tinkie, who is actually Zulu’s biological daughter. The two youngsters, Prince William and Tinkie, set numerous booby-traps for Rowena and Captain Diehard, who are chasing after the other half of the winning ticket that Tinkie holds in her possession.

Rhino and Zulu manage to escape certain death and end up saving Tinkie and Prince William. After all their struggles, the two men become close friends once again and Zulu embraces fatherhood.

There’s a Zulu on my Stoep (1993) Character outline

Rhino Labuschagne

Rhino Labuschagne (played by Leon Schuster) is a white South African farm boy/man who loves nature, animals and Tinkie. Rhino is first portrayed as a young boy (played by Ruan Mandelstam) who has no concern for racial tendencies as his best friend is a local young African boy, which is in contrast to views of the apartheid regime in which the film is set. As an adult, Rhino's disregard for racial discrimination, emphasised by his adoption of Tinkie, is contrasted to other white characters in the film who display racial bias. What is more, Rhino married Rowena however, their marriage ended in divorce due to differences in racial tolerance, culminated by the fact that Rhino adopted Tinkie. On account of his divorce, Rhino is portrayed as a financially struggling father, however, he is portrayed as a good and fun-loving father who is willing to do what it takes to make sure his daughter is cared for. Rhino is also portrayed as a mischievous prankster, which facilitates laughter throughout the film.

Zulu Mashabela

Zulu Mashabela (played by Bodo Seritsani), is portrayed as a rural boy who through his hardships has learnt how to survive in the modern world. As a young boy, Zulu is portrayed as a mischievous and yet soft-spoken boy who is compassionate towards Thandi, a young African girl living in the area. As an adult, Zulu (played by John Matshikiza) finds himself in an American prison convicted of stealing cars. Continuously wreaking havoc with the wardens, he is deported back to South Africa. His law-breaking tendencies and his mischievous character is maintained throughout the film. Zulu, having had a brief romantic relationship with Thandi is the biological father of Tinkie. Zulu does not display a 'fatherly role' and rather is seen playing the role of a jokester which provides comedic relief in the film. Zulu is also the "champion mud thrower of the world" and is a fit and athletic man. Zulu is also portrayed as an intelligent and street smart man who knows how to talk his way out of trouble. Much like Rhino, Zulu is portrayed as struggling financially and it is through both Zulu and Rhino's efforts to gain wealth that bring the two friends together again. As the film progresses, Zulu's character changes from a corrupt and hardened man to one that finally embraces his friend and fatherhood.

Captain "Diehard"

Captain Diehard (played by Wilson Dunster) is a German character who embodies the racial bias the apartheid regime stood for. His commanding position as the Captain of TIRD gives credit to his egotistical and status driven attitude. The name, 'Diehard,' makes reference to his relentless capability of staying alive as he appears extremely difficult to defeat and kill. Captain Diehard is engaged to be married to Rowena and the two are seen to share the same values and ideals which conform to the racial prejudice beliefs upheld by the apartheid regime. Representing a bad character in the film, Captain Diehard's prejudice beliefs, greed and power hungry attitude are shown as his downfall.

Rowena Labuschagne

Rowena Labuschagne (played by Terri Treas) is represented as a bad character in the film and is portrayed as a manipulative American woman who embraces her superior position and status as a white female in the apartheid era. Rowena views her position as an advantage in the context of being white in the apartheid era to assert power over others. With the addition of having self-defence skills, good physic and cunning charm, Rowena enforces and upholds the prejudice ideals of apartheid. Rowena is divorced from Rhino but given her greed and status driven attitude; she tries to take everything away from Rhino.

Tinkie Labuschagne

Tinkie Labuschagne (Played by Michelle Bowes) is a sweet young African girl who lives on a farm with Rhino, her adoptive father. Tinkie cares for the farm animals and is very familiar with nature and the outdoors. Tinkie is the biological daughter of Zulu and Thandi. Due to Zulu being unaware of Tinkie's birth and Thandi falling ill and dying soon after Tinkie's birth, Rhino adopted her. Tinkie also shows no quarrels about befriending a white boy, Prince William, on their trip to Sun City, which represents her easy-going nature and discard for racial bias. Moreover, Tinkie is a brave young girl who is street smart, much like her father, Zulu.

