

Soul City Series 7 a
Qualitative Evaluation report



Sometimes your tears come down when you are watching because the part that you see looks like really how you live or someone you know lives.

Sometimes even when a person is quiet, you will hear him say this part hurts me because I live like this. This shows that there is no difference between the story and his life. (Male, Limpopo, Rural, 25-35)

1. Background

Soul City series 7a underwent a repositioning process after discussions with SABC and after a drop in audience ratings for the 6th series relating to the late time slot. The channel (SABC1) had decided to focus on young people (16-35 years old). Soul City did research about preferences of young people in this age group and also did some key stakeholder interviews. The resultant series was flighted from 7th April on Thursday evenings from 8.30 to 9pm. The repositioning process also entailed a change in the length of each episode from 1 hour to half an hour.

After flighting of Soul City 7 the audience ratings have been around 14 though at times a bit lower. Although the television environment is changing, and there is more competition for Soul City (for example a movie on e-TV at the same time slot), the Institute would like to know what the audience thinks about the new series, their likes and dislikes of the new Soul City look.

In May 2005 Soul City did 3 focus groups to look at how the series was doing and found mixed results. People seemed to miss the old Soul City, especially the music and the old well known characters. They also did not seem to like the way that Soul City 7a had been shot using terms like “cold” or “low budget”. (Report is attached in appendix 1).

On reaching the end of the first 13 episodes of series 7 the Institute has decided to do a national qualitative study to determine whether the audience likes the new look any better, and to give guidance in the development of the next 13 episodes.

The Soul City 7 topics dealt with in the first 13 episodes are:

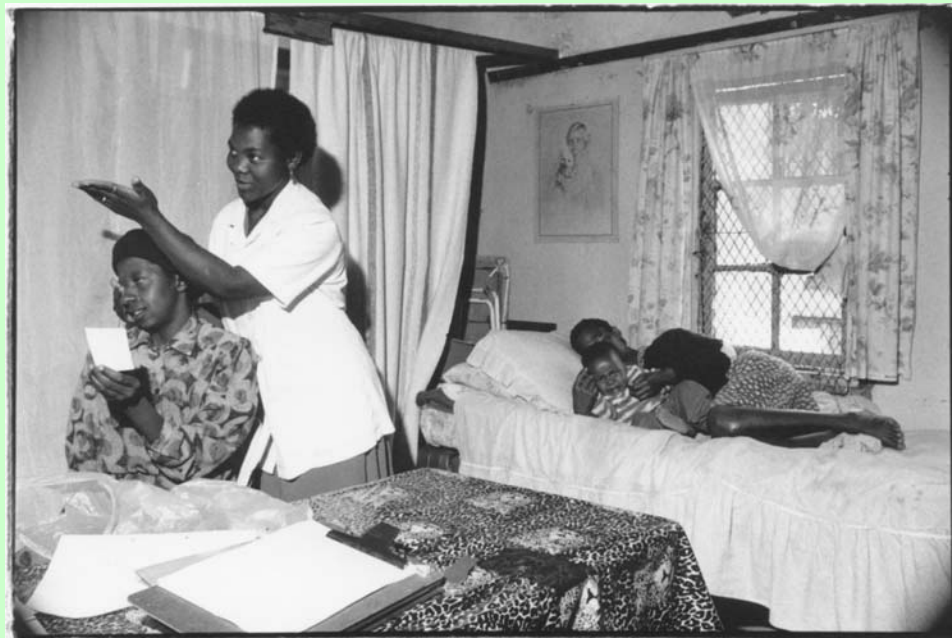
- The treatment of HIV and AIDS
- Manhood
- Community service (volunteering) and Health Equity

2. Methodology

15 focus group discussions were held with people around the country who had watched Soul City 7a. The province, area and age of the groups are described in the table below. The groups were held by trained facilitators and were transcribed and translated verbatim. They were analysed by 3 analysts using Atlasti version 5.0.66, and then meta-analysed.

Table 1: Spread and age of Focus groups

Province	Urban	Informal	Rural	16-25	25-35
Free State		1	1		2
KZN	1		1	2	
Gauteng	2	1		1	2
Limpopo	1		1	1	1
W. Cape	1			1	
E. Cape			2	1	1
Mpumalanga		1		1	
North West	1		1		2
Total	6	3	6	7	8



3. Findings

Audience reception:

General

There was a somewhat mixed reception of Soul City in 2005. Many people liked or even loved the new series and the new look, they liked the new characters and felt that it was more realistic. There were others who disliked the new look and felt that they didn't know this Soul City. What was interesting was that it was no particular audience segment that liked or disliked the new series, neither urban, rural, race nor age seemed to play a role. The audience reception is discussed in more detail below.

Production

General

People liked Soul City 7 and commented that it is “cool”, “nice”, “interesting”, “exciting”.

I would say it's cool. I would also say it's realistic and the other thing I like is the different problems in the townships.... It's very interesting. (Male, W. Cape, Urban, Coloured 16-25)

It was a cool series. I agree. Me too. Nah, it was cool. It had everything. It makes you want to watch future episodes and series. (Male, Gauteng, Urban, Coloured)

This series was very exciting compared to other Soul City drama series of the past. (Male, E. Cape, Rural, 16-25)

One person said that it was about “the soul of the city”

I agree with her. At first when they said Soul City they seemed to mean Soul Hospital (they laugh). Right now when they say Soul City we see why. It is only now that we are seeing the soul of the city. That's what I liked in this story. (Male, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

People talked about Soul City being “interesting”, “improved”, “more modern” and different.

