

***Ethnography of Indian Diaspora Women Watching
Bollywood Cinema in South Africa***

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Culture and Media Studies

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Indian Women

“The journey of my life

Begins from home,

ends at the graveyard.

My life is spent

like a corpse,

carried on the shoulders

of my father and brother,

husband and son.

Bathed in religion

attired in customs,

and buried in a grave

of ignorance.”

Atiya Dawood
Sindhi poet,
Pakistan
Goodwin
1995

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Preface

My interest in this topic was first piqued by the research of Nandini Bhattacharya (2004), Anjali Ram (2002) and Shakuntala Roa (2007), who focused on women in the Indian diaspora watching Bollywood cinema. All their studies were carried out in countries abroad. Their work and analysis provided interesting insights into the processes of identity construction and formation of Indian women in the diaspora. Notably lacking from their work though, was a focus on Indian women in South Africa and their viewing and decoding which is what I hope to establish in this study. In fact, a quick search on Google scholar brought to light that there is indeed a dearth of knowledge regarding South African audience reactions towards Bollywood cinema. It is within this gap in research that the present study wishes to situate itself. Seeing that they were unable to extract responses from South Africans further fueled my interest and the fact that no other work by any other South African theorist dealt with our audience reactions towards Bollywood cinema motivated this study further. I hope that this study will become a stepping stone in the discovery of our culturally rich and diverse Indian society. The multi-cultural facets of the lives of Indian women here in South Africa are yet to be uncovered and documented.

A level of societal expectations influences South African Indian women to a great extent. This study embarked on both individual and group sessions amongst these women to unravel themes of immense sociological value. Individual sessions revealed these women's most concealed emotions and group sessions curtailed their answers bringing to light what they would consider acceptable to say in front of other Indians.

These results needed to be carefully unpacked in order to truly understand the diverse and complex facets within the lives and obligations of South African Indian women.

The Ethnography of Indian Diaspora Women Watching Bollywood Cinema in South Africa is not a feminist work nor is it an anti-Bollywood campaign, but it is an attempt to reveal and understand the social functioning within and amongst Bollywood female film-watchers.

Abstract

In India, mass media is a major site through which the images of femininity are constructed, represented and marketed. The world's largest Indian film industry based in Bombay (Mumbai), known as Bollywood, is owned by big business men who are highly patriarchal in their mindset. Since Bollywood Cinema is owned predominantly by Indian men, it is not surprising that their patriarchal values are reflected in the movies sponsored by them. Hindi films have in many circles become India's unannounced ambassadors in spreading the gospel of Indian culture. It thus becomes problematic because women are portrayed as selfless, ambitionless, sacrificing, chaste, submissive, subservient and weak. These images become institutionalized through the most powerful form of mass media, namely the movies. Nevertheless, of late, these traditional representations of Indian women have been fiercely challenged by both men and women producers, directors and viewers.

While there has been a growing international interest in Bollywood, very little ethnographic research has been conducted on Bollywood audiences outside of India. Specifically with regard to this study, no audience research has been conducted on female Indian viewers in South Africa, thus this study focuses on the construction of meaning in Indian films by South African Indian women. The goal is to learn how and why this diaspora can at times identify with and at other times reject themes presented in these productions. Theories that will be used to evaluate my findings will be derived from the feminist theory in film, including conventional psychoanalytic feminism, where meaning for the female spectator is analyzed from the dual interrogation of self as spectator and self on screen.

Like mainstream film theory, feminist film theory is marked by a focus on the occasion of consumption: the act of watching a film and the identifications that this act engenders. As well as examining the psychological experience of the spectator, feminist film theory also studies the representation of women in filmic discourse. Since this activity is by its nature confined to specific Indian films, it is the analysis of the spectator that consequently forms the central topic for this thesis.

Chapter One

Introduction and Motivation

“Representation of the world, like the world itself is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth.”

(Simone de Beauvoir, 1952; 133)

In recent years, the Indian commercial cinema, famously known as Bollywood, has acquired a high status among South Africans of Indian origin. Despite the appearance of Bollywood blockbusters in theatre’s during the 1970s and 1980s, the Bollywood phenomenon of rapid video productions and distribution had not been so advanced in South Africa at that time and thus words commonly used in Indian movies such as Bindi, Biryani and Bollywood still sounded foreign to the average South African citizen prior to 2003. It was however in this year, that Bollywood reached our small screens thanks to SABC 3, who foresaw soaring audience ratings with three-hour marathon movies on a Saturday night. So successful were the initial thirteen-week Bollywood screenings that a second installment was ordered by SABC 3’s Executive Producer Anu Nepal (Car Torque: 2007). In my audience analysis, 90% of the respondents admitted that it was during this time that they began to enjoy Bollywood entertainment because it was easily available to them. Prior to 2003, accessing a Bollywood movie was rather rare and if accessible it only brought in the top hits that soared in India which were rather costly to hire. Thus before 2003 some people of Indian origin enjoyed the odd Indian movie when it fell into their lap, but the phenomenon of this art and entertainment form had not yet tapped its true potential.

According to Anjali Ram (2002) and Nandini Bhattacharya (2004), Bollywood's industry expansion largely began after the release of the Bollywood blockbuster *Lagaan* in 2001. According to Bhattacharya (2004: 162), "Bollywood travelled to the Indian Diaspora - in Southeast Asia, East and South Africa, the Caribbean, Fiji, the Middle East, Australia, New Zealand, Britain and the North and South Americas and has made different inroads into the social and national identity-constructions of these different communities." During these imperative years, South Africa's interest in the Bollywood cinema that produced more than 300 movies a year, continued to grow (Roa, 2007; 1). The popular South African television magazine programme, *Eastern Mosaic*, exploring Indian culture, was also established in these formative years. *Eastern Mosaic* is a one hour programme that provides insight into diverse Indian cultures. It also highlights the latest Bollywood fashion trends, music, interviews with stars and movie reviews. Newspapers like the *Sunday Times* and *Citizen* also started publishing regular Bollywood inserts and movie reviews. *You, People* and *S.A India* magazines followed suit, launching feature articles about Bollywood cinema and its counterparts. This regular exposure to Bollywood features allowed the average South African to get a taste of Indian culture and traditions. People became accustomed and even attracted to the glitz, colour and glamour of the Bollywood buzz.

However, prior to the rapid expansion and vigorous recognition of Bollywood cinema in South Africa outlined above, many Indian South African families went through great pains to ensure that families, and especially young children born here, were regularly exposed to Indian films and narratives. For many South African Indians, Bollywood movies were used as both a platform to secure a new space in the home and to stay connected to their ancestral homeland. This study focused on the ways in which Indian immigrant women in South Africa actively engage and interpret Indian cinema.

Employing an ethnographic approach, the analysis moved between spectators readings and film texts in order to locate how Indian cinema mediates the constitutions of gendered identities in the diaspora. Keeping alive the sense of agency, this thesis hopes to demonstrate that Indian spectators simultaneously comply with and resist the dominant patriarchal representations that saturate Indian cinema.

To better understand this diasporic identity formulation, Bhattacharya's article (2004: 162) refers to Salman's Rushdie's book *Imaginary Homelands*, which describes diasporic identity as hybridity, giving communities access to two traditions where the mythic and symbolic values of the homeland are in sharp contrast to the lived experiences of cultural assimilation and integration in the new home. Put simply, Indian diaspora refers to how people use their home country as the source of their cultural and traditional origin. Before proceeding further, it is important to explain my usage of the phrase 'diasporic identity', especially as it pertains to South Africans of the Indian diaspora. Indian diasporas within this study refer to the Indian people who watch and relate to Bollywood. Throughout my readings I observed that the term diaspora was used generally but for the purpose of my study I will concentrate only on the South African Indian female diasporas in Laudium and Polokwane. Research has been carried out with regard to the experiences of other Indian diasporas in Australia, New Zealand and Canada, to name a few, towards Bollywood, but it cannot be assumed that the results will be the same in every country which is why I choose to concentrate primarily on South Africa. In light of the above, Bhattacharya (2004: 162), points out "that the reception and consumption of Indian movies by these diasporas can never be the same for all but in each area can explain how these people develop meaning and derive identity from films made about their culture and traditions." For this reason, I choose to concentrate primarily on the female Indian diaspora in South Africa.

This study describes the Indian women interviewed as spectators, viewers and fans interchangeably. The word 'spectator' is used to describe those people who viewed the Bollywood film in the sample used in this study. The word 'viewer' refers to people that generally consume Bollywood cinema. The word 'fan' is used to describe viewers that are particularly enthusiastic about Bollywood cinema.

According to Fareed Dockrat (2006), South African Bollywood film critic, the impact that Bollywood cinema has had over the last 15 years in South Africa and the knowledge of its impact for many Indian South African families began even before 2004. This evidence makes it even more necessary to carry out a study that will explain and explore the effects that Bollywood narratives have on its audiences. My specific interest lies in the question as to how these narratives affect Indian female diasporas here in South Africa and what feminist consciousness it awakens.

In this respect the works of Nandini Bhattacharya (2004), Anjali Ram (2002) and Shakuntala Roa (2007) have been particularly influential in my approach to this topic. Ram (2002: 25-28) attempted to study the actual diasporic audience experience towards Bollywood cinema, however her target was primarily focused on Indian viewers who were displaced or who migrated from India to other parts of the world. South Africa did not feature at all. Roa (2007:57-76) completed a similar study in which she analyzed how Indian identity is being shaped by the new globalizing Bollywood. Here again the focus was elsewhere and not on South Africa per se. Her study was centered on Indian rural women residing in India.

Roa carried out ethnographic research that revealed how Indians consumed, absorbed and understood messages being presented in Bollywood movies. Despite the significance of both these studies they failed to include the crux of this study, namely, a South African perspective. Bhattacharya (2004) attempted to fill this subsequent gap in her research 'A Basement Cinephilia, Indian Diaspora Women Watch Bollywood,' but she was unfortunately unable to extract any response from South African audiences. Her internet survey study evaluated the viewing practices of Indian diaspora women who watch Bollywood films. Her methodology of extracting responses was executed as follows: an e-mail based survey was sent out to widely dispersed groups of female respondents of Indian origin around the globe. Her resource and method of circulation included internet list-servs such as *IndDiaspora* and *SAWNET (South African Asian Women's Net)*. Her surveys were met with a ten percent response rate. Her respondents were located mainly in North America, Australia and East Asia. She met with no success when she circulated her surveys amongst South African list-servs. Women did not respond to her internet surveys. With the responses she received, she argued that women do not merely consume but also construct new definitions about their identities through the mediation of film.

It is because of her minimal success rate that this study instead makes use of the ethnographic methodology steps carried out by Ram (2002), who enjoyed a larger success rate in eradicating results. The difficulties faced by Bhattacharya would thus be avoided but at the same time the gap left in her research would be filled.

Despite the fact that Bhattacharya's research (2002) has been used as a focal point for my study, and Ram's methodology (2004) has been similarly replicated, this study differs in the respect that it aims to rectify the gap in South African responses. Given the dearth

of information regarding the consumption of Bollywood by the South African Indian diaspora this study is focused on filling this gap in the existing research. My personal proximity to this group, guaranteed success in securing specified results and insight about the representations of women as understood by the South African female spectator, with particular attention to the practices of gender inequality.

Rationale and statement of the problem

In recent years Bollywood cinema has achieved the status of a novelty item; it has begun to develop as a new sensation or discovery. This could be attributed to the fact that the Indian Government in 1991 eased its restrictions of the importation of Bollywood movies, allowing Indians around the globe to easily access films made in their homeland. According to Nandini Bhattacharya (2004: 162) Bollywood cinema has become a global phenomenon, producing and distributing thousands of films yearly. Bollywood blockbusters are now exported in large numbers of subtitled prints to the US, UK, Australia and South Africa.

Amitabha Bagchi (1996: 1) adds that Bollywood cinema has shaped and expressed the changing scenarios of modern India to an extent that no preceding art form could ever achieve. It has influenced the way in which people perceive various aspects of their own lives. In this respect Bagchi notes that people use the movies as a focal point of meaning. This is corroborated by Shamita Das Dasgupta (1996: 173) who posits that “in the last two decades, several films stars have been achieving resounding victories over veteran politicians in major elections. Not only have film stars been gaining footholds in politics, but they have been steadily coming to the forefront in many other arenas of social activity.” Because Bollywood films are now globally distributed its impact does not

only span over the Indians in India but also those watching this genre world-wide. Authors like Bhattacharya (2004), Ram (2002) and Joshi (2002) all acknowledge the same global Bollywood effect.

Specifically, as was pointed out earlier, Bollywood has also started to make its mark on South African audiences. However, the influence that these movies have had or are still having on Indian female diasporas in South Africa has never been captured or analyzed. If one accepts the above, that Indian movies can be seen and understood as the link for diasporas to their homeland or that they are used as a focal point for identity formation, it becomes important to ask what these movies teach us about our roots and traditions. This is especially important if one considers that movies do not only appear in a vacuum but form part of very specific economic and cultural institutions. For example, it is noted that Bollywood is controlled by big businessmen who own the film studios and who are highly chauvinistic in their mindset. Since these gender-biased individuals own Bollywood Cinema, the treatment of women in these films has been a concern of feminists and social scientists around the world (Bagchi, 1996; 2).

Dasgupta (1996: 17) deduces that it is because of this hierarchical system that women end up as stereotyped objects on screen. This trend can also be observed in Western cinema, through the use of women as sexual objects for the male gaze. But Dasgupta further elaborates that the general presentation of 'good women' in Hindi films includes characters portrayed as long-suffering and submissive. In this role the films depict an ideal of how women in India should be controlled, chaste, protective of her family, insistent on her successful marriage, confined to the home and happy about her situation. On the other hand, Ram (2002: 6-7) elaborates that the 'bad women' in Bollywood movies are the westernized character that are bent on their individuality, that

flaunt their sexuality openly and aggressively, and that readily lead men to their destruction.

However, when talking about Bollywood cinema these generalizations are expected, as Sonal Minocha and George Stonehouse (2006: 1) clearly indicate in their research, Bollywood is stuck in a learning trap. Their research shows that the current film-making process in Hindi films is adaptive and not innovative. The movie making paradigm called *masala movies* has been rooted in the past and is still the same one used in present day cinema. Stonehouse believes its formulaic paradigm will not change in the future. Yet observational evidence suggests that Minocha and Stonehouse are wrong, as in recent years Indian movies have started to explore the previously unexplored, including themes of female independence and overt sexuality. These movies are called 'new wave films'.

As will become clear later, this study has revealed that for this group of women, at least, these movies are making them aware of the fact that their role as women carries many more dimensions than simply wife and mother and that it is this awareness that is bringing about the reflections that women are been projected incorrectly and inadequately. This is in line with the findings that were obtained by Bhattacharya (2004) and Ram (2002) in Bollywood realms, as well as by Mulvey (1993) who found that the male gaze made women aware of how they were being portrayed inadequately or simply as a body to be idolized in Hollywood cinema. Mulvey also explored women as more than a body but as a beauty with brains.

The beginning of new wave films started with the release of *Bhuvan Shome* at the end of the 1960's and is still currently being produced. New wave films were created as an alternative to the formulaic *masala* movies (Abbas & Sathe, 1985: 354-371). According

to a variety of Bollywood sources, *masala* movies are characterised by happily ever after endings that do not explore anything outside of the accepted Indian genre's for cinema. New wave films brought about a new consciousness with regards to issues that were of importance and relevance to the Indian audiences. India is a country plagued by poverty that suffered at the hands of slavery and subordination. There were incidences of mass human exploitation and feudalism that the people of India had to live with and women were born and burnt as burdens to their families. For example, female mutilation, teenage pregnancy, rape, and early widowed wives were strictly hidden from the public eye. New wave movies brought these social injustices to the forefront. Feminists today can thank the 'new wave' for bringing forth the possibility that woman could be seen as more than just subservient, abused and undermined objects (Anonymous, *New Wave Hits World*; 2005; 1). But such is not the opinion of all critics.

Priya Joshi (2002) opposes this view, saying that new wave films did not change much about Bollywood film production. She notes that the Bollywood film industry is still considered, along with other state-sanctioned institutions, as a force for cultural and political consolidation within the architecture of post-independence Indian-identity. "The product of the industry and indeed the filmic system itself projects a fantasy of a homogenous culture that in fact masks the hierarchy of subject positions and belonging divided along the lines of gender" (*ibid*, 2002: 4). Thus, awareness was being created about violence against women, rape, lack of confidence, male-subordination and lack of female individuality in new wave movies. However, many areas affecting Indian women were still being blatantly ignored, such as the inequality of the sexes, unfair rules regarding widowed Indian wives, the inability to be the bread winner, the inability to be a successful, educated person and the requirement of being locked in the house, serving her husband as her God, with an ever-obliging smile. It has to be noted that in the cases

where women were fairly represented, the themes that affected these women were presented in a rather simplistic manner.

Postcolonial critics have identified the patriarchal representation of Indian womanhood that male social reformers strategically constructed to counter colonialism. Radhika Parameswaran (2002: 833-834), for example, argues that “In nationalism’s symbolic construction of ideal femininity, women became the carriers of tradition and were glorified as devoted wives and mothers.” She notes that the early nationalist ideas of Indian womanhood, although modified by modern consumer culture, continue to have profound significance for Indian women’s lives both in postcolonial India and the world.

Parameswaran’s argument seemed to suggest that even diasporic women are affected by the practices propagated by India’s undercurrent political or cultural messages that are put forth in Bollywood’s movie narratives. While this claim has been researched and tested elsewhere, little or no research has been done in this respect with Indian women in South Africa. Research needs to be undertaken to ascertain whether this perception holds true for Indian diasporic women in South Africa and this is where this study stems from. With this in mind, the current study intends of to explore the impact of Bollywood movies on a group of Indian women in Polokwane and Pretoria, South Africa.

Following a cultural studies approach, which argues textual analysis of media texts be complemented with audience reception analysis, this study first explores the prevalence of Bollywood within a South African context, specifically concentrating on an analysis of a selection of six recently screened Bollywood films. Then, in this context, this study will evaluate and answer the questions with regards to six movies selected according to a valuable source (which will be further elaborated upon in my methodology section) and

thereafter will explain the interpretations of these movies by a selection of South African female audiences.

This thesis sets out to complete a two-tiered approach namely:

(1) A textual-visual analysis of the films under purview. This will include a basic synopsis of the plot of the films, followed by an in-depth analysis of the main themes that emerged and,

(2) A qualitative exploration of audience perceptions about Bollywood in general, but with a particular focus on the films under purview.

This study thus investigates the contentious relationship between South African Indian women, Bollywood cinema and the articulation of gender biased spaces in Bollywood films.

In particular, it asks a series of key questions about the relationship between audience identification and the narratives of Bollywood blockbusters:

- What are the key messages that Bollywood blockbusters screened in South Africa communicate to its (female) audiences?
- Is there a space for female spectators to occupy multiple positions?
- How many female spectators resist the narratives that secure them as passive consumers of the film industry and more broadly of the constructed Indian nation?

By answering these questions I hope to ascertain the over-all identity formation notion of Bollywood cinema and its influence on a sample of South African Indian female citizens. Extracting these results could be valuable on both a scholarly and social sense

because Bollywood is a much-talked about topic amongst Indian women at any social gathering and topics such as female seclusion and inability are often the themes of such discussions. Through observing these ideologies from the informal discussions held about Bollywood cinema it was brought to my attention the significant role these ideologies play.

Revealing such underlying messages could thus be of benefit for women who find such topics of value and interest. It could help the reader and my respondents at a social level, to understand why they identify with the sublime themes presented in Bollywood narratives, and it could also help identify certain background or traditional influences that make us identify with or reject certain scenes projected in these movies. On an academic front, the results extracted could serve as a springboard for further studies and it could also act as an indicator for film study experts to understand and to add a South African perspective to the body of work that suggests that Bollywood cinema is orchestrated by the men who own the business and the men who decide on various themes with intentional plot lines for the retrieval of specific gendered impacts and reactions.

This study thus becomes of value at this juncture because Bollywood cinema is at this very moment at a very successful peak. Its distribution numbers have tripled in the last year and the movie industry has no intention of stopping its hit blockbusters any time soon. It thus becomes evident that while this genre is spewing out movies at its current rate, no time could be better than the present to conduct this study. It also is important to note from my interview with Fareed (Dockrat, 2006), that the younger generations are not moving away from Indian movies but, in fact, are the largest group renting these movies and buying cinema tickets.

Thus, in finding the answers to these questions, my assumption that Bollywood promotes gender inequality, which is widely projected in their films, is tested. The rest of this study will deal with the explication of how this problem has been approached and will also elaborate on possible solutions to the problem.

Chapter Two

Methodology and Research Design

Introduction

My study uses an ethnographical qualitative research approach. It was developed in accordance to the methodological steps of Nandini Bhattacharya (2004) and Anjali Ram (2002). However my purpose was to include a South African female perspective which still remains undiscovered. I conducted focused interviews on the female South African diaspora in two provinces, Gauteng and Limpopo. I purposely selected these areas because ethnography studies involve field research, where data is collected by a researcher who participates with subjects over an extended period. Being close to both these towns I was able to conduct such extensive research. This chapter will elaborate upon my research design, recruitment of subjects, interviewing process and limitations.

Research design

This study emulates the research of Bhattacharya (2004) and the methodology of Ram (2002), with the aim of adding a South African perspective to their already rich results. Ram's ethnographic approaches together with Bhattacharya's research plan are appropriate for a study wishing to uncover the impact of media products on consumer's identities. As mentioned above, Ram adopted an ethnographic approach employed by the Birmingham school and Hall's encoding/decoding model which generated viewer-centred approaches in media research (2002:2). These studies are often termed

“reception studies,” and they introduce the idea of the active audience where viewers would no longer be passive sponges to information but rather active interpreters of media messages. She chose this model after carefully reviewing various other methodologies and she found that its success in terms of other Bollywood studies and its success according to the Birmingham cultural studies school would also ensure her victory in her own study. My own research concurs that this method appears to yield the best results for Bollywood scholars exploring the impact of the medium on its audiences. This belief stems from the fact that ethnography studies emerge the researcher in the environment of its subjects, and that if the researcher comes from within that background, being close to the subjects yield better results. This, of course, is my situation and thus seemed to be the most appropriate method for the study at hand.