Prince William

Prince William (played by Skye Svorinic) is portrayed as a witty and mischievous young British boy who wants to experience the world around him without the care of his nanny. The prince appears to be easily convinced by Tinkie and his attitude towards his friendship with her represents another world view on race, which is non-discriminatory.

Mr Bones (2001)

Plot, setting and context

Mr Bones is a 2001 slapstick comedy film set in South Africa in the time of a post-apartheid democratic society. The film, set primarily in the North West province and surrounding areas, tells of the journey of a white man, raised by African village people, who grows up to become a traditional soothsayer. Bones is summoned by King Tsonga to find and bring back the King's only son to claim his rightful place as heir to the throne. The context of the film is one that juxtaposes South Africa's conceptions of people through the reversal of traditional, cultural and racial stereotypes. Money, power, status and greed are added to the mix to help create laughter.

The comedy begins by portraying a typical day in the life of the people of Kuvukiland located in Africa's bushveld. Suddenly Kuvukiland is disrupted by a plane crash in which a little white baby boy is the only survivor. When the boy wards off a lion and impresses King Tsonga, ruler of Kuvukiland, the young boy grows up in the village and tries his hand at the game of 'Gwara Gwara' – a fictitious traditional African version of golf, but has no natural inclination or skill for the sport. What the boy does have is a talent for reading the 'bones' and as such King Tsonga names him "Bones". The young white village boy eventually becomes a prophet for the kingdom.

After 35 years, King Tsonga has fathered seventeen daughters in the hope of one day having a son to be heir to the throne. King Tsonga summons Bones, now a grown man, to throw the bones to see if he will bear a son. After doing so, Bones asks King Tsonga to think carefully because the bones show him having a son. King Tsonga then remembers a passionate night spent with a woman in Sun City decades ago after which he realises she later gave birth to a son. The king commands Bones to go in search of his son and bring him back to Kuvukiland.

While Bones makes his way to finding the son of King Tsonga, a well-renowned golf champion, Vince "The Prince" Lee arrives in Sun City for a golf tournament along with his esteemed coach, Fats Pudbedder, also referred to as 'Wild Boar'. Due to the large scale of the tournament, Zach Devlin, a casino owner, places a large bet on Vince winning and gets Vince's coach to ensure he wins. However, when Fats/'Wild Boar' decides to enjoy some leisure time before the tournament begins, a plane flying overhead accidentally drops a wild boar which lands on his head confining him to hospital, unable to coach Vince. After playing a terrible round of

golf without the help of his coach, Vince is met by Bones who arrives on the scene and decides to help Vince as he believes Vince to be the prince of Kuvukiland. After nearly winning, Bones refuses to help Vince due to the urgency of getting back to Kuvukiland. After retiring from the game for the day, Vince formally meets a local singer named Laleti. After seeing the two interact, Bones impersonates Laleti and kidnaps Vince to ensure they get back to Kuvukiland. The following day, Vince's coach escapes from hospital and goes in search of Vince. Zach learns of everyone's disappearance and goes in search for them in his helicopter. After arriving at Kuvukiland and after meeting King Tsonga, Vince displays a fear of animals and the King immediately disowns him. However, after being captured by Zach, Vince saves Laleti from a lion which King Tsonga bears witness to and decides that Vince is now worthy of being his son. After Bones throws the bones to be sure that Vince is the true Prince, Fats/Wild Boar arrives and it is resolved that it is he who is the actual Prince of Kuvukiland. In conclusion, the entire village along with Fats/Wild Boar, who is now married and the prince of Kuvukiland, watch Vince, who is now also married to Laleti, win the US Open Golf Championship.