I liked what Soul City was showing. It had a big difference from the past. (Female, KZN, Urban, 16-25)

I see that it is very different from the previous Soul Cities because they were based on rape, violence and this time it had people with ambitions like poets and musicians. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

I think it was more modern than previous series. (Female, W. Cape, Urban, Coloured 16-25)

There were others who did not like the new series, however and talked about it being “boring”, “complicated”, and “not interesting”. Some mentioned wanting more humour.

I think it was boring and they should not bring it back again. (Female, Limpopo, Urban, 16 – 25)

You do not understand where it is going even after that episode has ended. You are not interested in what is going to happen next. (Female, Limpopo, Urban, 16 – 25)

Ya I think soul city that time was good because it made us laugh. (Male, Mpumalanga Informal 16-25)

I think (pauses) you know it was boring, it was boring. You could change, that's why I was able to change the TV (channels) and watch another one. I didn't, I felt that I didn't need Soul City. (Female, North West Rural 25-35)

I think it was boring. Ya it was too serious. There was no comedy. Sometimes I was bored to watch it but because I like it from the first soul city, well I just watched. You see another thing was that the time was too short. It took a very short time. I mean 30 minutes was not enough. (Male, Mpumalanga Informal 16-25)

Some of the respondents talked of flipping channels and a few mentioned that their watching depended on what the movie was that was on that night.

Music

Most people talked about liking the music. They said it catches ones attention and it is funky.

The music was also a little bit funky - that's what we like. Compared to last year, where the beginning was a bit slow. Also, the music used to drag. The song was a bit boring. This one is much more catchy. It's something I'd like to watch if I saw the beginning. I think this series is more for young adults and teenagers. That's what they would look for in programmes. (Female, W. Cape, Urban, Coloured 16-25)

I have realised even at home that when Soul City ends they come and listen to the person who sings at the end. I like the way it is. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

One person, however, mentioned that she preferred the old theme song.

It was nice but the first song was not nice. I liked the one that said Soul City (like in the previous Soul City). I did not want the person to make a poem or praise (reta) in the beginning but at the end. (Female, Limpopo, Rural, 25-35)



Poetry

There was a somewhat mixed reception to the poetry with some people loving it and others not liking it at all. Those who liked it talked about it being nice and arty, inspiring and showing other talent.

They showed other people's talent like this sisi who recite poems, her poems were nice. It shows that she is talented, what she does comes from the inside... you see they gave her a nice character about the nice thing she is talented in. You hear even poems she recites that they are more interesting. If you listen to them you also feel that you can recite your own poem that comes from you (everybody laughed at that). It was nice, and she was very kind. You couldn't see that she had HIV because she kept talking about it yet others when they have HIV do not want to share with other people but she spoke about it showing that she got into that situation not liking it but she got it but she wanted to see other people not getting HIV. (Female, KZN, Urban, 16-25)

There is a part that I like that I forgot to talk about. You see the part about the poem? I like it. At least they have added some flavour by putting a poem about HIV and AIDS. The part was nice to me and I enjoyed it. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

Some people talked about Soul City encouraging poetry.

I agree with her. If you look closely there isn't much poetry in our black community, maybe in a way they were trying to motivate for poetry to black people, that life is not always about music and dancing, that we can always do poetry as well and inspire more people. (Male, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

Those that didn't like the poetry either felt that there was too much or they disliked it all together.

What I didn't like though I am an artist was poetry all the time. Poetry, poetry and at the end it was making me sleep. I want to admit that I like poetry but it should not be our daily bread. (Male, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

I was bored by the poet girl, the one who is a bit fat. We knew each time we saw her that she'll be making a poem, and I did not see the use of her reciting poetry always. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

Setting

Most respondents who commented on the setting liked it, they talked about the setting moving out of the clinic and being more realistic.

I also like the setting, the story is not acted in the suburbs it is right there in the informal settlement where it exposes their lifestyle. They did not create an illusive places where one would be blinded and ask 'why are all these people well-off with beautiful houses. Here in this story we see the real life from the informal settlement where people are sleeping on the single beds. (Female, E Cape, Rural, 25-35)

I think I like the new atmosphere. In the old one you knew that there is going to be a clinic, but now they have reduced the clinic, you are able to see outside, you see people passing which is more interesting. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

*In this one they showed how guys lived, braaied meat, loafing by the street corners and so on
(Male, North West Urban 25-35)*



Language and subtitles

Some respondents felt that the language used was too strong in the context that children will be watching.

Because a child will think that that language is acceptable because it is used in the television and she will use it the next day (Male, E Cape, Rural, 25-35)

There was some discussion about this and other respondents disagreed.

