



**INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION**

**TANGAZA COLLEGE**

**THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA**

**DORIS WANGARI NDUNG'U**

**Positive Use of Television in Changing the Perception/Gender  
Portrayal of Women**

Supervisor

**Fr. Maury Schepers**

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the Bachelor of Arts in social  
communication

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## STUDENTS DECLARATION

I, the under signed, declare that this thesis is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Award of a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Social Communication. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Sign:.....*W. Ndung'u*.....

Name of Student: Doris. W. Ndung'u

Date:.....*5<sup>th</sup> June 2009*.....



This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as college supervisor.

Signed:.....*D.S.O.G. 09*.....

Name of Supervisor:

Date:.....*[Signature]*.....

## DEDICATION

*I dedicate this book to my mother Elizabeth Njeri, My friend Yvonne and all Women in this world who have found their niche and still going beyond expectations...*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

This is my acknowledgement to all those special people who have enabled me to accomplish my thesis. First, I have to thank the Lord almighty for the gift of life and giving me the strength to go on through it all. I thank my parents for their financial and emotional support and their love which means a lot to me, My supervisor Fr. Maury who guided me through every stage, gave me new insights and enabled me reach the end. I also can not forget Tangaza College for letting me use their facilities, other persons are my sources like my interviewees for their time and cooperation. For those I did not mention thank you and God bless you always.

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Modern media continually models the behavior of the people, who are exposed to its content. It re-initiates values through its power to touch minds and hence, is a strong model of socialization consciously or unconsciously, over a period of time. Television as a modern medium perpetuates cultural values, from repeated association with its content. These values may be either positive or negative.

Women are widely represented and also mis-represented by the television, especially since modernity dictates our everyday existence, as we try to find our identity. Women are defined through gender roles. These gender roles define the way women and men behave in society and in relation to each other, and the way in which they perceive themselves and their attitudes. Gender relations affect the unequal power relations in society, these gender relations structure the roles of men and women, shape the ideas, knowledge, values, culture, attitudes, structure of society and, in essence, social life itself, and are reinforced in books, stories, songs and largely the media nowadays. "Gender is constructed socially and identifies the relationship between men and women, in the context of power relations using institutions such as the family, the church and religion, school and education, and the state and laws."<sup>1</sup>

Gender roles exist in all spheres of society, starting with the division of labor in the family. Women are usually allocated the role of domestic chores as if it were natural for them to do this. For most women, domestic chores are additional to the work they do

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<sup>1</sup> [www.ifuw.org/seminars/1998/portrayal.pef](http://www.ifuw.org/seminars/1998/portrayal.pef)

outside the house. These socially determined roles for men and women are culturally or socially created, and are given the status of being natural and normal. From these gender roles, “certain characteristics are a reflection of what it means to be male / masculine, and expected of men while other characteristics are attributed to women, as a reflection of their femininity”<sup>2</sup>. For example, men are supposed to be natural leaders, decision makers and providers in society, beginning within the family, while women are the caregivers, supporters and followers of men.

Women can be modeled through their representation as both positive and negative character attributes. Positive examples are strong people like Prof. Wangari Maathai, the 2005 Nobel laureate, Oprah Winfrey the American talk show hostess and women rights activist, Ellen Johnson -sir leaf the Liberian first woman president among others. These examples however, are not emphasized as much as the negative, where women are more often portrayed as sex objects, lowly wage workers like seamstresses, cleaners and secretaries among many other examples. For those in power, they are depicted as evil, divorced or un-married. This kind of negative media portrayal of women harms the mentality of girls towards the development of their self image and the mentalities of boys have towards women.

### **0.1 Statement of the problem**

Television is widely known to represent and reinforce the mainstream ideology of contemporary western culture. While television representations of women may have changed greatly in the recent times to accommodate the changing role of women in society, one is led to ask how much the ideology has changed behind the more modern

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<sup>2</sup> [www.ifuw.org/seminars/1998/portrayal.pcf](http://www.ifuw.org/seminars/1998/portrayal.pcf)

representations of women. It is important for us to question how real the representations of women are on television and how this affects the attitudes of those who watch.

“Television is present in virtually all homes in urban areas in Kenya with 94.6% of the total respondents from my long essay research have access to television.”<sup>3</sup> Hence, interaction is inevitable. Watching television does not require any special skills unlike reading that requires being literate. Children trying to find self-identity take in their surroundings, which expressly includes the television as a socialization tool. “Children at the adolescent stage have an identity vs. identity confusion as they transit from childhood to adulthood through physiological revolution, where adolescents try to consolidate their social role as they try to find the self. At times they absorb, adopt or imitate what is depicted,<sup>4</sup> by the models, the arcane language used, behavior, and fashion among other things on television programs. Thus, their characters become dominated by what they are watching, which in turn builds their perceptions of what reality should be. Hence, when there is a problem of stereotyping women, it should be addressed because these patronizing assumptions may create contempt for women, through illusion of reality. Children may take this as an accurate reflection of a trustworthy guide to accepted attitudes and behavior against women.

Television is a powerful tool that can be used to promote different ideologies hence, program producers should be responsible for their portrayal of women, because if politicians, advertisers and commentators rely on the power of television to communicate and promote their interests, women too can promote themselves accordingly.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf impact of exposure of children to sexual content (nudity, open sex & language) on .DVD, 32.

<sup>4</sup> Cf.Kail, R.V – Cavanaugh, J.C, 4th ed., *Human Development*, 40.

## **0.2 Objectives of the thesis**

This study intends to investigate how television portrayal of women touches on women, and confirm whether in fact this portrayal, does adversely affect their attitudes towards themselves as women and on children. The study will then propose the course of action that might deal with the issue from the suggestions given by the interviewees. The study will go about this by verifying the following hypotheses through qualitative research: in-depth interviews and qualitative research: self administered questionnaires. The hypotheses are as follows: Women are mis-represented on most entertainment shows on television through gender role portrayal, Adolescent children and women model behavior towards women from how they are represented on television and how television can be used to change perceptions towards women.

## **0.3 Limitations of the thesis**

The study is limited by lack of time to investigate all areas in langata and lack of resources. Entertainment considerations will only be movies, music, soap-operas and advertisements on the various television stations in Kenya thus limiting on other forms of entertainment.

## **0.4 Structure of thesis**

Chapter one looks at the sociological analysis of the topic, literature review and contextualization of the reflection with the chosen locale.

Chapter two is the research data collection which will be a self administered questionnaires and in-depth interviews. There is assessment on media use and interpretation of the findings against the background of relevant communication theories Chapter three is an elaboration of the communication strategy, justification of the communication strategy vis-à-vis the research findings, and details for the implementation of the proposed communication project.

The Thesis ends with a general conclusion with emphasis on the objectives and viability of the proposed project, that is, the social/cultural impact of the communication and ethical implications of proposed project. A bibliography and appendices complement the whole thesis.

### **0.5 Definition of terms**

**Television** –this is an electronic telecommunication system for broadcasting and receiving moving pictures and sound at a distance. It includes the set, transmission and programming.<sup>5</sup>

**Socialization** – this is the process through which children learn how to become members of society through the family, church, school, legal system and now widely the media.<sup>6</sup>

**Children** –In this context, they are teenagers from the age of 12-19yrs.

**Gender/role portrayal** – these are socially enforced rules and values associated with being female or male as per society norms.

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<sup>5</sup> www.webopedia.com

<sup>6</sup> Cf .Nzangi, A, *psychology of communication*, class notes.

**Pro-social** – Beneficial to all parties and consistent with community laws and mores.<sup>7</sup>

**Post Structural feminism** - Structural feminism theory focuses on social structures, notably patriarchy and capitalism that oppress women. Post structural feminism construes power relations in more complex forms, focusing on multiple systems of oppression, possibilities for resistance and ways those relations of power work to shape women's identities by renegotiating gender based relations of power.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.allwords.com/word-prosocial.html>

<sup>8</sup> <http://edrev.asu.edu/reviews/rev108.html>

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1.0 Introduction

Television is a powerful electronic medium of communication. It appeals to its audience due its combination of visuals and audio hence making it very captivating by monopolizing its audience's attention. It may also be regarded by a good number of viewers to represent truth and reality, Hence, "widely reinforcing the mainstream ideology of most cultures which includes representation of women."<sup>9</sup> While this representation of women may have changed greatly in recent years to accommodate the changing role of women in society, one is led to ask how much the ideology behind these modern representations of women has changed. If this is the case, then it is important for us to question how real the representations of women on television is, and how this affects the attitudes of those who watch.

"Gender role stereotyping reflects the changes in beliefs about the value of family, child care, the role of the woman in marriage, and the possibility of self-fulfillment through work."<sup>10</sup> Generally, in the world of television, women tend to be confined to a life dominated by the family and personal relationships far more than men, outside the home, as well as in it. The housewives role for women dominates as a major life role and gender trait stereotyping. Statistics in the recent years show there is a higher

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<sup>9</sup> [www.aber.ac.uk/media/Students/hzi9401.htm](http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Students/hzi9401.htm)

<sup>10</sup> [www.oppapers.com/essays/portrayalofwomeninthedia](http://www.oppapers.com/essays/portrayalofwomeninthedia)

number of women in the population than men, yet women are typically seen less often than men on television and much less frequently in central dramatic roles. “Lead characters of women are almost non-existent compared to almost all male shows common in television history.”<sup>11</sup> It is possible that Men dominate the production side of television, so it is hardly surprising that the masculine or patriarchal ideology is the norm. Women therefore are vastly outnumbered by men on screen, and behind the scenes in television. Thus, television presents its audience with a very masculine perspective.

## **1.1 Communication theory**

Communication theories are valuable ideas as to how researchers elicit a series of conceptions of understanding the media from how it impacts on its audiences.

### **1.1.1 Cultivation theory**

Cultivation theory according to George Gebner means a process within which interaction through messages shapes and sustains the terms on which the messages are premised. This theory builds on the assumption that, major impacts of television materialize by means of the way it exposes people, to some images and metaphors repeatedly. This influences their attitudes and behavior.”<sup>12</sup> Cultivation theory conceptualizes the role of television in our lives. George Gebner said that watching a great deal of television will be associated with a tendency to hold a specific and distinct sense of reality, conceptions that are congruent with the most inconsistent and pervasive images and values of the medium”<sup>13</sup> This theory is about implications of stable, repetitive, pervasive and virtually inescapable patterns of images and ideologies that

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<sup>11</sup> H:\thesis\women\Portrayal Of Women In The Media - Term Papers - Megan1831\_files

<sup>12</sup> McQuail. D, (3rd e.d) ., *Mass Communication: an Introduction*,6.

<sup>13</sup> Cf DeFleur, M. L. & Ball-Rokeach, S. J., *Theories of mass communication*, 29.

television especially dramatic, fictional entertainment provide exposure to thousands of images over time might have something to do with our perception of likelihood of encountering the world. Thus, in this context, when audiences are repeatedly exposed to gender stereotyping they are likely to hold a specific and distinct sense of reality, conceptions that are congruent with the most inconsistent and pervasive images and values of the television which are most of the time negative and inequitable gender role stereotypes.

### **1.1.2 Theory of active audiences: uses and gratification theory**

It looks into the theory of active audiences stating that cognitive dissonance is when people reach certain equilibrium, and tend to search reinforcement and become selective in their exposure, and pay attention to what affirms them. The uses and gratification theory suggests that people use the media to gratify various needs.<sup>14</sup> In this context, I expect positive exposure to television content, should be choosing to watch what fulfills the needs of women, because it represents them responsibly and equitably to men. Hence, satisfying a certain need for them that has been overlooked.

### **1.1.3 Agenda setting theory**

The agenda setting theory states that, the media does not tell us what to think, but what to think about, by bringing to our attention what it wants to influence your opinion on.<sup>15</sup> In this context, it looks at how television can set the agenda on how to portray women, thus, negative perceptions associated with women, can be replaced with positive

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<sup>14</sup> Cf Mwongi j, *Mass Media and Society*, class notes.

<sup>15</sup> Cf Mwongi j, *Mass Media and Society*, class notes.

perceptions from television content on women, taking into consideration their individuality.

## 1.2 The roots of female stereotypes

“Cultural Prejudice regarding women starts early with men taking credit for progress while women to mistakes. From birth, some parents commonly betray a desire to have male children as opposed to girls. Hence, hostility towards the female, this means that the woman’s social value is lower than males. Hence, they become objects valued for what they would give.”<sup>16</sup> Women during the traditional days were solely house wives, they were judged from what has to be done inside the home whilst the man it is outside working. Today, traditional gender roles still define a woman’s merit in the society, with no changes toward seeing greater equality in a world still referred to as a mans world, Even with roles solely for women having over they years changed due to choices on taking on careers. The entry of women in the labor force has increased what they have to shoulder as career women and home makers but it is a significant positive development.