Mr Bones (2001) Character outline

Bones

Bones is a baby boy (played by Adam Woolf) when he becomes part of the isolated Kuvukiland community and grows up learning traditions and culture very different to what is expected of his white heritage. Bones, although a white male, embodies and portrays all that is traditionally African in his behaviour, in his way of speaking, in his beliefs, customs, clothing and attitude. Growing up to eventually become an African traditional soothsayer, Bones' character represents the extreme opposite to his white heritage. Bones is not just any village boy but is a rare traditional soothsayer which is specifically associated to African culture. Bones' character is comical because of the blatant contradiction he stands to represent – a white man who is an African traditional prophet. Bones is an obedient and loyal servant to the King and values all that Kuvukiland stands for. Bones' faith and belief in the foresight of the bones makes him appear illogical. However, it is his gift of reading the bones that ultimately get him through life. Bones has never left Kuvukiland until he is sent away in search for the King's son and thus has very little knowledge of the modern world, especially that of white culture. However, when he comes across other white characters he does not recognise them as being the same as him and in this way Bones does not view himself as a white man but instead sees himself as an African man. To the other characters in the film Bones appears 'crazy'. Bones is in many ways

very naïve and is portrayed as being shy with females. However, through his journey it is evident that Bones becomes a man.

Vince Lee

Vince Lee (played by David Ramsey) is an African American pro golfer who comes to South Africa to prove his golfing capabilities and win the Golf Championship. He is a single man who finds love in Laleti, an African singer who he meets on his trip and eventually marries. Vince is portrayed as being bewildered with Laleti and often fumbles and has embarrassing encounters with animals in front of her. Vince's character takes instruction well and relies strongly on guidance from his Coach, Fats/Wild Boar, rather than having confidence in his own abilities and skills. Vince, who himself is an orphan is also portrayed as a compassionate and generous character when he tells his coach that he would like to give his portion of the winnings to the children's home. Vince is also afraid of animals and appears to be more modern than traditional in his customs, traditions and knowledge of the world. It is the fact that Vince fears animals that King Tsonga is apprehensive of the idea of having him as a son because the King says "he will never chase the lion into the cave." Vince shows that he is able to conquer his fears in the aim of love by scaring away a lion which was about to harm Laleti.

Fats Pudbedder

Fats, also known as "Wild Boar" (played by Faizon Love) is a large African American, who is first portrayed as a self-consumed and arrogant man and assumes a comical role in the film. Fats is also portrayed as greedy in that he is not prepared to share his winnings with the orphans. Fats displays his greedy and arrogant nature by agreeing to take part in a bet on Vince winning the golf tournament due to his excellent coaching skills. However, as the film progresses, Fat's character matures into a good man who happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Zach Devlin

Zach Devlin (played by Robert Whitehead), an extremely arrogant and obnoxious white man will stop at nothing to get what he wants. Zach, who is the local casino owner, bets money on Vince winning the golf tournament based on the assurance from Fats and will do everything in his power to ensure he wins. Zach is also dating Laleti who he often talks down to and uses his status and wealth to control her. Zach is portrayed as jealous especially in the case of Laleti and will do anything to assert his power and authority to gain and maintain control. In many

ways, Zach's concern for power, status and money is representative of his need to dominate others.

Laleti

Laleti (played by Jane Benney) is a beautiful African girl who takes a liking to Vince as soon as she meets him. Laleti is a humble, soft-spoken and traditional woman who displays strong ties to her family given the fact that her mother plays a big role in her life. Laleti eventually marries Vince and is shown supporting him in the US Open Golf Championship. Laleti displays a caring, supportive and nurturing nature and in the last scene of the film is shown being pregnant. Laleti is both traditional and modern having ties from Kuvukiland and the modern world.

Nomsa

Nomsa (played by Keketso Semoko) is Laleti's mother and is the nurse in the local hospital who attends to Fats/Wild Boar. Nomsa is portrayed as a caring and yet strong-willed and stubborn woman. She is portrayed as being supportive of her daughter, Laleti and does what she can to help her. What is significant to note is that Noma is only seen in the film supporting others. Moreover, Nomsa, much like Laleti, has traditional and modern values thanks to her time spent in and out of Kuvukiland. Nomsa's ideals are in this way both traditional and contemporary.

King Tsonga

King Tsonga (played by Fats Bookholane) is an African man who embraces the traditional and cultural life in Kuvukiland. Being the King and ruler of Kuvukiland gives him authority above all others. The people of Kuvukiland are seen to admire, love and respect him. King Tsonga's character is knowledgeable of the modern world thanks to his travels and is represented as a ladies man given the fact that he has taken on many wives, which is expected of his culture and status as king. What is significant is that a man's strength and bravery is considered an important ideal to King Tsonga as he would rather die than to have a son who is all but those things. King Tsonga is stern in his approach to people, but his character is well-liked and respected. Passing on his legacy is significant to King Tsonga as that is what his life and the film are ultimately all about. King Tsonga represents all that a traditional African king would be.