I see no problem with such issues especially if you are going to say after the programme that was not right and must learn to select right from wrong things because television gives us both. Do not think that if somebody on the TV is insulting, you will also insult other people that is wrong. That is not acceptable in my house. (Female, E Cape, Rural, 25-35)

The respondents generally appreciated the subtitles, some saying they learned other languages that way; one however said they were too fast.

yes because even if the characters are speaking seSotho sometimes there is underlying lettering interpreting whatever is said at that moment, so this is one thing that makes the story exciting because you are not going to be lost in understanding the story. (Female, E Cape, Rural, 25-35)

And the subtitles puts you there as well. You don't feel it's only for blacks because of the language. It's really for everybody. Yeah, it's really cool. (Male, W. Cape, Urban, Coloured 16-25)

The subtitles are too fast to read (laughter). (Female, E. Cape, Rural, 16-25)

Target audience

Respondents often mentioned that the target audience is young people; some however felt that there should be even younger youth; others felt that there should be more older people. One group felt that there should be more characters that are in tertiary institutions.

Soul City was right but it is that they were based on grown up people. They had to focus on life in general not grown up people.they need to focus more on life in tertiary, technikons. (Female, KZN, Urban, 16-25)

I think Soul City has drastically changed, the new episode is more different and more based on the youth but I think it should have more younger actors to really influence us youth cause the matriculants and people who are already out of school it doesn't really influence us that much even if it is based on us youth it doesn't really influence us that much but if they use more younger actors that are at school, that have problems at school by getting pressure from their friends I think that will really influence us a lot. (Male, KZN, Urban, 16-25)

In one group there was a debate about whether children should watch Soul City or not.

I wish they could move it to nine o' clock. It was at half past eight wasn't? And it should take a whole hour. There are things that I think children are not supposed to see. At least at nine some will be asleep. (Male, Limpopo, Rural, 25-35)

I wasn't that much against those things because I think children should see how crime starts and what happens to people who are involved. They should be able to see that crime does not pay. (Male, Limpopo, Rural, 25-35)

Length

A number of respondents felt that the new Soul City was too short and called for it to be 1 hour.

A half hour is too short. Then you must wait a week to see what's going to happen next. And the plot was interesting and things moved quite fast - it didn't drag in any way. (Female, W. Cape, Urban, Coloured 16-25)

I wish they could move it to nine o' clock. It was at half past eight wasn't? And it should take a whole hour. (Male, Limpopo, Rural, 25-35)

Realism

Many people talked about how Soul City is real or more realistic. They mentioned indirectly that many of the things happen in their lives and that the characters are realistic. There were a few who felt that the story should be more realistic.

It was a little bit more understanding than the previous Soul City because now the story is a bit more realistic. They deal with very human problems.... How people carry on in relationships and the workplace and things. (Female, W. Cape, Urban, Coloured 16-25)

Isn't that when they make/write these stories they look at how we live as people and they take our lives and develop a story. (Male, Limpopo, Rural, 25-35)

A lot was very... was very real. (Female, Free State, Rural, 25-35)

These things happen. There is this guy who has already died; he used to live Venter's life. Venter just exaggerated by having body guards, he did not have body guards. He has left a big house. (Male, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

Since it was written that "REAL", to me it meant it was something happening in our everyday lives (Female, Free State, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

One thing I want to say is that the Soul City drama is like something we can relate to, as if it happens in our neighbourhood. What happens is that after each episode there are numbers given out for people who need help. Okay when you view carefully the story you will surely believe that this happens in a real life situation. (Male, E Cape, Rural, 25-35)

What I thought about Soul City, I think it was kind of a nice film, the episodes that were shown was right but not that right because most things portrayed in the film, say they didn't show more things that happen in reality. Things were way different with the drama. (Male, KZN, Urban, 16-25)

Some respondents thought the stories were too obvious.

So, like some of the things were unrealistic, some of the things were too obvious. It was meant for, maybe for pre-school children (Female North West Rural 25-35)

Search for the star

Some respondents mentioned that they liked search for the star and had watched it on Selamathunzi. Others said they didn't believe that it was real, and complained that the new stars didn't sing.

I liked the way they marketed. They did not go to agents to get actors; they went to townships and looked for people who want to act. They showed that on Selamathunzi. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

Adding to that I was bored by the fact that Soul City started hardly three weeks after the auditions which means that they had already chosen people even before that. They wanted it to look like they have chosen people from the communities. It is same people. Zukiswa was in Yizo Yizo, Thabo was also in another story. It is boring to show same people. We are tired of seeing same people in different things. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

What bored me is that in the auditions they were looking for people who sing and now when we were watching there are no people who sing. It was going to be interesting if there were people who sing. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

Future Soul City

Some respondents had ideas for future Soul City series. They ask for Soul City to focus on women's rights, educating parents about AIDS and sexuality, teaching youth about the danger of dance clubs, and one respondent said that Soul City should only be about health.

May I say something? I would like Soul City to tackle, if they are going to have another series the issue of woman's rights but not woman rights as such. They should show things like how do we settle our issues with men, either in our relationships or interactions with them in our communities. It is an issue now that women are now in most cases able to do things for themselves. (Female Gauteng, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

Ya' what I like to ask from Soul City is educate our parents about HIV and AIDS and sexual education .They don't have parental guidance and skills to handle youth issues particularly relationships. (Male, KZN, Rural, 16-25)

That is why I just wish they can concentrate on these things, all these wrong things happening in clubs – you get raped there and get a lot of diseases. (Female, KZN, Urban, 16-25)

Actors and Characters

There was quite a lot of discussion about the acting in the series. A number of respondents did not like the acting style and felt that the actors were not “real” actors.