There is a spur towards consciousness of conditioning women undergo so that it is not reproduced as awareness of the situation that can be changed. The reason why women go though with the script of being home makers is because young women grow watching their mothers literally spoon feeding men who never did any house work. Hence, women get the idea that a woman is only as good as their housekeeping skills.<sup>17</sup> Women must break away from these inappropriate stereo-types, to transmit to their children of both sexes, respect for women as individual achievers. It is possible to modify social cultural conditions.

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<sup>16</sup> Belotti, E, G., *what are girls made of – the roots of feminine stereotypes*, 20.

<sup>17</sup> Milly,G, *Do not cut off your mans hands*, the daily nation, Saturday magazine (February 28, 2009), 3

### 1.3 Post structural feminism

Post-structural feminism states that, “gender is not something that is understood outside of its social construction but within a particular culture. There is no definition of what it means to be a man or woman in concrete or objective, these words and concepts only gain meaning within a particular cultural context, and are limited to that cultural context”. The concept of male carries no meaning by itself. It is not until male is compared to female that it gains definition and meaning.

The way, in which gender is constructed in most societies, creates artificial hierarchies of power, this occurs because of our habit of defining the world in dualities and comparing some "normative" category with an "other." <sup>18</sup> Power therefore is not exercised directly, but through different mediums that shape and restricts our reality. The use of the gendered ideologies automatically places the male in the dominant position of normalcy and the woman as the "other". This gives males power over females, and automatically gives females an inferior position.

The concern with the above concept is use of images and language that give meaning to gender especially when gender gains meaning when constructed through representations like gender role portrayals, hence, give meaning to association of gender roles to particular genders especially women to traditional roles, objectifications etc which limits the potential of women because they are confined to particular roles and judged form them.

Post-feminism structuralism also looks at how power operates in society. Especially, through socialization that acts as the primary, non-punitive method of

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<sup>18</sup><http://edrev.asu.edu/reviews/rev108.html>

persuading people to behave in a certain way. Social pressure is the disciplinarian for those who do not fit into what it prescribes as right. To many people, gender seems to be an inherent trait, because the social cues for gender are so ingrained in our everyday social relations.<sup>19</sup> Unless you are able to remove yourself, for a time, from the process and look at it from a different point of view, you won't see it. Those who cannot consider the realm of other possibilities for social order are stuck in their world of absolute truth, feeding into the perception of women as different from men, because of un-equitable gender differentiations.

#### **1.4 Views of women on television**

There has always been a double standard of judging women as compared with men. "almost all women on television must be youthful beauties whose duty is to stay young and attractive, to please men otherwise they become an object of ridicule when they do not fit into a certain standard of beauty, Hence, most beauty advertisements on television target women with pressure on not allowing themselves to age."<sup>20</sup> Looking at news anchors even on Kenyan television, little grey hair on a man is acceptable but never on women. This puts pressure on women to do almost anything to look young with even grave consequences happening.

"Lead characters of women are almost non-existent compared to all lead male shows common in television history."<sup>21</sup> Women most of the times are brought in as wives to the lead male character, disproportionately seen as homemakers, with their business roles down played or not represented at all. Occupational roles are next to nil. In fact,

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<sup>19</sup> <http://whyyouarewrong.blogspot.com/2006/01/post-structural-feminism.html>

<sup>20</sup> Harris, R.J, (4<sup>th</sup> e.d), *a cognitive psychology of mass communication*, 54-56.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

they are stay at home mothers obsessed with cleanliness and spotlessness. For those with careers, they are given a super power myth where a woman does work all day, comes home, makes dinner, tends to the children and still have strength to make love to her husband. This is unrealistic and sends the message to young girls about what it means to be a woman in today's society. With most advice given on what a woman should be willing to do to keep a man, which leads to expectations that men have on women they marry.

“Women with power are shown to be underhanded and conniving, often directly or indirectly involving their sexuality. Sexuality is displayed as a weapon of power subtly de-emphasizes and degrades its tender and relational aspect.”<sup>22</sup> This misplaces perception of women a lot because people are led to think that women have to use their sexuality to get anywhere in life. I have had arguments with my male friends who believe women have it easier in life because they can use their sexuality to climb up the corporate ladder while they believe men get jobs on merit and hard work.

## **1.5 Children as audiences**

“Children learn at an early age what it means to be a boy or girl in our society through myriads of activities, encouragements, discouragements, overt behavior, covert suggestions and various forms of guidance..”<sup>23</sup> Hence, it is almost impossible to grow without experiencing some form of gender stereotype. A substantial number of children also begin watching television at an early age and in greater amounts than what experts recommend.

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<sup>22</sup> Harris, R.J, (4<sup>th</sup> e.d), *a cognitive psychology of mass communication*, 54-56.

<sup>23</sup> Witt, S., *Parental influence on Children's Socialization to Gender Roles*, 2.

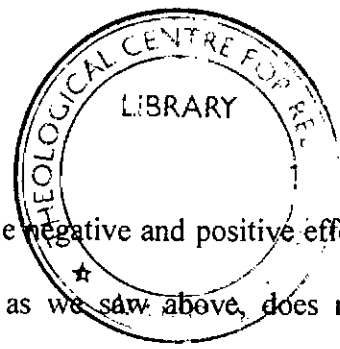
Children especially Adolescents are in process of learning their values and roles and developing their self concepts. Hence, they are vulnerable to many things, especially advertisements because they are new and in-experienced consumers, and are prime targets of many advertisements. “The influence of advertising on adolescents is hardly surprising, researches show that adolescents emulate the behavior of attractive models, especially when the behavior is rewarded.”<sup>24</sup> Television makes possible a kind of pressure that erodes their private and individual values and standards. Evidence suggests that television’s influence on children is related to how much time they spend watching television, as a result, with prolonged viewing, the world shown on television becomes the real world.

Elite discourses about popular culture have traditionally been suffused with patronizing assumptions about the audience, based largely on contempt for women and other members of the lower orders. Yet, is also children who are often defined as other and historically been seen to be at most risk from the media. They may take what they watch as an accurate reflection of trustworthy guide to behavior.<sup>25</sup> Children though can not be said to be passive audiences of television messages because they are active interpreters of meaning thus, making watching of television by children potentially able to generate both positive and negative effects, from selecting symbolically the structure of values and relationships beneath the surface. Some studies have looked at the impact of television on society, particularly on children and adolescents. An individual child’s developmental level is a critical factor in determining, whether the medium will have positive or negative effects.

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<sup>24</sup> [www.knepublishers.com](http://www.knepublishers.com)

<sup>25</sup> Barker, M., – petley, J, 2nd E.D., *ill effects*, 16.



There is need to advocate continual research into the negative and positive effect of media on children, because of how much television as we saw above, does not represent the manifest actuality of our society, hence, it may convince children its reality. Meaning, what children view as realistic portrayal of women in media, can affect how they think and feel about them. Various studies document adolescents' susceptibility to the media's influence on their attitudes, values and beliefs. Children should be encouraged to criticize and analyze what they see in the media.

### **1.6 Gender roles and Gender trait stereotyping**

Gender and gender roles define the way women and men behave in society and in relation to each other, the way in which they perceive themselves and their attitudes. Gender relations affect the unequal power relations in society, the essence of which is the domination of men and the subordination of women. "These gender relations structure the roles of men and women, shape the ideas, knowledge, values, culture, attitudes, structure of society and, in essence, social life itself, and are reinforced in the media."<sup>26</sup>

According to Gunter, televisions gender stereotyping occurs in relation to various roles in which men and women are portrayed, and which have a connection with the personality attributes they typically display. He therefore divides stereotyping into gender role stereotyping and gender trait stereotyping. Gender role stereotyping reflects the changes in beliefs about the value of family, child care, the role of the woman in marriage and the possibility of self-fulfillment through work.<sup>27</sup> Generally, in the world of television, women tend to be confined to a life dominated by the family and personal relationships far more than men, outside the home, as well as in it.

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<sup>26</sup> [www.ifuw.org/seminars/1998/portrayal.pcf](http://www.ifuw.org/seminars/1998/portrayal.pcf)

<sup>27</sup> Gunter.B, *Television and Sex Roles Stereotyping*. entries/107622767.html

On the other hand, Gunter argues that Gender trait stereotyping, reflects more commonly held stereotypes about women's characteristics.<sup>28</sup> for example, that women are more emotional than men. But the word 'emotional' isn't used in association with aggression or dominance but more often used in association to the neuroticism commonly associated with women and femininity.

Some of the most watched and perhaps influential genres of television viewing are advertisements music, movies and soap operas. Studies have demonstrated that women in the above genres tend to be both misrepresented and underrepresented regardless of the change in gender roles.

### **1.6.1 Advertising and its portrayal of women**

Advertising is probably one of the most important and influential engine of television. For the amount of time we spend watching adverts, it stands to reason that it will have some kind of effect on those who watch, because advertising is a persuasional and influential product for television. Therefore, it stands to have some kind of effect on those who watch.

Nowhere else is the heady combination of physical beauty and personal success is pleadingly and persuasively portrayed as in commercial advertisements. Advertisers have often emphasized sexuality and the importance of physical attractiveness in an attempt to sell products. This Research is concerned that this places undue pressure on people especially women to focus solely on their appearances. "In today's media, women are looked upon as a tool that can help to sell a product. Women and Sex is often a great

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<sup>28</sup>Gunter.B, *Television and Sex Roles Stereotyping*. entries/107622767.html

combination when to get a product to come off the shelves.<sup>29</sup> There are many different companies that stretch far and wide, to include women and sex in their advertisements for sale purposes and many use very interesting ways of including women, to sell their products. Women are still shown primarily in submissive positions as sex objects. Sexual women are used in advertisements for women to imply that the product will increase the user's appeal to men. Advertisements continuously promote the message that women's ultimate goal is to attract men.

Women have been stereotyped in the media more than any other group. A stereotype against women creates a world where no one is ugly, overweight, poor, struggling and disabled. In advertisements women are often portrayed in similar roles and are grouped together with the assumption that all women are the same or should be the same."<sup>30</sup> Women in advertisements take on a fake look because they are made to look as close to perfect as possible. Women in advertisements are masked with make-up and almost always the pictures airbrushed to perfection.

Women are also shown as domestic housewives. Their role being very much a family and home orientated one. "They are also depicted as sex objects whose only attribute is conventional beauty. It is also shown that a woman is either intelligent or beautiful; but rarely both. She is used to advertise cosmetics, health products and anything that works to improve the appearance of the body, with advertisements that erode a woman's self-esteem and then offer to sell it back to her."<sup>31</sup> In Kenya, A fair & lovely advert on television showed a woman applying for a job but can not get it because she is ugly but after using the product she becomes beautiful and gets the job. "Women

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<sup>29</sup>Trowel,p(1998)news Desk@UMCOM.UMC.ORG.>WomeninMedia<<http://www.wfn.org/conference/wfn.news>

<sup>30</sup> [www.aber.ac.uk/media/Students/hzi9401.html](http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Students/hzi9401.html)

<sup>31</sup> Wolf, N., "The beauty myth: how images of beauty are used against women, 35.

are made to feel that they have to achieve this ideal, by constantly being presented with these images and are made to feel guilty and ashamed if they fail. Women and men should be portrayed in commercial messages with diversity in age, abilities, physical appearance, ethnic origin, occupation, family structure and household responsibilities.

Women are also given a super women image where they are supposed to do it all. All working with full time job and still play the role of man and take care of kids, clean, cook, and maintain a heavy relationship with her husband. This is not true in the entire real world but because it is portrayed so much in the media, People feel it is necessary to have the kind of expectations for women. The stereotypical image of women in advertisements remains that women are still seen as objects, and women are expected to look and act like those portrayed in adverts.”<sup>32</sup> The women in advertisements represent what society holds as the ideal image for a woman. The images of woman today are highly sexualized to appeal to those looking.

### **1.6.2 Soap operas representation of women**

Soap operas are said to be for women. Hence, one may be inclined to feel that women are represented here more fairly, it being the genre of television watched mainly by women. “The majority of soap operas are set in a domestic situation, because the home is a place where women's expertise is supposedly valued, and is also a place of comfort. Often, the central characters are female, and the ultimate achievement for these women in soaps is to get married and have children. So it could be argued that the myth of never ending paternalism actually, conceals the subordination of women.”<sup>33</sup> When women are shown in a position of power, it is portrayed as being unusual, because from

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<sup>32</sup> [www.springerlink.com](http://www.springerlink.com)

<sup>33</sup> [www.knepublishers.com/02\\_journals](http://www.knepublishers.com/02_journals)

the dominant ideology, it is the men who are the most powerful and so having a male working for a female is made an issue. Powerful women are depicted as very evil and scheming their way through everything. Their features are portrayed in a morally disapproving manner, and so ultimately, success is denied. The female viewer both love and hates this character, sides with her, yet at the same time, desires her downfall.