Ram (2002) explores mediated identity by examining how commercial Indian cinema is implicated in the reconstitution of gendered identities within the Indian diaspora. She conducted the research to understand the ways in which Indian immigrant women interpret the gendered representations in Indian cinema and also to ascertain how such interpretations help us understand the role of cinema in mediating gender in the diaspora. Ram (2002: 25-28) explains that she first took up the question of gender as it emerges in relation to the discourse of nationhood. Secondly, she explored how women viewers reframed, edited and negotiated the gendered codes that were presented in Indian films. And finally she undertook the reading of the popular Indian film star, Rekha, both in her role as a female heroine in Indian movies and how she is perceived by female viewers, film narratives, critics and media gossip.

Her methodology involved in-depth interviewing where subjects were selected according to a purposeful-sampling method. She then included textual analysis as well as

participant observations to better ground her data gathering and generation. She conducted wide scale transcribing of the data she found and this helped her categorise themes and topics that constantly reoccurred. Her analysis of each theme was situated within an interpretative paradigm and emphasized on cultural particularities, contradictions and concurrences in the social construction of meaning for Indian women under patriarchal structures.

Ram's work yielded the following results: Firstly, she found that women are implicated in the discourses of nationhood and that these implications emerge as themes in film texts and readers' narratives. Secondly, she found that there were apparent contestations and contradictions inherent in the representations and readings of Indian women in relation to the maternal-feminine, sexuality and the ideal-masculine. And finally, her inclusion of Rekha as a subject of analysis showed how popular Indian cinema holds out possibilities for transgression and female subversion. She managed to keep the audience agency throughout her research and this helped her affirm that Indian popular films are a crucial site for exploring how gendered diasporic identities are communicatively constituted. Ram (2002: 2) deduced that "Indian cinema projects narratives of womanhood that are coded through discourses of patriarchy and nationalism, they sometimes open up spaces for subversion. Conversely, women viewers' negotiations with popular media texts simultaneously resist and submit to preferred reading." Such reading of the film texts by Indian women within the South African diaspora is the focus of my study. The focus on South Africa is meant as a corrective measure on the lack of research about the reception and impact of Bollywood in this region. By conducting this research following Ram's methodology I intend eradicating the complex and contradictory intersections of textual meanings and viewer engagements which Bhattacharya found were the factors responsible for constructing gendered identity in the Indian diaspora.

Bhattacharya (2004), in a similar vein to Ram (2002), explored the actual and situated viewing practices of Indian diaspora women who watch Bollywood cinema. She argued that these women do not simply consume Bollywood narratives but that they also construct meaning according to the political setting that they find themselves in or according to the shifting paradigms of subject positioning that they aspire to at that particular time. Bhattacharya's study similarly examines the actual and situated viewing practices of Indian diaspora women who watch Bollywood cinema. Her main argument stems from the premise that these women do not simply consume Bollywood narratives but that they also construct meaning according to the political setting that they find themselves in or according to the shifting paradigms of subject positioning that they aspire to at that particular time.

Bhattacharya used a consumer-centered reception studies model where she made use of e-mail based surveys as her methodological instrument and centered her questions in a way that would enable her to answer her focal question, which was whether Bollywood cinema seeks to make diasporic viewers retrospective and nostalgic, or if it is a dynamic medium that allows the viewer to produce or invent, and not merely receive or consume, codes of culture and identity.

After accumulating her responses, she was able to recognise broad categories that surfaced. She classified them as a politicised versus an apolitical group. The politicised group mainly identified art films as their preference and they rejected the commercial Bollywood film as trivial. She identified that these individuals mainly consisted of women that were immersed in their careers or childless, or they were highly feminist in thinking. They also tended to belong to the middle and upper class financial categories. The

apolitical group on the other hand preferred the commercial Bollywood narrative claiming that they saw Bollywood as a clutch to hold on to from their cultural roots, a kind of nostalgic link, and also that they watched these movies for entertainment purposes. They belonged to middle and lower class categories. She used the movie *Sholay* and interpreted respondents' reactions to this movie to understand the themes of nostalgia, materiality, maternity and cinema. Her main observation yielded that the most important aspect of Bollywood spectatorship was that the viewers used their location of their personal desires and pleasures to engage and respond to issues of nationalism and feminism in the narratives.

Although both Bhattacharya and Rams studies' followed qualitative methodologies, their approaches were somewhat different. Ram did not engage an active audience in her study and merely conducted field research on her topic and a selected Indian movie. Bhattacharya took this research a step further by involving respondents in her study. Both researchers assumed their research would explain how and why Bollywood had an effect on its audiences and the diaspora. Ram's results found that Bollywood was rather choosey when it came to the representation of women. When it suited the narrative, women were seen as chaste mothers, daughters and wives. However, in scenes where the male audience was being targeted, women were portrayed as sexual objects. She thus found that Bollywood did not portray women as a fixed or formulaic image but that it was a rigid menial aspect that could be played with to suit any scene. Women were simply not given the respect they deserved. On the other hand, Bhattacharya allowed her respondents to deduce why, and how women felt while watching the way in which they were being presented. She proved that women identified with the female stars in movies according to the situations they found themselves in. What piqued my interest when it comes to the works of both theorists is that they are both from Indian origin and

both studied Bollywood and its effect on women. This has been an area of study I too hoped to one day explore. Being a progressive Indian female further fueled my creative engine as my assumptions had been explored and successfully analyzed by two other women in the same context as myself. I intended to use both Ram and Bhattacharya's ideas and achievements and apply them to my South African study.

Thus, this qualitative research has been conducted on South African Indian women, focusing on a small sample, in an attempt to arrive at meaningful understandings about the possibility of an undercurrent reason for the social oppression of women in Indian cinema and society and also to interpret how we can resolve such incidences. G.M. Du Plooy (2001: 37) explains that "ethnography studies involve field research, where data is collected by a researcher who participates with subjects over an extended period." Due to Du Plooy's comparisons with various forms of quantitative and qualitative approaches and links to my study, I conclude that to analyse people's attitudes, perceptions and feelings towards Bollywood would require a more qualitative approach.

According to Morse (cited in Hassim: 2007: 22), "qualitative research presupposes an understanding of research in general." Neuman (cited in Hassim: 2007: 22) contends that qualitative research allows for the formation of concepts that are grounded in the data." This again supported my process as I interviewed my subjects; thereafter I indexed and grouped all the information into categories. This allowed me to retract data and be more creative in the analysis phase of this study, as was the case with Ram's research.

In addition, qualitative research comprises a specific understanding of the relation between issue and method. Morse (cited in Hassim: 2007: 23) also states that qualitative

research allows the participants to expand more appropriately on certain topics. “In qualitative research, ideas and evidence are mutually interdependent. This applies particularly to case study analysis” (cited in Hassim: 2007: 23). Ultimately my aim was to actively engage Bollywood fans in the viewing process of a few Bollywood movies to ascertain if their thought-processes are shaped by Bollywood movies. This allowed me to gauge if there is a frame of reference which can be subsequently used to measure issues of gender inequality against the Indian traditions which paradoxically deny them in the context of a newly transitional democratic South Africa. Hassim (2007: 24) further motivates my choice by saying that to actively engage respondents is the only way to develop the formation of clearly demarcated theories that can then add to the paucity of available literature.

According to Madison (2005: 15) the ethnographic research approach can work correspondently as he describes it as follows:

Ethnography is a form of research focusing on the sociology of meaning through close field observation of socio-cultural phenomena. Typically, the ethnographer focuses on a community that comes into contact with the subject being studied, selecting informants who are known to have an overview of the issue and of the community. Such informants are asked to identify other informants representative of the subject or community, using chain sampling to obtain a saturation of informants in all empirical areas of investigation. Informants are interviewed multiple times, using information from previous informants to elicit clarification and deeper responses upon re-interview. This process is intended to reveal common cultural understandings related to the phenomena under study.

Du Plooy's (2002: 151) explanation describing the use of ethnography studies better states why I used this methodology in my study and what I hoped to be achieved by following these steps. She says that ethnography studies are used to ascertain “ways of life, beliefs, formal and informal relationships, communication behaviours, ideologies and many other dimensions of a particular culture or group of people.” This would highlight the validity of the ethnographic methodology and support why it best suits this study,

because it can allow for insights into human communication and how it is influenced by female representations in Bollywood cinema. To determine people's reasons for their attitudes, ideas, motives and behaviour, I evaluated these respondents' points of view within their natural surroundings or situations. A quantitative approach, or any other qualitative study, would not satisfy this particular need as aptly as an ethnographical study would.

The empirical collection of data for this study followed the same structure administered by Ram (2002: 3) which consisted of semi-structured conversational and written interviews with a sample of forty women from the Indian communities in Pretoria and Polokwane. All conversational information has also been recorded and transcribed. In order to gauge the reactions and levels of identification from the respondents towards Bollywood movies a two-tiered approach was administered. This can be described as a textual analysis of the movies, followed by audience reception analysis. The textual analysis will be included as it will help the reader by providing clues and themes that will aid with the explanation of certain social norms and thoughts that are practiced amongst the South African Indian female society. The same format was followed by Ram who compiled a textual analysis of the film star Rekha, all her movie narratives, interviews and media gossip, followed by a reception study where she interviewed fourteen Indian women between the age groups of 25 to 55.

The sample of movies that was selected for my study was provided by popular former *Radio Lotus* presenter and current *Radio 702* sports presenter and *Sunday Times* and *Eastern Mosaic* Bollywood fundi, Fareed "Docky" Dockrat. Considering that he is a South African Bollywood expert, he could provide expert advice about the top six movies enjoyed by the South African audience over the last ten years. Due to the fact that I

would be interviewing viewers in the hope of extracting their views on both new wave films as well as *masala* movies, the most recent international blockbusters were selected, as this sample would include a variety of both genres. To add depth to this selection, I went to the local India Video store in Laudium to get the rental records on the movies selected. According to my personal interview with Farouq Abdoola, owner of the store *Video Razeena*, *Devdas*, *Babul*, *Faana* and *Shabd* did exceptionally well. Demand for the DVD was so great after being released, that the store had to turn away many rental clients as the DVD's were always rented out. "Full house rentals," was what Mr. Abdoola called it. As for *Shabd* and *Dushman*, although there was a demand, it was not as great as the prior four videos.

The movies selected were: *Devdas* (2002), *Babul* (2006), *Dushman* (1998), *Aitraaz* (2004), *Faana* (2006) and *Shabd* (2004). After completing textual-visual analysis of these films, I used a receptive study within the qualitative paradigm to obtain audiences responses.

To obtain these audience responses Stuart Hall's (1980: 57) reception theory of encoding and decoding was employed. "This approach to textual and audience analysis focuses on the scope for negotiation and opposition on the part of the audience." By using this theory respondents would not be expected to simply passively accept the narratives of the films, but they could actively engage story lines which would reveal undercurrent social phenomena which the study uncovered. Hall further explains that the ways in which respondents decode media texts are greatly influenced by their own cultural backgrounds. This cultural background could serve to explain in my case studies why some viewers accepted a given movie while others rejected it.

Similarly, in reception analysis, as Fiske (1991: 461) suggests, “audiences are seen as active producers of meaning, not consumers of media meanings. They decode media texts in ways which are related to their social and cultural circumstances, and the ways that they individually experience those circumstances.” This would be recognised as a strength within the qualitative paradigm and within the spectrum of the analysis because the aim of this study is to evaluate the impact of Bollywood movies with specific attention to its effect in everyday life.

By considering the social and cultural positioning of each respondent when deconstructing their understanding of the Bollywood narrative, one would be carrying out what is called ‘new audience research’. This allows each member of the audience to actively watch and understand the film from their own personal point of departure. As part of the research, in-depth interviews and group interviews were conducted as a means of uncovering the meanings which the groups of viewers generated from the movie narrative, and it was also a means of focusing on the audience's 'situatedness' within their particular socio-historical context. Taking the above aims into consideration it can be argued that the selection of an ethnographic methodology best suits the needs of this study. It allows for carrying out interviews and analysing data within the qualitative paradigm.

My focused interviews followed the methodological steps presented by Uwe Flick (2006: 77) in his article titled *Semi-Structured Interviews*. The initial interview included questions that were focused on everyday life, career and household decision making. The generally perceived view of Indian women and their position as South Africans was compared to that of Indian women from India during the first interview. How the individual perceives and conceptualises everyday life is essential in attempting to

quantify the impact of social expectations and understanding. But each individual cannot be expected to have the same view as Hall (1980: 60) identified in his “Policing Crisis” study that he conducted in 1978. He said, “The meaning of a text lies somewhere between the producer and the reader. Even though the producer encodes the text in a particular way, the reader will decode it in a slightly different manner.” Hall called this the margin of understanding and he linked this theory to the theory of social constructionism which supports the argument that each respondent’s outlook would be influenced by both self-reflexivity and societal expectations.

A weakness in this approach can be seen when reading Wengraf’s (cited in Hassim; 2007: 24) findings which recognises the difficulty in directly accessing many of the assumptions, purposes, feelings and knowledge that constitutes personal and social life. Hassim (2007) similarly discovered during her research that the less controversial the issue, “the less an interviewee will be aware of them and able to talk about them. Conversely, to ask for a person’s explicit knowledge and approach is to access only material that they themselves experience as consciously controversial” and they then decide to articulate this information. In this way, respondents are fully aware of how they choose to present perceived knowledge and ideologies, which the motivation for opting for focused interviews. Focused interviews have the advantage of being less subject to this form of conscious control: unstructured questions are asked first, and increased structuring is introduced only later during the interview to prevent the interviewer’s frame of reference being imposed on the interviewee’s viewpoints. The only obstacle in this method is the aspect of timing, as Flick (2006: 77) points out. If the wrong question is asked at the wrong time it may influence the way in which the answer is provided by the interviewee, thus as part of this method, extreme restraint had to be exercised as not to

influence the respondents answers. Freedom of expression was encouraged during interview sessions.

Recruitment of subjects

Below follows an explanation of how the respondents were chosen. Sampling of participants combined random sampling with purposive sampling. These sampling methods will be explained below.

An advert measuring 11 by 4 cm was published during the week of the 8th of August 2008, which ran for three weeks. This advert is attached as Appendix B. The advert invited South African female viewers of Bollywood movies to participate in a study about the content and reception of six movies. My criteria for inclusion included that participants should be Indian, female and preferably avid viewers of Bollywood films. (By avid I mean Indian cinema viewers that consume a number of the movies that are regularly released.) I intentionally selected female viewers as this was my interest and as an Indian female who regularly watches Bollywood movies at the cinema I am very well aware that it is more a female form of entertainment than for that of the male Indian spectator. However, after conducting my research I did discover that male viewers of Bollywood cinema do in fact exist, not in the same proportions as female viewers of course, but this discovery could thus add to the possibility of further research at a later juncture. My age restriction was set from 16 upwards. Respondents were invited from only the Pretoria and Polokwane regions. Excluded from the sample were men and people not from Indian descent. Nineteen women responded to my advert, some via telephone and others by e-mail *The Laudium Sun* is a local newspaper that is distributed free of charge to the Indian communities both in Laudium-Pretoria and Nirvana-

Polokwane. It is also a paper whose popularity within these communities has reached outstanding heights. Some residents refer to the paper as their local bible and it also includes a gossip or 'punchaat' column which is much-enjoyed by the typical Indian. Due to the ease of access to both these communities it was logical to make use of this paper as a source of advertising to draw potentially interested and interesting respondents.

However it did not amount to the forty women that were initially hoped for. Thus posters were printed which were put up at our local supermarket, bakeries and butcheries, both in Pretoria and Polokwane. These together with the snowball effect of word-of-mouth brought in the remaining respondents.

This study set out to reveal themes presented in Bollywood movies that create stigma, social obligations and fear of exclusion due to unfavourable community opinion, as well as the perceived duty of obedience to patriarchal structures which may indeed be recognised as religious, cultural and traditional obligations. In order to tacitly fulfill this objective, careful attention and planning needed to be paid to the types of interview sessions which would best facilitate this process.

Participation, after considering all the above factors consisted of three meetings, lasting between 30-60 minutes. The first meeting addressed the respondent's personal details, family structures, beliefs and values. The second meeting addressed their thoughts and experiences of Bollywood and Bollywood cinema. The last meeting dealt with the actual movies selected for this study. Auxiliary interviews were established if respondents agreed to participate in group sessions with other women to accumulate patterns in thinking or if they wished to watch movies from the list which they had not already seen.

This is the structure of a focused interview as set out by Flick (2006: 77-109). The interviews were adapted from one comprehensive meeting to three short meetings as my respondents were unable to meet for such a long span at one time. This had the advantage that the respondents were not influenced by details that they had provided in their previous meetings and also allowed for the analysis of personality factors together with their movie responses to see if respondents' personalities had any influence on their responses to other questions.

Ram's (2002) consumer-centred reception studies model which she obtained from the Birmingham cultural studies school, together with the theoretical framework of feminism in film, was used as it has proved a success in many prior reception studies done outside of South Africa by scholars of Bollywood. Feminism in film is an urgent political act to stop and transform all prejudiced existing myths and practices with regards to the female population.

By following my approach and using Ram's model I wished to trace the patterns in the South African female diasporas towards the reading of the text and how identity-construction formulates itself within these women. As Ram says (2002: 41), it is not only the movie that needs to be analyzed to understand the viewers' perspective but also their politics of location and individual ideas that add to the mediation and retrieval of messages projected by film. In some senses, this study set out to find out what traditional representations of women have migrated with the Indian diasporas and which ones have become irrelevant in today's times and society. More importantly, my aim was to evaluate Bollywood's role in the projection and absorption of gendered messages and the effect thereof on South African women. Because my study aimed to evaluate a female standpoint on Bollywood narratives, I found it apt to only include a sample of

women as who better would understand their feelings, ideologies and associations than themselves. Also in my primary data accumulation it appeared that more women than men were Bollywood fans and fanatics. The male point of view can become an interesting topic to explore and research at a later stage.

The interviewing process

Following in the footsteps of Shafinaaz Hassim (2007), I initially carried out a semi-structured interview that divulged in the personal lives and functioning of each woman. These interviews, as with Hassim's (2007), took the form of casual conversations and discussions with individuals and groups of women. Here, the questions centred on their conceptions of male and female equality, independence and Bollywood's portrayal thereof. As Hassim discovered, "invariably each interviewee dug into her past and gave personal accounts of such incidences in their own lives, thus proving that experience can yield a lot of explanations for present behaviour. Along with the recount of the past, talking about their everyday lives, careers and household situations, it helped to bring the interviews to the present." I ventured to add other avenues of comparison into our discussions and found that by talking about the hierarchy of decision making in an Indian women's home, it brought about a lot of discrepancies in gender equality that they themselves failed to recognise. It was simply accepted.

I also centred discussion around how their household and career decisions were often coloured by the perceived expectations of their husbands, in-laws and communities and that they all felt that Bollywood cinema projects this thought process of behavioural patterns in their narratives. These conversations also pointed to the fact that in Indian communities people's opinions are taken very seriously, you live to please others and

avoid being gossiped about rather than living being happy with who and what you are doing for yourself. The expectations of community weighed heavily on the decision making process of many women that I interviewed as it demarcated their behavioural allowances.

Of special interest to the discussion was the data that was obtained from asking the question pertaining to personality: “Describe your own personality and how your life experiences have helped shaped who you are?” By keeping this question open-ended it allowed respondents to go into lengthy descriptions of incidents in their lives that seemed to sum up why they felt or acted out the roles that they currently play in their homes. The initial appraisal of the data was surprising as women who were more independent and educated seemed to have completely contrasting views to those who merely completed tertiary education to be met with marriage proposals.

Without revealing the concluding findings, it can be said that the accounts of the three interviews proved far more rewarding than had previously been expected. These results will be discussed in full in the evaluation of my findings. By conducting these interviews, respondents related lengthy life experiences which brought insight into socio-cultural factors that proved to be pivotal in respondent’s lives and they could closely identify with Bollywood narratives that hold similar themes as presented in their life circumstances. So is it life taken from reality or reality shaped from Bollywood narratives? The themes and social features that recurred with respondents’ with regards to Bollywood movies and how they perceived and experienced them also brought about very helpful data.

Further explorative issues were uncovered and they focused on the construction of female identities in society, the home and more importantly, in Bollywood movies. The

following issues in theory were raised in this study through the use of the three interview sessions (the full questionnaire is included as Appendix A and can be viewed to better situate the following themes).

- How do women feel about their positions as South African citizens?
- To what extent, if at all, does the hierarchy of decision making work in their home? How do they feel about the spread of power?
- Open-ended personality assessment questions were also included.
- Why did the respondent agree to be part this study?
- How would they describe the narratives of Bollywood movies?
- Can they identify with certain aspects of the Bollywood movie genre?
- Their views about the six movies in question.

From each of the interviews it can be ascertained that the notion of traditional Indian culture severely influences many women's opinions and actions. They are bound by the limits set by their social units and the women who fell out of this category were greatly influenced by rebellion from the old, a high sense of independence and a good educational background. This will be further presented in the chapter of analysis from the interviews. Apart from the three interviews that I carried out, a number of other auxiliary data collection methods were included. Several experts in the field were interviewed, such as Mr. Ebrahim Kaskar from Cape Town. He is the founder and establisher of Bollywood brought to South Africa. He introduced Bollywood movies to Ster Kinekor cinemas in and around South Africa and is a regular host of Bollywood stars and crew when they are filming in our vicinity. I also interviewed Fareed Dockrat, Bollywood expert and critic as well as Shafinaaz Hassim, author of *Daughters are Diamonds*. These

auxiliary interviews added depth and dimension to this study, because these authors' have spent a considerable amount of their time analysing, observing and understanding our South African Bollywood audiences.