I just want to say something about some of the characters. Some characters don't really feel their roles in a sense. They don't have enough emotion or passion. Some could embrace their roles more. I don't want to mention which characters because it will sound ugly. But maybe just be careful about how you cast people. That's the only thing. There's nothing about the story that I don't like. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, Coloured)

Sello's character also looked bored all the time. It is as if someone decided on him because of his dull character. (Male, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

They do not look like they have done the auditions for this Soul City. It's like they asked people can you act. Obviously they wouldn't say no. (Female, Limpopo, Urban, 16 – 25)

The way I see Sello he is right for the part but the way I see him he is shy, lazy somewhere somehow. So if they can get someone who can play his part and be more active than he was... (Female, Gauteng, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

Some people talked about liking the new characters, some talked about liking the old characters. Some even talked about the new characters being “strangers”.

I was disturbed by the changed look. Before, they used to show lives within families and now I don't understand exactly what's being shown. It is like full of strangers. It has evolved, but in some funny (ka mokgwanyana o momg) way. It doesn't evolve well. (Male, Limpopo, Urban, 16 – 25)

There is one thing I loved about Soul City. It is that they showed new characters. They allowed other people to show what they are built of. (Female, KZN, Urban, 16-25)

I think it has improved a lot compared with the old Soul Cities. I used to find the old Soul City series' boring because it concentrated on same old faces like Sister Bettina and others. So this year it has improved because it has included other people. So this year it has improved because it has included other people, quiet a few. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

I did like the mixture of old actors and many new one. Soul City has shown that they do the work. (Male, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

The parts that had Toko, Madala who was driving the taxi and all those people in the previous one. This new one doesn't make it (e a kgana). It doesn't come together. Its characters are not active; they look like they are afraid all the time in front of the cameras. (Male, Limpopo, Urban, 16 – 25)

The characters who were most loved were Zandi, Sello, Zukiswa and Khwezi and Sister Bettina. Thabo was liked by some and disliked by others, as was Connie. Nomfundo was not mentioned much but when she was people didn't like her. Those who mentioned Francis talked about him being unsuitable as a doctor.

Zandi and Khwezi



Zandi was seen as a strong character who managed to turn her life around. People felt she had a lot of courage, and set a good example. They also liked her relationship with Khwezi.

What I liked was that Khwezi was supportive of the mother. Her mother gave her love and she gave her mother love. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

I liked the character that was played by Khwezi's mother. I can seriously say that character was good for me. Like the time she found out she was HIV positive, she went to the clinic and she found that her CD 4 count is already down and that she has to start with the treatment, she didn't just accept it. At least she struggled with that, and that shows reality. That part is convincing. But when you just look and things are happening easy it's a problem. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

And the part of that other lady (Zandi), because when you become sick people start to cast you away, and this lady had so much courage because she not only had to be strong for her self but also for her child as well in order to ensure a better future for her child. She was also able to appear strong to child. (Male, Free State, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

For me, it was also just Zandi - she's a really strong character. There's no-one else. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, Coloured)

And this lady (Zandi) she made a complete turn around of her life from selling alcohol to selling food and I think that she stopped selling alcohol because felt that alcohol had the highest risk of HIV infections. Because when men buy women drinks they expect to be paid by sex. She had realised that when people are drunk they meet other people and are less likely to have safe sex and that's why she changed her business into a business that she can be proud of and feel that she has done something to curb the scourge of AIDS. (Female, Free State, Rural, 25-35)

Sello



There was a lot of discussion about Sello's story. Much of the discussion was about crime not paying, and not getting into bad company. Many people talked about forgiveness and that they liked that Sello took responsibility for his actions and atoned. They also liked the volunteer work that Sello did. People were also taken with the support that Refiloe had for Sello that she stood by him, though one group said she was too passive. Some respondents could not understand or believe that Sello gave up his opportunity for Sunday.

I like Sello because I kind of feel sorry for him. He really paid the price for his stupid decision. And he comes across as a nice, gentle man, despite what he got involved in. Yeah, I also like Sello. Or maybe I just like the guy who played him (Laughter). (Female, Gauteng, Urban, Coloured)

There is one part that I liked and it is where Sello went to wash that old man. He improved after Sello had taken over caring for him, he started moving, and Sello made it possible for him to have a friend that he can share things with of which that person was Sello's father. I liked that part. This man used to lock himself in the house and Sello said 'you know what? I am going to find you a friend that you can chat to and that you can sit outside with and get some fresh air'. After this, this man began to really feel well and as if everything is becoming alright. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

Sello was too kind and I don't think there is a person who can – having been offered to go to tertiary and offer another person the opportunity knowing well how much we suffer. His father had worked for the money wanting to give it to his child because he loved him and Sello takes it to someone else easily as that. No! I don't think that is how things can happen on earth. It shows they were just acting, you see all those things like that. How could they forgive easily with Sunday having been so much angry and in court things were so easy for him to get out of his troubles? (Male, KZN, Urban, 16-25)

For me the one part that stands out is the way Sello's wife stood by him throughout this whole mess he had let himself into, even during the time when she was being harassed at work to the point that she had to choose between her husband and her job; she still chose her husband. So yes I really liked that part. (Female, Free State, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

I liked Sello during the time he went to the police station and he show that what he did was unintentional to kill and during that time Sello's wife showed true love to Sello by leaving the place of work to show her love and stand by him to deal with his problem (Female, KZN, Rural, 16-25)