Mama Jack (2005)

Plot, setting and context

Mama Jack, primarily shot in Cape Town, was released in cinemas in South Africa in 2005. The comedy tells of the life of a film grip, Jack Theron, who gets drugged by an egotistical American producer of the film, ‘Bird of Freedom’ they are both working on. After realising he had been drugged, Jack Theron disguises himself as an African women; ‘Mama Bolo’ to avoid being recognised and arrested for his actions while intoxicated. As Mama Bolo, Jack tries to clear his name and prove his innocence. The context of the film is one that is based on the ‘new South Africa’, post-1994, where issues of status, class, money and power play a significant role in defining a person’s position in society. The film also makes use of the *mise en abyme* effect, in its representation of being a film within a film, representing a double standard ideal of reality.

As the film begins, Jack and his best friend, Shorty Dladla, are seen pranking a police officer on their way to the set of the film, ‘Bird of Freedom.’ While on set, Jack tries to provide assistance to an actor playing the part of Nelson Mandela and the American director, John Daragon, gets incredible angry with Jack for speaking out of turn when he is only a film grip. As Jack and the director, John, continue to bump heads, John tries to convince the producer, Stanley, to fire Jack and gives the ultimatum; “It is me or him.” Because Stanley refuses to fire Jack due to issues he will face with the trade unions, John revokes his ultimatum and decides to get Jack fired in another way. At the arrival dinner of Hollywood actress; Rivonia Ryder, Jack’s drink gets spiked with a drug called “Mama Africa” and begins to act crazy and attacks and offends attendees, including Miss Rivonia Ryder. After escaping the party and after the drugs wear off, Jack realises he is in serious trouble. Shorty devises a plan to disguise Jack as an African lady named “Mama Bolo”. Jack/Mama Bolo get sent out for the day and finds himself/herself being interviewed for a domestic housekeeping position by none other than John’s fiancée, Angela. Jack quickly realises that this is the perfect opportunity to get revenge on John and clear his name. After spending time with Angela as Mama Bolo, Jack falls in love. After being caught by Angela without the disguise of Mama Bolo, Jack introduces himself as “Doctor Doland”, a tramp from Scotland and the two display affection towards one another.

When Stanley comes to visit John and Angela one evening, he meets Mama Bolo (Jack) and is immediately drawn to her and displays his affection towards her. It does not last long for Jack

to get found out when his disguise is accidentally torn off by Stanley at the film's premiere. Jack, however, manages to get the drug "Mama Africa" and gives it to John at the function where John admits to everything and is then arrested. Angela is devastated by Jack's deceit and it is weeks later when he plucks up the courage to chase after Angela at Cape Town's cable and the two to finally reconcile and get married.

Mama Jack (2005) Character outline

Jack Theron/Mama Bolo/ Doctor Donald

Jack Theron (played by Leon Schuster) is a complex character as he takes on the roles of two fictitious characters; Mama Bolo and Doctor Donald. It is made clear in the film that Jack comes from a rough background, however, manages to overcome his struggles and sustain a job in the film industry, as a film grip. Jack's aspirations to become an actor never come to fruition until he assumes the characters of Mama Bolo who gets the part of the angel in the film he was originally working on, entitled: 'Bird of Freedom'. Jack's character is a shy man when it comes to speaking to women he is attracted to, however, finds himself able to speak to Angela when he is in disguise. Jack leads a simple life living with his friend Shorty and enjoys his job as a film grip. Jack had never achieved much until his world gets turned upside down which presents him with the opportunity to change his life and become the man he is meant to be. Jack's character is witty and fun-loving in his approach to practical jokes and life, and, as a result, his character is not taken seriously. However, when he transforms into Mama Bolo, who he portrays as nurturing, caring, understanding and helpful, Jack's character becomes resourceful and his life changes for the better – he acts in a movie, meets the woman of his dreams who he can actually talk to and makes a success of his life. As Doctor Donald, Jack plays a serious character who is grateful for all he has in life due to the hardships he has faced. Playing the part of Doctor Donald, Jack is able to speak to Angela on a romantic level. However Jack's character is represented as being manipulative and deceitful as he is pretending to be someone else. With the resolution of clearing his name and resolving issues with Angela, Jack's life has come full circle.