Limitations

An outline of the limitations of this study may help future researchers to build on a study of this nature:

- Future research mechanisms need to take into account additional details such as the experience and understanding of Bollywood movies from the perspective of the male spectator. This will give way for an avenue of comparative film readings and also it will give insight into a male perspective.
- Being a progressive-minded South African Indian Muslim woman, setting out with the goal of objectivity was very difficult because I constantly had to be aware that my own values and personality did not influence or shape this study. The implication was that I had to spend a lot more time re-reading and analysing the data. Thus, a data retrieval table was formulated in the results section as this aided the in-depth analysis to a considerable degree.
- Since Bollywood movies take two to three hours to view, many of the respondents failed to agree to watch movies that they had not already seen. Their ideas were extremely beneficial but time constraints greatly impacted areas that I felt could have been more adequately developed. And I had to include all the movies as my sample had already been selected by Bollywood expert Fareed Dockrat.

Although every study has proven to have a frame of limits it is necessary to be open about these stumbling blocks because it may serve to assist future researchers.

Conclusion

Following an ethnographical qualitative approach with focused interview sessions aptly demarcated my methodology. My qualitative approach was phenomenological, thus the focus was on an in-depth understanding and description of how Bollywood films were conceptualized and received. Given the contextualized nature of this research, my aim was not to generalize findings to other settings. Therefore, purposive sampling of my Bollywood movies and a combined random/purposive sampling of viewer participants was a relevant and valid method to use. In order to ensure data quality, several strategies were employed to ensure trustworthiness.

In qualitative research designs, validity and reliability are described through strategies of trustworthiness. Trustworthiness was maintained using strategies of credibility, and dependability and transferability. Credibility was ensured through cross-examination of data, literature control and triangulation. Dependability was maintained through code-recode procedures and a dense description of the data, while transferability was ensured through a dense description of the contexts of this study as well as purposeful sampling of the data utilized.

Although the study largely replicates the work of Ram (2002), she gathered her respondents using purposive sampling, whereas by using the advert and a snowball system to recruit subjects in this study it is believed that the methodology would be less

biased. Less purposive methodologies such as those used in this study were used by other theorists such as Adrian Athique and Ashley Dawson (2005), Faiza Hijri (2005) and Dina Lordanova (2005) who all evaluated Bollywood cinema at some level of identification. In order to contextualise this study a comprehensive literature review will follow.

Literature review

“The women in this magazine, as part of the women’s movement, are aware of the political, psychological, social and economic oppressions of women. The struggle begins on all fronts and we are taking up the struggle with women’s image in film and women’s roles in the film industry- the ways in which we are exploited and the ways to transform the derogatory and immoral attitudes the ruling class and their male lackeys have towards women and other oppressed people”

(Editorial, Women and Film 1972: 5).

Given the diverse objectives of my study, and in order to cover all these perspectives, I have concurrently highlighted the two dominant stand-points within this literature review to explain and further ground my findings: Bollywood’s representation of women and the reception of women audiences with regards to the role of women in Bollywood cinema. These general standpoints have led to this study, which deals with the question of whether Bollywood films, as representative of mainstream culture, still disseminate patriarchal images of women dominated by the male gaze even though feminist thought has been part of our society for some decades now. These feminist voices fighting for female liberation in cinema include Anjali Ram (2002), Nandini Bhattacharya (2004),

Tania Modleski (1982), Linda Williams (1988) and Laura Mulvey (1993) who argue that women should not simply stand back and accept female representations as they are being presented.

In this light my study aimed to evaluate Indian women in South Africa and their opinions about Bollywood and female representations as they appear today. In the process of viewing the films under purview and conducting my literature review, it became clear that Bollywood cinema has not evolved much over the years. Though cinema initially entailed silent dramas its central themes have not changed. As will become clear in my analysis of more recent Bollywood films in chapter three, the rise of the new wave cinema is a simple manner of diverting attention from the real issues at hand, such as the inaccurate representation of women. As Minocha and Stonehouse (2006) have identified, Bollywood is stuck in a learning trap, struggling to move away from its stagnation. However dealing with issues such as rape and female battering does not mean that Bollywood has changed, it simply means that they are changing their structures but still incorporating their patriarchal views and such has also been acknowledged by Bhattacharya (2004), Minocha and Stonehouse (2006), Joshi (2002), Ram (2002) and the like. Hence it can be understood that superficial structural changes, such as the change from *masala* to new wave films, are being propagated as a move forward. This study sought resources that would not only show, but also prove, that as far as the issue of Bollywood female identity goes, nothing has changed. Thus, this study draws on research dating back to the 1980s, but attempts to set up a discourse between these older sources and more current literature on Bollywood in order to advance the argument above. What will become clear in this discussion is that, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

This thesis is located at the intersection of Media Studies, Cultural Studies, Sociology, and Gender Studies, and draws on the work and theoretical approaches of feminist film critics Bhattacharya (2004) and Ram (2002). Ram's ethnographic results carried out in America, Europe and Australia proved that Indian people use the movies to mirror behaviour that they feel is legitimate to the Indian experience of life. This study sought to ascertain if the same holds true in the context of a South African audience. Thus, this study closely mirrors Ram's work in theory and methodology. Similarly, Bhattacharya's findings contributed to the analysis of this study that the images of women in Bollywood films still correspond to conservative patriarchal stereotypes that are projected in society and can be found within the characters and personalities of female audiences in South Africa.

To situate my argument, the voices below will highlight the various themes that I wish to explore and attend to. Women, the editors of the magazine *Women and Film* explain, are oppressed within the film industry as sex objects and they are oppressed within film theory as well (1972: 14). The way in which the media systems reflect our social environment and especially how they represent and disseminate gender role models and have a lasting effect on the construction of identity is of long-standing interest both in Gender Studies and in literature and the visual arts. The use of the male gaze as a media phenomenon became very important to understand and examine within Bollywood cinema as it helped to situate the representation of women as a visual form art in popular Indian cinema.

Although media and specifically television and films are often considered to act "largely as a social mirror", films in fact often distort social reality and continue to reflect traditional stereotypical gender constructions (Editorial, *Women and Film*; 1972: 5).

Mulvey, (1993: 51-52) a pioneer in Gender theory, argued that the classic movie narrative used lighting, camera angles, editing and storylines in calculated ways to create specific effects. She explains that it is the hero of the movie that shapes the story line because we see the story and events through the hero's eyes. Male stars are predominantly the protagonists in Bollywood movies, so according to Mulvey the audience would be encouraged to identify with the male stars' point of view. Mulvey also showed that this way of filming reinforced messages portraying women as weak or passive subjects. Though Mulvey's main focus was Hollywood, Bollywood scholars discovered similar male gaze patterns.

Generally, Indian cinema reflects the roles of women as seen through the male gaze according to four broad categories. Each representation of women has their own set of consequences or fit in one of these categories. Their lives will follow a certain path that will lead to the same generalised outcomes. For example, if they are good, chaste women they will live lives that end very happily. However, if they follow the path of a vixen they will land in the position of an outcast in society. These categories include the ideal wife, the ideal mother, the vamp and the courtesan. These roles are best summarized and explained by Carolyn Finch (2000:3-4) in her article "Representation of Women in Popular Indian Cinema."

1. **The ideal wife:** In Indian traditional society women are expected to enact certain behaviours that are illustrated through the example of the Goddess of Sita from the Hindu scriptures. She perpetuated the ideals of sexual purity and fidelity. The ideal wife in Hindi cinema honours her family and is highly dependent on her husband. Her character revolves around domestic chores and situations. And the consequence of women acting in such roles result in them having happy endings.

2. **The ideal mother:** Again, with regards to the ideal mother, there comes into play a religious background. This time it stems from the Hindu Mother Goddess Shakti. She is a representative of great strength and selflessness. The ideal mother in Hindi cinema is a woman of strong force. An excellent example of this female role is evident in the movie 'Mother India' released in 1957.

3. **The vamp:** She is the character that strays away from the ideal and expected roles of women in India. She does everything that is not expected; she smokes, drinks, seduces and elicits unacceptable sexual behaviour. She is always portrayed as the evil imitation of the west and too modern for her society. Her clothes also overtly show this character. Her behaviour is almost always punished. She is not based on some Indian figure of antiquity but rather on a reflection of the "evil west."

4. **The courtesan:** This women falls completely out of the norm of roles expected from Indian women. She is the prostitute, someone who sells herself and her body. She is simply placed in Indian cinema as eye candy for male audiences then she is drastically discarded. She is the overt portrayal of sexuality.

In fact, these traditional gender images are not simply mirrors of real life, but also ideological signifiers. In many Bollywood films that pretend to depict reality, a time lag separates true social circumstances from the film reality the movie produces.

Consequently, this time lag also manifests itself in filmic representations of gender roles, disallowing the women's movement and that of feminism to enact new images of women outside the patriarchal context of popular films or change female stereotypes and

incorporate feminist thought into mainstream films. Thus, mainstream films do not propagate an image of the emancipated woman but quite the reverse: women are subordinate objects of the male gaze. And this is where Mulvey's article highlights the problem created for female audiences, because it sets up a one-track scenario for women in film. They were simply expected to accept viewing themselves through the eyes and opinions of male subjects which would render them either watching other women being sexualised or objectified, disempowered and punished. Mulvey (1993: 53) also identified in her article that "the traditions of film were reflections of the psyches and deep, unconscious attitudes of both film makers and audiences towards women and that it would be unlikely that film spectators, living within a sexist culture, would ever interpret a female body as a non-object."

While radical women's movements in South Africa have been fairly successful and progressive in raising awareness and change about female stereotypes and inequality that is perpetuated in all forms of media, women in other countries, such as India, continue to stagnate in their struggle. South African movements such as the African National Congress Women's League, Rural Women's Movement and the campaign called 16 days of Activism, which acts against violence towards women and children, to name a few, have gathered momentum to fight for the emancipation of women and to deviate away from gender inequality. These movements have not only created a supportive base for women but they have also raised awareness against gender stereotypes perpetuated in the media and society. It has given South African women a platform to launch their gender bias complaints and it has provided a voice against female abuse. Courts of law in South Africa fight cases against female subordination on a daily basis, and women are surely transforming their image and position in South Africa by taking up high profile positions in government and business sectors.

However, in India, this platform has yet to be formally established. The problem with the feminist movement in India is that it lacks a cohesive voice. The supporters of this ideology are scattered and fragmented and many Indians in the diaspora who wish to lend aid to this cause are unable to have their voices heard where and when it matters (Bagchi, 1996; 4). Leon D'souza (2000: 1) illustrates the lack of a cohesive voice when she explains that even during Indira Gandhi's eighteen years of incumbency, the country saw increasing incidents of violence and discrimination against women. It thus follows that without having any established body that guards or protects the rights of women in India, filming will continue to project women according to the way that the male directors see fit. And when considering all the gathered written data by other theorists one can establish that these male directors will use the gap in any protest of female emancipation to project women as they wish, namely, as the weak and dominated sex. In the same light, Simone de Beauvoir (1998: 175) writes, "representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth."

My film analysis includes a range of Bollywood movies, as this would provide the focus for my audience to comment on and analyse. The reason for only selecting Bollywood films would be because they are representative of popular Indian taste in South Africa, and are vigorously consumed by these audiences and thus have an undisputed impact on these individuals. The films' far-reaching dissemination is also due to Bollywood's economic resources and power, clever marketing strategies, commercial exploitation of their films, and star hype. Bollywood has been ceaselessly perpetuating the so-called "Indian lifestyle", which not only South Africans still like to believe in and aspire to. However, maintaining the myth of the "Indian experience" also means propagating

patriarchal ideology, including a hierarchical social order and traditional female roles. Also, in view of the fact that Bollywood presents these patriarchal role models in the guise of the ideological “Indian lifestyle” as desirable to the audience, it makes Bollywood’s conception and representation of the female sex especially problematic.

In summary, Bollywood films, predominantly box-office hits all over the world, are undoubtedly most effective in perpetuating the dominant patriarchal ideology and dissemination of traditional female gender roles, which contribute to the limited ways in which women are depicted in culture and society. Although there are some similarities between Bollywood and old-school Hollywood cinema, Bollywood’s culturally-specific context means it has developed differently, especially with regards to the representation of women. Where mainstream Hollywood representations on the surface appeared to have changed with the times, introducing stronger women of substance, Bollywood still largely clings to stereotypical portrayals of subservient women, and when they do get portrayed as strong-willed, it is usually as a cautionary tale of the ill’s that might befall those who dare move outside the cultural boundaries as dictated by so called “Indian Culture”, or, at the very least, how this is understood by literature and Bollywood in general. What Bollywood and Hollywood still have in common is their use of a love triangle. An imperative theorist who discovered this phenomenon was Modleski (1982: 10-11) who pointed out in her studies that romances were often used to help a woman solve their problems by having them fall in love with the male hero,

In two articles, “Feminist Film Theory: Mildred Pierce and the Second World War,” and “Something Else besides a Mother,” Linda Williams (1988), likewise argued that a female subject could use her feminine empathy to identify with more than one character, but she observed that movies presented contradictory messages about women. On the one

hand, they are seen as the heroine who sacrifices everything but on the other hand, her sacrifice is also seen as unfair and not necessary in the first place.

Charles Taylor (1992: 25) similarly argues that the demand for recognition in contemporary politics is based on the thesis that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by misrecognition of others. Therefore, it is argued, a person or a group of people can suffer real damage and distortion if the people or society around them mirrors a confining or contemptible picture of themselves. Elizabeth Traube (1992: 18-19), in the same light argues that when looking at the representation of women in cinema to solely focus on the film structure and psychoanalysis will be misleading because it overlooks the relationship between the film and the real, outside world surrounding it. She elaborates that psychoanalysis explains how you react to a movie based on your gender but she shows that it ignores factors such as race, class, sexuality, and external or societal influences, and that these factors can greatly determine the ways in which you react to a communication medium. Non-recognition or misrecognition of these factors can inflict harm; it can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted and reduced mode of being.

Sharon Smith (1972) author of "The image of Women in Film: Some suggestions for future Research", explores sex-role stereotyping. She argues that the limited range of images of women offered in any form of cinema is both false and oppressive. She explains how Hollywood films both reflect social structures and changes and misrepresents them according to the fantasies and fears of their male creators. Similar patterns can be observed within the Bollywood film structure. She found that the stereotypes that are used in films that oppress women were used purposely to reinforce or create prejudices of the male audience in order to limit the aspirations of women. Her

audience reception studies proved that women were being undermined and held back by ideologies that male counterparts used and projected in the Bollywood movies. Women also saw their rebellion of such patriarchal standards as punishable. It becomes important at this stage to note Beauvoir who states that film reflects social change, but that it also shapes cultural attitudes and behaviour. Concerning Bollywood cinema it has been noted that the stereotypes with regards to women are too deep-rooted to be simply changed by having more women in positions of power, but that these gender biased forms of art need to be broken by means of persuasive stereotype corrections. The way forward for Bollywood is undoubtedly to embrace a wider variety of roles for women, especially those that will break age-old notions, but as Smith (1972) recognizes uneasily, for this to occur a completely new mode of thinking will need to be adopted and this is not so easy to attain.

In opposition to Smith's argument that it would be difficult to alter the perception of audiences towards Bollywood representations, Claire Johnston (1973: 2) argues that the way we analyze or interpret representations of women are relative to our own ideologies. She explains ideology as "the representational system which we engage or our own way of seeing." Her argument is based on the grounds that we all understand certain images presented in films according to our own social and cultural positioning. She argues that it cannot be so simplistically blamed on male dominance or male created stereotypes. Johnston can be placed in the branch of cultural studies analysts that appeared in the eighties. These individuals all emerged from Marxist scholarship that took a very different approach towards media. These scholars argued that too much importance was placed on film texts rendering audience members as passive rather than active interpreters of what they are viewing. Film theorists up until this point saw audiences as 'blank slates,' (Heineken, 1999; 11), while cultural theorists argue that each individual's

life and social experiences would shape their interpretations of a film. Cultural theorists thus argue that it is no longer possible to evaluate any movie based simply on the narrative; they would have to include the views of the physical audience. This then led to a new branch of analysis in the early nineties, called the audience analysts. These audience analysts were interested in seeing how the diverse audiences used media texts in their daily lives. My study is situated along the lines of audience analysts' understandings that the media should not be able to perpetuate deep-rooted inequalities to such an extent that they should take internalized and distorted positions within our lives. However, Bollywood and its portrayals have not evolved tremendously over the years and even the new wave cinema was criticised to the extent of wide spread protest, which made it necessary to evaluate Bollywood sources from the 1970s.

Another imperative reason for researching Bollywood film from the 1970s was due to the fact that Bollywood, as compared to Hollywood, has not evolved further than its passive dissemination of media messages. They have not taken to the changes of mass communication and continue to develop films using psychoanalysis and structured texts without any audience reception analysis.

Because research has not aided the struggle against gender bias in Bollywood movies, in India the media has been the driving force in the propagation of these distorted images of true femininity. According to a United Nations Working Group report (2000: 3), images of women in Indian media ten years ago are still common currency and this explains why I have explored information that is relatively new as well as that which is considered very old. The United Nations Working group further explains that "Bollywood movies feature women as housewives, mothers, girlfriends, decorative objects, sex objects, and victims of male violence." It can thus be deduced that modern Indian

feminism has not had much impact on the standard of Bollywood movies that are produced.

The end of male dominance and the production of these images in Bollywood movies are slowly but not yet decisively beginning to change. It has begun with the actresses who were traditionally content to play the deified goddess glamdoll. They were basically cardboard creations of male directors who wore minis and bustiers, but who acted virginal. They sang four or five songs and did two and a half hours of dramatic scenes and then they walked into the sunset as happy as they could possibly be. Not anymore. After years of being mass-production of the same template, heroines are slowly shedding these Bollywood stereotypes.

New generations of savvy, intelligent and beautiful actresses are demanding roles that have meaning and that tread issues of feminism and independence. In a written interview, carried out by the South African television magazine program *Eastern Mosaic* (2000: 8) popular Bollywood actress Preity Zinta says, "I want to be part of good films, even if it means I am not the protagonist. I want to do films that are real, informative and entertaining". In the same interview, Rani Mukherjee (2000: 9) had similar views about her ambition: "I've passed the stage of being the standard Hindi film heroine. I am now looking for distinctive characters. I don't have any image that I want to preserve. Actually, I don't want to be categorized at all."

Alternatively, D'souza (2000: 5) says that these women want to progress but they are not always successful. She explains that with women's role it has always been a case of one-step forward and two-steps back. Despite acting in some new wave films, these very actresses are remembered for their eye-candy roles. The characters may be more

fleshed out, but the politics is largely regressive. It is like Molly Haskell (1973:13) suggests, in a sexist society the images of women will remain sexist until the social structures are changed. Considering that Bollywood movies are so influential and widely watched, it becomes increasingly problematic that these sexist messages are constantly being repeated. The influence of these films should not be underestimated. In the words of Bollywood icon, Amitabh Bachchan (2004: 5): "It is not we who have changed, and it is the people who are looking at us who have. It could be at Deauville in France or at Marrakech in Morocco, or anyone anywhere else for that matter, the world has decided to take our movies to heart." In light of Bachchan's quote above, it becomes necessary to point out that although he says it can be anywhere in the world that viewers take Bollywood movies to heart, South Africa's position within this arena has never been formally or academically established. This means that research with regards to Bollywood audience reception in America, Britain, Australia, India and many other important areas that feature Bollywood cinema and who have an abundant population of Indians, has been studied and evaluated but no such research has ever been done with respect to the South African Indian diaspora.

Conclusion

After reviewing the literature available and deciding to model this study in replication to that of Nandini Bhattacharya's audience reception study it was found that many other feminist theorists believed that analysis of movie texts together with audience reaction accumulation could reveal a common cultural truth. This can be attributed to the fact that audiences are not only passive receivers of messages. Molly Haskell finds that films do not reflect a unified culture or interpretation, and she is joined by Bonnie Dow (1996: 16-18), who argues that although texts are not closed to all but one interpretation, neither

are they open to just any interpretation. She explains that certain sub-cultures appropriate texts for their own purposes, which are reflective of their ideologies, and cultural and traditional beliefs attitudes and ideas.

Thus, as Traube (1992) and Christine Gledhill (1984: 19) explain, when conducting reception studies one needs to take into account diverse social audiences, their race, class, gender and belief-systems. Textual and audience studies may be viewed as complementary approaches. Dawn Heinecken (1999: 20), best explains this dual approach as follows:

The use of one method depends on the type of questions one is asking. If one is concerned solely with the effects of the text on the viewer, audience studies may be the best approach. But since texts are not open to every interpretation, textual studies are necessary in order to shift between an understanding of the text and the audience in order to gain an understanding of what possible meanings the texts are capable of forming for different audiences.

Bearing the above in consideration and in an attempt to match Bhattacharya's (2004) findings with regards to this study, the following gaps were identified: the South African Indian diaspora experience of Bollywood cinema has never been accounted for and the female consumption or possible identity construction thereof has never been investigated. Being an Indian scholar residing in South Africa made the task of filling this gap much more feasible.

It is beyond the scope of this study to statistically prove the assumption that Bollywood still disseminates demeaning images of women, as for such a venture one would have to analyse a broader sample of Bollywood films in order to be representative. However, on the basis of a reasonable selection of films and use of textual and descriptive analysis,

the goal of this study was to point out a range of themes prevalent in contemporary Bollywood films. The identification and analyses of these themes forms a necessary and important base for my interviews with participants and serves to contextualize both my and their responses to Bollywood films.