Like Sello, for example. I mean, he stood out for me because even though he was involved in someone's murder, he had the courage to come back to his family ad apologise. And to face people. Even when they were shunning him at the volunteer organisation, his courage never failed. He still tried to make amends. He still wanted to help people - sick and old people. For him, that was a separate issue. He accepted his responsibilities for what he did wrong. (Male, W. Cape, Urban, Coloured 16-25)

What I liked though was the reality of his guilty conscience. That part I must say was convincing (Male, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

Yes I do have like those two influenced each other to steal a car and there after they realised that they were doing wrong and he went to the police station to report himself and that part built me as a young person. (Male, KZN, Rural, 16-25)

I liked the where when Sello was offered an opportunity to go to medical school he in return offered the opportunity to Sunday (Female, Free State, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

To add on that I like Sello's part where he took his parent's offer to take him to University and gave it to that boy, whose uncle was going to take him to university before they killed him. (Female, Limpopo, Rural, 25-35)

Zukiswa and Thabo

People really liked Zukiswa for her dedication to her work, and that she stood up to her husband, and for forgiving him in the end. They said she is a strong woman, and sets an example to nurses. They liked Thabo for admitting wrongdoing and for asking for forgiveness. Though they were critical of him bowing to peer pressure. There was a lot of discussion about the changing role of women in a marriage. A few people blamed Zukiswa, and some others felt that women should be patient with men.



I think because the man was able to understand later that what he did was wrong, because now he was staying alone without a wife and he is somebody who wanted to start a family. That's why when they had stolen medicine in that clinic's chemist he helped out. (Male, Limpopo, Rural, 25-35)

I liked Thabo. It is not every man who accepts when he has done a mistake. Men never see their faults but Thabo accepted his mistake/fault and he tried by all means to buy his wife a car after he had burnt it. He impressed me because men are proud people and they never see their mistakes. (Female, Limpopo, Rural, 25-35)

And that Zukiswa has proven that a woman's place is more than in the kitchen. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

What I liked was the part of the man who burnt a car. At the end he saw that what he did was wrong and then he went back to his wife to apologise and tried to buy her a car. They ended up resolving the problem so that at the end he went to counselling, so that he can see his wife is a human being and she is willing to help people. That he should be able to understand the situation and that if he was in his wife's shoes he would do the same. So that's what I liked about the part. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

Another character I do not like is Zukiswa. I did not like what Zukiswa did by not being able to sit down with her husband and talk about her job. She acted as if she was just going to work night shift and this led to his husband abusing her. (Female, KZN, Urban, 16-25)

She has shown many girls I think, as girls we have a bad tendency of depending too much on a person even when he does something wrong you persevere because he is the one who bought it. So by that part she has shown you don't have to tolerate the intolerable because life is yours. I liked her, she is the one who is always on my mind. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

I also like Thabo's wife. She did not stop what she was doing even though her husband was standing in front of her. She stood by her commitment of helping people even though it was heavy going in her home. You understand that most of us would not have survived the way it was so difficult. She forced matters, she took it that people's lives were also important than her house. She loved her home, she loved people's lives. She was a determined person. She didn't care what restrictions existed in her own home. She is a woman who showed that people should die by their oath (motho a shwele dikano) (Female, Limpopo, Rural, 25-35)

Impact

General

Many respondents said they had discussed the issues that arose from Soul City.

The kinds of things they discussed were the burning of the car, whether or not Sello should have given up his opportunity for Sunday. Many people said that they talked about jealousy. Others talked about AIDS and disclosure. One respondent said he had persuaded his family to watch Soul City, and another said he and attempted to persuade his friends to watch. One group said they didn't discuss Soul City as they agreed with it, they only discuss "negative" things.

Yes, at school and in my home. I would discuss with my aunt who is also a nurse. ...I would ask her why nurses behave the way they do. (Female, Free State, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

...alcoholism is always a topic we discuss. Some people don't even know they're alcoholics. Also, vandalism is another issue. I mean, here it was a car but sometimes in our communities it's a school or a library or someone's property. Yeah. (Male, W. Cape, Urban, Coloured 16-25)

Yeah! Like when we go to work in the morning and then we discuss the issues that happened the previous night. And sometimes the others in the taxi also start talking about it. Also, these topics, because they're everyday issues, are part and parcel of our lives too. They can happen to everyone. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, Coloured)

What I discussed with my friends is the issue of jealousy because Thabo ended up burning his wife's car, and he could have easily burnt his wife as well and that is what we read in the newspaper and see on TV everyday. Because jealousy was leading him to do these insane things. (Male, Free State, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

I have discussed it with my sister especially the part about jealousy where I told my sister that I don't want a man like that. (Female, Free State, Rural, 25-35)

We had a lot to talk about AIDS and the advices that they gave. You were able to encourage a person to go to a Doctor and see the way the Doctor deals with such people and see people referred to psychologists. (Female, Limpopo, Urban, 16 – 25)

We do not discuss it because we approve of it. We discuss it because it is cool to talk about it. We know it is against the law and we do not want to be rebels. We like the way they have done it, the way they stole the car, those little lies. That's what makes us talk and at the end of the day we know we are not supposed to do that. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

For me at home they used to switch channels and didn't like to watch Soul City but I held discussions with them until they ended understanding and started watching Soul City. (Male, KZN, Urban, 16-25)

HIV and AIDS

Many people talked about learning about antiretroviral medicines. They learned that you have to take them consistently, that you should not forget to take them. People learned that if you know your status you can get onto ART sooner.