In a Philippine soap opera called “The long wait” all the rich women are evil and use power to get the men they want. Hence, a woman success is compared to her heartlessness. Also the man is always often rich while the girl is poor and must overcome many obstacles to be accepted reach a man’s status. When men are shown in domestic situations, they are usually portrayed as being incompetent because it is not their job. In an episode in a series on KTN called “Desperate housewives” one of the characters husband lost his job and had to be left home with their children, but he could not do any of the housework or take care of the children till the wife, had to quit his job to take of the house plus her husband. While television can be said to reflect the changing roles of women, it seems to portray them in a light of approval or disapproval, positive or negative according to the roles that patriarchy favors: the housewife is favored, whilst the woman in power is often shown to be the villain.

### **1.6.3 Representation of women on Music lyrics and videos**

Music has been used to examine and influence policy changes that affect women’s conceptions of empowerment, creating the framework for women in the public sphere and work and changing narratives of women’s sexualities. On television, a good number of Music videos on television focus on women’s bodies and portray them as sex

objects, plus some of the popular music is a very powerful medium for dictating what is in vogue. Thus, people are exposed to certain songs and the messages they convey.

The lyrics are repeated in daily conversations, and even children can be heard repeating them during their play time in the streets, at school, or at home.<sup>34</sup> But with the Women in this music subsequently portrayed in a condescending manner, means that this may in turn affect children's attitudes about women, especially since music videos and Music lyrics have become increasingly explicit, particularly with references to women, sex and violence hence reinforcing false stereotypes.<sup>35</sup>

It's reality that such images might cause some girls and women to believe that these portrayals are what they are. Hence, fail to develop their potentials. "We as a society should consider alternative representations of women. The public should not encourage exposure to songs that stereotype women, especially because most songs about women are composed by men therefore women need to be encouraged and supported to sing about themselves. They may need to take the initial steps in setting new standards about what they want the society to view as what being a woman entails.

#### **1.6.4 Perceptions of girls towards themselves**

When women are portrayed purely as a sex object it tells them that their place is behind men and that there is a pressure to always look good and dictates what type of woman men should be attracted to. Sexualization has negative effects in cognitive, physical and mental health, and healthy sexual development.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> <http://www.megaessays.com/viewpaper/99819.html>

<sup>35</sup> [www.theportrayalofwomenontv.com](http://www.theportrayalofwomenontv.com)

<sup>36</sup> Kaplan, A-Sedney, M., *psychology and sex roles: an androgynous perspective*, 24

When female characters are portrayed as both able and pro-social they encourage self-confidence in other women and growing girls. Despite relatively positive portrayal of female characters, their appearance rare and most likely not the main focus of the action. Women portrayal in media can affect how we think and feel about ourselves especially Images presenting unrealistic beauty ideals, stereotyped gender roles.

Women are often represented as not being as intelligent as men, and having to rely on them. It is also shown that a woman is either intelligent or beautiful; but rarely both. “Shallowness is often associated with beautiful women this can lead to a lack of confidence and have a negative effect on healthy sexual development in girls.<sup>37</sup> We need to replace all of these sexualized images with ones showing girls in positive settings and ones that show the uniqueness and competence of girls.

### **1.7 Representation of both men and women in the Canadian broadcast Act**

Canadian broadcasters recognized the cumulative effect of negative and inequitable gender role portrayal which they addressed effectively and responsibly. The Broadcasting Act ensures that their programming and broadcast services achieved the highest professional standards and demonstrated the broadcasters' commitment to the fair and equitable portrayal of all persons in television and radio programming. “Negative or Inequitable gender-Role Portrayal refers to language, attitudes or representations which tend to associate particular roles, modes of behavior, characteristics, attributes or products to people on the basis of gender, without taking them into consideration as individuals.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Trowel,p(1998)news Desk@UMCOM.UMC.ORG.>WomeninMedia<<http://www.wfn.org/conference/wfn.news>

<sup>38</sup> [www.mediaawareness.ca/english/resources/educational/handouts/tv/radio/cab-sex-role-code.cfm](http://www.mediaawareness.ca/english/resources/educational/handouts/tv/radio/cab-sex-role-code.cfm)

The objective of equal representation is recognized and the portrayal of women and men shall be comparable to, and reflective of, their actual social and professional achievements, contributions, interests and activities.<sup>39</sup> In addressing the issue of gender-role portrayal of women and men, broadcasters shall seek to broaden the comparable diversity of roles for all individuals. Nothing in this Code should be interpreted as censoring the depiction of healthy sexuality.

Broadcasters shall avoid and eliminate the depiction of gratuitous harm toward individuals in a sexual context, as well as the promotion of sexual hatred and degradation. Broadcasters shall be sensitive to the sex-role models provided to children by television and radio programming.<sup>40</sup> In this context, programmers shall make every effort to continue to eliminate negative gender-role portrayals, thereby encouraging the further development of positive and progressive gender-role models”.

“Sexist language is language that unnecessarily excludes one sex or gives unequal treatment to women and men. Such language may perpetuate attitudes or representations of persons which tend to attribute particular roles and characteristics on the basis of their gender, without taking them into consideration as individuals.”<sup>41</sup> The roles and opportunities for both genders are becoming more diverse due to such factors as the elimination of female-only and male-only occupations, changing patterns of parenting and lifestyles. Women and girls should be portrayed in a range of roles as diverse as that shown for men and boys. Women and men should perform in a range of occupations and function as intellectual and emotional equals in all types of thematic circumstances. This

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

should be the case for both work and leisure activities requiring varying degrees of intellectual competence.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

Effects of gender stereo-typing means the negative and narrow gender images which are seen as reflective of real life thus becoming a problem to the real woman and not the ideal woman because real women feel they should look and behave in a certain way leading to low self esteem when this is not achieved.

What we need to understand is that television has not only been changed by society, but television too has changed society. It seems to portray women in a light of approval or disapproval, positive or negative according to the roles that patriarchy favors: the housewife is favored, whilst the career woman in power is often shown to be the villain. Women are also often represented as not being as intelligent as men and also shown that a woman is either intelligent or beautiful; but rarely both. But as long as writers and producers are willing to take risks, to lead and educate and to communicate, television can become a critical public forum, entertainment vehicle and an educational resource to communicate and promote their interests of women as of those of men.

Women should also tap into televisions educational power and dominate productions that will use television as a tool for positive social change of portraying women as they deem fit for their image as positive role models. repeated appearances of women in traditional male occupations can lead to more open attitudes in girls towards considering those occupations as the opposite is true hence, Women should be allowed to celebrate their femininity with positivism rather than negativism of being women.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **1.8 Introduction**

This chapter presents the field research I conducted in Langata to assess how television can be used positively in changing the perception/portrayal of women. The research seeks to verify the hypotheses through qualitative research: in-depth interviews which I consider very elaborate and give room for framing of questions from how the interviewee responds and self-administered questionnaires to verify the closed ended questions. The hypotheses are as follows: Adolescent children model behavior towards women from how women are represented on television, women are mis-represented on most entertainment shows on television through gender portrayal; and how television can be used to change perceptions towards women.

It begins with the description of the context of the research. It explains the sampling criteria used and the methodology employed in the research. It will then highlight the procedure used in the data collection and lay down the findings and outcome of the research. Reference to my previous research on a related investigation will be used to complement the findings.

## **1.9 Area of research**

Langata is located in the southlands of Nairobi and is of a mixed social class that is the high income earning class, middle income and the poor who live in the slums in Kibera. However, my initial focus was on the people living in the numerous estates. During my previous research, I distributed questionnaires around schools to verify the viewing of sexual content by adolescents. I got responses from children living in Kibera, Nairobi west and some other areas that make up the Langata constituency hence a wide range of feedback in verifying my hypotheses. The interviews complemented the same leading to the discovery of a new angle, which was, that most children viewed women in most sexualized material hence acquiring an attitude towards women from their portrayal on television.

## **2.0 Research methodology**

The research was both qualitative and quantitative research methods which was in-depth interviews and self-administered questionnaires. The in-depth interviews have given the research a deep insight into not only how the interviewees regard gender portrayal of women on television but also their suggestions on how television can be used to change perceptions towards women.

### **2.1 Sampling criteria**

The in-depth interviews were of 32 interviewees all which were valid and dealt with the open-ended questions which needed further elaboration. The interviewees were from langata in particular estates around Uhuru gardens which consist of estates that

include Akiba, Otiende, Southlands, Ngei 2, Park estate, Onyonka and Langata high school. Additionally, I interviewed people from Nairobi west which is still generally in Langata constituency. The age bracket of interviewees was (15-35yrs), 20 female interviewees compared to 12 male interviewees. The age bracket of children was (16-19yrs). The research for the self administered questionnaires was 85 distributed questionnaires with 80 of them returned. 5 were spoilt to make 75 valid responses. The statistical program used to enter and analyze data was Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS).

## **2.2 Research hypotheses**

The situation observed depends on assumptions and proposed hypotheses that seek to understand the role of television, in influencing attitudes towards women, from its gender role portrayal. The research is aimed at verifying them and getting suggestions on commitment to the fair and equitable portrayal of all persons on television, comparable and reflective of, their actual social and professional achievements, contributions, interests and activities. The hypotheses were as follows: women are mis-represented on most entertainment shows on television through gender role portrayal, children model behavior towards women from how they are represented on television and television educational power can be used to change/enhance perceptions towards women.

## **2.3 Research instrument**

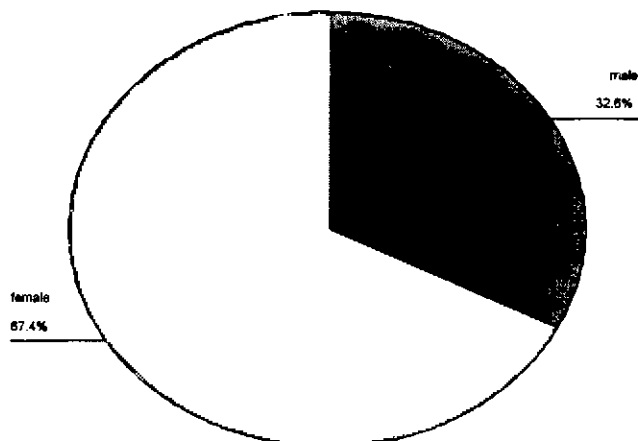
The interviews were designed into Place, date and purpose of the research. The questions asked were open ended in in-depth interviews so as to get elaborate and objective responses. These answers had no limit to what an interviewee could say. The closed ended questions used for this research were from the findings from self

administered questionnaires. They offered a list of answers to choose from. The research also used previous research on the impact of exposure of children to sexual content (nudity, open sex and language) on DVD to analyze media access. The researcher had distributed 105 questionnaires 94 of them were returned. One was spoiled to make 93 valid responses 93 valid responses.

## 2.4 Data Analysis

From the findings in the in depth interviews and quantitative research, the researcher was able to find complimentary, contradicting un-expected findings and verify the hypotheses from the responses of the interviewees and questionnaires. The respondents verified the hypotheses that women are mis-represented on most entertainment shows on television through gender role portrayal, Children and women model behavior towards women from how they are represented on television and the interviewees gave different suggestions as to how television can be used positively to change perceptions towards women

## 2.5 Background information



The number of female respondents was at 67.4% compared to 32.6% of the males. This means the views are diverse but since this is a woman's issues they had the bigger chance to express what they know about themselves and what they want changed for their betterment. In the communication theory on active audiences, it states that cognitive dissonance is when people reach certain equilibrium, and tends to search reinforcement and become selective in their exposure, and pay attention to what affirms them, the uses and gratification theory suggests that people use the media to gratify various needs.<sup>42</sup> This means the respondents are capable people who know what they want and can select from television programs what gratifies them hence, able to make suggestions on what

### 2.5.1 Access to television

**Respondent Distribution by access to television**

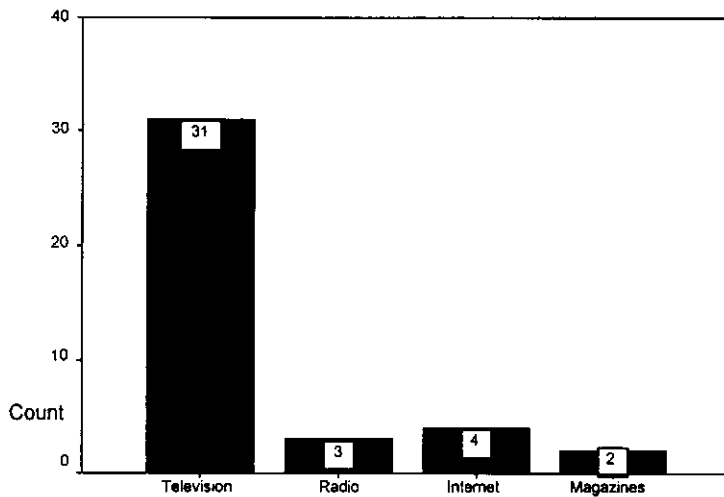
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid YES	73	76.6	76.6	76.6
NO	2	5.4	5.4	100.0
Total	75	100.0	100.0	

76.6% of the total respondents from the research in Langata have access to television. meaning that a fairable number of households have a television set or can be able to access one around them hence vulnerable to its influential capability from its program line up of movies, music at 5pm, the soap operas and the numerous advertisements.