This study hopes to provide evidence that, in spite of more than three decades of feminist film criticism, the male gaze continues to dominate the image of women in Bollywood films well into the 21st century. The film selection has helped to illustrate how patriarchal female role models are still perpetuated, yet through more latent manifestations than at the time when Bhattacharya's pivotal article was first published.

Chapter Three

Synopsis and Analysis of Six Bollywood Films

Introduction

Sampling for qualitative analysis is not required to meet the statistically valid formulae of quantitative analysis. Nevertheless, sampling for in-depth qualitative study should not be simply drawn at the researcher's whim, and random methods may not yield useful data, as the purpose of qualitative research is to investigate certain issues or themes in detail. Random or even representative methods of sampling may not capture the issues or themes which are the subject of qualitative analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994: 29) argue that sampling strategies for qualitative research should be driven by a conceptual question, not by concern for "representativeness." They suggest instead three techniques which can be used together to yield rich results in qualitative analysis:

1. Selecting apparently typical/representative examples;
2. Selecting negative/disconfirming examples; and
3. Selecting exceptional or discrepant examples (1994: 34).

Given that this study replicates the qualitative ethnographical steps carried out by Anjali Ram (2002), the selection that best suits the sample for this study is the one illustrated in point one above.

The methodological steps as set out more elaborately earlier included a two tiered approach: a textual analysis of six movies selected according to their popularity amongst

South African viewers and based on the authority of both Fareed Dockrat and the Indian Video store owner in Pretoria Mr. Farouq Abdoola. After spending considerable amounts of time viewing these movies, to gain a better understanding of each narrative, I developed semi-structured questionnaires and set out to advertise in the hopes of drawing interested respondents. As respondents poured in I set up three short meetings with each respondent. This meant commuting between Polokwane and Pretoria regularly. Each interview presented three different and purposive themes.

The first interview aimed to establish the personality and general positioning of the respondent within their family structure. The second divulged into the viewing practices of each woman and the last interview dealt primarily with the reaction of each respondent towards each movie in the selected sample. To gain a perspective of what these movies offered I had to view each one, as I explained above, as a neutral observer. Following that, I did a textual analysis to discover the recurring discourses, themes and images and to identify frameworks of ideas and beliefs that Bollywood films produce about so-called Indian culture and various Indian identities. I focused specifically on the representation of women in this entertainment medium and after drawing from the available literature and my casual observations I argue that Bollywood portrays women as weak, subservient, passive and undermined objects stuck in the era of male dominance and patriarchy.

In this chapter and the following chapters these arguments will come under further scrutiny as we look at six Bollywood movies. At the outset, this study asked the question, is Bollywood cinema a gender bias disseminator of media messages and do South African women see it this way or is there another stream of reasoning? Thus, as a starting point for answering my original question, this chapter and the next asks how

Bollywood represents women and what the impact of this representation is on women of the Indian diaspora in South Africa. The exploration first considers six Bollywood movies in this chapter and then follows with viewer perspectives on Bollywood.

Bollywood and the representation of Indian culture

Bollywood cinema has developed as an ambassador for the distribution and creation of what has come to be regarded as Indian. The latest trends, tastes and traditions are all soaked up through Bollywood blockbusters. However, people have become so susceptible to Bollywood messages that they take them in without understanding that they are being produced as an entertainment medium and not as a portrayal of life or religion. Not just the films themselves, the themes, cast and narrative of popular Hindi films have too, long been dictated by assigning cultural or traditional trends and confusing or misrepresenting them as religious obligations. An apt example is the representation of women spilt to either belong on the side of the evil or the virtuous, the vamp or the Britney Spears. This presentation of women in Bollywood has been developed as a discourse on representation of the idealized women and it has been passed off as part of the Indian culture for centuries. Jyotika Viridi (2003) argues that these stereotypes have been created as a means of identity construction for women prescribed by men. Women are to be seen as passive, victimized, sacrificial, submissive, glorified, static, one-dimensional, and resilient.

These representations of women, argues Hassim (2007: 90), highlight the realm of Indian traditional culture and not religion. Both Islam and Hinduism grant ample rights and position to their women followers. This presentation of women in Bollywood cinema is thus not a real representation of the world as we know it but rather an unofficial

ambassador and disseminator of what is culturally wanted and expected of Indian women.

Indian culture proclaims the woman as the house-keeper, chaste and submissive. Indian scriptures, however, give authority to women within obvious boundaries. But they are allowed to be bread-winners, become successful and voice their opinions. Such is not the archetype created by Bollywood movies. The misunderstanding Bollywood creates is that the Indian culture it presents as Indian religion is not authentic. Also, women in India are presented as homogenous. No one person can think or act differently geographically or politically. However, in India, women who live in the rural areas have a completely different mind-set to those who reside in urban areas. Their living circumstances, educational backgrounds and intellectual capabilities vary drastically. Bollywood overlooks this, presenting an assimilated and uniformed way of life.

There is a scarcity of literature dealing with the separation of the representation of Indian culture and the representation of Indian religion in Bollywood films. However, it has been deduced by both Ram (2002) and Bhattacharya (2004) that Bollywood cinema acts as a catalyst for identity construction. As Charles Taylor (1992) explains, identity is created when one observes a homogenous population and there from develops their own characteristics based on the differences from what is the norm.

Alternately, Stuart Hall (1980) says that each individual is entitled, without negotiation, to develop their own self-reflexivity and personality. Identifying how identity is constructed and the difference between a religious identity and what is simply traditional will help develop a background and framework that will explain the reactions from the

respondents. It will also bring to the fore how some of the powerful men in Bollywood blur the lines between tradition and religion to suit their own needs.

Films viewed

To explore the ways in which Bollywood cinema represents women, a textual analysis with regards to six Bollywood movies was undertaken to discover recurring discourses, themes and images and to identify frameworks of ideas and beliefs that Bollywood communicates about Indian culture and, more specifically, with regards to Indian women. Textual analysis is an approach that allows for the interpretation of texts in relation to the cultural context in which they operate (Fairclough: 2003). The analysis of these films draws on two areas of enquiry, namely, representation and reception. This chapter focuses on the former and the following chapters will focus on the latter.

To contextualize the discussion of these movies a brief description of each movie will be provided that will be followed by a theme analysis paragraph for each movie. Because the intention is not to compare the movies but rather to deduce common themes, a colour-coded methodology has been used to highlight the concurrent stream of themes in each movie. As explained earlier, this study is not a comparative study but a study on themes and reception evoking analysis.

Analysis of the films viewed

To direct the analysis of the six movies, messages were extrapolated through observations, interviews and other written sources about Bollywood film analysis. In the abstract it was mentioned that Bollywood producers are overwhelmingly male orientated

and patriarchal in their mindsets. Following this observation and based on the arguments of feminist Bollywood scholars, Bhattacharya (2004) and Ram (2002), it was expected that thematically, the representation of women in Bollywood cinema would abide by the unspoken code of conduct presented for Indian women by the so-called Indian culture. What was found was that the women who were portrayed in these movies all fell neatly into demarcated categories, labeling them as the ideal mother, wife or daughter and alternatively themes of rebellion were identified in the neat packages of vamp or regressor of acceptable traditions. Themes of romance were used to minimize the women's independence, and the unimportance of education for women was also a prominent theme. 'Happily ever after' was a feature of most Bollywood movies, which is usually a far cry from reality for women in India. Lastly, the theme of class and coin was also rife. Not all of these themes spanned across all the movies, though some were evident throughout. To assist the readers understanding of the discussions that follow, the main themes are projected in the table below, which also includes a synopsis and production context for each of the movies under purview.

Tables of data with regards to the six Bollywood films under questions:

Movie Title	Production Context	Brief Synopsis	Main Themes
1. Devdas (2002):	<p>Director: Sanjay Leela Bhansali</p> <p>Producer: Bharat Shah</p> <p>Cast: Shahrukh Khan as Devdas Madhuri Dixit as Chandramukhi Aishwarya Rai as Parvati</p> <p>Music: Ismail Darbar</p> <p>Lyrics: Bela Singar</p>	<p>This film is a tragic tale of star-crossed lovers. Devdas is the younger son of an upper class Brahmin Prince. Parvati is also the daughter of a Brahmin family of a slightly lower class. The two families are neighbours. Devdas and Parvati are childhood friends and they adore each other. Parvati's family proposes to Devdas' family for their marriage, but his high-caste family object, cruelly insulting Parvati's mother, who brokers a marriage with an aristocrat for her daughter, sending Devdas into a spiral of alcohol-fuelled despair.</p> <p>Parvati's marriage turns out to be a sham as well. She is married to a man much older who simply needed a woman to baby-sit his children from a previous marriage. He is a dictator, who shares no marital attachment to Parvati. Back-stabbed by Parvati's parents decision to marry her off Devdas falls into a downward spiral and his only solace is Chandramukhi (Bollywood legend Madhuri Dixit), a beautiful courtesan. Chandramukhi falls dreadfully in love with Devdas, but Devdas realizes that Parvati was his true love. Eventually Devdas dies due to over-drinking and fails to keep his promise of meeting Parvati before his death. She tries endlessly to reach him, having the huge gates of his palace shut in her face minutes before his life seizes, ending the tragic tale of unrequited love, and class and gender struggle.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Status, class and caste 2. Arranged marriages 3. Male dominance 4. Female acceptance of life despite unhappiness-The ideal wife and daughter 5. Tragic ending

Movie Title	Production Context	Brief Synopsis	Main Themes
2. Babul (2006):	<p>Director: Ravi Chopra</p> <p>Producer: B.R.Chopra</p> <p>Cast: Amitabh Bachchan- Balraj Salman Khan- Avinash, Rani Mukherjee- Malvika, Hema Malini- Shobna, John Abraham- Rajat.</p> <p>Music: Aadesh Srivastava</p> <p>Lyrics: Sameer</p>	<p>Baabul is a movie about love, family and culture, Balraj Kapoor (Amitabh Bachchan) is the head of the family and his word is law, though he is a loving husband, father and father-in-law. Shobna's (Herma Malini) life revolves around her son, Avinash and husband. For Balraj, Avinash is more a friend than a son.</p> <p>Avinash has returned after studying abroad and he falls in love with a traditional, conservative painter named Malvika Talwar (Rani Mukherjee). Unbeknown to Millie, a long-term friend of hers, Rajat (John Abraham), is secretly in love with her too. However, Rajat loses the girl of his dreams. Avinash and Millie get married and are bestowed with a child named Ansh. Avinash meets with an accident and loses his life. Millie is unable to cope with life without her late husband, and her father-in-law decides that Millie needs the love of a husband back in her life, so he starts searching for Rajat, hoping that he will help Millie with her grief.</p> <p>In this movie the father-in-law breaks all traditional and cultural boundaries by assisting his daughter-in-law in finding a second chance at happiness. However Balraj faces criticism and opposition, from friends and family alike. He argues that the husband may die, but that tradition cannot kill the remaining living human being. That person is entitled to still live and go on, that would be the wish from a husband who truly loves his wife, not to allow her to die along with him. He fights against society, culture and his family to re-unite his daughter-in-law with happiness. As expected he achieves his dream with eventual full acceptance.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Male dominance 2. Submissive wives 3. Western influence 4. Happy endings and self sacrifice 5. Cultural obligations

Movie Title	Production Context	Brief Synopsis	Main Themes
3. Dushman (1998):	<p>Director: Tanuja Chandra</p> <p>Producer: Mahesh Bhatt</p> <p>Cast: Sanjay Dutt, Kajol, Jas Arora, Tanvi Music: Dolby SR</p> <p>Lyrics: Dolby SR</p>	<p>The story opens with a happy-go-lucky family content in the ups and downs of their small world. This happy picture is shattered on the day of younger sister, Diya's, birthday when a psychotic postman, under pretense of delivering a letter to the house, breaks into the house, savagely beats, rapes, and murders her older sister Sonia Her twin, Naina, is on the other end of a cell phone conversation with her sister at the time of the murder, and is forced to hear the screams of her dying twin.</p> <p>When the justice systems lets this man off, due to a witness who changes their testimony, Naina is driven mad with grief and, with aid from an ex-army official (played by Sanjay Dutt) arms herself to track this killer and serve justice where the courts can't. It isn't an easy feat for Naina but in the end she successfully avenges her sisters' murder.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Male Dominance 2. Female Stereotype 3. Traditional vs. Pro-active female roles 4. Reality based Narratives

Movie Titel	Production Context	Brief Synopsis	Main Themes
4. Aitraaz (2004):	<p>Director: Abbas-Mustan M</p> <p>Producer: Subhash Ghai</p> <p>Cast: Akshay Kumar as Raj, Kareen Kapoor as Prita and Priyanka Chopra as Sonia</p> <p>Music: Himesh Reshammiya</p> <p>Lyrics: Sameer</p>	<p>A case of mistaken identity unites Priya Saxena, a law student, with Raj Malhotra. Raj is awaiting a promotion as Chief Executive Officer in his organization. Kareena on the other hand leaves her career to play the role of a devoted wife. Raj however does not get promoted, but instead is inducted as a Director, by the wife of the Chairman, Sonia Roy. The reason for Raj's promotion is quite simple: Sonia wants to rekindle her affair with Raj. Sonia attempts to harass him sexually. When Raj refuses, she demands his resignation. Raj files a case against Sonia. Shocked, Priya is determined to save her husband. This is when Raj tells Priya that he had been involved with Sonia and that they broke up due to differences of opinion. Sonia's lawyer cleverly projects the case in Sonia's favor. Priya's shock is short-lived. The climax reveals how she collects evidence to support her husband which helps her win his case.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Female Stereotyping 2. Westernized women 3. False Reality

Movie Titel	Production Context	Brief Synopsis	Main Themes
5. Faana (2006):	<p>Director: Kunal Kohli</p> <p>Producer: Aditya Chopra (Yash Raj Films)</p> <p>Cast: Aamir Khan as Rehan, Kajol as Zooni, Rishi Kapoor as Zulfikar, and Tabu as Nafisa</p> <p>Music: Jatin-Lalit</p> <p>Lyrics: Prasoon Joshi</p>	<p>Blind from birth, Zooni Baig lives in Kashmir, India, with her protective parents. They hesitantly allow her to make her first travels with a dance troupe that goes to Delhi. Their guide in Delhi, Rehan Khan, promptly falls in love with Zooni. He helps Zooni regain her vision and she introduces him to her parents.</p> <p>Later, as Rehan is scheduled to fetch Zooni's parents from Delhi, he is killed by a bomb explosion detonated by a militant group, the Independent Kashmir Front, who are fighting for independence from both India and Pakistan.</p> <p>Zooni regains her sight only to find she has lost her love. The family returns home and Zooni gives birth to Rehan's son.</p> <p>Five years pass when Zooni opens the door to a wounded Indian army officer, Major Rajvir Singh. Zooni's family seek to care for him, not knowing he is in fact a terrorist who has the ability to trigger a nuclear device that will kill millions.</p> <p>Zooni discovers this only after she has fallen in love with Singh, and has to decide to lose another love and potential father for her son when she kills Singh in order to save millions of lives.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Move away from traditionalism 2. Move away from Arranged Marriages 3. Male Domination 4. Female liberation over-shadowed by a sacrifice

Movie Title	Production Context	Brief Synopsis	Main Themes
6. Shabd (2004):	<p>Director: Leena Yadav</p> <p>Producer: P.N.C</p> <p>Cast: Sanjay Dutt, Aishwarya Rai, Zayed Khan</p> <p>Music: Vishal-Shekhar</p> <p>Lyricist: Irshad Kamil</p>	<p>In Shabd, Aishwarya Rai plays Antara, a college professor married to writer Shaukat, (Sanjay Dutt). One day Antara meets Yash (Zayed Khan), a spirited young man who is immediately drawn to Antara and he makes no attempt to hide it. When Antara mentions this to her husband he is intrigued rather than angry and asks her to indulge the young man, hoping to use it as source material for his new book. He encourages and at times almost forces his beautiful spouse to indulge in an affair with a younger man. He is interested in the behavioural reactions and also his arrogance assures him that his wife will not desert him but that she would rather reject the wayward lover. The plot of his sick plan could be the source of his next best seller. As nature has it, things go awry the wife starts really liking the younger man and her husband forces her to reject him. The husband takes it rather benevolently and the situation reverses with the author ending up as a pawn in his own game.</p> <p>Ash plays the wife, with a frustrating desperation, trying to comprehend the demands of her unusual husband who she deeply loves, while Sunjay Dutt as the obsessive-compulsive intellectual is both a figure evoking sympathy and fear as he is bent on destroying three lives for an experiment in theory which he eventually achieves, namely, losing his wife, the plot for his book and soon after, his sanity.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Male Dominance 2. Female Oppression-Sacrifice for her husbands needs 3. Female liberation

Integrated theme analysis of the table above

The theme of coin and class:

The movies *Devdas* and *Babul* develop the theme of 'class and coin' ideologies which are rife and real amongst Indian societies. Amongst Indian communities, money is a social factor that decides which class you will belong too (Chow, 1995, Ram, 2002 and Roa, 2007). In *Devdas*, scenes providing these rife comparisons include rapid cuts between the homes of Parvati and Devdas, illustrating aspects such as size and structure of rooms and veranda's, back-yards and the glitz and glamour of the wives and daughters garments and jewellery. In *Babul*, however, the flashy cars, branded clothing, sunglasses and modern technology boasted by both the father, Balraj, and son, Avinash, demonstrate these notions of coin and class. Their home, too, can be seen as reflective of a very high financial status. These material comparisons for the Indian diaspora reflect status and definition. However in the movie *Devdas*, Devdas and Paro love each other as children, therefore it is important here to note that issues such as class or gender are not adhered to by the youth. At this stage in their lives they are oblivious to the impact that has been attached to being of higher or lower social orders.

The theme of arranged marriages

Incidences of disapproval of marriages are common practice for the Indian diaspora world-wide. To observe such scenarios is not uncommon for Indian viewers; in fact it is what is expected. South African audiences admit that despite the decline of such occurrences in today's society, complications surrounding love marriage choices are still accompanied by intensive discussion, consideration and negotiation. Disapproval in

these cases may be because of class, cast, financial status or the individuals place in society.

A typical narrative in Bollywood cinema is the one presented in *Devdas*: boy and girl love one another but for some reason fate tears them apart. Boy is left spiraling downwards and girl is rendered helpless and inactive. It also depicts the traditional role of an Indian woman, as discussed in my literature review, who is expected to passively accept her fate, despite her unhappiness about it. The movie *Faana*, however, moves away from the theme of arranged marriages. Zooni's parents in actual fact sent her away in the hope that she would find love, in the same way as they had.

This reveals an exception or alteration in the expected narrative because audiences do not typically expect parents to be liberal and open about their children choosing their own partners. It was traditionally not expected or allowed in Indian society. However, today one can observe changes in these trends and I believe it is effective to portray these realities in Bollywood cinema because people really take to heart the plots and themes and so a reality-based story usually creates a better hit amongst viewers.

The theme of male dominance:

In the *movie Devdas* gender inequalities and expectations render Paro as a representation of weak and passive women. In the scenes following Paro's wedding, her husband is almost always filmed from higher camera angles, framing Paro below him. This technique, as Mulvey (1993) has explained, is purposely used to create the power play between Paro and her husband, illuminating her as the weaker force in the

relationship and in society. Also, it should be noted that during the events that led to Paro's wedding, she was hardly consulted; her family simply married her off to the next rich alternative. What comes across as strikingly incorrect is the fact that she never speaks on behalf of herself. The movie aptly captures the lack of any decisive female voice. Despite being unbearably unhappy she can never speak up for herself. But the tragedy of this movie can also lie in Devdas's destruction, because he, being a male, also fails to stand up to the sick social constraints that prevented him from marrying the woman he truly loved, namely, Paro. It is important here again to observe the injustices with regards to the Indian male and female social expectations. When an Indian woman strays from the traditional culture in any way, she is labeled as the westernized villain breaking the age-old rules of generations before. It is regarded as a grave sin and she is shunned from the community. However, when a man is hurt or destroyed in any sense, he is allowed to turn to prostitution or alcohol and he receives sympathy rather than being labeled negatively or thrown out of the family structure. Again this is a typical expectation in a Bollywood narrative and after careful analysis it becomes apparent that both Paro and Chandramukhi's lives revolve around Devdas. They both may have lead female roles, but they fall second in line when compared to the lead role of Devdas, the center of all the attention. Chandramukhi's heart is broken and this also makes her appear weak and helpless.

As was the case with Devdas being the center of everything, a similar scenario can be observed in the movie *Babul* where Balraj is at the center of all events. He is held in high esteem with his family and his decisions are accepted as law. Though he is a very fair and liberal father, husband and father-in-law, we come to see in this movie that his authority is still highly respected and adhered to. All family decisions are left to him and he is elevated as the one who possesses all wisdom and thought. Even household

decisions are not left to the wife but to Balraj. However, what makes *Babul* different from *Devdas* and other Indian movies is the fact that this movie fights for female liberation from the shackles that render her a widow-for-life once her husband dies. But this difference is rather superficial because it is not Millie who fights for her right to continue with her life but her father-in-law, Balraj, takes on this battle. Here again, male dominance over the female voice is overtly projected. This would aptly portray Mulvey's (1993), theories that a man is glorified at the expense of a women's ability, as in this movie the portrayal is of man using his senses, not a woman fighting for her liberation, so in a sense it still weakens the female voice in Indian culture. Balraj fights against society, culture and his family to re-unite his daughter-in-law with happiness and as expected he achieves his dream with eventual full acceptance. This movie is a break from the traditional genre of Bollywood movies, but it would have made more of an impact if it was the female lead-role fighting her own liberation. It would have given the movie more depth and created a better stance for gender equality in Indian cinema.