Respondents learned about disclosure from Zandi that one should be open about being HIV positive, and that if one discloses then you can get help. Some people said that there is still denial in their communities about AIDS, and found Zandi's boyfriend realistic.

Respondents learned about living positively with HIV and AIDS, and that one should not drink with AIDS. People liked that HIV positive people can do things , and that having HIV is not the end of the world.

Respondents believed that the messages about AIDS are important and that it changes the lives of those who are living with HIV. One person said that it had changed her life.

The other aspect of AIDS that people learned about was home based care. One person who is a home based carer said that Soul City makes their work easier as now people understand what home based care is.

Some respondents felt that issues relating to AIDS are resolved too easily, that the AIDS story should scare more that they want to see people with "full blown AIDS" and that Soul City should show real HIV positive people. Some said that they want to see Nomfundo sick.

I think Soul City has taught us how to take your ARVs when you have AIDS. It has enabled those ones who have to drink them and to go for treatment. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

The previous Soul City used to deal with AIDS a lot. At least this one also deals with treatment for AIDS. (Female, Limpopo, Urban, 16 – 25)

Mama ka Khwezi, the one with red hair who is HIV positive. She was able to move from Soul City where she stays and went back home to the rural areas and met her friend who was HIV positive and who had not told her parents that she is HIV positive and she was able to give her friend support that enabled her to disclose to her family that she is HIV positive but the girl was not able to disclose. It was nice because mama ka Khwezi was able to teach her mother about ARVs (anti retrovirals), pills for HIV positive and told her that they take them when they have a CD 4 count of less than 200. Her mother understood and was able to go to her daughter's friend's house and she was able to tell the family that there is something that their daughter wants them to know. She was then able to talk, to disclose that she was HIV positive. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

What is important is that most of people do not know when and how to get the ARV's, so what is portrayed in the story is that if I want them I have to follow certain channels. So the story is informative for instance there are places in the rural areas whereby a person is HIV positive, there are many HIV positive people who decide to sit and hide their status as long as there are no physical changes in their bodies. But if she sees this issue about the ARV's portrayed on the television she will "oh I didn't understand that its easy for me to get these ARV's I don't have to sick before I qualify for the ARV's". (Male, E Cape, Rural, 25-35)
I think I have learnt that disclosing is like getting help. It has given me courage that if someday I go to the clinic to test, when I come back I should be able to accept what I am. If ever I am positive I should be strong and able to talk about it to family and friends and people that I want to tell that I am HIV positive so that I can also get help. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

Like the part of Home Based Care, it was nice and it showed that we should not take people the way that we know them. We got to know Sello as not a good person whereas deep down inside his heart he was a good person. (Female, Limpopo, Rural, 25-35)

It has taught me that in our community there is something that is called Home Based Care. I did not know that, I saw it in Soul City and that encouraged me to join in the Home Based Care that I am active in now. This new Soul City has given me strength unlike the old one that talked about people with TB who just went to the clinic only. (Male, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

Yeah, I think we saw the two faces of AIDS here. We saw the more positive side, where people chose to embrace life and just get on with things and we also saw the more hopeless, poverty-stricken reality of AIDS.... the ignorance around it and also the denial about having the virus. That was quite nice. All circumstances around AIDS don't have to be the same. (Male, Gauteng, Urban, Coloured)



To me to watch Soul City changed my whole life because; I was affected with HIV and AIDS. I was able to teach other to disclose to their partners, and those who are infected I prepare them to for testing and accept their HIV status. (Female, KZN, Rural, 16-25)

It is very important in changing the lives of people who are living with HIV. And the ones who are not on good terms with their parents. If they can watch Soul City they can resolve some of those things. I think it shows life in the homes, girlfriends, boyfriends, they appear. (Male, Limpopo, Rural, 25-35)

It has increased my knowledge and wherever I go people say what we do is good because they have seen it in Soul City (Female, Gauteng, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

There was nothing like someone died of AIDS. They didn't emphasise AIDS that when you ignore AIDS and something you go bony and stuff (a sigh)... They just didn't show things that are happening in real life. (Male, KZN, Urban, 16-25)

I think that they should take people in real life that are HIV positive. At least we will be able to understand from them. In most cases they take people who have nothing, then they say they have sores, when you look again the sores are gone and there are no longer marks. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

I think through many stories like Gaz'lam we have seen enough that AIDS kills but they should try to motivate people who live with HIV/AIDS on how to live their lives if they are infected. That's how I see it. They want to show people that you can live a long healthy life. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

I have learned that for every problem that you face in life; there is life after every experience. I also liked the way Nomfundo and the crew handled themselves, they always lived their lives positively. (Male, Free State, Rural, 25-35)

It shows that if you do that you won't get well. You have to live healthily and do exercises. You shouldn't drink. (Female, Limpopo, Urban, 16 – 25)

There were important messages about HIV and AIDS. It does not mean that when a person is HIV positive it is the end of the world, she won't be able to do something in her life. Like the girl that they show rapping. It shows that you can continue doing something, doing what you like even if you are HIV positive. It is the most important message that people who are HIV positive should not give up on themselves. (Female, Limpopo, Rural, 25-35)

Manhood

The respondents engaged with the manhood messages through the two main stories about Thabo and Zukiswa and Sello. They talked about making choices and resisting peer pressure. They said that they learned about forgiveness, and that men can change. They also learned the value of communication and respect in relationships, and that problems can be solved. Some talked about equality between the sexes, and empowerment of Zukiswa.