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<sup>42</sup> Mwongi, J, *Mass Media and Communication*, class notes.

## 2.5.2 Favorite media



Respondent distribution by favorite medium

The respondent's favorite media is the television which could be explained that most of the respondents have access to it at 76.6% thus exposure to its content therein television impacts on their behavior one way or the other. From George Gebner's cultivation interaction through messages shapes and sustains the terms on which the messages are premised this theory builds on the assumption that major impacts of television materialize by means of way it exposes people to some images and metaphors repeatedly hence influences their attitudes and behavior.<sup>43</sup> This theory can explain how some of the interviewees felt television programs influence them or children. For instance, from the in-depth interviews, Yvonne feels children have the capacity to absorb what they watch to be the truth. Girls may feel the pressure to conform to society's standards of judging women and the boys grow knowing that women should act in a certain way.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> McQuail. D, (3rd e.d), *Mass Communication: an Introduction*, 6.

<sup>44</sup>Cf Yvonne, " Interview13"

With Bella, she gives the example of a program she was watching called “complete savages” with boys complaining doing dishes is the work of women and they would rather be irresponsible than do women work.<sup>45</sup> An example of how much influence a child watching such a program will emulate its content and unjustly limit the capabilities of women to solely homemakers. If television can show it is not something to take pride then maybe a reason that has some women scampering away from any associations as homemakers.

### 2.5.3 Respondent distribution by favorite program



Respondent distribution by favorite programs

Most of the respondent's prefer watching advertisements at 30% which could be for the reason that they come in between every program hence the respondents are left with no choice but to watch them and identify with some. The soap operas and movies tie at 24%. Music shows follow closely at 22% .all the above genres feature women very adversely in there content. Hence, the respondents chose them as their favorite programs due to the possibility of being influenced by their content. Soap operas are claimed to be

<sup>45</sup> Cf Bella , “Interview 17”

loved by women because of their plot which some may identify with, in music videos, they feature women half dressed dancing to some lyrics.

The respondents may have chosen music shows as favorite programs because they like to identify with those featured. Sexual innuendos are common in all the above genres featuring especially women more prominently which impacts on viewers negatively especially in relation to associations of women and sex objects. For instance, in the interview with Njeri, she quotes the music videos as depicting women as sexual objects especially since they seem to parade half naked dancing to music lyrics that is demeaning them<sup>46</sup>. Jemo says that music video and lyrics make women be viewed as sex objects hence, women are never taken as serious contenders to men.<sup>47</sup> From the uses and gratification theory, it suggests that the mass does not exist but people become audiences for different media products at different times<sup>48</sup> hence, the respondents choose their favorite media from the various themes they project hence gratifying a need or want for different consumers as the different interviewees above pointed out.

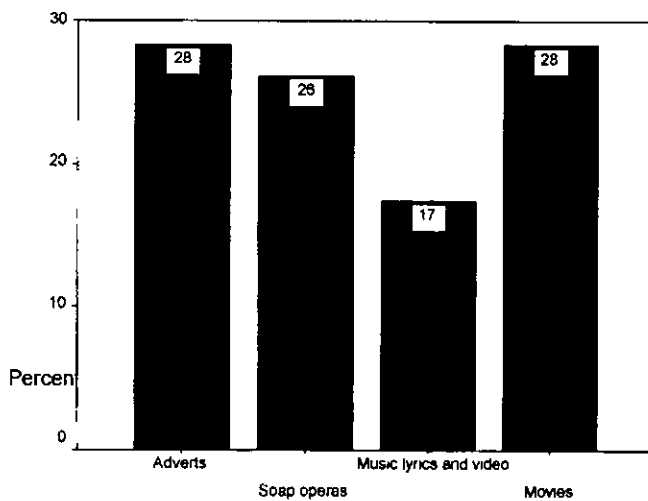
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<sup>46</sup>Cf Njeri., *Interview 2*.

<sup>47</sup> Cf jemo, *Interview 9*.

<sup>48</sup> Mwongi, J, *Mass Media and Communication*, class notes.

## 2.6 Respondents distribution by watching television content



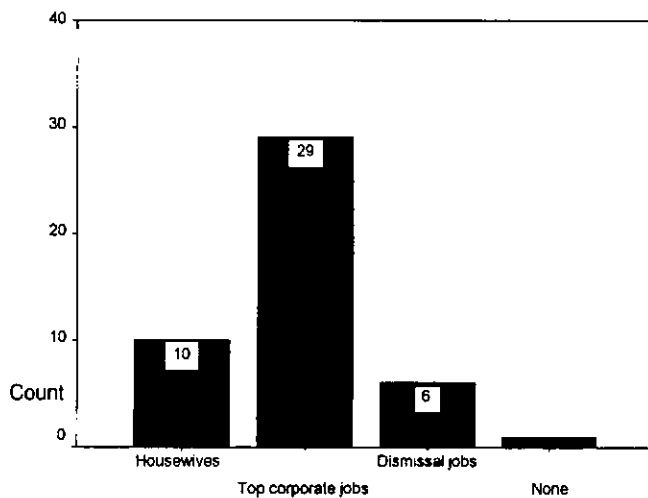
Respondent distribution by watching TV programs

Form the graph above, Most of the respondents watch the content that is shown on television whether by choice or by chance. Advertisements, soap operas, movies and music shows feature prominently in most of the Kenyan television channels at different time spans hence targeting various audiences even with adverts which feature according to the target audience meant to attract a certain audiences. During soap operas, adverts featured seem to target women from their content of cleaning agents, cooking oils, antiseptics to protect their family with among many others.

Hence, the research can conclude that gender portrayal also depends with time slots of various programs and the advertisements associated with them to get meanings interpreted as wanted. The social learning theory states that learning occurs when one observes and imitates the behavior of others called models and the process is modeling hence, the people in television programs are observed and if their behavior is rewarded, people will model after them which happens with advertisements that are brought with

rewarding effects.<sup>49</sup> The research will elaborate on the above genres more by themselves below.

### 2.6.1 Respondents view on advertisements portrayal of women



Respondent distribution by attitude

The graph above is on the attitude the respondents feel the woman should be portrayed on television. Considering that 67% of the respondents were women it shows there is an overwhelming feeling that women feel they are mis-represented and wants to be seen more in top-corporate jobs to show their capability and not dismissal jobs like seamstresses and under-paid secretaries. The housewife role seems to becoming less and less of an attitude they would like wholly defining women but, The reason could be that women in most advertisements get house wives/home maker's roles and objectified to sell a product as compared to an almost zero portrayal on top corporate career people. dismissal jobs is the lowest attitude because women have embraced top careers but are still confined to dismissal jobs like receptionists hence, career achievements is an attitude women would like to see recognized. For instance, in the interview with Irene she says

<sup>49</sup> Nzangi, A, *Psychology of Communication*, class notes.

women are presented on advertisements as targets as of all kinds of beauty improving products, users of cleaning products e.g. “Omo”, “Harpic”, “sunlight”, “Superbrite” among many. She wonders if men do not clean because actually most have taken to house work but television advertisements continue to make women the ultimate sole cleaners. <sup>50</sup>Njeri says that women are presented as beauty products, kitchen experts and obsessed cleaners in advertisements and even actually judged from their prowess in house work. <sup>51</sup> While her daughter Waithera says women are objectified into the ideal woman. The real woman is ignored because most women don’t match to television advertisements notion of perfect in weight, height, flawless beauty.<sup>52</sup> On the other hand Jerome says use of women in selling products looks good because their beauty lures men to buy.<sup>53</sup> He therefore acknowledges women are portrayed as objects for product sale.

From the research summary description of advertisements portrayal of women, most of the women interviewees feel unjustified by their portrayal on domestic expertise objects of selling products as compared to corporate experts. Most of the male interviewees seem un-aware of any mis-representation of women because, I would tend to say that they are used to the idea of women in those positions of gender stereotypes. Adrian feels it would actually be awkward to reverse roles and the message would not be well decoded or interpreted. <sup>54</sup> Richard also says that it goes against the laws of nature to portray men as home makers.<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, I would interpret it that women notice these detail of adverts because of their determination for acknowledgement of change in

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<sup>50</sup> Cf Irene, *interview 11*.

<sup>51</sup> Cf Njeri, *Interview 2*.

<sup>52</sup> Cf Waithera., *interview 3*.

<sup>53</sup> Cf Jerome., *interview 7*.

<sup>54</sup> Cf Adrian, *interview 18*.

<sup>55</sup> Cf Richard, *interview 24*.

their roles thus the need to see it incorporated in their portrayal on television today. Carol says that women accept they were housewives in traditional homes but they need more acknowledgment as equal representatives in the career front too.<sup>56</sup>

For Women to be taken seriously, advertisers should portray them comparatively to men because if it worked to make men be taken seriously then women should be given the same chance to compete on the same level. Awiti says women should be presented on equal basis as men<sup>57</sup> Liz feels that showing women as powerful and achievers in various fields will condition people to think that way hence propel women to new heights.<sup>58</sup> Decy notes that people continue to take men seriously because they are seen in significant positions all the time as presidents, managers, doctors among others hence we have been conditioned to think of them on those terms<sup>59</sup>.

It is important to note the effects that these portrayals have on women and children as the future generations. these interviews are by no means representative of the everyone's opinions, but they do adversely prove that advertisements portray women in an un-equitable way, compared to men hence, affecting perceptions of women thus, women are looking for recognition, which they see achieved, if they are given the same fighting chance, as of portrayal of men on television, as opposed to stereotypical portrayal of women as home makers, and objects used to sell products in advertisements.

## **2.6.2 Respondents view on soap-opera's portrayal of women**

The soaps watched in Kenya are mostly Mexican and Philippine based. These Soap operas are mostly said to be the genre of television, watched mainly by women

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<sup>56</sup> Cf carol, *interview 8*.

<sup>57</sup> Cf Awiti, *interview 30*.

<sup>58</sup> Cf Liz, *Interview 31*.

<sup>59</sup> Cf Decy *interview 32*.

hence, should be the full representative of women in all ways, but the plot always seem to surround the same theme of poor women, saved from their poverty by rich men hence, the notion that women are needy, dependants and can not make it in life without the help of men.. For instance, in the interview with nyokabi she said women are always wives to male characters in movies, and soap operas with their importance, based on their marriage to men, who have professional jobs to which the story revolves around, meaning women's significance on their own is next to zero, which she says is a role associated with women being the weaker and needy.<sup>60</sup>

Marianne says soap operas show women depend on getting married to rich men to succeed and the successful women are shown to be single, evil and manipulative hence the notion that women who have found success maybe independent but are unfulfilled because they have abandoned being housewives for careers.<sup>61</sup> The effect of this is that young girls watching this kind of portrayal of women will look at life in a very narrow-minded way for instance the interview with Koki where she says she relishes the thoughts of making a good house wife to her future husband who will take care of her. This she says is from watching soap operas with very poor women getting married and being happy taking care of their rich husbands who reward them with gifts.<sup>62</sup>

In the interview with Yvonne she feels women in soap operas are shown as emotional "freaks" and social climbers. She complains that soap operas are actually not for women and it is actually men who seem to have their egos stroked from the over-achievers images of perfect business men.<sup>63</sup> Form some of the sampled views; the

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<sup>60</sup> Cf Elle nyokabi, *Interview 29*.

<sup>61</sup> Cf Marianne, *Interview 21*.

<sup>62</sup> Cf Koki, *Interview 22*.

<sup>63</sup> Cf Yvonne, *interview 13*.

research concludes that women are not flattered by their portrayals of under-achievers as compared to men in the soap operas. In the interview with Mr. Ng'ang'a Mutiga he says he has noted women are portrayed in roles that make them not be taken seriously hence for the sake of his daughter He does not let her watch soap operas because they are likely to narrow her perspective of the world form their repetitive ,biased and shallow story lines. He prefers her watching programs with strong female leads like “relic hunter” to identify with.<sup>64</sup>

In movies, female leads in the Hollywood films do get leads with men as support characters but not nearly as many as those with male leads but it is a good starting point to showcase women as of similar strengths, capabilities and knowledge. In the interview with Liz she says this kind of portrayal that shows women as powerful and achievers in various fields will condition people to think that way hence propel women to new heights.<sup>65</sup> Decy adds that people take men seriously because they are shown in significant positions all the time hence we get conditioned to think of them as presidents, managers, doctors among others. She says women can use the same idea to condition society to look at women on the same level as men<sup>66</sup>. The research concludes that women want to see themselves not as dependants to men but people who stand on their own to feet hence women should be more involved in the production of their images. They should consider scripts that give them power and authority as women.