Another form of male dominance can be acknowledged in the movie *Dushman* where Naina is unable to see her sister's murderer. This brings to mind Mulvey's discussions around male power through gaze, where Mulvey explains that the woman is unable to see the male protagonist that patronizes her life, giving him higher superiority. This form of male dominance may not be the same as the one's presented in *Babul* or *Devdas* but it still gives power to the male subjects, shadowing the female struggle.

Another representation of male dominance, as illustrated by Mulvey, can be observed in the movie *Faana* when Zooni is admitted into hospital. It is in this scene that she tells Rehan that when she regains her sight, his face is the first thing she would like to see. When she regains her sight, she is devastated to hear that on his way to the airport to

fetch her parents, he is killed in an explosion. Mulvey's argument states that the woman is still left in an inferior position because she was initially portrayed as a strong character without vision, and when she regains her vision she is weakened again by the fact that she never gets to see the man behind the success of her recovery. According to my analysis, this still puts Zooni in the category of female protagonist in an inferior or lower position. Bhattacharya (2004) explains through her results that this is intentionally done to reiterate the expected traditional and cultural role of a woman in Indian cinema and civilization.

Male dominance can also be displayed through use of male sexuality. In the movie *Shabd*, Yash makes it perfectly clear that he is interested in Antara. This overt portrayal of male sexuality and confidence is reflective of the man's position within Indian society. He is the one capable of making the first move and leaving a lasting effect. These plot lines have been purposely inculcated into Bollywood movies, as Beauvoir explains, to shape cultural attitudes and behaviours. Antara's husbands' demand to engage herself in tempting Yash into a love affair can also be observed as a form of male dominance, but that scene is better suited for the theme of female oppression which will follow in a later section.

The theme of tragic endings:

Bollywood cinema loves to project melodrama. Part of its successful formula is the inclusion of tear-jerkers. However the typical *masala* movie never really includes these teary moments in the conclusion of the movies which is what makes the movie *Devdas* completely different from all the other movies in this sample. According to film critic, Anabela Voi You (2002: 1), *Devdas* earned its fame because of its tragic ending. When the movie reaches its height, the audience is shown the tragedy of an unrequited love,

where neither character is able to achieve the fairy-tale ending. My analysis revealed that despite the fact that *Devdas* achieved un-resounding success, it left most of the spectators in this study feeling bitter and unfulfilled at the end. This clearly demonstrated their need for a neatly tied happily-ever-after ending. For those who craved something out of the ordinary, the tragic ending of *Devdas* was a breath of fresh air, but for the larger group of Bollywood fans it proved to be strange and negatively unfamiliar. Such responses confirmed that Indian Bollywood viewers are spectators of a reality in which they wish for everything to end rosy and happily. Such illusions, however, are merely a need to escape from the reality of life and a means to be internally satisfied knowing that tragedy in the end only exists in their physical lives and not in their alternate form of life, their Bollywood entertainment.

The themes of submissive wives, female stereotypes and cultural obligations:

As illustrated in my literature review, women's representation in Bollywood films can be categorized as the ideal wife and mother. In the movie *Babul* both characterizations are present in Shobna and Millie. These women are expected to enact certain cultural behaviours that are illustrated through the example of the Goddess of Sita from the Hindu scriptures. She perpetuates the ideals of sexual purity and fidelity. The ideal wife in Hindi cinema honours her family and is highly dependent on her husband. Her character revolves around domestic chores and situations. And the consequence of women acting in such roles results in them having happy endings. Shobna could fit the perfect cultural representation of the Goddess Sita. Her life revolves around the men in her home and though this is revered and respected in Indian society, according to gender studies, she would be labeled as weak and submissive.

Similarly, although Millie may be educated and dress in modern attire, we are constantly shown customs and trains of thoughts that she illustrates, linking her to a more traditional background. These can be observed in the fact that all religious and traditional customs of marriage are strictly followed and adhered to by Millie and her mother. It can then be deduced that she acts the way she does due to the passing on of customs from mother to daughter. This is important to note in the light of this study as Millie is a central character in this movie and her behaviour sends out loud messages to the audience.

The fact that she dresses in a westernized manner and that she is educated is over-run by the reality of her traditional behaviour and manners. As Linda Williams (1988) would have said, the above is a perfect example of the contradictory relationship portrayed through a single female protagonist. She is modern in some ways, but held back in the ways that really add significance to the life of women in society. She is recognized as a woman in one way and limited in yet another way. Later in the movie, as well after Avinash dies, Millie accepts her widowed status and takes on all the relevant cultural responsibilities expected of a widow. She wears white clothes, removes all colours from her closet and room, wears the head-scarf and accepts that her life will be lived in seclusion from the outside world. It is her father-in-law who refuses to accept such a fate for such a young woman. He believes that customs cannot keep you from living.

Although the analysis of *Dushman* places it in a generally positive light with regards to the categorization of women, there are nevertheless scenes that evoke age-old female stereotypes. Much like those perpetuated in *Babul*, where the father-in-law had to be the hero, in *Dushman*, when Naina is driven to avenge her sister's murderer, she cannot do so independently. She has to be accompanied by a man, Sanjay Dutt, who is the lead male hero who saves the day. These male heroes, in both movies, further re-iterate the

menial position of women as independent and capable people. They constantly need a hero to rescue them.

Another movie that replicates the common Bollywood female stereotype is *Aitraaz*. In this movie, Priya Saxena responds to an advertisement by Barrister Ram Chostrani, but ends up in the wrong house, that of Raj Malhotra. She is mistaken for the maid, who incidentally was always expected to arrive on the same day. Eventually the misunderstanding is cleared up and the two fall in love and get married. What is ironic to note at this stage is that an educated, sophisticated woman who fits the part in every way, is mistaken for a maid by the male protagonist. This kind of gender stereotyping will land a female in a subordinate position at all times, despite her obvious achievements. Similar situations develop in the movie when Priya leaves her successful career to stay at home and play the devoted wife, reminding us of *Babul* and the enacting of the requirements of the Goddess Sita, while realistically both goals could be pursued.

The theme of western influence:

The infiltration of western influence on Bollywood cinema can be eradicated in the opening scenes of the movie *Babul*, where father and son refer to one another using the term 'dude.' Such friendly relations were never traditionally allowed in Indian culture between father and son; such incidences would previously be portrayed as regressing against a parent's authority. This brings about elements of modernization and westernization in an Indian home which was never done before the productions from the new millennium. Also, Avinash's return home from his studies abroad places this movie in a modern, urban bracket, because traditionally all associations with over-seas countries were characterized as bad, westernized or moving too far from the Indian way

of life. Avinash's studies abroad, his families' flashy cars and modern dressing all help the audience place this family in an upper class western bracket.

Moving away from wealth and wording in the movie *Aitraaz*, Sonia's entrance is very significant. Her entrance alone serves to highlight the bad effects of the western influence. Through the use of psychoanalysis, one can observe that the camera, lighting, her style and dress code all act as signifiers, representing Sonia as the westernized female vixen in the movie. Camera cuts are rapidly shot between Sonia and Kareena to show off Sonia's legs, thighs and cleavage as compared to Kareena's respectable and conservative Indian dress sense, fully covering all her female anatomy, making sure that it is all hidden from the indecent male gaze. The west and Hollywood are constantly used by Bollywood cinema to address what is wrong and indecent. Scenes that merely hint at a westernized way of life all show a form of punishment afterwards to iterate that such behaviour is transgressive in an Indian society. Such can be observed in *Aitraaz* where Sonia loses her case in court and the pure and chaste love of Kareena's is restored.

The theme of happy endings and self sacrifice:

An excellent example of the theme of self-sacrifice can be identified in the movie *Babul*, when Millie initially accepts her widowed state without any rebellion or questions asked. She provides the example of the prototypical ideal wife and in the end this woman receives her guaranteed happiness. She fits this category perfectly and receives her happy ending in marrying Rajat, who accepts her child and her choice without any qualms.

Similarly Rajat is in love with Millie before she even meets Avinash, but he is a silent type, and as he is a musician, he expresses his emotions through his songs. Rajat loses the girl of his dreams, but is not heartbroken, as his only wish in life is for Millie to be happy. This, again, is another typical Bollywood cliché because somebody must end up being hurt, but he or she will humbly step down for the happiness of the other. Themes such as these sacrifices evade reality because there is never a fight for the girl, or a quarrel. Instead, everything is neatly packaged and fits in, so that everything will end happily-ever-after. Rajat relocates his life to Europe hoping to pursue his music career further. His relocation also signifies his emotional displacement. He can't express his feelings so he runs away from them. Eventually, because of his adherence to what is expected of him, he too receives his happy ending. Such scenes make it clear that if characters stood up against such stereotypical roles they would obviously end up displaced and dislocated from society, in the same way as the vamp.

A similar but more dramatic sacrifice was evident in the movie *Faana*. Here Zooni is seen as a female freedom fighter but her freedom comes at a high cost. She has to make an important choice which was traditionally only left to the male protagonists. She has to choose between right or wrong, but what will define her life is the decision between the greater of two goods or the lesser of two evils. One has to consider her strength as a woman and person. She does choose to do the right thing for society and morality but in the end she is weakened because she has to give up the man she loves and the father of her child for the sake of the world. It proves she is strong in character but it leaves her in the unfair position of a widow and her child is left fatherless. This film would fit perfectly in Linda Williams' (1988) theories of contradictory power positions given to female characters, where they are glorified in one respect but weakened in an equally important scenario. Although this movie may be considered a new wave

narrative it is still riddled with female inequalities and confirms what this study has shown, that even the new wave films hold onto old ways of depicting gender stereotypes.

The theme of traditional vs. pro-active female roles:

What can be observed in the movie *Dushman* are the clear lines that separate the two types of women one can find in Bollywood cinema. The traditional role is represented by the twin's mother, who is so grieved by her daughters' murder that she falls deeply into a depression rendering her inconsolable and weak. In opposition to that is the character of Naina who deals with her grief in a pro-active manner, deciding to put fate in her own hands. Though Naina is supported by Sanjay, her decision to avenge her sister's death stems primarily from her own personal strength. This movie is representative of an alternate in Bollywood cinema as compared to the traditional expectations of Indian women in society. But this relationship is also very placid as she can also be viewed as the traditional female stereotype in that she does not transgress any societal expectations of her; she simply goes out to set right a wrong that has been committed and she does not transgress any male established boundaries. She commits no wrong and is still a reflection of a good female in the Indian society. Her actions are not viewed as transgressive or westernized and ironically all the other female roles in this movie were traditionally cast reinforcing societies expectations of what other good women should be like.

The theme of reality based narratives vs. false reality narratives:

Though revenge plots are nothing new to Bollywood, *Dushman* is different because it does not show a gun-wielding hero stealing a weapon from somewhere and going on a mad killing spree to avenge his family. It shows a sister who first has to come to terms

with the unbearable loss she has suffered and has to train herself adequately so that she has the means necessary to avenge her sister, which she successfully achieves. This narrative structure is rather successful because it creates a reality-based story rather than one riddled with unrealistic scenes. The actress, Kajol, plays both Naina and Sonia. She plays the two separate personalities as effortlessly as she plays the tormented twin sister, who can't look in the mirror anymore because of the reflection that stares back at her. The rest of the cast gives good support. The movie cast, crew and cinematography must be complemented.

Contrary to the reality-based success of the movie above was the failure of the movie *Aitraaz* where Priya's shock about her husband's past affair is so short-lived that an audience has to consider the truth of such a scenario. She hardly questions her husband's fidelity and despite his innocence, he was previously involved with the very same women. In reality, such an association would make a wife question her husband's innocence. This should have been adequately addressed to make the plot more believable and fair to the female protagonist. Priya's lack of suspicion categorizes her as a typical Indian wife, expected to blindly believe her husband's word as law.

The climax reveals how Priya collects evidence to support her husband which helps her win the case for him in the end. This scene allows the audience to see Priya's academic strength, for she is in fact very talented. She wins her husband's case and the battle between the traditional and modern woman. When analyzing the movie it becomes obvious that in this narrative, traditional customs are being represented and fed to the audience. The westernized women still loses and though Priya is educated she uses that strength to defend her husband, so no real changes of gender expectations are being projected.

The theme reflecting the move away from traditionalism

The first break from the traditionalist Indian ideology can be observed in *Faana* when Zooni's parents allow their blind daughter to leave home without their supervision. Such a scenario would never happen, even had she not been handicapped. This type of freedom is unlikely in an Indian movie. Traditionally, girls were never allowed to travel anywhere without male supervision, and here is the additional complication that Zooni is blind. Her blindness does not deter her strength or determination to go out and experience life, which already points to the fact that this movie may diverge from the traditional stereotypical Bollywood narrative.

The second move away from the traditionalist narrative is the fact that Rehan and Zooni sleep together without a marriage certificate. Again, this movie is presenting themes and scenes in Bollywood cinema that are regarded as progressive and even at times too modern. A woman would never sleep with a man in a Bollywood narrative until marriage and even when it did occur it would be staged with a song and no revelation of any skin or bodily anatomy. However, in *Fanaa* an open scene is enacted with the two characters in bed. This sort of scene does bring about protest and upheaval in India and *Fanaa* did not fall short of such protests. However, directors felt it is a step into the new millennium and that the movie was reflective of the state of mind and ways of living of the younger generations and the Indian diaspora. So in the end the movie was released without any censorship.

The theme of female oppression and liberation (in the same movie):

In the movie *Shabd*, Shaukat encourages his wife Anantara, and at times almost forces her, to indulge in an affair with a younger man. He is interested in the behavioural

reactions of Yash and his arrogance assures him that his wife will not desert him but that she would rather reject the wayward lover. He imagines that the plot of his sick plan might be the source of his next best seller. This sort of twist may be different from the norm, where the husband would be streaked by a jealous rage that forces him to go out and avenge this betrayal. But this movie encourages the woman to allow her admirer to pursue his interest in a married woman as decided so by her husband. His motives are different in that he wants to use his wife as a muse to further develop his career. Despite the difference in scenario, as Smith would explain, the female character, both in Hollywood and Bollywood movies are still only offered a small range of possible roles which will all render them oppressed and undermined. She reveals that female roles are misrepresented according to the fears and fantasies of their male creators and such occurrences can be directly observed in this movie with Sanjay Dutt's irrational requests. What comes across as extreme prejudice in this movie is the fact that no female confidence is allowed. Rai has to unquestionably observe her husband's wishes despite believing them to be insane and unfair. These projections are exactly what Indian directors are trying to achieve; a blind obligation to the patriarchal structures and the representation that anything different is punishable.

However, the plot of this very same movie proved to be one of the first that produced an alternate view, because despite the husbands' unusual obsession, his plan turned on him. The lead woman finally realizes that she cannot have her fidelity compromised because of her husband's crazy plot and she chooses to emerge as the stronger character in that she refuses to give in to an affair or to stay with her husband. This places a movie that seemed to follow the same Bollywood plot on a different level where we see the women emerge as strong and independent. Such a representation reinforces the possibility that age-old stereotypes can be challenged if persuasive stereotyping

corrections are enforced. Movies such as the one above will undoubtedly provide a better and a wider variety of roles for women.

Conclusion

After completing this analysis and grouping the themes, what has become evident are the similarities and consistencies in the narrative structures. A few creative plot changes may have occurred between the movies but over-all the messages and stereotypes were being consistently carried from one movie to another. Females in all the movies above were neatly created to fill the male expectancy of female characters. They are both chaste and submissive and this would allow them to lead happy, uncomplicated lives or they would be deviant and independent and this would land their lives in total disarray. Females that were self-sacrificing would lead happy lives but in the back of ones mind you can observe that they are actually the losers in the plot, as for example in *Faana*, where she sacrifices her husband for the world but loses the father of her child and her own father as well. Similarly, in *Shabd* the female protagonist sacrifices her marriage for her insane husband's desires. She lands up alone in the end as well. Where females were strong in character, as for example in *Aitraaz*, where the female lead protects her husband's fidelity, this scenario is such a far cry from reality that her glory in that scene is undermined as it is underplayed with a scene where a male is victorious. Even themes of arranged marriages are evident in most of these movies. The importance of this is to show once again that success in women's lives is only possible if they adhere to the customs of fixed marriages. *Faana* acts as a transgression from cultural norms and arranged marriages, and the leading woman chooses a terrorist for a husband, again reflective of the notion that if a women transgresses the boundaries set up by the male

dominated society she will end up at the losing end. Themes that also recurred were themes of class and coin, education and female liberation.

Following these analyses, it would appear that Bollywood cinema aims to present its audience with an image of the perfect women in society, religion and relationships. The themes presented above are all dictated by assigning cultural or traditional trends and confusing or misrepresenting them as religious obligations. Thus presentation of women in Bollywood has been developed as a discourse on representation of the idealized women and it has been passed off as part of the Indian culture for centuries. Bollywood cinema started off presenting these misleading ideologies and they continue to do so. Changes that have evolved over the years are rather superficial and include dress changes, dance sequence changes and more bodily exposure. However the narratives are much the same. Females in contemporary Bollywood cinema have not really grown with evolution; they have in fact transgressed and are no longer reflective of the modern Indian women in reality. They are merely presented as what is culturally wanted and expected from a male perspective. A fixed archetype is created for female roles and they don't transgress entirely from this structure. It becomes pertinent to acknowledge these factors because it foreshadows what might be found in the findings in the chapters that follow.

The above six summaries and evaluations will serve as a guideline for the observations accumulated below in my respondents opinions. It may help the reader to understand certain references made by the respondents about the plots of the movies that have been selected for my sample. The analysis completed above was done so intentionally in order to situate the reader in a context that will enable them to effectively analyze the

respondent's reactions and the way that they may perceive their own possible interpretations.

Chapter Four

Responses from Respondents

Section one: Defining the diaspora

Introduction and methodology

In Billington, Hockey and Strawbridge's (cited in Hassim; 2007; 54-55) view, representations of values and perceptions are reflections of the power and interest of the dominant forces and are manifested in social relationships. These representations in India can be described as forced identity-construction ideologies. More explicitly these constructed archetypes serve as a link between consciousness and those conflicting ideologies that arise from the individuality of people within their particular social groups, for example, their gender or age. Billington et al. identified that these constructed identities are created purposely to maintain social order by concealing conflicting interests.

Barlas (cited in Hassim, 2007: 54) suggests that, "a society's construction of the ideal women also shapes its treatment of real ones." That is precisely why our understanding of the way South African women think and act cannot just lie within the imagined constructs of Bollywood cinema through which women are projected as subjects. For example, the theme of female stereotyping as discussed in the movie analysis section in the previous chapter constructs women as carers and nurturers, which is to the advantage of men, who receive this care and who are not expected to provide it for

others. But both men and women perceive this as a natural difference rather than a purposive identity construct. This makes it difficult to challenge these oppressive practices.

Drawing on Sood, Stockdale, and Rogers (2003), it will be deduced why women accept these identity constructions as natural and, even if they do not passively submit to these ideologies how they deter against them. As Sood et al. would explain, this study aims to determine viewers' referential reflections and critical reflections regarding the message content of the six selected Bollywood movies that form the center of this study and to use this information to ascertain how it is related to these respondents' daily lives. Referential reflections refer to the level to which viewers felt they could relate the stories to their own lives. Critical reflections refer to the degree to which viewers separate themselves from the events in the movie. Sood et al. (2003) argues that audience members have the capacity to construct, reconstruct and deconstruct messages in dramas that capture their interest.

This study focuses not only on a textual analysis of Bollywood movies, but also on determining how viewers react to the images and narratives presented to them in these Bollywood movies. I discussed the sampling of respondents in chapter two. While these women do not necessarily present a representative sample of the entire Indian women diaspora in South Africa (as mentioned previously, qualitative research does not carry the same burden of representativeness as quantitative research) their positionality within South Africa, and especially within the Indian diaspora in South Africa, makes them a particularly useful sample to investigate.

This section entails the identification of patterns of commonality amongst the interviewees about Bollywood cinema and the representation of women therein through the use of three narrative interviews. The data from specific interviews with women, chosen for the sake of this analysis, were deliberately selected in terms of particular profiles that stood out as representing something relative or completely outside of the usual pattern, but that were still relevant and representative of the greater population of South African Indian women. All interviewees were promised anonymity thus pseudonyms are used throughout the analysis. Their geographical details and personal particulars are retained in secured circumstances.

The literature that I have consulted and included looked at identity formation and construction derived from Bollywood cinema as well as the acceptance or resistance of Bollywood narratives from women and theorists in England, America, Australia and India. I now turn towards the case study of South Africa, and in particular to the small diaspora of Indian women in Polokwane and Laudium who form the structural center and focal point of this study.

In Pretoria and Polokwane, I discovered that the language differences amongst these women did not interfere with the production of cultural identities. However, what did stand out predominately was the split in thinking from those individuals who were born South African citizens and those who attained citizenship after moving here from India. Age did not matter as much as the environment and educational background from which each individual was brought up in or came from.

The discussion on data analysis begins by drawing a distinction between the process of making data manageable, or amendable to analysis, on the one hand, and actually

developing an analysis on the other. The first set of activities usually involves a variety of indexing and retrieval systems which researchers develop to help them get a handle on their data set. The second set of activities is more likely to entail going on to do some further creative work on the products of the first, in order to develop the analysis. In practice, the distinction between these two sets of activities became blurred because splitting the two engaged thoughts within a realm of creativity. But it is useful to treat the two sets of activities as distinct because this helps to underline the important point that, although techniques like indexing and retrieval provide materials with which an analysis can be created and crafted, they do not represent the analysis in and of themselves. In this section the focus is on the first set of activities. The data was used to develop categories that would act as signifiers in the sub-findings section.