John Daragon

John Daragon's (played by Leonel Newton) character is one that is an egotistical American, who thinks he is superior in many ways. John is a film director and uses this position of power

to assert authority and manipulate others into doing things for him. John mistreats Angela through adultery and shows no affection towards her daughter. John is portrayed as a selfish man who will stop at nothing to get his way. Moreover, status and class are important to John as he thrives on power. John's character is susceptible to mishaps and in many ways is naïve to what is going on around him because he is too concerned with himself.

Angela

Angela (played by Mary-Anne Barlow) is a red-haired American lady who has come to South Africa in support of her fiancée, John, who is directing a film, set in Cape Town. Angela's character is soft-spoken, caring, nurturing and loving. Angela's character is also portrayed as being sensitive to the fact that things are different in South Africa with having help around the house and shows guilt for that. Angela is a housewife who is involved in the community and actively participates in charity work. It is clear that Angela is a good mother and worries about the happiness of her daughter. Moreover, Angela is aware that John is having an affair, however, still shows support and care for him. In this way, her character is portrayed as being selfless.

Stanley

Stanley (Played by Jerry Mofokeng) is a middle-aged African film producer working on the film 'Bird of Freedom'. Stanley is portrayed as an honest and compassionate man who is law abiding and considerate of rules and regulations. When Stanley meets Mama Bolo, he is immediately intrigued by her and is intent on pursuing her throughout the film. Stanley's character is considered powerful and influential as he is able to cast Mama Bolo in the role of the angel in the film 'Bird of Freedom'. However, Stanley's intentions are also viewed as selfish as he uses his position of power to help his chances with Mama Bolo by getting her the acting part in the film.

Shorty Dladla

Shorty Dladla (played by Alfred Ntombela) is Jack's best friend, roommate and colleague on the set of the film 'Bird of Freedom'. What is significant is that Shorty is a makeup artist, a convention position associated with females and is represented as being overly feminine in his dress sense. Shorty is a loyal, supportive and trustworthy character who attends to Jack's needs and is a good friend to Jack even when everyone turned their backs on him. Shorty is portrayed

as an accomplice to Jack in their initiation of practical jokes. It is clear that Shorty is a good listener and an adviser to Jack, often helping Jack when dealing with women.

Sisi Dladla

Sisi Dladla (played by Andrea Dondolo) is Shorty's sister and is only seen briefly in the film. Sisi represents an insightful woman with much life experience who guides Jack. It is due to Sisi's wisdom that Jack gains insight into the meaning behind what he saw when he was hallucinating on drugs.

Gladys

Gladys (played by Lee Duru) is seen as the leader of a group of domestic housekeepers, who all work in Angela's street. Gladys is a loud and straightforward character who knows everything about everyone in the neighbourhood. Gladys quickly befriends Mama Bolo and is always willing and prepared to help out. Gladys' character is witty, caring and compassionate.

Innocence

Adding to the domestic housekeeping characters on Angela's Street, Innocence (played by Bongzi Mdongwe) is also a significant character as she helps Mama Bolo on a number of occasions. Much like Gladys, Innocence, is supportive, caring and eager to help whenever it is needed.

Mad Buddies (2012)

Plot, setting and context

Released in 2012, *Mad Buddies* is based on the lives of two men, Boetie and Beast, from opposite backgrounds, cultures and race, who meet and become sworn enemies. The pair's first encounter is based on a misunderstanding when both are called out to catch a poacher and mistake one another for being the poacher, leading to a fight breaking out between the two men. During the fight, Boetie's toe is shot off and Beast is chased away by a lion. Years pass and the two men meet again at Minister Mda's daughter's wedding which erupts yet again into