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<sup>64</sup> Cf Ng'ang'a Mutiga, *Interview 4*.

<sup>65</sup> Cf Liz, *interview 31*.

<sup>66</sup> Cf Decy, *Interview 32*.

### 2.6.3 Respondents views on women's portrayal in music lyrics and videos.

Women's bodies in music videos are exploited negatively with the notion that of using their sexuality to sell the music videos. They may do this for the money but it objectifies other women not in those videos through how women are viewed. In the interview with Bella, she says they are rarely dressed decently as they dance to songs that are actually insulting them in their lyrics referring to them as "gold diggers", "bitches"<sup>67</sup>, "sluts" among other names. In the Interview with Njeri she echoes the same sentiments as Bella saying the girls are always half dressed/nude while the man is always fully dressed. She feels women's nudity is what sells the video even though the lyrics are of something totally different theme.<sup>68</sup> Yvonne also says that music producers use women's sexuality as the selling point in promoting their music.<sup>69</sup> Irene also feels it is specifically hip-hop music videos and lyrics, where women are represented as sex objects and adds that she has noted hip-hop is listened to mostly by men hence does not understand why there are always almost nude women seen and mentioned everywhere in those songs.<sup>70</sup> For jemo, he feels that women should also not agree to be music videos dancing nude/half naked because this are some of the small things that make women be viewed as sex objects and not taken seriously.<sup>71</sup>

The effect of this music lyrics and videos is not only degrading to women but also effects children in that the girls may feel the pressure to look like the women in those

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<sup>67</sup> Cf Bella , *Interview 17*

<sup>68</sup> Cf Njeri, *Interview 2*.

<sup>69</sup> Cf Yvonne, *Interview 13*.

<sup>70</sup> Cf Irene ,*Interview 11*

<sup>71</sup> Cf jemo , *Interview 9*

videos which introduces them to sexual situations early and young boys may judge women according to how they see them in those videos. In the interview with Koki She says she likes watching music shows and wants to be exactly perfect like those women dancing with bikinis because men like women who look like that.<sup>72</sup> She is only 15yrs but we can see the influence the videos impact on her. Sadat feels that women who complain are those who know they can not qualify to be in those videos, adding that women's anatomies are beautiful and are used to tease men.<sup>73</sup> It is important to note that messages conveyed about women in some of the popular music videos are often negative and tend to reinforce stereotypical perceptions of women especially when they sexualize women's bodies into sex objects by dismembering her body into different parts they sing about. This makes the woman cease from being a human being into an object. It is rare to see or here any negative portrayal of men in music lyrics and videos for the reason that they are the ones singing hence should also be encouraged to sing about themselves because they are familiar with what they want and become positive role models.

## **2.7 Attitudes and values**

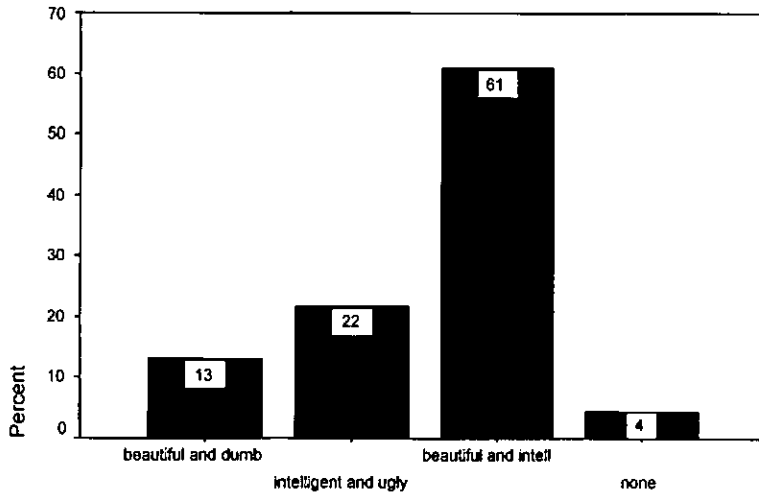
These are the attitudes and values that the modern woman views herself with regards to their character, their ambitions, status, values and capabilities among other.

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<sup>72</sup> Cf Koki , *Interview 22*

<sup>73</sup> Cf Sadat , *Interview 12*

### 2.7.1 Respondents view on attitudes towards beauty and intelligence in women

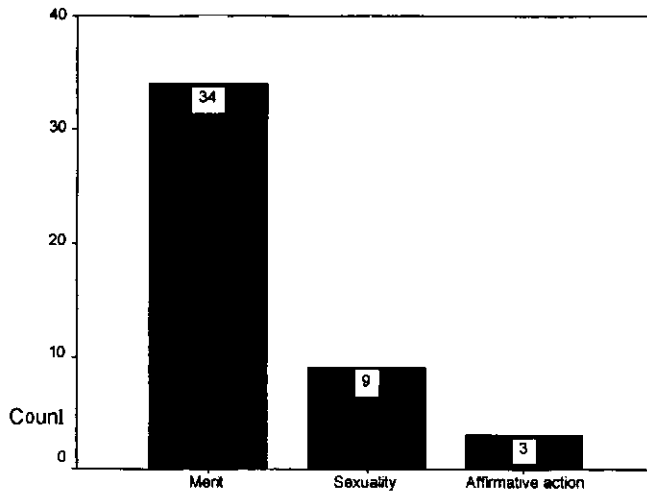


respondent distribution by attitudes

The respondents overwhelmingly felt that the attitude that they would like associated with women is beautiful and intelligent at 61%. This is from the stereotypical categorizing of women as either beautiful and dumb or intelligent and ugly but never both. At 61%, this is a way of women saying that those attitudes are an in-accurate description of them especially because you never miss the “dumb blondes” in movies and soap operas. In the interview with Waithera she feels women on television are judged unrealistically especially on endless beauty notions of being thin, tall, standard weight meaning women should be basically flawless thus what she says is that television build the attitude of the ideal women and not the real women .<sup>74</sup> But as the graph shows, women need to view themselves as beautiful and intelligent no matter how the ideal woman on television is portrayed who is more often than not wearing so much makeup to cover-up flaws hence, real women are real to themselves.

<sup>74</sup> Cf Waithera, *interview 4*

## 2.7.2 Respondents view on attitudes towards women capability



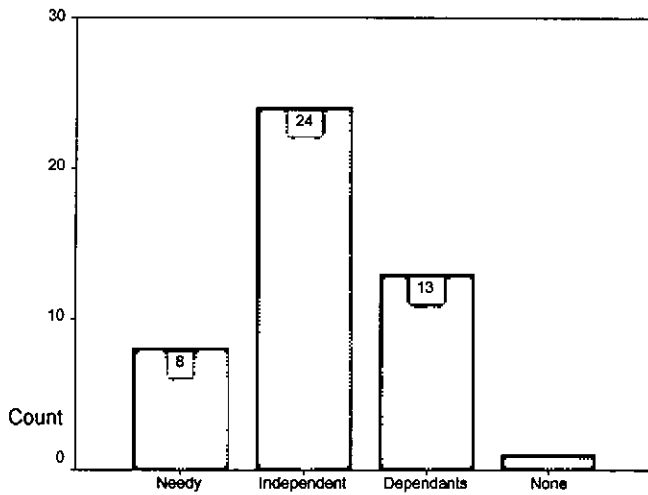
Respondent distribution by attitude

The majority of respondents felt that women's capability is measured through merit unlike stereotypical attitudes that women use their sexuality to get anywhere in life. Most women may have also started shunning Affirmative action because, they feel it makes them dependants, needy and all those things they are fighting against so as to gain equality and respect which is measured similarly to men. For instance in the interview with carol she says that both girls and boys are in school they are all in school so as to become what they want to be in life and she has not seen women given easier exams because they are "women".<sup>75</sup> Hence, women are looking for recognition on merit as opposed to affirmative action and extremes on use of sexuality to gain advantage.

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<sup>75</sup> Cf Carol, *interview 9*

### 2.7.3 Respondents attitude towards women's character



Respondent distribution by attitude

The majority of women's attitude towards themselves is that they are independent. this means that attitude towards themselves as needy and dependants to men is becoming foreign to them especially with so many of them working and taking care of their family in the interview with Jackie she says women are working and not at home waiting to be provided for anymore so independence should describe a woman.<sup>76</sup>

### 2.8 Conclusion

The field research was able to find credible discussions, interpretations and findings for the research, and came by new findings which gave me insightful conclusions and great understanding on most perspectives. Communication theories helped elaborate on some of the findings.

The research from the attitudes of some if not most of the respondents and interviewees brought about how positive use of television can be used to change the

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<sup>76</sup> Cf Jackie, *interview 26*

portrayal and perceptions of women, from the stereotypical gender portrayal associated with being a woman, which the respondents felt was from the according to the school of thought on structural feminism, by Hélène Cixous. she noted that feminism is from a Cultural point of view, that often designates gender to objects, words, attitude and even language, for example being powerful and strong is attributed to masculinity while irrationality is attributed to feminism<sup>77</sup> among other findings from this research's in-depth interviews and questionnaires. All the interviewees gave their suggestions, as to how women can use television to change on this gender portrayal, which is achievable, because there is a step of awareness that has been accomplished, from traditional days to open minded individuals of today.

There are several ways of using television to change gender portrayal but I will consider that most suggestions were flowing towards empowering women through giving them prominent independent lead roles that can be modeled by children, men and women themselves. I will write the synopsis of a drama series that will incorporate most of the suggestions satisfactorily.

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<sup>77</sup> Cf Mwongi, j., *media culture and society*, class notes.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 2.9 Introduction

The field research showed that 76.6% of the respondents have access to television and is also their favourite medium compared to radio, internet and magazines hence consumption of television content is inevitable whether positive or negative as viewers become aware of the life of people all over the world, hence, learning, comparing and contrasting different cultures. Television derives its power from using both visual and audio images, to capture people's emotions, hence, perpetuating universalized television values and interpretation of meaning. Thus, since television is a powerful tool that can be used to promote different ideologies, women should be able curb negative or inequitable gender-Role Portrayal, and instead promote structural feminism, which means fighting for female self-dominion and opportunities, equal to those naturally extended to men by virtue of being men. "The objective of equal representation, is recognized and the portrayal of women and men shall be comparable to, and reflective of, their actual social and professional achievements, contributions, interests and activities." <sup>78</sup>

The research proposes the use of a drama series that incorporates, most of the suggestions by the respondents, on empowering women through giving them prominent lead roles that build, on their characters, career, family, ambitions, values and

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<sup>78</sup> [www.mediaawareness.calenglish/resources/educational/handouts/tv/radio/cab-sex-role-code.cfm](http://www.mediaawareness.calenglish/resources/educational/handouts/tv/radio/cab-sex-role-code.cfm)

independence among other things. Hence, I believe that having a drama series, is more effective for a Kenyan market, especially given the hunger with which Kenyans, are receiving local programs with local content. Thus, this is a recipe for an intriguing and successful show that is committed, to the fair and equitable portrayal of all persons in television.

### **3.0 Television's educative power**

Television's educative power comes from the media, being a new form of socialization for people, to become members of a society, competing with the family, church, school and legal system, especially due to the dimensions of change experienced, in the family setting. Hence, socialization is relegated to television, which does not require literacy and is virtually a member of the family, in many homesteads. 76.6% of the total respondents, in my case study in Langata, have a television set or have access to one. Thus, interaction with the television is inevitable, for most of the people, especially because it does not require special skills to understand hence; shaping people's attitudes and opinions of what is "truth."

George Gebner's Cultivation Theory states that, watching a great deal of television, will be associated with a tendency to hold a specific and distinct sense of reality, conceptions that are congruent with the most inconsistent and pervasive images and values of the medium. This theory is about implications of stable, repetitive, pervasive and virtually inescapable patterns of images and ideologies that television entertainment displays.<sup>79</sup> My research suggests the use of television's educative power, to appreciate women as individuals, ambitious, contributors, powerful and achievers and

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<sup>79</sup> Cf DeFleur, M. L. & Ball- Rokeach, S. J., *Theories of mass communication*, 29.

more in various fields. Hence, associative conditioning will make people associate a distinct sense of reality of women in that light. For instance, in one of the interviews, Liz actually suggested that the media prepared people for a black president by showing the popular series “24” with a black president among other programs<sup>80</sup> Television also sets the agenda by its focus. The agenda setting theory states that, the media does not tell us what to think, but what to think about, by bringing to our attention what it wants to influence your opinion on.<sup>81</sup> Hence, women can tap into television’s ability, to reach people’s emotions, shape their opinions and set the agenda for them. The proposed program is in form of a television drama series.