In total, forty South African citizens were interviewed. Twenty of these women were from Polokwane and twenty from Pretoria. I was able to extract more interviews with Hindu respondents in Polokwane than in Pretoria. I interviewed a total of fifteen Hindu's: five from Pretoria and ten from Polokwane. They ranged from the ages of 23 to 65. They belonged to upper and middle class citizens and seven of them represented the Indian citizen's category. Two women belonged to the upper class Indian citizen's category and the rest fell in the lower/middle class branch. The remaining twenty-five respondents were Muslim. These women could be divided as follows: thirteen women from Pretoria and twelve from Polokwane, all belonging to middle and upper class categories and ranging from the ages of 20 to 60. A small percentage of this group was representative of the Indian citizen's category. Meaning these were ladies that were born in India and who moved to South Africa and have citizenship in our country. Though the sample was not equally split between Hindu and Muslim they were adequately represented in order

to observe a pattern and a very interesting diversity from the norm. All forty women interviewed belonged to the middle or upper class brackets.

Using an indexing methodology together with an amalgamation of similar themes I was able to identify four broad categories of women. These women could be divided as follows:

- The Traditionalist category; these were women that adhered to all customs and expectations. They never went against the rule of the male, be it their fathers or husbands or brothers. They have no say in household or personal matters and they did not think anything less of themselves for having no voice of their own.
- The second category of women that I developed was the Totally Independent category; these ladies stood their ground. In every question and discussion they emerged strong, decisive and liberated. They refused to be under the finger of any male counterpart and bared no feelings of guilt or hesitation when it came to how society would view their position. Knowing that they were seen as outcasts in society due to their rebellion against male power was of no significance to them.
- The third category included in my table is the Equal Category. These ladies showed a balance of power, decision making, negotiations and relations throughout their interviews. They explained that each situation that they encountered was reviewed by both sexes and decisions were civilly taken after seeing which option would give them both the best outcome.
- The last category of women in my table was the Indian Citizens category. Meaning these were ladies that both had Indian and South African citizenships. They proved to be interesting in my study as they experienced Indian life as it is

in India. They reflected the class system by showing their division through economic and educational standards. Thus I divided them into upper and middle class citizens. The upper class citizens were very similar to my Totally Independent category and the Lower/middle class citizens were much like my Traditionalist.

Below a table will indicate the types of characteristics identified in each group of the female categories that were identified as well as the characteristics of each group based on themes that I developed from their questionnaires. The first block in my table will explain what question or theme provoked the following group answers, reactions and deductions. The second, third, fourth and fifth blocks will reveal the reactions of each category respectively. The categories are listed at the top of the table.

Thereafter and to better familiarize the reader with the deductions from the table; I have included a narrative breakdown of the information in the tables.

Indexing of category characteristics:

1. Themes, Questions and Discussions that yield the results in columns 2, 3, 4 and 5:	2. Group 1: Traditionalist	3. Group 2: Totally independent	4. Group 3: Equal	5. Group 4: Citizens of India then S.A: Restriction
How were or are you brought up at home? How is your parenting structure enforced?	Autocratic Parenting	Broadminded, liberal parents	Cultural but communicative upbringing	Two classes: 1)Urban/upper class: Liberal upbringing. 2)Lower/middle class: Staunch and autocratic upbringing
What is the decision making process in your home? Is the balance of power equal or one-sided? Does this refer to both your personal and financial decision making?	Hierarchical family structures: all decision-making falls on the father, and then the husband, after marriage	All decisions, be they financial or personal, are made by the individual herself	All decisions are jointly undertaken. Sometimes in-laws may interfere but after negotiation decisions are undertaken. Financial dependence on husbands or fathers.	Urban class: Equal to independent decision-making Lower/middle class: Hierarchical family structures: responsibilities fall on father/husbands or sons

<p>Do society and its expectations affect your life and obligations within the realm of your home? Do you conform to society's needs or your own?</p>	<p>Conformity to social obligations</p>	<p>Rejection or acceptance of social obligations based on personal preference. Not concerned with opinions of others</p>	<p>Conformity to social obligations</p>	<p>Urban families: Follow self-constructed limitations Lower/middle class: Total conformity to societies expectations</p>
<p>Describe your own personality?</p>	<p>Conservative, introverted, passive personalities. Dependent on male counterparts and are in acceptance of such structures</p>	<p>Extroverted, independent, conscientious individuals. Staunch in their own beliefs and needs</p>	<p>Range from independent to moderately dependent; however they are still capable of and allowed to make personal decisions.</p>	<p>Urban class: Independent, decisive, highly educated. Lower class: Introverted, passive and submissive</p>
<p>How do you feel about gender inequality? And how does it bare reference in your own home?</p>	<p>Gender inequality is something that does not affect these people as they feel it is right for a man to wear the pants</p>	<p>Gender inequality is not accepted or allowed</p>	<p>They feel that south Africa does not perpetuate too much gender discrimination</p>	<p>Urban class: women are very free Lower class: subordinate to men</p>

<p>Are you a Bollywood fan?</p>	<p>These individuals all answered yes to being Bollywood fans</p>	<p>90% of individuals were not fans of Bollywood cinema, and felt it was a total waste of time. The other 10% watched it but with no significance</p>	<p>These individuals were all Bollywood fans</p>	<p>Upper class: Enjoyed the more thought-provoking Bollywood movie but both castes were over-all supporters of Bollywood cinema</p>
<p>Do you become emotional while watching a Bollywood Movie? If yes or no please substantiate.</p>	<p>Individuals admitted to becoming emotional while watching Bollywood movies as they do have relevance to life circumstances in one's life. Also these individuals are severely influenced by their sensitivity</p>	<p>Never become emotional because they believe Bollywood movies are in complete subversion from reality</p>	<p>Individuals become emotional about scenes that seem relevant to their own lives and also because they are sensitive to these tear-jerker presentations</p>	<p>Urban class: Do not really become emotional about <i>masala</i> movies because it is the same narrative being constantly repeated. Lower/middle class: Become sensitive and nostalgic when they see home and the predicaments that their people are faced with</p>

<p>Do you feel that Bollywood is a representation of reality? Why do you watch Bollywood movies?</p>	<p>These women feel that watching Bollywood movies show a thing or two about how Indians should behave and they feel a distinct connection to their Indian roots or origins</p>	<p>Bollywood is not representative of Indian culture or society and thus can in no way create feelings of nostalgia or any connection</p>	<p>These women feel that certain scenarios are reflective of our society and the issues surrounding our traditions. So there are certain root connections with India that can be established</p>	<p>No connection with India for both casts as they understand that the India they lived in was very different. They merely watch the films for entertainment and laughter purposes</p>
<p>Do you discuss Bollywood movies or their narratives after viewing them? If yes, why do you do so?</p>	<p>Scenes of Bollywood movies are discussed after watching a movie if they were interesting or reflective of the individual's life</p>	<p>Scenes are never discussed because they do not watch Bollywood cinema and if they do it merely as a past time</p>	<p>If the movie was excellent and produced some meaningful messages then it is worth talking about. And if the fashion is hip and new then a lot of hype centres these discussions</p>	<p>No discussion follows a movie for these viewers because they watch to simply get their monies worth and to entertain their over-worked minds. They however do find themselves discussing scenes that are totally unrealistic of the India they so very well know</p>

<p>What is your educational background?</p>	<p>These women are mostly uneducated mothers or educated single females who are restricted from carrying out their prospective careers due to male dominance</p>	<p>Very educated and professionally successful individuals</p>	<p>Matriculated or further educated, carrying out profession with the approval of their spouse, fathers or brothers</p>	<p>Upper class: Highly educated Lower/middle class: Not educated and majority are without matric certification as well</p>
<p>How would you describe the typical Bollywood narrative?</p>	<p>Bollywood narratives were described by these women as boy meets girl, they fall in love then a problem occurs. The problem is solved and all ends well. But they are against too open or westernized story-lines</p>	<p>Fairy tales which always end happily even if it means bringing someone back from the dead. They are un-real narratives</p>	<p>Typical narratives, a story with a problem, drama then a solution. These women were in joint approval of new wave films as they found them thought-provoking and worthwhile. Example: <i>Faana</i></p>	<p>Urban class: the basic <i>masala</i> movie which is the only kind we South Africans get access to are not reflective of India's movie talent and they feel we are getting the bitter end of the narrative possibilities. Lower/middle class: It satisfies their taste to see a movie end happily ever after, this shows they getting their money's worth</p>

<p>Are you for or against the typical Bollywood narrative?</p>	<p>For the narrative structure of Bollywood movies but against too progressive dressing or plots</p>	<p>Against the basic Bollywood narrative as it has no substance for them</p>	<p>For the basic narrative especially when it takes on issues of relevance in today's times and society</p>	<p>Urban class: against the <i>masala</i> productions that we have access to here in South Africa. They realize these target the middle to lower class viewers Lower/middle class: They are happy with basic Bollywood plot.</p>
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Narrative explanation of the table above

The table above summarizes the basic opinions and answers that were retrieved and indexed from the forty respondents. These interviews were separated into groups depending on the similarities that they bore with regards to certain amalgamated questions. This was done intentionally to make the data more accessible. The similarities in themes drawn from the answers provided by respondents acted as signifiers that formed the crux of the sub-findings section.

From these extractions the respondents were divided into three broad categories, namely: traditionalist, totally independent and equal members. Amongst the citizens who came from India to settle in South Africa, different spectrums or categories came into play. They could be separated into an urban or upper class division and middle to lower class division. The lower or middle class division could be aligned with the traditional category as mentioned above; however the urban/upper class sector produced a restriction in this study. Their diasporic roots proved that no generalized spectrum could be identified with a mere sample of forty women and although it was a limitation, it was discovered that it is this restriction that could help further researchers to evolve and further develop the initial findings of this study.

The characteristics that helped develop these three categories stemmed from the following questions that have been tabled above and will be explained below:

- The upbringing and parental structures in place in each respondents home. The question that brought to light this conversation was part of the first interview with the respondents. It considered the decision making models in their homes. Respondents

were asked if they were married, who made household decisions and how it differed from their parent's homes. They were invited to share how they felt about the hierarchies of power within their households or within the homes of their parents.

It could be deduced that in an Indian home, the parents are usually meant to be the mentors and power-agents. It was interesting to see how each category neatly demarcated their parent's roles in their lives. None of the categories could completely move away from the parental unit. The totally independent and equal groups both admitted that their parents allowed them to make their own decisions, however they still needed that un-invading advice or support from their parental units. The final decision would be in their own hands, however their communication with their parents continued. Thus, even in the broad-minded scenario, parents were still an integral part of their lives, which is an important point to note. Carolyn Finch (2000:3-4) explains that moving away from ones family would amount to transgressive behaviour or what Indians would regard as the 'western evil influence of the vamp' which is seen as a punishable act. This bullet point explains the first factor in my table.

- Hierarchical family structures formed the second most discussed issue and theme amongst my respondents which will be discussed here. Each respondent was eager to talk about who wore the pants in their homes and they all acknowledged that according to custom it is the male that holds such power. The totally independent category in this regard knew that they were going against the norm by saying that they make all their household and financial decisions. However, they believed that no curse would befall on them. The women in homes that were dominated by in-laws which belonged to the traditionalist category and the lower/middle class Indian

citizens were terribly unhappy and had a lot of objections against such practices. However, in keeping with the main argument in this study, they were correspondingly unhappy but unable or rather not allowed by tradition to vent their feelings. Thus they openly accept and privately reject their position in the home, society and within the diaspora. Overt and direct male dominated decision making could be acknowledged in all the movies in my sample. The equal category women expressed that they had the power to discuss any decision making issues, however the final say would be the one with the most pro's over cons. This, they all admitted was a fair distribution of decision-making power, and it was one that they could accept. Some of the women in the equal category complained about in-laws that tended to interfere, but the husband's in this case were fair and would lean towards the side that was right in any given situation. Also, the majority of these women were financially supported by their husband or father and this was despite the fact that most of them had their own jobs, earning their own salaries. This money was kept solely for themselves, as the fathers and husbands felt responsible to still look after their households.

- Conformity to social obligations formed my third issue. Although this question was not directly addressed in my questionnaire, during my interview sessions the issue of society and what it expected continued to come forward. Therefore it began to form one of my main themes. Here, respondents accepted that being Indian meant living up to the expectations of those around you. The traditionalist category, equal and lower/middle class Indian citizens categories here expressed their utmost respect, and at the same time fear, for the sense of community. They did everything possible to adhere to what the community would label as acceptable and they dared not transgress these imaginary boundaries. It could be deduced that they felt the need to please not themselves, but all those around them. My independent and upper class

Indian citizen categories were disdainful of community responsibility. They all, in some way or the other, expressed no need to constantly live up to other people's standards. Hassim (2007) in this respect would side with those in the totally independent and Upper class Indian citizens categories where she explains in her book that being Indian means that if you do what people want you to do, they will gossip, and if you do the opposite of what is expected of you, you will still be the topic of gossip until some other person falls out of societies fold. So either way, you will never satisfy an Indian community.

- Character profiling proved very beneficial because it helped to situate the reasons for these respondents either rejecting or taking to heart the messages and narratives presented in the movie sample. This will help explain the next block in my table. In the questionnaire, many questions allowed for some self-reflection. This data was used along with the answer that they provided for the question that asked, "Describe your own personality?" It was interesting as well as self-gratifying to see that the women in each of the categories provided similar if not the same descriptions of themselves. When comparing their characters to the rest of their answers, the profiling was relatively accurate. Hence I was able to divide them as such: the women in the traditional and lower class Indian citizens group could be described as conservative, introverted and passive. They were completely dependent on their male counterparts and were in acceptance of such structures. The totally independent category as one could imagine was the complete opposite. They could be described as extroverted, independent and conscientious individuals. These women were extremely staunch in their own beliefs and would not sacrifice anything to replace their own needs. The equal category women varied and could be best described as a range of characters varying from independent to moderately

dependent; however they were still capable of and allowed to make personal decisions. The urban upper class women were also very decisive, independent and driven by their educational standings.

- Gender inequality is the main reason that this Bollywood study was conducted. However this question could not be directly addressed to the respondents as it may have influenced their thinking. Thus I have used my own interpretation skills to decipher their position on this issue. The 5th block in the table represents what these women shared with respect to gender inequality. The following two questions from the interview schedule were used to develop this theme: “How do you imagine or if you have direct knowledge, how do you feel about women in India?” and “How do you feel about your position as an Indian women in South Africa?” Using the responses from these questions it was found that the traditionalist category women weren’t concerned about issues of male and female power struggles. They felt that men were the breadwinners, family gatherers and decision makers. One woman even described her husband and father-in-law as the spine of the family, which only becomes reflective of the fact that they are aware that men are in a superior position but that at the same time they have no problem with this. The independent category revealed that they would never allow a man to dominate over them in any realm of life or society. The equal category respondents showed that South Africa was not a place that made them feel any differences between male and female, hence they did not feel this imbalance in their homes as well and lastly the Indian citizens category was divided. The lower class expressed feeling that men are superior and allowed to be so and the upper class felt that such behaviour could, should and would not be tolerated.

- Being a Bollywood fan also featured as an important discussion. This is the next point in the table. All the sectors in the category segregation, the traditionalist, the equal and the upper and middle class Indian citizens categories were all fans of Bollywood movies. Being a fan meant that respondents had a lot more to say and engage with. However, those respondents who were not fans proved to be very valuable in this study because they formed the exception to the typical female fan. This group formed the totally independent category. They helped see shed light on certain issues and provided a base for comparison when it came to the emotional attachment or involvement that the fans had towards Bollywood cinema.
- This then brings us to the issue of emotional attachment, featured 7th on the table. As Mulvey would suggest, when women are being produced as eye-candy or are being inadequately represented, how can they sit back and not feel a thing? The traditionalist and equal and the lower class Indian citizens categories all felt an emotional attachment to the tear jerker moments in the movies, as well as for scenes that were reflective of certain situations in their own lives. Their reactions are also appropriate when one looks at their character profiling. All of the above respondents fell in sensitive personality description. They had nostalgic attachments to the Bollywood movies. And it was those who were highly independent that were disturbed by the sing-song narratives of Bollywood melodramas.
- The emotional attachment factor led to many discussions amongst respondents about their feelings of nostalgia or association with the traditions and cultural elements presented in the sample of movies. These were therefore included as the next theme. The questionnaire tried to address their level of interaction with the movie by asking questions about how they relate to Bollywood cinema and its

narratives. These interesting conversations led to the following observations: the traditionalist category said they felt that watching Bollywood movies shows a thing or two about how Indians should behave and that they also felt a distinct connection to their Indian roots or origins. Similarly the equal category women felt that certain scenarios were reflective of their society and the issues surrounding Indian traditions. The totally independent categories reaction was a complete divergence from the women above. They felt that Bollywood is not representative of Indian culture or society and thus can in no way create feelings of nostalgia or any connection for them. In this regard, the Indian citizen's category was rather interesting to observe. They expressed no connection with India, in the case of both casts, as they understand that the India they lived in was very different. They merely watch the films for entertainment and laughter purposes. This observation makes one understand that what these directors are producing is a false sense of reality, tradition, culture and gender.

- The next three tabulated themes can be discussed and broken down as a whole as they lead into one another. It was found that education influenced how often Bollywood movies were discussed among respondents and also how they reacted to the *masala* formula of happily-ever-after. The traditionalist category women were uneducated due to being held behind by their dominant males, they however did discuss Bollywood movie scenes when they felt it pertained to their lives. However, this can also be related to the fact that they did identify with feelings of nostalgia towards Bollywood movies and also because their education would not allow them to understand that these movies have been specifically designed to evoke those emotions in them. Traditionalists described the typical Bollywood movies as a boy meets girl, they fall in love, experience an obstacle, resolve the issue and happiness

is restored. The only objection that they had was the presentation of westernized dressing and ideas. The totally independent category never discussed Bollywood movies and if they did it was to scorn their ridiculous story-lines. They attributed their reaction to the fact that they were highly educated and not so gullible to stereotypical *masala* creations. They described the fairy-tale endings of Bollywood movies as a far cry from reality. Hence they would not waste their time on such forms of entertainment. The women that formed part of the equal category had a balanced reaction towards all three themes. Most of them came from educated backgrounds, be it matric or further study, and they felt a need to discuss Bollywood movies as if the messages presented meant something or evoked something positive. They also enjoyed talking about fashion in Bollywood cinema and they described story-lines much like the traditionalist, namely, the story begins, everyone is happy, a problem occurs, the problem is resolved and happiness prevails. They, however, identified new wave films as ones that they preferred because these movies were created with special messages from the start; a movie with a meaning. The last category of women, the Indian citizens category, despite their educational experiences felt no need to discuss Bollywood movies, as they know they are watching it for entertainment purposes only. They have experienced and know the real culture and talent that India possesses. The upper class however felt that we South Africans are only being allowed to view these typical *masala* movies, whereas India's movie talent goes far beyond these meaningless productions. The lower class citizens felt that the happily-ever-after endings provide them with satisfaction for the money they spent to rent out a form of entertainment.

- Lastly, the important factor that helped form the theme of educational acquisition was whether the families, and especially the male members of these respondents,

supported their studies if they allowed them to acquire an education at all. When divulging in this controversial topic, women who did possess some academic qualification appeared to be more opinionated than those who had been deprived of or simply did not have such resources available. Education also led to the question of financial stability and distribution.

The narratives produced by these forty women showed very interesting responses to the exponential structures of Bollywood cinema and to those surrounding their own lives. The table and narrative analysis above helped index all the research so that it could come together to form a wholesome analysis. The reactions of each woman towards the selected movies also helped to bring forth a number of defined themes, like that of education, hierarchies of power, decision-making, feelings of nostalgia associated with the way they displayed emotions towards Bollywood narratives and the actual structure of the Bollywood plot. These themes also cut across each individual personal life experience, which added more depth and justification to the evaluations. These results and rich responses will be fully evaluated in the next section.

Section two: Findings and discussions

Carrying out a reception study with responses from the viewers themselves situates this study well. There is no doubt that the proliferation of popular Indian movies has increased in South Africa over the last ten years, during which time our press agencies have been publishing more Bollywood stories and our audiences have become very conscious of this growing popularity.

The forty women who form the core of this project were interviewed with regard to more than just Bollywood and its themes but also about their self-reflexivity and their own life circumstances. In the previous section it was explained that the indexing process of these individuals' biographical data did involve analytical thinking. However, the categories themselves provided this study with a way into the data rather than representing analytical end-products. The tables of category data assisted in developing cross-sectional themes which were observed when looking at the tables horizontally. For example, looking at the first block of category features in the table, parenting structures, it can be comparatively seen that each groups' parenting strategies impact on their other features, like education and liberation. This is the main strength and purpose of indexing data according to categorising in this way (Mason, 1989; 95).

Madison (2005: 95) points out that there is a limitation here: these category features, although having some meaning in themselves, have been removed from the context from which they originated. Yet for qualitative research the context, whether that is viewed as the social interaction of the interview itself, or interviews with the individual, or the biography of the interviewee, or something else, is usually highly relevant both to understanding what is going on, and to validating analytical claims. "For almost any purpose the researcher will want to do some contextualizing, especially where she or he is investigating the nature of social processes, and that will mean bringing to bear other data to make sense of, and make the most of, the cross sectional themes (Madison, 2005; 95)." How to contextualize, which other data to draw upon, and how to understand relationships between themes in the data, are of course matters of intellectual judgment which form part of the process of developing the analysis.

The data that was extracted revealed a great deal about their experiences, views and the models that decipher their decision-making capabilities. Four segments were identified in the South African thinking and the basic arguments revealed that respondents either found Indian movies appealing and entertaining because of their cultural proximity, their affirmation of or affinity for the imagined narratives or because of a sense of nostalgia in connection to their roots. Alternatively however, the argument also revealed that for some respondents the Indian movie was distanced from their lifestyles completely due to a lack of realism or substance.