Respondents felt that the story challenged culture.

I think we are learning that many people do not communicate in homes. It seems Thabo in most cases he talks about issues to his father or uncles, in the house he doesn't talk. Then Zukiswa saw that this man comes with issues from the street and brings them here. They should sit together, a husband and wife and talk about what they like and not like. If they do not talk they are going to end up saying, I am the one bringing food into this house you must listen to me and then the other one will say I am the one who cooks. (Male, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

What I have learnt is still around that man who burnt the car. He had no right to burn his wife's car, whatever his wife had done. He was supposed to have called her and sat with her and talk, tell her people say this and that about you, what do you say? And take it from there, not to just jump into conclusions. I mean how do you think the woman feels? She bought that car with her salary, she worked hard for it. She also impressed me (undicazile) by leaving him and telling him I don't know what you will do to me next, so I am going back home. Went to stay home until he saw that he was wrong, and realised that a house without a mother is empty. So I have learnt something from her. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

I have learned that a person should stay away from bad friends because when look at Sello you can see that he was not a bad person but rather a victim of bad influence and bad friends. (M Sello was also a cheap boaster) yes I may agree with you because we can see Sello buying lunch for a friend with his last cent. Therefore, I've learned that impressing friends won't get me anywhere. (Male, Free State, Rural, 25-35)



Sorry but her husband was angered by his friends that were talking about it at the tavern or what where they were sitting. Thabo had not realised that. It means he is influenced by other people about his wife so you cannot blame his wife because I think you cannot marry a person not knowing what she because she did not start now doing it. (Female, KZN, Urban, 16-25)

Again on the scene of Thabo it shows that life skills are something that you should learn at an early age. It does not mean that peer pressure attacks youth only, there are grandmothers who still get it (they laugh). In a way it shows that peer pressure is not something that just ends here, even adults still feel it. So it is better to gather some information when you are younger and understand how it works from now on. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

I liked Thabo's part most. It shows that there is pressure in our lives. There

Was peer pressure on him from friends about his wife going out at night. If it wasn't because of pressure from his friends, he wouldn't have burnt his wife's car. So I think I like that. It shows that pressure is something that we live with as youth. Sometimes you'll find that you are not involved but people around you are pressurising you to do something and they say if you do not do this and that, this and that will happen and because of the pressure you end up doing wrong things. (Male, Gauteng, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

Also the issue of peer pressure - at the beginning with Sello. When he gave in and ended up almost ruining his life. (Male, W. Cape, Urban, Coloured 16-25)

For instance Sello, he dropped out of school, got married and immediately experienced a lot of manhood problems; and take a look at Thabo he seems to be the kind of man who does not want an independent woman he wants a housewife or he seems to think that his woman is being disrespectful when she's doing her job, and yes there are men like that; but we can see that he later joins that support group. And there is Sello's father; there are indeed parents who are like that who'd want to blame their children for the death of their partner. (Male, Free State, Rural, 25-35)

There are people who are like Thabo there are many of them in our community. They don't think carefully when they decisions. They listen to other people and in our community majority of them are males, and community love and respect and accept their views because they are male, "males are bosses and rulers" (Female, KZN, Rural, 16-25)

Another part is that of that man whose wife was a nurse. His wife worked long hours and especially for males it was teaching them that they should leave their old culture that a man is the head. To us youngsters it says it doesn't mean because you are the head of the family you are the remote control, you wanted this person to be your partner and in a way you have to support each other. (Male, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

I was surprised to find that Thabo was talking to his wife like that at the end. I mean, how he used to relate to her in the beginning. It's nice to see that men can change. And that they can have sensitive discussions with women. (Female, W. Cape, Urban, Coloured 16-25)

It has clarified to us. It has challenged culture (setso). They have removed the perception that a woman should always be in the kitchen, be home early. We are also human beings, and if we have certain careers we should also be able to enjoy them. If say I am a nurse are you all of a sudden expecting me not to work night shift? I think it has educated us a great deal on that part. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

Again Soul City encourages people such as Sello: I liked Sello very much since he was concerned. His love for his child, he stays and cares for his child and his girlfriend found a job and he is not working but he is still concerned asking what he could do until his girlfriend advised him to do voluntary work. He ended up being involved in criminal activities and agreed to the deal of taking those criminal to the crime scene, it is because he wanted to care for his family and have some money to bring home. What encourages a lot about him is that when he realises he had made a mistake he did not hide it inside but handed himself to the police. It shows that if we can do likewise maybe crime can go down a bit and would develop conscience and recognise that they make mistakes because they get forced by circumstances. (Male, KZN, Urban, 16-25)

At the end Sello handed himself in and confessed to that they killed a person, took his car and his necklace. And that is something that we should teach ourselves, that when you've wronged somebody you should swallow your pride and go and ask for forgiveness. (Female, Free State, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

The other one that I liked is that widow whose husband was killed. I liked the part that she was acting. She showed humanity (botho). If it was me I wasn't going to give Sello any chance to be near me because now I would be on my own. The woman showed womanhood (bosadi), I think it is different from femininity. (Female, Limpopo, Rural, 25-35)

There is nothing that I can say, except forgiveness is a key to build strong community relationship. I learn a lot from soul city and I will always support their episode. (Male, KZN, Rural, 16-25)

Thabo and Zukiswa's scene has made a big difference in my life. We used to discuss it a lot and we used to ask each other how we see it. Then he would say it is not right for a woman to live like that. Because we have discussed it, now it is simple for me to take my time when I go to town. I no longer worry that they'll complain that I have been gone for long. It has made a difference. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, 16-25)

Community Service (Home based Care), and Health Equity

Respondents learnt about home based care (mentioned above), and that one should help in one's community. They were impressed by the clinic's relationship with the home based carers. Respondents also talked about nurses learning to care from this series, and wishing that their clinic was like the Soul City clinic.