### **3.1 Concept of a television drama series**

A drama series is a dramatic composition, illustrating a series of real events, invested with a dramatic unity and interest in depiction of human life, through a series of actions of more than ordinary interest, tending toward some striking result<sup>82</sup>. This means that the drama series the research proposes will depict the lives of different women, as they go through the humorous or grave actions in their life, through different episodes. The audience should be able to relate, and gain a critical experience on the life of women today.

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<sup>80</sup> Cf Liz, *Interview 31*.

<sup>82</sup> <http://thinkexist.com/dictionary/meaning/drama/>

## **3.2 The Treatment (planning the project)**

### **3.2.1 Program name**

I propose the name of the series to be “Beyond the Era’s Margin”. The name suggests a group of women, who know what they want, and go for it beyond the era/times they live in. The under the surface meaning is that, women are working very hard, but still lurk behind men in recognition, appreciation, self worth and diversity. So in essence, it is a title telling women whatever they want they can have it, dream it or do it anyway. This I feel is a psychological calling for women to get involved in doing what they like, and not what is imposed on them by their gender or the stereotypical rules of society, during whichever time they live.

### **3.2.2 Justification of the communication strategy**

The research conducted shows that some women feel shortchanged by stereotypical gender portrayals of women associating them to particular roles and characteristics on television whether it is in soap-operas, movies, music video and lyrics or advertisements hence a move towards equitable portrayal of all persons on television and comparable diversity of roles for all individuals. As above on television’s educative power, the agenda setting communication theory states the media influences what is important by bringing it to our attention hence determining what to think about. Thus, by showing women in stereotypical gender roles for so long, the audiences have adopted this as the way to think about women, who continue to be confined to these conservative societal roles as they try to find acceptance in other fields. Hence, a question of what can be done to ease the burden on women who are driving themselves to become the ideal/super woman but are not really happy inside. The communication strategy proposed

has most of the elements that will implement what the respondents voiced as a way thorough which “women can achieve equitable representation comparable to and reflective of, their actual social and professional achievements, contributions, interests and activities<sup>83</sup>.”

### **3.2.3 The synopsis of the proposed television series**

The series “Beyond the Era’s Margin” begins with a pilot episode introducing the audience to the lead characters of four women friends. There is Wanjira, 33yr old woman running for office. She is a lawyer by profession and married to a banker. Her husband quits his job to support her and become a stay at home dad to their 9yr old twin daughters. There is Mumbua, a 27yr old woman running her successful own architectural firm. She is a widow with a 3yr old son. There is Awuor, a 29yr old woman; she is brilliant doctor up for promotion for chief of staff. She is engaged to a male nurse. Lastly there is Njambi, a 30yr old successful Afro-fusion musician and video producer and also runs a charity organization in her own name.

The careers and personal life of these women will be shown by bringing out the different life lessons for today’s society in different episodes. Wanjira’s life is that of a married woman juggling between family and career. Her stay- at- home husband is to encourage men to support women who choose to pursue careers and also to encourage men to embrace being homemakers and be proud of it.

In Mumbua’s life, the series brings forward the notion of women as successful business professionals and breadwinners for their families. Being a widow brings out the

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<sup>83</sup> [www.mediaawareness.calenglish/resources/educational/handouts/tv/radio/cab-sex-role-code.cfm](http://www.mediaawareness.calenglish/resources/educational/handouts/tv/radio/cab-sex-role-code.cfm)

issue of women who are alone or left alone, but still make it without depending on men to provide for them, and who make decisions for themselves and still find success.

Awuor's life represents those of women who are able to get what they want through hard work and resilience and do not using their sexuality, to climb up the corporate ladder. Her dating a male nurse stands for the issue of women with good careers who are able to find happiness with men of whose career status is lower than theirs.

Through Njambi's life, the series considers women who do brilliant, respectful music about themselves and life generally. Her being 30yrs, single and without children stands for the issue of women fearing aging without being married. Not having children represents women choosing to concentrate on their careers, without pressure of being confined to societal pressure, of what is happiness for women, and doing charity work represents finding fulfillment, in other things one feels define what they want. The friendship between them all should bring out support of women for each other, exchange ideas and bond through it all.

### **3.2.4 Communication objectives**

The communication objectives for the proposed program: "Beyond the Era's Margin". Aims at the following: To relieve women of un-equal gender portrayal on television, which means changing the perception of women as suited solely for housewives roles, as sex objects and objects for product sale, so that they are seen to be independent people, working professionals and decent human beings. To empower women in disengaging themselves from society's conservative rules for their own priorities without fear of becoming victims. To show children how to respect, relate and

imitate women and encourage self-confidence in young girls from portrayal of other women as both able and pro-social.

### **3.2.5 Target audience**

The target audience for the program is women of all ages, adolescent children because they are at the stage of an identity crisis hence, the series should build on it and the last target audiences are men, so that they ease down on their conservative nature of looking at the changes women, have undergone and protectively uphold.

### **3.2.6 Choice of medium**

Television informs, entertains and persuades, so the research proposes use the television for those reasons, and because it is a medium from my research, that is easily accessible to more than 50% of the people, and it is also the favourite medium among the respondents as per this research. The television will also be the best medium to use because of its use of both audio and visual images to capture people's emotions, reactions, imaginations and it also feeds the desires of people.

Television also represents the theory of Consistent repetition of information to generate changes in perception. George Gebner's cultivation theory states that, the major impact of television is due to the way it exposes people to some images and metaphors repeatedly, thus influencing their attitudes and behavior.<sup>84</sup> Television has been what this whole thesis has been about because of its negative gender portrayal of women therefore, The television drama series "Beyond the Era's Margin" will therefore tap positively into televisions informative, entertaining and persuasional power to expose audiences

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<sup>84</sup> Cf DeFleur, M. L. & Ball- Rokeach, S. J., *Theories of mass communication*, 29.

repeatedly to the plot of the series, that should change perception of women, which has always been limited to stereotyped gender role portrayals of women.

### **3.2.7 Actual programming**

The “Beyond the Era’s Margin” series will be aired at 8.00-9.00 time slots on Sundays for forty five minutes. This time slot allows for most people to be available to watch. “In the principles of programming one should place new programs on the best time for tune-ins so that people can recognize it and start relating to it<sup>85</sup>.” hence, this means that once the audience is familiar with the pilot program, they will be able to tune in as regular fans through the first twelve episodes for three months. If the program is successful and meets its objectives, there will be production of other eleven episodes (total of 23) to make up the first season of the series. Subsequent series’ will be produced in consideration of demand and popularity of the program. The series will also be available in DVD (a medium for digital representation of movies and other multimedia presentations that combine sound with graphics.) form for those interested in re-runs.

A lot of creativity will be put into shaping the stories. for example to keep things intriguing, the series will use flashbacks to bring out their past, they will meet at each other’s houses once in a while and play lawn tennis, as they discuss the present dramas in their life, solutions and support each other through joining Wanjira in her campaign trails, going to Njambi’s concerts, video shoots and mobilizing support for her charity work, having Mumbua as their doctor and their reference, to other doctors and also for Mumbua’s architectural firm. All these will incorporate dilemmas and cliff-hangers to excite and keep the audiences interest.

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<sup>85</sup> Booker, N. *media management*, class notes.

The channel of choice will be according to its popularity with Kenyan audiences and its support of local programming. There are many television stations in Kenya but through personal participatory observation, Citizen Television, Nation television (NTV) and the Kenya broadcasting corporation (KBC) have invested a lot in promoting local talents and productions .I propose though use of citizen television because of its rapid popularity growth in recent years, and the number of local programs it shows thus an easier negotiating ground.

### **3.2.8 Financing of the drama series**

It will be a low budget production, with proposals sent to various sponsors and donors, especially, organizations that deal with gender based issues. I also propose working with established producers, who through their success and experience can mobilize funds, through relying on their reputations of having had successful productions. The funds will cover the talent's salaries and any other expenses. With the success of the series, I propose to use the money from the DVD's, acquired profits and the supportive advertisement sponsorship to run the series through time.

### **3.3 Critiquing the program**

Although I expect the program will be able to change the perceptions of women, as regards to gender role portrayals, associating women with particular roles and characteristics on television, I do also expect to receive opposition and resistance from some producers, advertisers and society's conservative groups, among others who want to maintain a certain status quo, they have always been familiar with. But importantly, the series should be able to capture the theory of an active audience. The uses and

gratification theory states that, when people reach a certain equilibrium, they tend to search for reinforcement and become selective in their exposure, by selecting what they want, retain it, recall it and pay attention to what affirms them. Audiences are active individuals in the context of their personal and social goals<sup>86</sup> hence, target audiences should be able to select what provides them with significant information, and meets their various needs for personal identity and references.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has elaborated the communication strategy and justified the proposed communication project. Women are very significant people who have surpassed many expectations to reach where they are today. I hope that the proposed series can be able to demonstrate their achievement and recognition. Children should be able to relate to women as individuals and not through associating them to gender stereotypes which can have a negative effect on their growth, especially because they are in process of learning their values and developing their self-concepts. Hence, television programs should be able to shape them in the un-biased way of looking at female-only and male-only occupations. The Diversity portrayed for men should be comparable to women's.

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<sup>86</sup> Cf Mwangi j, *Mass Media and Society*, class notes.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

In this research, I set my mind to find out how television can be used positively to change the perceptions of women about themselves and others. My motivation was grounded on the fact that women are most of the time mis-represented on television, especially in advertisements, soap operas, music lyrics, videos and movies. They fail to recognize women as individuals and instead judge them on the basis of stereotypical gender portrayals on television which are not comparable or reflective of their actual social and professional achievements.

The in-depth interviews represented the views of the respondents, and the suggestions they felt would wholly portray women, in a range of diverse roles. The self administered questionnaires complemented the in-depth interviews, through responses on background information, media use and the attitude and values towards the modern women. Hence, the incorporation of a drama series, aiming at achieving different objectives, with women as major lead characters instead of support roles and also builds on their careers and personal life.

I believe the proposed project meets the objectives proposed. Thus the viability of this series is that women can identify with the characters; they can also see themselves in a different light as independent, intellectually competent, beautiful no matter what and decision makers on their own priorities and not confine themselves to society's conservativeness. All the characters represent one thing or another that real women deal with everyday, and things they would like to see changed. Hence, the proposed series is a factual representative of the real world. Men may also be able to relate to the character

because they have mothers, sisters, aunts, nieces and grandmothers, who they would not like to see treated in a different way because of their gender. and as per the research, a good number of them felt that women deserve recognition, because they have proved they can compete with men on the same level, especially with change in the family setting, where we have women as breadwinners and men as home-makers hence, encouraged to see development of positive women role models for both young girls and boys.

The ways in which women are portrayed in media, can affect how they think and feel about themselves, especially, images representing unrealistic beauty ideals, stereotyped gender roles, objectification among other. Hence, with televisions popularity, it should be a common ground for all interested parties to express, educate and contribute to truth and reality, reflective of their actual social and professional lives. The ethical implications of the project materialize, when people want to maintain the status quo, they are used to because they are threatened/afraid of change. But, opening up to new concepts for those with different tastes and preferences, should be a battle you win because you participated in it.

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## APPENDIX 1: BUDGET FOR THE FIRST TWELVE EPISODES

No.	Task	Resource description	Unit	Cost per unit (Sh)	Sub-total	Grand-total	Financiers
1.	Pay	Talents	7	50,000	350,000		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sponsorship</li> <li>▪ Fund rais /donors</li> <li>▪ Established producers</li> <li>▪ Women b NGO's</li> <li>▪ Subsequent profits</li> </ul>
		Camera crew	3	36,000	108,000		
		Director	1	62,000	62,000		
		Producer	1	67,000	67,000		
		Editor	2	36,000	72,000		
		Lighting crew	3	32,000	96,000		
		Sound engineer	2	32,000	64,000		
		Extras	4	10,000	40,000		
					<b>859,000</b>		
2	Location inspection	Empty compounds	3	100,000	300,000		
						<b>300,000</b>	
3	Hire	Transport –van	25	20,000	20,000		
		Furniture/props	4	75,000	300,000		
		Dressing/makeup artists	3	30,000	90,000		
		Dolly & Crane	2	100,00	200,000		
						<b>610,000</b>	
4	Buy	Cameras	4	80,000	320,000		
		Microphones	4	45,000	180,000		
		Desktop computer(HP)	4	70,000	280,000		
		Laptops(DELL)	2	50,000	100,000		
						<b>888,000</b>	
5	Access	Internet	6	3,000	18,000	<b>18,000</b>	
6	Contingencies	Other	25	600	15,000	<b>15,000</b>	
7	No. of episodes	Pilot	1	97,000	97,000		
		Rest of the episodes	11	82,000	902,000		
						<b>999,000</b>	
						<b>3,689,000</b>	

## **APPENDIX 2: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS**

### **FIELD NOTES**

**Place: Akiba estate, Langata.**

**Date: 16/02/09**

**Question 1: What in your view is gender role portrayal?**

1. Cleo washu, (21yrs), she says gender portrayal is how both women and men are portrayed on modern electronic media. She adds that women are portrayed negatively as compared to men, especially in dismissive roles, particularly as sex objects to sell products.