Within the spectrum of the respondents, there were notably different degrees of attachment and involvement to the contemporary Indian media culture. They all had their own opinions about the contribution and construction of mediated identities in Bollywood movies. Thus the process of discovering significant themes involved the gathering and clustering of several related issues and ideologies. Emmerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995: 170) suggest that a theme that allows the researcher to make linkages to other issues noted in the data as particularly promising; building a thematic narrative involves the organization of themes into a “coherent story about life and events in the setting studies.” Ram (2002: 28) explains that this kind of analysis is not only a description or cataloging of patterns but an “interpretative leap,” which adds meaning, significance, explanations and ultimately draws conclusions, inferences and linkages for the conclusion of a study.

Each interview which was carried out was transcribed. This transcription allowed themes and commonalities to become clearly evident. According to Nelson cited in Flick (1989: 229) “it is during the labour of transcribing that the researcher performs the actual transformation from listening to speech, to writing of speech, or making visible the

invisible.” Transcribing and indexing categories formed the first step in developing a stream of similarities in the data analysis as common ideas and topics that occurred were correspondingly recorded. The questionnaire provided an initial guide in sorting through the bulk of the data. This study was directed by the main research question: How do South African Indian women interpret the gendered representation embodied in popular Indian movies? With this their answers were observed in relation to life circumstances, experiences and backgrounds.

In this regard, the single most undecided issue that was brought to attention was whether Bollywood cinema is seeking to make viewers nostalgic, or if it is a medium that allows viewers to produce, retaliate or accept notions of male/female hierarchies, is it a means of producing consumers with certain cultural codes and identities? Regarding the issue of nostalgia, Allesandrini (2001: 315-340) argues that nostalgia alone cannot compel viewers to watch Bollywood movies but that it has to be a process of simultaneity with some other entity in one’s life. He urges us to ask, what, instead of nostalgia, underpins the concrete viewing experience of Bollywood in the diaspora.

Bhattacharya’s (2004: 164) research clearly outlines that although researchers like Allesandrini pose such questions, they failed to provide much empirical insight about such audiences and their responses, due to the fact that they limited their studies to more formal and cultural readings of particular movies. Bhattacharya also points out that Ram (2002) tried to fill the audience analysis gap but that her results also failed to address the issues highlighted above. Bhattacharya herself undertook a study, “to understand the diverse population known as the India diaspora in concrete sites of spectatorship and locations of desire and pleasure, negotiate their relations with nation,

exile and cultural reproduction through the medium of Bollywood,” but she failed to include the South African diaspora which is where this study situates itself.

In this chapter, the strategy of combining the biographical characteristics that were found in the previous chapter together with data that section two and three in the interview yielded, was used. The questionnaire is attached as an appendix and this will help situate where the themes below were gathered from. Throughout the results section a two-way interrelationship between the table of characteristics and the other data that were obtained was created to form a horizontally common set of themes with particular attention to the reproduction of identities, hierarchies, gender segregation and cultural traditionalism. Below are the themes that were identified.

Evoking a sense of nostalgia:

All the women interviewed who fell in the traditionalist as well as the equal and lower/middle class Indian citizen categories clearly noted and admitted that they do feel a sense of re-connection to their roots. For the lower/middle class Indian citizen this feeling of nostalgia was described “as a link to back home.” Earlier Indian cinema scholars have emphatically suggested that Bollywood films, like other versions of popular culture from their roots, serve to stage nostalgia for many viewers in the diaspora.

Bhattacharya (2004: 164) notes, in support of this argument, that Indian social settings are staged with ongoing Bollywood film rebuttals, in a way of the exegetic setting despite

the actual act of watching the movie. A middle-class Hindu respondent, Mrs. S, who is a qualified beautician living in Polokwane said”

My kids continually participate in Bollywood-style dance competitions, like the Boogie Woogie competition and they learn their dance moves from all the latest Bollywood movies.

She was proud to include that her son and daughter were selected for the semi-finals that took place in Durban sometime this year. As one thus observes, Bollywood serves as a powerful ideological tool in re-enforcing the relevance of Bollywood cinema in everyday life. Other respondents also noted that Hindu celebrations such as Diwali and Holi, the festivals of colour, are celebrated much to the same extent as it is represented in Bollywood movies.

A Muslim radiologist, Mrs. K, in her late forties, further added that:

While watching scenes from Bollywood movies where parents are old-fashioned but their homes are full of love and honour, I think of my parents while they were in India on the farms. I can picture them acting out similar roles as those of the stars.

She further elaborated that life in India was always described with so much passion by her deceased father that she relates the stories and scenes to their own lives. She says she sometimes sees her father’s messages and talks being reiterated through this medium. She strongly identifies with the narratives and morals that are projected in these films and says that:

I love to watch Indian movies with my three daughters; it gives me a chance to explain that this or that is the way things should be.

In some sense one can observe that the traditions and experiences of the Indian homeland have migrated with the diaspora through the influence of Bollywood cinema. However, the other side of the continuum needs to be included to understand the contrasting views of respondents. Both remaining categories, the totally independent

and the upper/urban class Indian citizen, violently disputed the creation of any sort of nostalgic charges. A highly educated Dentist, Dr. S, from Pretoria argues that:

Bollywood movies are really a far cry from reality, they project ideals, morals and themes that are not relevant or reflective of the Indian society in India or here.

She was in an uproar about the fact that Bollywood projects too much glitz and glamour but that it does not really show the suffering, inequality or actual lived experience of the average Indian citizen in India.

It should not be about the crazy dance sequences, off-base story lines or typical happily-ever-after endings,

said 26 year old Mrs. R, a Biologist living in Polokwane. She feels that Indian people give too much time to pointlessly long and un-stimulating Indian movies. She admits that:

The range of 'New Wave' films sweeping the industry do have some depth as compared to the typical *masala* movie, but that people should not become so involved in plots that are not true accounts of what is really happening in India or around the world with respect to the lives of Indian women.

These women all displayed their disliking for Bollywood very overtly and a pattern was located in the fact that these women all attained tertiary education as well as further academic achievements and they displayed characteristics of independence and decisiveness.

The other category that was in firm unison with the totally independent category was the upper Indian citizen category. These individuals all identified the fact that the actual-lived experience in India was very different to the one projected in Bollywood narratives and they therefore could never establish any kind of nostalgic attachment to these movies.

They evoke no feeling of connection to my roots, because that is not how we lived or what we did while we lived in India,

said Prof. S. She is a Professor in Economics, who currently works in Canada but is married to her Professor husband stationed in Polokwane.

An interesting conversation with her revealed an amusing story that highlighted a strikingly important reality that relates to this particular theme. The conversation can be quoted as follows:

We have these Italian diplomat friends that we meet up with in the inter-rim of our Johannesburg trips, they are close friends of my husband and I. We one day got talking about our own people and the Italian lady friend of mine said something rather interesting. She said that it's amazing that Italian women in Johannesburg insist on making their own pasta from scratch, claiming that it's the Italian way. But what is hilarious is that back home in Italy the women have moved forward, they buy their pasta from the local supermarkets, so I can't get the logic of these women here, who are clinging to an identity that is just not relevant in our times.

She pointed out this story and went on to elaborate that it's not just with Indians but any cultural diaspora. They make claim to traditions because they see it that way in the movies or they hear what's expected of their identities and they follow these rituals but it does not necessarily have a relation to reality. It is more an internalized need for some nostalgic characteristic. Mrs. S. also clearly pointed out that she was of an upper class category while she lived in India and women there were not restricted, ill-treated or deprived the way Bollywood portrays them, certainly not the women in her social strata. Her story made me realize that in many senses the actual traditions and morals featured in Bollywood movies are being taken very literally by the first three categories of respondents.

The varieties of these responses accommodate and contain significant paradoxes which clearly arise due to the fact that the respondents came from different occupational categories as well as educational backgrounds. The equal, traditionalist and lower class Indian citizens all related to Bollywood film as a source of nostalgic evocation. But the

upper class Indian citizens, along with the totally independent categories, dismissed the commercial Bollywood narratives as trivial or even despicable. These conversations brought me to the next most prominent theme namely: society and its expectations.

Societal expectations:

Entangled within the Bollywood narratives and Indian family boundaries is the ever-increasing pressure of societal expectations. During the process of interviewing respondents' it came about very distinctively that whether women were accepted or ridiculed depended on their religious, traditional or family boundaries that were further dependent on societies views of what's acceptable.

All my Hindu respondents made reference to their Hindu Goddess Sita when it came to what's expected of them and this led to further research into their religion to understand the background of such expectations. Ram (2002) adequately summarises the influence of Sita as follows:

The Hindu Goddess represents an embodiment of purity, chastity and the careful control of sexuality, continuously circumscribed within the domain of heterosexual marriage, family and nation. Prescribed as the feminine ideal by the classic text the *Manu-Smriti*, stories about Sita are used to promote strong patriarchal ideologies primarily through the notion of *pati-vrata* or complete devotion to the husband (2002: 25-28).

According to Pretoria jeweler, Mrs. R:

Sita-like role models are always used in Bollywood movies where a wife who is traditional will fight for her husband against the Westernized women, who is an example of what we Indian women should never be. And it is always the Sita-like women who will win. A typical example of this is the movie you made me watch- *Aitraaz*, where Priya protects her husband Raj from being accused of an affair with the evil, modern Sonia. And it is Sonia's overly open manner that leads to her downfall.

What made Mrs. R's interview interesting was the fact that she recognized and took personally the fact that a women who transgresses her role as a chaste women will be duly punished both internally, by her reputation, and externally, by society and religion whose boundaries she has transgressed. Similarly, a Muslim house-wife from a traditional background, Mrs. N, commented that:

In *Babul*, the daughter-in-law Malini, was so respectful to her culture and the expectations of her religion that she failed to see any happiness after the death of her husband, and eventually it was her father-in-law who had to make the family see that a person does not have to die with their traditions or customs. The society cannot kill someone who is still alive and it was due to her loyalty to that very society that she was given a second chance at love and happiness.

At this point is it imperative to explain that according to Hindu scriptures a women who has lost her husband is considered to be eternally widowed, she cannot re-marry and must live in her mourning from then till her end. In the Islamic scriptures a women is allowed to re-marry after the death of her husband but this marriage is also guided by a few religious principles. These respondents highlight that the theme of societal loyalty essentially parallel Hindu and Muslim prescripts. These women recognized and constantly re-iterated that an adulterous woman or a woman who further steps over the boundaries set by society is recognized as the vamp, the representation of impurity which is closely associated with modernity and westernization.

During the interviews I was met with a very touching but relevant example of a woman whose life was drastically affected by the influence of external societal expectation. A middle-aged Muslim teacher from Polokwane, Mrs. N, was met with the unfortunate circumstance of her husband giving her three *Talaqs* during a rage of anger. According to Islamic scriptures the pronouncement of three *Talaqs* equals an immediate divorce bearing in mind certain principles. The family was divided. Their two children, both in junior primary school, were severely affected and confused. The community, despite the

husband and wife's desire to patch things up, were in uproar of such a possibility. If they wished to re-unite they both would have to marry someone else, divorce that person and then re-marry each other. Such a possibility seemed daunting to both parties and they tried their best to overcome their bitter but unintentional separation. People in the community began to stir feelings of hatred and anger in them and this caused them to turn away from each other and the possibility of ever being re-united, but silently they both tried their utmost and contacted the Islamic foundation in Saudi Arabia who after a year accepted that their divorce was void as the woman was menstruating and at such a time a divorce cannot be proclaimed.

Mrs. N, said:

You cannot imagine the things that the community tried to put in my head, if my love for my husband was not so strong, I think we would have been torn apart forever and our kids would have suffered the most. It is sad but even my in-laws forgot all the things I had done for them, they simply sided with the society in saying that a divorce is a divorce. Such notions in society need to be rid of because sometimes circumstances are different. This experience, however, has taught me how strong a woman I really am, in my husband's anger he left me totally financially and emotionally crippled, I however managed to get a job, feed, clothe and look after my kids and I don't deny that there were people that supported me and helped me through, but the sour grapes in our community I shall forever remember. I suppose if I was in India there would only be sour grapes because there I would not even have been given the opportunity to defend my innocence or to look after my own family using my education and skills. I am lucky to be a South African and I am lucky to have found my happily-ever-after. You would have thought my life was a Bollywood movie, but I've learnt that if it does not kill you it only makes you stronger.

Her story greatly impacted this study because through her suffering a lot of themes were provoked, such as the theme of external influence being the most prominent. Her strength also highlighted that society was not able to overcome her ability to fulfill a strong role in looking after her children and being the bread winner. However, her perception that in India it would be completely different came solely from the Bollywood notion, so it makes one think about the messages Bollywood are perpetuating. Could the

Sita not be a strong-willed independent and liberated women, who at the same time was a brilliant female role-model mother and wife?

Although not all the interviewees agreed with the Sita explanation, they all agreed that transgressing societal expectations meant being excluded or mocked by those around them, especially in male domains. A very successful woman, Mrs. Z, who is a government construction builder (R.D.P Housing), in her fifties said:

I have built my success on everything that I alone achieved. People, especially in my Indian community, are dissatisfied with the fact that I as a women have achieved such high ranks. But their comments are met with my ignorance because my family strongly supports and encourages me further. I believe I have done absolutely nothing wrong and yet I have the time to be a good wife and mother at the same time as being a successful female entrepreneur.

Mrs. Z, who belonged to the totally independent category, was not the only one who felt this way. She was joined by all the other totally independent women who all explained that they were well aware of their own personal boundaries but that in terms of their own achievements and standards, they could not be bothered about society as they are living for themselves and not for others. These women all showed a low tolerance to being told what to do or how it should be done. Their liberal thinking could be attributed to such behavioural characteristics.

However, according to Mrs. S, a young Homeopath,

Growing up, my dad was very possessive and controlling. We were five sisters and he would never allow us to go out with our friends alone without my mum as supervision. He seldomly allowed me to dress the way I wanted to and when I was 19, he allowed me to have my first boyfriends, which was actually arranged through him. Today I think of my dad and I can't thank him enough for being the way he was, because I married the boy he chose for me and I am happy. He kept my name from being vilified in society. When I was younger I detested him for being so concerned with the world, I thought he forgot us in the process but if it was not for him I would not be the person I am today. He was just protecting me from the comments of our inquisitive society.

Mrs. S was very open during her interview and this allowed me to extract essential information, noting that it was her primary male care-giver, her father that shaped her life and the way she turned out as well as how she identified herself. Another interesting quote that Mrs. S made during our interview was that:

Because my dad was so strict and concerned about our community after I got married I always found myself going to my husband for approval on anything I did, because this is how it was with my daddy. My hubbie hates that about me because he feels I keep second guessing myself. He's a firm believer in equality, it's just tough for me because I never had that confidence as kid and being a girl I feel I need that support.

This quote highlights how much significance the role of the man in the house has on women.

Indian cinema and Indian families have prioritized their duty to protect females' reputations in a highly restrictive way. These restrictions may have impacted the lives and potentials of many women. Hassim (2007), author of "Daughters are Diamonds," highlights in her study that although women are well aware of their obvious human limitations and obligations, society has still managed to curtail the success and happiness of many unheard female voices. Bhattacharya (2004) captures this well in saying that, "Ones perception of identity is intimately tied to ones perception of belonging to a community, of (maternal or non-maternal) identity, and what processes constitute communities and identities in the diaspora."

It was further discovered through the interviews that these societal obligations were imposed or expected to be adhered to from male forces which develops the next point of discovery: Gender hierarchies and patriarchal parents or partners.

Patriarchal hierarchies of power:

Gender, as we understand and use it, is that deep imprinting of cultural beliefs, values, and expectations on one's biological sex, forming a new fundamental component in a person's sense of identity. When viewed collectively, it is a system of difference between men and women, and a system of relations between the two groups, with males almost universally in a position of dominance. (Bell and Yalom: 1990: 5).

Amongst my respondents identification of Bollywood's gendered narratives diverged greatly, from submissive acceptance, to maintaining the status quo, to defensive declarations justifying the patriarchal structures displayed in Bollywood narratives and practices in their homes.

As one could guess by now, similar patterns occurred in this theme which appeared in the previous two. 98% of the women interviewed noted and responded to the gendered portrayals of controlled sexuality, monogamy and purity in Indian cinema. When asked, "How do you feel women are portrayed in Bollywood cinema?" the range of answers put forth significant divisions. Mrs. A, a 24-year-old optician and mother, professed her rejection of this gendered identity and said:

Bollywood makes women inferior to men and our religion. Islam teaches equality between genders, that is how it is between my husband and me and now that I have a daughter I want nothing less for her too.

Mrs. K, a young mother and housewife with a B.Com Degree, which she cannot utilize said:

Being Indian and a woman comes with these rules that allow us to act in a certain way publically. And I think a husband has the right to impose his rules on his wife. It's cultural, traditional and the way it was in all our previous generations. I see Bollywood showing this thinking so I can relate but I hate the way the new movies show too much of skin on the female characters. The dressing and story lines are becoming too modern with affairs and stuff. The old movies with the morals and the modesty are still the best.

Her reaction identifies an outright acceptance of patriarchal representations because she herself can identify with such a lifestyle. And the last category of reactions that I

could establish was similar to that of Mrs. Z, the Government Construction Builder, who said:

I don't have time for these sexist stories because it's not right, women are not so weak.

Similar interpretations of gender in relation to the selected movies resonated across the interviews. The lower class Indian citizens agreed with Mrs. K, from the traditionalist category that women have prescribed submissive roles in relation to men and that it is totally acceptable. The urban Indian citizen category rejected such ideologies. According to Mrs. S, the Economics Professor:

We are watching the range of movies that are popular and which are allowed to circulate because they fit the marketed description of what sells, these movies sell but far from represent the status of women in India. Women in India stand on better footings than they do here in South Africa. I never noticed my gender as an issue with regards to my success in India. But here in South Africa a big thing is made of my femininity. Students and male colleagues look at me and approach me differently here. South Africans have the wrong idea about the educated women in India; they are not submissive, restricted or weak, they are simply misrepresented thanks to these *masala* movies that you have also included in your sample. You are not even getting to watch a tenth of the really reflective Indian movies which Bollywood produces and you will probably never get to see them because they are not the typical popular movies that are so widely distributed. I don't think those movies will even succeed here because it will throw off these typical movies which South African Indian women seem to adore so much. They want to watch these ridiculous movies because I believe they have a morbid sense of identification with the plots in regard to what's happening in their own South African lives and they mistake it for being part of the Indian world culture or tradition. Identification however with these movies don't make these women more Indian, because it's simply not true of India, it just makes them vulnerable to a lie.

It can be recognized that for the categories of respondents in this study that gender is an important site for cultural difference in opinion. As Ram says, "Shame, patience, sexual loyalty and even deference are presented as signifying the Indian-ness of Indian women," (2002: 30). Implicit in the accounts of the women belonging to the traditionalist, equal and lower class Indian citizens' category was their reactions about being different from the modern or westernized women. This difference is marked in their responses to

two new notions that are being promoted in the recent Bollywood blockbusters, namely, the showing of flesh and the association of having affairs and being an Indian woman. These women expressed high levels of moral censure with regards to the movies *Aitraaz* and the appearance of westernized vamp Sonia, whose dressing and demeanor spelt sexual over-kill.

One respondent, Miss A, who belonged to the traditionalist category said:

How could the producer of *Aitraaz* allow the woman Sonia, to dress the way she did? She showed more leg and breast than any acting and then how can you concentrate on the movie when she looks so off. Another thing is how can I then watch such movies with my father or brothers? It's just sick!

Another similar response was gathered from Mrs. S, a housewife and mother of five, who said:

In *Dushman*, *Aitraaz* and *Faana*, the women are too strong in character and roles. They all over-power their men. In *Faana*, she kills the love of her life, the father of her child. That's just not the Indian way. I still like movies like *Babul* and *Devdas* and even *Shabd* because I can see me in those lights. A good mum and wife and I am obedient to my husband. My husband also likes it that way.

It can be understood that from her position in the home and in the hierarchy of power she would react the way she did. This respondent according, to Ram (2002: 30), would be someone who relates to Bollywood because of her position as a symbol of purity, adherence to compulsory heterosexuality and the ideology of the sanctity of her motherhood.

Ram further explains this reasoning as follows: "Hindu mythology provides the ground for such expressions. One of the most powerful symbols to resonate across religious, nationalist and popular discourses within Indian contexts is that of the Earth. In Hinduism the earth is revered as both Prithvi or as a natural/divine phenomenon, as a Bharat, Mother Indian, a more cultural entity" (2002: 31). According to Islamic scriptures women

are given equal status but are supposed to be protected and provided for by the men in their homes. Women are to be associated with motherhood and maternal instincts.

The reactions to the above three categories confirm Vasudev's (1983: 100), argument that although Indian cinema portrays women as self-sacrificing, they also figure as "indestructible when it comes to protecting their children." It is ironic that they can be such forces of power for their children, but such weak representations of their own individuality.

But as with the other themes, this one also comes with contradictions from the totally independent and urban class Indian citizen categories. These women contested these dominant patriarchal ideologies that surface repeatedly in all the Indian movies in the sample. Mrs. S, the totally independent dentist said:

In my home it's my way or the high-way and my husband is too busy to even realize that I wear the pants, so why should I succumb to such silly Bollywood babble.

Mrs. R, and Mrs. Y, from Polokwane both agreed along the same lines that a women's perspective should not be one that is shunned because they have the ability to be more logical and powerful than men and they both agreed that they would not stand to be represented as weaker than or submissive to their husbands. When asked, "How does your husband react to your strong-willed confidence?" they explained that their husbands support and understand their strength. Despite being successful and liberated these women also achieve happiness in their marriages and find relatively little complaints from their spouse. It was amusing, on my way out of Mrs. Y's home to spot a magnet that that read as follows:

If we could put a man on the moon, how come we can't put them all there!