What I've learned is that you need to be ready and willing to give a helping hand wherever it is needed especially in your own community. (Male, Free State, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

It has increased my knowledge and wherever I go people say what we do is good because they have seen it in Soul City. (Female home based carer, Gauteng, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

For me is the way the volunteers are taking care of the sick patients at home, it was so impressive. (Male, E. Cape, Rural, 16-25)

Another good message is that we should care of what happens in our communities. We should be concerned. Very often we don't even care because it's not our personal problem. And that's wrong. If someone robs a clinic it is all of our responsibility to try and find out more about it. The clinics are there for us and our families and our neighbours. If they don't have equipment or medicines, it's the community that suffers anyway. (Male, W. Cape, Urban, Coloured 16-25)

When you check other people you'll find that they are nurses only when they arrive at work and they are no stop being nurses immediately when they knock off. And you ask yourself where is that love that she has or supposed to have when she is at work, because the patients that she works with when she's at work are the same people she lives with, in the community. So whatever she does at work she has to do in the community... because the treatment that some of the nurses give us it's not okay but it's not all of them who are like that and if all of them could be like Zukiswa surely we will have a better country. (Male, Free State, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

It teaches us that nurses too are human beings after all. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

What I like about Soul City is that when you have gone to the clinic you get the sisters, you get help and after that you get after care. We see the caregivers, Sello and others who go and check who the new patients are. I like that because it shows what happens in real life. It is true that there are care givers that support you after you have been to the clinic. When you leave the clinic, it is known that there is a patient in hat house and the care givers come and help. (Female, Gauteng, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

On the issues that she has commented about, I think that what Soul City is trying to show is that in reality the nurse is supposed to work like this and that. So we have to compare what happens in reality and what should happen ideally. We have to ask ourselves that in reality what really goes wrong. Where do we lose the way? (Male, Gauteng, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

I hope all the other nurses were watching and have learnt what it means to be a nurse, because to be nurse means you have to be able to care, to educate, to inspire, must be able to communicate but most of all to "care". (Male, Free State, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

I think I liked the atmosphere of the clinic. It sends the message. People are encouraged to go to the clinics because they see how people are cared for in Soul City. They think they are going to get the help that they need and you already feel yourself get healed because of the atmosphere around you. SO people get encouraged to visit clinics even though in real life it is not happening. In the clinic those people are very rude. (Male, Gauteng, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

I want to add on that. They are showing us the guy burning the car because they want to show us the pressure that the nurses at the clinic are living under, sometimes they have stress that is why sometimes when you are at the clinic you can see the nurse is not ok towards us as people. This part maybe can help tackle this issue of nurses or at least try to get counselling for the nurses from problems that they have at home and help them be able to separate their problems at home from work related problems. (Female Gauteng, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

Conclusion

This research was conducted among viewers of Soul City (and in a few cases people who had stopped watching), and is qualitative in nature thus one cannot generalize any of these findings.

Although there was somewhat mixed reception of Soul City 7, in general people related to the stories and characters and believed them to be a true reflection of their lives. Respondents also took a variety of messages out of Soul City, importantly the ones relating to AIDS disclosure, ART, and living positively. Respondents related particularly well to the “manhood stories” and although not all were convinced by the story many told how it had taught them something or even changed their lives.

The audience seems to have grown to like the new characters in Soul City and mentioned that they would like to see what happens to them in the future. Although Connie’s role in Soul City was useful for the hopeful and arty messaging, it was not recognized by most respondents that she is a real person and that she is really HIV positive. Sometimes the messages that people receive are very moving.

I have learned that after each and every pain there is joy, like Zandi she was devastated when she found out that she was HIV positive, she able to come back from that. Because when other people are told that they are HIV then end up doing the stupid things like going and sell their bodies just for the sake of spreading the disease. And another thing is that one should accept his or her circumstances and for one to accept his\her circumstances one should have checked his HIV status. (Female, Free State, Rural, 25-35)

And sometimes they are not intended but important.

Oh! Yes! It made me realise that the potential I have for dancing can take me very far. Recently I got a scholarship to attend a dance school, but because my parents don't really support this choice I was beginning to doubt it myself. Until I saw the way Zandi picked herself up from near ruin to a healthy and normal life. (Male, Free State, Urban, Informal, 25-35)

Finally Soul City seems to really have resulted in positive change in some people’s lives:

To me to watch Soul City changed my whole life because; I was affected with HIV and AIDS. I was able to teach other to disclose to their partners, and those who are infected I prepare them to for testing and accept their HIV status. (Female, KZN, Rural, 16-25)