**Question 2: How has this affected your esteem as a woman?**

She says, her esteem is affected, when people expect her to act in a certain way, because she is a woman, especially men who expect women to be sexually submissive, because television portrays them as such. She adds that she has taken to be very strict with men, even when they want to be friends, because she feels men look down upon women. She feels it is insulting to her, as she works so hard to be independent, yet society hasn't appreciated this fact. She points out, she actually moved out of her parent's house at 19yrs, and doing very well in her businesses.

**Question 3: How would you like to see women represented?**

She says, obviously more independent, like they have become. She points out, soap operas show women as always poor, and they only acquire status, when they get married to a rich man. She says that she can not stand soap operas, and thinks people who say soaps are for women are people who feel the need to deprive women of their knowledge of the real world.

**Place: Akiba estate, Langata.**

**Date: 16/02/09**

**Question 1: What is your view on how women are portrayed on television?**

**2.** Njeri, (33yrs), she says, women are presented as beauty products, kitchen experts and obsessed cleaners, in advertisements. In movies and soap operas she says, women are always fighting for the love of the rich man, who is oblivious of it. In music videos she says, they are always half dressed/nude while the man is fully dressed, meaning that woman nudity is what sells the video, even though the lyrics are of a totally different theme. She wonders then, how are women supposed to be taken seriously after all this. She gives the example of the videos by Koffi Olomide as her worst.

**Question 2: Do you think the kind of portrayal above has an effect on children?**

She feels, it affects mostly young girls as they are growing, because gender role portrayals are forms of domination over women, where men dominate over them, and every thing else. Hence, when they accept, they fear exploiting their potential.

**3.** Waithera, (17yrs), Njeri's daughter, chips in adding that girls are affected, because what they see and hear all the time, becomes who they become tomorrow and not exceed expectations. She also feels women's gender portrayal continually leads to how women are viewed. If it is in negative light, they will forever work to be respected, but in vain. She says she is very passionate about this issue, because she has taken note that women on television, are presented in the most un-realistic way. She calls them the ideal women not the real women.

**Question 3: What do you mean by ideal and not real women?**

She says, ideal is how society thinks you should be and act but real is how in reality a person acts without conforming to rules set by others but act on your own accord. She gives the example of women on television advertisements as perfect in weight, height, flawless beauty and manners because, that's how those making the advert, want women to think of themselves, as women will start to question if they fit, hence, sell their product. She feels this does not represent her or who she wants to become.

**Place: Otiende estate, Langata.**

**Date: 17/02/09**

**Question 1: How do you see women portrayed on television?**

**4.** Mr. Ng'ang'a Mutiga, (35yrs), He says women seem to be exploited in the name of selling products whether in advertisements or music videos. In movies, women are given support roles to men's main characters. He adds, for women to be taken seriously, they need tougher roles.

**Question 2: So, as men do you think women deserve roles that were once defined as men's?**

He says, women have come along way, and they deserve fair recognition for their efforts. He adds, he has a little girl, he wouldn't like to see treated differently, because of her gender. He wants her role models, to be people like Njoki Ndung'u (a former nominated member of parliament and mover of the Sex act bill). He says there is need for women to be presented in serious roles.

**Question 3: Do you have any examples of programs you like your daughter to watch?**

He says, he does not like his daughter watching soap operas, because they are likely to narrow her perspective of the world, from their repetitive, biased and shallow story lines. He adds, the ideal programs for his daughter as he said before, are those with strong female leads like "relic hunter" hence, somebody she can identify with.

**Place: Langata high school**

**Date: 17/02/09**

**Question 1: How do think women are portrayed on television?**

**5.** Kevin, (17yrs), He says, he's never thought about it, and sees no problem in the way women are presented, he sees nothing "un-normal" about that. He adds, at the end of the day it sells whatever idea is being sold.

**6.** Jerome and Kathy, both (16yrs), Jerome says, use of women in selling products looks good. Their beauty lures men to buy. Kathy refutes this. She explains what Jerome is saying, is an attitude advertisers have formulated in them, because, to sell women

products to women, they use other women models, so for men products it should be the same. Otherwise this is objectifying women.

**Question 2: How do you think gender based portrayals are affecting your attitudes as growing children?**

Kathy says, attitudes like Jerome's and Kevin's is what the impact of gender role portrayal is. This is because television tells women; their place is behind men, pressure to be perfect and never ending expectations of women on domestic expertise. She says she has taken to pretending she can not cook because she does not like those stereotypes of women as perfect cooks, cleaner's etcetera. She says, she wants to cook because she feels like not because she is a woman.

Jerome says, he does not understand the bitterness with women nowadays, because in society women and men have their own roles, hence, what television shows ,are just the unwritten rules of society harmonization.

**Question 3: I got the impression from Jerome that women and men have roles that make them who they are. What do you think?**

**8.** Carol, (17yrs), she says, Jerome is a chauvinist and narrow minded. She adds, women and men in the past had roles no doubt, but since women joined the professional world, some of these roles took a back seat, in their daily priorities. She points out, both men and women are in school, so as to pave way for what they want to be in life. Women are not given easier exams because they are "women" hence, unfair to be given roles on basis of being women.

**Question 4: Do you think television is representing women accurately?**

**9.** Jemo, (16yrs), he feels women deserve better, and admire their resilience. He admires his mother most. He thinks soap operas are rubbish, and women should also not agree, to be in music videos dancing nude/half naked, as the man is fully dressed, because, these are some of the small things, that make women be viewed as sex objects.

**Place: akiba estate, Langata.**

**Date: 17/02/09**

**Question 1: How are women portrayed on television?**

**10.** Monika, (31yrs), she says, women are represented according to their ages. Older women are always housewives, the younger women work in offices, but mostly as secretaries. In soap operas, they are always fighting for one mans attention, and in music videos, they are always indecent. She feels this kind of roles, make women feel that this is who they are. She gives examples of the “kimbo”, and “harpic” as emphasizing the woman expertise in the home area.

**Question 2: How do you teach your children differently?**

(She has boy/girl twins of (10yrs)) She says, from when they were young, she has treated them similarly, and does not encourage any gender based roles. She says, she actually prefers to buy for Sage, her little girl, cars instead of dolls.

**Question 3: Do you think buying her cars instead of dolls will make her grow differently?**

She says, she does this because television adverts, seem to advertise cars to men, especially when they use women models, to attract men. meaning that if the man buys that car, he will attract women like the model. She feels her daughter should not be limited by her gender, and needs to work hard for herself. She says dolls, psychologically condition women to start thinking of maternalism as their duty, and have to apologize when they choose entirely different paths in life. She also adds, she will always respect whichever path, any of her children take, but for now she is doing what she feels is right.

**Place: Onyonka estate, Langata.**

**Date: 17/02/09**

**Question 1: How are women portrayed on television?**

**11.** Irene (19yrs), she says, women are presented on adverts, as targets of all kinds of beauty improving products, users of cleaning products e.g. “Omo”, “Harpic”, “sunlight”, “Superbrite” among many. She wonders if men do not clean, even with most taking to house work, but, television adverts, continue to make women the ultimate cleaners. She says hip-hop music videos and lyrics represent women as sex objects, yet most women

actually prefer listening to R&B music like “West life”, Luther Van dross among others. She points out that hip-hop lyrics and videos degrade women in her opinion and are listened to mostly by men. Hence, she does not understand why, there are almost nude women seen and mentioned everywhere in those songs.

**Question 2: what of movies and soap operas?**

She says, she does not mind soap operas, because they have female lead characters, but her only problem with them, is the plot of poor girl/rich man story lines. Women only acquire status by marrying men, and women are less accomplished in life than men, this she says is, basically what someone watching without an open mind gets. She quotes a soap opera she watched called “More than Love”; a character by the name Jackie is expressing to her friend Celina that, “she should always take care of her man, and cook for him, so that he can love her more.” Irene sees this as something that would make a young girl think that, doing stuff for a man will make him love you.

In movies, she says women mostly are support characters, especially as wives to the lead male. Lead females are their but very few. She sees this as treatment of women as people incapable of holding onto anything on their own.

**Question 3: What is the ideal program/advert?**

**12.** Sadat (25yrs), he says, he really does not care as long as it is not boring. I ask him what if it is demeaning to women. He says, he has never seen any, but some women do complain about music videos, having under-dressed women. He says those who complain though are those who know they can not qualify to be in those videos. He adds that, women were made with very beautiful anatomies and use it to tease men.

**Question 4: If you had a daughter, would you like to see her view herself from what She watches on television?**

He says it depends, if it is videos he would not let her identify herself with them, because they don’t show women very positively. He says now that he really thinks about it, women need to change how they are perceived by society, because how they are portrayed is so normalized , it could totally pass you as wrong. He gives the “Oprah Winfrey show” and “Tyra banks show” as ideal for talking women issues and improving on women based issues.

**Place: Southlands estate, Langata.**

**Date: 18/02/09**

**Question 1: How do you think women are portrayed on adverts, music and soap operas on television?**

**13.** Yvonne (24yrs), she says, women are portrayed according to gender based roles of the yester years, when women were solely home makers. She says though advertisements have home setting, they emphasize on women as the home makers, with expertise on the best cooking oils, effective detergents, best antiseptics among others. She gives the example of “Elianto” cooking fat advert with a mother-in-law who comes to visit his son, and criticizes his wife over some dusty window panes, and only becomes friendly to her when she cooks good food with Elianto oil. This goes on to show that women are judged, from their prowess in house work. She adds, advertisers also use women’s sexuality to sell products. An example is the Samsung sleek phone which shows a very sleek woman posing next to it.

In music videos and lyrics, she says that producers use women to promote their music, by again using women’s sexuality as the selling point. In soap operas, she says women are shown as emotional “freaks” and social climbers. She says soaps in essence should be classified as “for men” because it seems they were meant to stroke their egos.

**Question 2: what do you think is the effect of gender portrayal on women and children?**

She says, growing children have the capacity sometimes, to absorb what they watch to be truth, hence, girls may feel the pressure to conform, to society’s standards of judging women and boys may grow thinking, women should act in a certain way. As for grown men, she says they have grown seeing women portrayed in certain ways, hence, a dismissal attitude towards women.

**Question 3: How can this be changed?**

She says, change can be experienced, by giving women more independent and career oriented roles. She gives Gabrielle union (a Hollywood actress), as her favorite role model lead character, because in all her movie roles she is a “go-getter”. She says commercials, should make a point of equally representing both men and women, in whatever adverts they do. She gives an example of the “Golden fry cooking oil” where a

man cooks for his wife and children and proceeds to wash the dishes. She says, this is an advert that has gone past gender stereotypes, to show that even men do housework and are good at it. In movies, she says she prefers an all women cast, like the television series “cashmere mafia” and “jungle lipstick”. She explains that they respect women as top achievers, with talents beyond house wife duties. She also likes songs with respectful lyrics, especially if they are about women. She cites her best song as “miss independent by ne-yo.”

**Place: Nairobi west, Langata.**

**Date: 18/02/09**

**Question 1: What do you understand by gender role portrayal?**

**14.** Kope, (31yrs), he says, gender role portrayal is how a man or woman is seen through society’s eyes then represented on any medium.

**Question 2: How do you see gender role portrayal on television?**

He says, most programs represent both men and women according to their traditional roles in society.

**Question 3: Do you feel this gender role portrayal is positive or negative?**

He says, positive. This is because women are seen as the home makers, whilst the men as the family providers hence a unified society.

**Question 4: Do you agree with what kope is saying?**

**15.** Awuor, (23yrs), she agrees, she sees nothing wrong, with how people are represented on television, according to their roles in society. Women as housewives on adverts or movies are who they are. She adds, even though women have careers, they should not neglect their most important role, taking care of their family.

**Question 5: Do you feel gender role portrayals on television limit you as a woman?**

She does not agree. She says, Women do more, because they can cope with multi-tasking, unlike men, who are poor at multi-tasking. She feels television is just relaying the obvious. She feels maybe only music videos with naked women, is negative portrayal, otherwise, everything else is positive.