Within these traditional, Indian, patriarchal, familial contexts women had varying degrees of power, depending on their relationship with themselves and their counterparts. As was noted earlier, for those women who were undermined in the gender realm the irony was that they were accorded as much power in their role as mothers, in contrast to being wives that are subservient, self-sacrificing and weak. Concurrently, the women who wore the pants in a relationship or who came from equal, respected marriages revealed that such positions evolved whether from their liberal upbringings or from strong educational backing grounds which draws me to my next themes: “Parental upbringing, education and its implications for Bollywood respondents.”

Education and parental guidance:

“As part of the prescribed traditionalist Indian structures that ensure that the female is kept within a limited sphere of reference so that there is no space for harm to befall the honour of the family/community, the kind of education and socialization material that she has access to, are themselves deliberately limited in nature.” (Hassim: 2007: 92).

The above quote is reminiscent of the mindset that has limited many of the women in this study from furthering their own aspirations and from reaching their own goals. The quote above provides the perfect justification for the Indian mindset and it illustrates why in some homes boundaries have not evolved further than the meticulous control of all female matters.

Respondents who came from traditionalist homes all found that their reaction to Bollywood movies was greatly influenced by the background or upbringing from which they came from or grew up in. Lines clearly separated those who were brought up by patriarchal father figures, matriarchal mother figures and from those who were brought

up in liberal homes. Respondents from the traditionalist and lower class Indian citizen categories admitted to growing up in homes where their fathers, grandfathers, uncles, father-in-laws or husbands words were regarded as law. Such was the case in the movie *Babul*, where the eldest uncle was feared due to his obsession with old strict customs and laws. This resonates with the images represented by all these respondents. Words that were commonly repeated by these women included: “His way or no way,” and “possessive, controlling, authoritarian, dictator and dominant.” It was ironic, however, to note that these were the women who also justified the male superiority in their lives by saying: “its okay that he is in control, because it has to be that way.” A pattern of acceptance emerged amongst these women, one that came from generations before.

In other words, it could be ascertained that women who came from homes where their mothers submissively accepted the words and wishes of the fathers as law would lead these women into believing that such must be true for all women, including themselves. They would follow the same way of doing things in their own homes as in their parent’s home. A respondent from the lower class Indian citizens category Mrs. K, said:

In *Devdas*, Parvati’s mother obeyed the father’s every whim and so did she when she married a man that she did not even love because it was her father’s wishes. And this landed her losing the love of her life who later dies of alcohol abuse. It’s tragic but when we have to obey our male superiors, we just have to find a way to be happy or we will end up in the dumps like *Devdas*.

The pattern of passing these traditions down can be observed in the interview with mother and daughter, Mrs. K and Miss S. Miss S, the daughter said:

My mum accepts the male structure of power in our home, my grandmother accepted it in her home, and they lived happily, so I think I too after marriage will carry these traditions with me, it’s our culture, it must still be practiced.

A common pattern was also identified amongst all the respondents who fell in the equal category. These women all came from families where equality between sexes was

something practiced and entrenched. It was in these homes that women were given equal say, opportunity and freedom as would be given to men. It was this thinking that made these women react differently to Bollywood and scenes enacted in the sample of movies that were selected. An educated lawyer from Pretoria, Mrs. S, said:

I love the way *Dushman* portrayed Sonia, the protagonist. It was a breath of fresh air to see a woman with such strength. She avenged her twin sisters murdered and she shows clearly in that movie that there is a division between women who will weep and whine and accept bad fate, like the mother and then there are characters like herself, who go out to restore the natural balance in life.

Mrs. S fell in the equal category, as she is a woman who likes to take charge of her life but who feels no need to over-ride her husband's opinions because their mutual love and respect allows them to have a successful, well-negotiated and equal relationship. She attributed her lifestyle to that of her parents and in-laws and believes that:

Marriage is a 50/50 relationship, the minute it becomes 60/40 you are no longer in a marriage but rather an unequivocal contract, where one will always end up losing.

The final category with regards to family background influence could be identified amongst the urban Indian citizen category. These women explained that their households were rather matriarchal in structure, leaving decision-making opportunities open to the women's interests. It was these women who were revealed to be people driven by power and independence, to achieve great heights and were less deterred by the opposite sex. Their ranking, socially, intellectually and personally is very high and they identify Bollywood narratives as weak representations of real family or female lives in India. Miss J, a doctor, from Pretoria said:

In the movie *Shabd*, Antara plays a college Professor married to a writer. She is such an intelligent woman and she has so much going for her, but she lets her husband lead her into an affair in order to write his sick novel and she allows herself to be a pawn in his sick game.

She elaborates that such insanity is not at all reflective of how Indian women should behave and she angrily added:

She has brains, she is a Professor for God's sake, how can she let a man play with her mind as if she has no brains at all!

But all these responses and divisions could not stand on family background alone, they were further supported by these women's' educational achievements.

With regards to the responses provided by those belonging to the traditionalist and lower class Indian citizen categories, it was found that these families saw female education as a burden and unethical for the subordinate, submissive wife and daughter. Supporting this is Callaway and Creevey's argument that, "If the morally approved role of a woman is to be occupied with domestic chores, then education may be seen as unnecessary beyond the elementary level or some fraction thereof" (1994: 56). It is this very lack of education that leads these women to cling to Bollywood stories and reflections of women because they feel they belong somewhere and they can identify to other women in society. They see themselves enacting the same sordid scenarios' in their everyday lives and when they watch movies that show too much flesh or that promote sexuality, infidelity or a break from traditions then they immediately attribute such behaviour to modernization or westernization, because they themselves will accept nothing different from their cultural allowances.

Based on the evidence that was accumulated from the interviews it becomes relevant to mention that Indian families here in South Africa were negatively judgmental on the topic of women aspiring towards higher education for a very long time. Then came the emergence of the liberal family category where women were not seen as objects but as subjects too and it was in these families that education for women began to flourish. These women who were supported and encouraged by their fathers found it easier to allay the adverse pressures of the society, shaking their heads in disapproval.

It is these women who today demand an equal say on all matters and who seldom identify with weak female characters in Bollywood movies. Hassim (2007:91) adds that it is a misconception amongst Indian men who claim that education is linked to the trends of western wild women. She justifies her argument with verses from the Holy Quraan which encourage education for both men and women: “The acquisition of knowledge is incumbent upon all Muslims”. It was emphasized at the very onset of revelation (Holy Quraan: 1996: 1-19).

As can be observed above that educational trends as well as the upbringing of these individuals greatly impacted their notions and reactions towards Bollywood. The respondent who is a lawyer best sums up this theme when she said:

Look at our mothers, they were never allowed to study after marriage and our grandmothers were not allowed to study even before marriage. But in my generation opportunities are ample and it will continue for the next generations. I am married for over ten years and I am still studying. Our education gives us liberation, financially, intellectually and emotionally. It's our process of maturation and it has opened the doors and eyes of all Indian women.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the narratives produced by these forty women showed very interesting responses towards the orchestrated construction of Bollywood cinema and to the reflective circumstances surrounding their own lives. The table, narrative, findings and discussions chapter form the jewels of my study. The reactions of each woman towards the selected movies helped develop each theme, like that of education- proving that an educated Indian women is less likely to be taken in by the Bollywood narratives and that they would merely watch cinema as a form of entertainment, where as the less educated Indian women would attach too much importance and emotion to Bollywood plot lines. They would use such a form as a disseminator or life messages and lessons. The

hierarchies of power theme also yielded rich results, showing that the Independent ladies, independently made their own decisions whereas the traditionalists were constantly bound by their male counterparts. Decision-making models, feelings of nostalgia associated with the way they displayed emotions towards Bollywood narratives and the actual structure of the Bollywood plots also brought forward important factors that all contributed to my hypotheses that Bollywood is a male construct to deviate women away from independence and towards a false reality of gender bias. These themes also cut across each individual personal life experience, which added more depth and justification to each of my evaluations. It was not only fulfilling but also captivating to meet, hear and experience each one of my ladies responses. My concluding chapter will divulge more.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

“In recent years, popular culture has become a fashionable subject of research in Western academe and, by osmosis, in other parts of the academic world. The academic discovery of popular Bombay films, earlier an object of derision among well-educated Indians, is a by-product of that fashion. Yet, this discovery is also associated with a persistent, deep fear that acknowledging these films is empowering the categories and the aesthetic criteria of the viewers of these films. Avoiding the empirical work on viewers’ preferences and avoiding the more difficult task of integrating their perspectives and theories into film studies remain a way of handling the widespread fear of the people that infects virtually every political ideology in the Afro-Asian world. This explains the proliferation of insipid, mechanical works on cinema. The challenge to the serious students of Indian culture and creativity lies exactly there.”

(Ashis Nandy: Next Generation of Film Theorists in India: 2003: 84)

In this study, I examined the responses by women in various social situations in relation to the representation of their gender in Bollywood cinema, generally and textually, based on a sample of six Bollywood movies. Firstly, I explored how women are represented in the discourse of their home situation and how this affected their readings of Bollywood narratives. Secondly, I attempted to separate these women based on commonalities, and I was able to divide them into four broad categories namely: the traditionalist, equal, totally independent and Indian citizen. This last category was further divided into the upper/urban class Indian citizens and the lower/middle class Indian citizens. These

groupings gave me the opportunity to unpack some of the contestations and contradictions inherent in the readings and representation of Indian womanhood in relation to male-subordination, femininity and Bollywood's role in these very cycles. Finally, I engaged respondents in an inter-textual reading of six such movies illustrating both the possibilities for overt acceptance of Bollywood narratives or significant resistance to these narratives to see how they would respond when faced with similar scenarios.

Throughout the results section I moved between the text and respondents reactions intentionally in a hope to demonstrate that this diaspora of women both uncritically and passively accept the patriarchal ideologies that underpins these movie narratives and, alternatively, others recognized Bollywood's wrongs with regards to sexist plots and they rejected mythical submissions to what they experienced as ludicrous perpetuations.

As the title states, this study explores the ethnography of Indian diaspora women watching Bollywood cinema in South Africa. Prior to the interviews, it had been my assumption that the outcomes would frame one homogenous set of ideologies, characteristics and readings because those being studied came from one distinct group in the diaspora. It was discovered, however, that within a single diaspora multiple layers of identifications, ideologies and thought processes were uncovered.

This study found that female respondents both actively constructed their own representations and at the same time also contained their identities within representations provided to them in Indian movies. Further, it was seen that these women negotiated their understanding of Bollywood movies in the sample with regards

to their own ranking in the home boundary, external society as well as according to their traditional and educational backgrounds.

During interviews, a considerable amount of time was spent discussing with each interviewee their life histories, motivations for various reactions, their life circumstances and that of their parent's lives as well. Personal questions were posed regarding the types of husbands and fathers they had as well as their social expectations and hierarchies of power that are practiced in their surroundings, home and work. These in-depth dialogues helped respondents feel comfortable, and once they were in a 'comfort-zone' they began to open up and speak freely. It was this freedom in dialogue that allowed for study into their readings of Bollywood movies in relation to their other daily menial activities that they encounter, practice and consume.

The results revealed supported Anjali Ram's findings when she said, "Indian cinema intensifies our cultural bifocality, as we negotiate between past and present, home and diaspora, here and there. Consequently the practice of consuming film in the diaspora can be understood as a situated communicative practice" (2002). This situated communicative practice that she identified was very eminent in the respondents. Despite their various reactions to Bollywood cinema they all regularly participated in Indian acts of a variety of sources. For example, the *Indian Delights Recipe Book*, compiled and published in India was an asset in all their kitchens, homes were strewn with symbols of Indian origin, rugs and gold vases reflecting Indian patterns and prints could be located in rooms of all their homes, displayed proudly. As was mentioned before, Hindu festivals like Diwali and Holi are celebrated in a similar fashion as is represented in Bollywood movies and the respondents, even those who displayed a dislike for Bollywood cinema, possessed Indian garments like Kurti tops, Punjabee's and Sari's which they wore to

special occasions. These very issues were indicative of the respondent's sense of the Indian cultural identity.

Bollywood movies producing culturally rich messages of gender inequality and cultural trends offered appealing bases of identification and similarity for the South African diasporic viewers but it was for some this very source of linkage to India that made them constantly redefine and undermine the stereotypical presentations of notions of gender and society and due to being outside of India, for these respondents who were unaware of the reality of female positions in India, they used the South African context to justify their liberation.

Women who accepted the female roles presented in Bollywood cinema were the ones who lived within such structurally segmented homes and it was uncovered that they consoled themselves by saying that the way Bollywood portrays the good, pure and controlled women meant not being like women of the west. They justified their position as being the actual preservation of traditions and cultures that are unique to being Indian and which cannot be lost because they go generations back. None identified Bollywood male businessmen as being the careful constructors or strategic powers determining the choices of their subjective narratives.

A visit to Cape Town took me to the home of Ebrahim Kaskar, founder or establisher of Bollywood cinema in South Africa. He said, "The male directors, scriptwriters and bosses dominate over the female stars when they film shows here. I watch their female stars lack of opinion and the way the men ignore them. They're given a script and that's it, they must act it, no personal interpretations are allowed for the ladies. But it's different with the male hero's, their opinion or changes are taken very seriously. On the whole

Bollywood is a male controlled world.” As a regular observer of the actual people that produce and enact Bollywood movies, his observation becomes very pertinent as it not only reflects the fact that men dominate over women apart from the script, it also reveals that Indian women that originate from these areas also readily accept this hierarchy of power and so too project it to their viewers.

It was through the views of those women that kept away from Bollywood narratives that it was possible to identify the need for the emergence of a different construction of the feminine. Women cannot be portrayed as constantly passive, submissive, sacrificing and dependent in their internal as well as external existence. This does not mean movies should stray away from the cultures or traditions that are regarded sacred to the Indian way of life but rather script writers should produce movies where women are mutually respected, loved and cared for.

Abuse against women, physical or emotional, should be portrayed as villainous and not the accepted norm. Women should be allowed to challenge the authority of men where good lessons will be projected. It has to be remembered that Bollywood is regarded as the unofficial ambassador presenting India to its Indians world-wide and portrayals of gender biased male modes of life are not reflective of life in India or of Indian religions or of Indian identity. We would be better off supporting discourses of womanhood that can provide images of equality and pleasure for viewers of both genders.

Lata Mani (1990) points out that the, “discourse of women as victims has been invaluable to feminism in pointing out the systematic character of gender dominations, but that it should be placed adjacently to female agency or else we will always be faced with subordinate reductive representations of women.” She highlights a brilliant

argument that reveals that even in plots where women are abused, they should not be presented as objects but rather as strong subjects that can rise and triumph as well. By highlighting both broad strands of identification in this study, namely, the passive accepter and the deliberate rejecter, it was possible to keep the questions of patriarchal power plays in Bollywood cinema alive and it could be deduced that the lack of knowledge on the actual situation for women in India made women accept narratives as they are portrayed. It was possible to identify that each women's position within their external and internal environments greatly influenced their responses and that education and societal influences were key role-players in an Indian women's lifestyle.

Further, the shifting between the theoretical understanding of the respondent's reactions, with support from the available sources on this topic, and active readings of the Bollywood movies in the sample, affirm that Bollywood movies are used as a crucial site for exploring how diasporic gender identities are communicatively constituted. Two possibilities emerged for further research in this field: an ethnographic study of Indian diaspora of men watching Bollywood cinema in South Africa. This possibility emerged from heated discussions with my husband, who has been a source of great support throughout this study. He brought to my awareness that the reactions of men are not necessarily aligned with the reactions that were encountered with the female counterparts in the homes above. The above comment made us engage the topic with some of his male friends and here we found that many of these men were unaware of their wives, sisters or mothers reactions towards Bollywood and traditional expectations of them.

Many believed that their notion of inequality stemmed from their own self-reflexivity and that they were left unaware of these feelings of gender inequality because issues such

as male dominance or power plays were simply never discussed openly. These men, together with my husband, felt that women acted the way they did simply because they are happy to do so, being unaware of their feelings of gender bias. They felt they could not be expected to understand the position of women. The men we spoke to also found it hard to believe that a medium such as Bollywood could influence the actions of women in their everyday lives and societies, or that movies could shape women's' identities on the whole.

One friend, Mr. M, even went on to say that with regards to gender inequality, he felt that South African women make men the weaker sex. "They are over-powering us in every way, financially, emotionally and mentally." His comments were followed with an sms which he sent to my husband: "Life isn't fair to men. When we were born our mothers got flowers. When we married our brides got the presents. And when we die our widows get the insurance."

The second option for further research possibilities stemmed from the Indian citizen category. It was in this category that limitations to this study were identified. The first limitation was that this category could be broken down into two classes: the urban/upper class and the lower/middle class. The lower/middle class, due to lack of education and due to strict traditional upbringings, found many similarities in identity between themselves and the women portrayed in Bollywood movies. However, the urban/upper class found no relevance in the popular cultural movies because they reflected a rather stereotypical view of an Indian society that in this class was mostly non-existent. They also noted a variety of other movies privy to only the Indian diaspora in India that are closer to reality in terms of themes, plots and morals which brought the realization that to further this study a trip to India and a study carried out on the Indian diaspora in India, as

well as on the Bollywood industry, may shed more light on this basement study that can further elaborate the possible reasons for such thinking amongst other female Indian diasporas worldwide. A wider diasporic evaluation done in South Africa may also provide more conclusive themes and theories.

Based on these findings, it will suffice on this note to end with a reference made by Adrian Anthique: “It is not assumed that members of a media audience necessarily possess a shared identity that can be measured through the product itself. However, it does assume that they have a shared interest (in this case in Indian movies), and that, taken together, the different subjective positions from which they locate, understand or otherwise imagine those movies in relation to their everyday practices of their own lives can facilitate a richer understanding of this media artifact.”

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Appendix A

Questionnaire for the following proposed Masters Thesis:

Ethnography of Indian Diaspora Women Watching

Bollywood Cinema in South Africa

By: Waheeda Ismail

Supervisor: Dr Viola Milton

University of Pretoria

2007-2008

**Questionnaire designed according to the structure and model provided by
Carter McNamara, MBA, PhD, Authenticity Consulting, LLC**

Name and Surname:

Age:

Gender:

Occupation:

Address:

Contact Details (please include e-mail address if possible):

Signature:

1. Do I have your full permission to use any of the information provided by yourself in this written interview as well as in our verbal and group interviews to follow?

2. Let's get into your personal or family life as a point of departure:

2a. Are you a South African citizen?

2b. Are you married or single? How many members are there in your family?

2c. If you are married, who makes all the decisions in your household?

2c. If you are not married and you are still living in your parents home how does the decision making model work in your home?

2d. Are you left making any imperative decisions, such as your child's education, friends, your own and the dressing of your children?

2e. How do you feel about the hierarchy or spread of decision making as it is in your home?

2f. Do you still have relatives or roots in India that you stay connected to and if so how?

2g. How do you imagine or if you have direct knowledge, how do you feel about women in India?

2h. How do you feel about your position as an Indian women in South Africa?

2i. If there is any other information about your family life that you feel can be beneficial to my study at this point in the questionnaire please feel free to include it here.

3. Now lets get into the nitty gritty Bollywood Stuff:

3a. Why have you volunteered to be part of my study?

3b. Are you a Bollywood movie fan?

3c. If a new Bollywood movie is released today at a cinema near you, will you know about it, and if yes, how would have become aware of this new movie screening?

3d. Do you watch Bollywood movies in the comfort of your home or do you prefer watching the movie on the big screen?

3e. Would you watch the movie alone or with company?

3f. If you watch the movie in a group, who would your group consist of and why do you chose to watch with these individuals?

3g. Do you find a difference watching the selected film with male company (be it your husband, brother or friend) and if so how would you describe the difference?

4. A little more in-depth:

4a. Why do you watch Bollywood films?

4b. Do you ever discuss scenes of themes with friends after watching a Bollywood movie? If so why?

4c. Do you become emotional after watching a Bollywood movie, if yes, how so?

4d. How would you describe your own personality?

4e. Do you think your personality or life circumstances make you react or feel the way you do about certain scenes or plots in Bollywood movies? Elaborate Further.

4g. Do you think other women would react or think the same way as you do about specific Bollywood movies? Why?

4h. How would you describe the basic plot of Bollywood movies?

4i. Would you say you are for or against the narratives of Bollywood movies and why would you say so?

5. More about the movies I am specifically studying:

5a. The movies included in my analysis are: *Devdas* (2002), *Babul* (2006), *Dushman* (1998), *Aitraaz* (2004), *Lajja* (2001) *Shabd* (2004) and *Fiza* (2000), have you watched any of these movies?

5b. If yes to any, can you describe your thoughts or feelings about these movies?

5c. Do you have any opinion about the positioning of women in these movies, can you please elaborate extensively?

5d. Now look at your answer for the question above, do you feel that way because you are female, because of your life circumstances or because of a sound educational backing that you feel you have provided in your answer.

5e. If you have the time would you agree to watch the movies that you have not already seen and provide some more of your insight for the purposes of my study? And also would you be able to participate in a few group discussions with other women to help me deduce if there are any commonalities with regards to the results that I hope to accumulate.

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Appendix B

Bollywood Movie Research: Attention Ladies

I am conducting research on the impact of Bollywood movies on identity formation for Indian women in Gauteng and Limpopo, South Africa. I am especially interested to see how Bollywood movies represent Indian women, how it addresses its viewers and what female Indian viewers think of the messages portrayed to them by Bollywood movies. Participation will consist of three meetings lasting between 30-60 minutes, during which I will ask questions pertaining to the above, as well as about participants' viewing habits, their feelings/ideas about Bollywood in general and Bollywood's portrayal of female Indian subjects in particular. I would like to hear from you or anyone you know who would be interested in participating in this study. Your participation is completely voluntary, anonymous and valuable. Information gathered during the interviews will be used solely for the purpose of this study and all efforts will be made to ensure the confidentiality of participants' personal information. Thank you for your time.

If you are interested in participating, please respond to waheeda@mailbox.co.za or call: 072 674 1524

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