a fight which ruins the wedding. After witnessing the two men's highly dramatic and yet comical encounter, Kelsey, a TV producer recognises the potential success of a reality TV show starring the two men. Kelsey devises a plan to have the men released from prison on condition that they journey together from Kwazulu-Natal to Gauteng on foot. Both Boetie and Beast despise each other and do everything in their power to spite each other on their journey which makes for good entertainment. The two men are unaware they are being filmed and that the whole country is watching their every move. To ensure Boetie and Beast stay focused and on track, Kelsey uses her good looks and cunning charm to manipulate the men into completing the journey. Once Beast and Boetie realise they are being filmed and are the stars of a successful reality TV show, they realise they are being used to make the likes of Kelsey and others rich. Boetie and Beast put their differences aside and join forces to exact revenge and get paid for their efforts and in the process finally become true friends. The context of the film is true to the 'new South Africa' and the controversy both black and white people are facing in their efforts to *get along* given the historical context of South African. The film is also representative of the *mise en abyme* effect due it being a reality show within a film and therefore, representation becomes a contextual factor in the film.

***Mad Buddies* (2012) Character outline**

Boetie de Wett

Boetie de Wett (played by Leon Schuster) is a middle-aged white man who is first seen as a game ranger who through a misunderstanding with Boetie gets shot in the foot and loses his toe. Due to this misfortune, Boetie retires as a Ranger and instead turns to maintaining gardens to produce an income. Boetie's character enjoys the simple things in life, such as food, beer and women and is not too concerned with money and status. In many ways, Boetie's character represents the white perspective in South Africa. Boetie is knowledgeable of nature and animals thanks to his background in conservation. With regards to a love interest, it is significant to note that Boetie does not meet a love interest in the film. Boetie is confident and resourceful but not good with women.

Beast Buthelezi

Beast Buthelezi (played by Kenneth Nkosi) is a rather large middle-aged African man who quits his job as a policeman after losing his nerve being chased by a lion during the first

altercation he had with Boetie. To move on, Beast becomes a bodyguard and feels he has no real purpose in life. It is also apparent that although Beast appears strong and tough he is a sensitive character. Much like Boetie, Beast also leads a simple life with no wife or children. Beast is a confident man who is stubborn and proud. In many ways, Beast portrays similar characteristic to Boetie. When concerning women, Beast has high regard for his way with women, however, it is evident that he is only ever successful with women once he becomes a star of a reality TV show. Beast represents the black South African perspective.

Kelsey

Kelsey (played by Tanit Phoenix), is a beautiful, smart and successful TV producer and is portrayed as power hungry. Kelsey is aware of her beauty and uses her female attributes and charm and manipulate men to get her way. With an insatiable drive to succeed, Kelsey will evidently do whatever it takes to get to the top. After manipulating Minister Mda into approving the reality show, Kelsey ignores orders from him to help the two men *get al.ong*, in order to prove to the South African audience that black and white people are able to work well together and be friends, because she assumes she knows what works best for good TV ratings. Kelsey portrays a proud and hard-headed nature but when Boetie and Beast trick her on camera in order to motivate her to agree to share the profits of the reality show, she displays vulnerability, concern and care which makes her character more emotional and likeable.

Minister Mda

Minister Mda (played by Alfred Ntombese) is a clumsy man who often finds himself in awkward and laughable situations. A noteworthy consideration is that Minister Mda holds a significant position of power and yet no one seems to take him seriously due to the ridiculous situations he often finds himself in. To this end, Minister Mda is acknowledged as a comical character in the film. On the other hand, his character is compassionate and caring and longs for peace and tolerance amongst South Africans. Minister Mda is portrayed as a loyal government patron in that he does what he can to serve the president, following orders to the best of his ability.

Goodness

Goodness, (played by Nompumelelo Mayiyane) is a curvaceous and spritely African lady who is an avid fan of the reality show. When she meets Beast at the local bar, Goodness is portrayed as a promiscuous women who pole dances in order to get the attention from Beast and then

goes to bed with him the very same night she meets him. Goodness is a confident woman who knows what she wants and is not afraid to go after it. What is significant is that she supports Beast until the end of the race after which the pair unite.

Minister Mda's PA

Minister Mda's Personal Assistant (played by Josette Eales) is a stern, uptight and yet quite woman who attends to Minister Mda's every need. The woman is always seen helping Minister Mda out of trouble.

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