**Place: Nairobi west, Mama Ngina estate, Langata.**

**Date: 18/02/09**

**Question 1: How are women portrayed on television?**

**16.** Krista, (18yrs), she says, advertisements use women as the attraction in sale of a product, and women are also the majority targets, for most products. E.g. beauty products, kitchen and cleaning merchandise target women.

**Question 2: What do you think would happen if they portrayed men on the alleged women roles on television programs?**

She says, she can not imagine reversed roles on adverts or soap operas. If they target men with cooking oils or toiletries, it will seem absurd, because women do those things. In soaps and movies she sees this as possible but only in a comedy genre.

**Question 3: Does this affect you in any way as a growing adolescent woman?**

She says it does, because society makes women feel they should be super beings balancing careers and home makers roles, as men enjoy doing less and less duties. She feels it is up to women to decide, if they want to feed on that perception or fight for change.

**Question 4: how do you think women should be portrayed on television?**

She says, women should not be represented in association to particular roles, on basis of gender, because it continues to bind them to certain stereotypes, they feel they must live up to. They should be represented, according to the changes they have gone through the years.

**Place: Ngei 2 estate, Langata.**

**Date: 18/02/09**

**Question 1: What do you think is gender role portrayal on television?**

**17.** Bella, (18yrs), she says, this is how both women are represented on television and according to the roles they do or are associated with everyday.

**Question 2: how do you see women in particular represented on television?**

She says mostly as house wives, objects to sell products, and sex objects in music videos, because, they are rarely dressed decently, as they dance to lyrics insulting them, referring to them as “gold diggers”, “bitches” , “sluts” among other names.

**Question 3: How do you think affects women and children?**

She says, she feels gender role portrayals, make women be looked down upon, and not taken as seriously as men. Children watching will get the same concepts and dismiss women. She quotes a DVD she watched called "Complete Savages" with a cast of five brothers, who were once asked to do dishes, but complained to their father, he was trying to turn them into women. Asked who will lean after them when they grow up, they said their girlfriends, adding they would rather be irresponsible than do women work. She feels if men have such an attitude towards "women roles" then, how is it anything of pride to women.

**Question 4: How would you like to see women portrayed?**

She says women should abandon roles that only define them, as home makers, and lean towards more career related roles. She adds that television should have more programs with women as lead characters, and in prominent positions, without making the successful woman look evil, or unable to have a husband and children because of her position. Success in women should be portrayed in the same way as of successful men.

**Question 5: How do you see women and men portrayed on television?**

**18.** Adrian, (19yrs), he says he has never really thought about it, but thinks it is mostly as house wives from the adverts he can recall, whilst the men are likely to be visionaries, professionals in corporation's etcetera.

**Question 6: Why do you think this is the case?**

He says this is what each is suited to do. He feels that showing men in traditional women roles will be awkward, and the message will not get around as intended, especially in sale of products in advertisements.

**Question 7: what do you think about what Adrian just said?**

**19.** Ciku (20yrs), she says that's all in the mind of people, constantly bombarded by images of who does this and that. She adds that there has been so much experienced, due to the entry of women in areas which were domains of men, hence, television programs should acknowledge this, and stop limiting women to gender stereotypes.

**Question 8: How do you think children and women themselves are affected by gender role portrayals?**

**20.** Denden (20yrs), he says one of the limits of gender role portrayals comes when those bold enough to move away from traditional roles, are not supported by their fellow women. He feels that women have been conditioned, to think of themselves in a certain way. Hence, they do not support each other success. He gives an example of Martha karua (the constitution minister and 2012 presidential candidate) as what women should be emulating, but say they can not vote for a woman to be president, because of her head-strong character, but they will vote for men with the same character. Hence, what they are used to watching transpires to real life aspects of women's lives. Children learn from watching what is represented, as the realities .hence, they grow up with the same attitudes. He says women, should be given roles that will change their attitudes towards themselves, and for children as the future generations.

**Place: Akiba estate, Langata.**

**Date: 18/02/09**

**Question 1: what is gender role portrayal on television?**

**21.** Marianne, (17yrs), she says it is how people are represented on television according to their gender roles. e.g. Women are home makers and men are breadwinners.

**Question 2: With changes experienced in changes of roles, do you think what television presents is justified?**

She says it does not, but women have continued to be house chore doers, even as some bring home the bacon, hence, television is just presenting the real situation on the ground. Women still insist on taking care of men like children, because they have been made to think that's what being a woman entails, and having television programs following on the same theme does not help the situation.

**Question 3: how have gender role stereotypes affected you as an adolescent girl?**

**22.** Koki (15yrs), she says it has affected her from what she watches her role models in her favorite programs do. She says it comes with phases, because at times she wants to be like Oprah winfrey (Hollywood talk show host). And, at times when she watches soap operas with very poor women getting married, and being happy taking care of their rich

husbands, she wants to be like them. She also adds that she likes watching music shows, and wants to be exactly perfect, like those women dancing in bikinis. She thinks that all men like women who look like that.

**Question 4: Would you like to see women represented differently?**

She says they all seem perfectly happy even though it is acting. She gives an example of the “kimbo” advert with small girls saying their mothers are the best cooks, and want to one day want to be the perfect cooks like them. She adds that she would rather fit into society’s given gender roles, as she has grown admiring how both her parents, shared roles and were perfectly happy.

**Place: Southlands estate, Langata.**

**Date: 19/02/09**

**Question 1: What is your view on how women are portrayed on television?**

**23.** Kunle (30yrs), he says he is from Nigeria and sees no big difference with Kenyan television portrayal of women. He explains that culturally, women do housework hence advertisements basically reflect that, in music, he says that the European music is explicit with portrayal of women as sex objects, as compared to African music He adds that a woman, in his Nigerian culture is celebrated; hence, the same is reflected on their television programs.

**Question 2: what is the difference you have identified in the Kenyan compared to Nigerian gender portrayals.**

He says it is basically same and has never seen women portrayed in any bad way, except in exported programs from the western countries, which depict women as sex objects in music and advertisements compare women to sale objects. He says foreign programs is what is corrupts the self image of women and children today.

**Question 3: I have looked at some of the western programs and what we have on our television which is similar, how would you like to see television portray women?**

He says local broadcasters should get rid of western programs with themes that degrade women, and embrace home grown portrayals, which are in line with the different roles both women and men have.

**Question 4: With changes experienced in roles for women, do you think they would like to see themselves portrayed differently?**

**24.** Richard (29yrs), also from Nigeria, He says it goes against the laws of nature to portray men as home makers, men do acknowledge women have changed, but they are still suited up to do some things than men can not. He says his culture goes against men doing any housework, so it is impossible for the television to show what is not there. He adds that he actually does not let the women in his life pay for anything, even if they have more money than him. This he explains makes him uncomfortable. Hence, gender roles should stay as they were but television should concentrate on the positive aspects of it.

**Question 5: Do you feel differently from Kunle and Richard about gender stereotype roles?**

**25.** Sophia (25yrs), she says being friends with both Kunle and Richard has influenced how she feels about gender roles, because she enjoys not paying any bills and does not mind doing any house chores. She says she sees nothing wrong with women being portrayed as better house wives, in comparison to career prioritized women. She also adds she at times goes with what suits her needs at the moment.

**Place: Park estate, Langata.**

**Date: 19/02/09**

**Question 1: what do you understand by gender portrayal on television?**

**26.** Jackie, (25yrs), she says it is the un-balanced portrayal of women as compared to men in the television programs.

**Question 2: why do you say un-balanced?**

She points out that women are portrayed in a biased way, taking in mind they have changed so much, especially, with their entry into the corporate world, politics, science etcetera. But, television still portrays women as second class citizens best suited for housewife duties. She calls for adverse portrayal of women.

**27.** Jesse, (23yrs), he agrees with his sister Jackie, he says gender portrayals are not only unfair to women, but also hide the subordination of women by society. He adds that these portrayals do have some sort of effect on how people view women, whether it is children, men or women themselves.

**Question 2: What do you see as a balanced gender portrayal on television?**

He says that both men and women should be represented on equal terms, positions and entitlements on any television programs. He adds that producers should also make productions that show women in lead roles, good career positions, politics etcetera. He gives the example of the series “prison break” when it had episodes with a woman president. Hence, this makes women believe they can achieve whatever they want. But, if they are continuously shown as seamstresses and poor women waiting to be married by rich men, they will not be taken seriously ever.

**28.** Lena (25yrs) he adds that he agrees with both his cousins Jackie and Jesse. He explains that in their family, no one was shown they were suited for this job, and the other one another. Everyone did everything. Men did house work and women changed car tyres, hence, gender associated roles are foreign in their family.

He adds that women, should not be limited to what society insists they should do or not do, they should be their own individuals judged from that.

**Place: Akiba, Langata.**

**Date: 19/02/09**

**Question 1: How do you see women portrayed on television?**

**29.** Elle Nyokabi, (28yrs), she says women are portrayed in the line with their traditional gender roles. They appear as house wives in advertisements, wives to male characters in movies, and in soap operas their importance is based on their marriage to the men. Hence, they have no significance on their own which she feels is a role associated with women, being the weaker sex and needy.

**Question 2: Has this affected your self esteem as a woman?**

She says it has not. She attributes this to learning early that a woman is required to take care of others, even her brothers who were older than her. Thus, she developed some kind of defiance from an early age, which earned her the nickname of “hardcore” from her family. She says this episodes in her life helped shape a very strong character, that saw her move out of home before all her three brothers, and become a manager by the time she was 24yrs. she says her esteem would have been low, if she had let society dictate who she was to become. She feels society dictates to women options of who they are,

what they should do and become so as to fit in. hence, women take the burden of trying to be super humans. They work till late and go home to a man, waiting for them to reach so as to cook, tuck in the children and still have energy to make love. She adds that women should be allowed their freedom, and those who wish to go out of patriarchy favored roles of society, be accorded their respect and recognition of achievement too.

**Question 3: How do you think women should be portrayed on television?**

**30.** Awiti (25yrs), she says women should be presented on equal basis as men, and not limited to sex objects on music videos, attractive objects to sell products or stereotypical roles associated with being a woman. The best way to present women, is as strong characters that carry the story by themselves and on significant roles as achievers.

**Question 4: Do you think Awiti's suggestion would work differently for women?**

**31.** Liz, (25yrs), she says it would work in the same way the Obama mania (the euphoria associated with current president of the United States) worked, by showing programs with a black president, for example the series "24" showed a black person as the president of the United states, hence, psychologically conditioning people for one. She adds that showing women as powerful and achievers in various fields, will condition people to think that way hence propel women to new heights.

**32.** Decy, (26yrs), she adds to carols point by noting that people continue to take men seriously because we see men in significant positions all the time. Hence, we have been conditioned to think of them as presidents, managers, doctors among others. This is because television continues to show us that hence, women can use the same angle and will eventually achieve the same status accorded to men. Home maker roles and women as objects should be minimized, emotional beings and dependants, should be scraped. Otherwise, equalize on the gender portrayals of both women and men.

### APPENDIX 3: SELF ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear friend,

*I thank you for accepting to participate in this research study am a student in Tangaza college, an affiliate of the catholic university of eastern Africa, institute of social communication. My research is looking into how television can be used positively in changing the perception/gender role portrayal of women. Your kind and honest responses will be appreciated. All your information is treated with utmost confidentiality and will only be used for this research. There no right or wrong answers, your opinion is what matters. Please do not write your name.*

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

1. How old are you?

12-20years

21-35years

2. Which gender are you?

Male

Female

3. Where do you live?

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#### MEDIA USE:

4. Do you have access to? (tick yes or no where appropriate)

	Yes	No
Television	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computer / Internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Radio	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DVD/VCD player	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Magazines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**5. Which is your favorite media (tick one)**

**Television**

**Internet**

**Radio**

**Magazines**

**6. What are your favorite programs on TV Give one example from the category you choose? (tick one)**

**Soap operas**

**Movies**

**Advertisements**

**Music shows**

**Other**

**7. On the list below, which one contains your favorite content?(tick one)**

**Soap operas**

**Movies**

**Advertisements**

**Music shows**

**Other**

#### **ATTITUDES AND VALUES TOWARDS THE MODERN WOMAN**

**8. In the advertisement content, how do you think women want to see themselves represented?(tick one)**

**Top corporate jobs**

**Housewives**

**Dismissal jobs**

**None of the above**

9. From the perceptions below, which one do you think represents the real women (tick one)

Beautiful and dumb

Intelligent and ugly

Beautiful and intelligent

None of the above

10. From the perceptions below, which one do you think represents women capability in the professional world (tick one)

Merit

Sexuality

Affirmative action

None of the above

11. From the perceptions below, which one do you think represents women characters today (tick one)

Needy

Independent

Dependants

None of the above

**APPENDIX 6: NEWSPAPER ARTICLE** - Milly, G, "Do Not Cut off Your Mans Hands", *The Standard*, Saturday magazine (February 28, 2009)