

No Short Cuts in Entertainment-Education: Designing Soul City Step-by-Step¹

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EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

The authors are employees of the Soul City Institute of Health and Development Communication in South Africa except for Dr. Arvind Singhal of Ohio University. Singhal served on the research advisory committee to Soul City IV, the subject of the present chapter.

"I saw it on the telly [television] and it was an eye opener... We Black people have this tendency that when we have problems at home we hide them... A woman who is being abused by her husband won't tell anyone... What Soul City has done is to show us that if a woman is being abused physically and emotionally, she should report that... And if you see someone in the street being beaten, you are not supposed to keep quiet... Like in Soul City when Mattakala was being abused, the community kept quiet until she was

¹The present chapter draws upon Usdin et al. (2000), and Singhal et al. (in press).

hurt and admitted at the hospital.... One nurse was angry because her husband was there when Matlakala was beaten.... He heard when she screamed and did nothing to help. Then the next time when the beating happened, they started hitting this and made lots of noise and that stopped the fight."

--A woman viewer of *Soul City IV* from Mamelodi Township in South Africa.

In 1999, in the fourth *Soul City* entertainment-education television series (referred to hereafter as *Soul City IV*) in South Africa, a new collective behavior was modeled to portray how neighbors might intervene in a domestic violence situation. The prevailing cultural norm in South Africa was for neighbors, even if they wished to help an abused woman, not to intervene in such a situation. Wife (or partner) abuse was seen as a private matter, carried out in a private space, with curtains drawn and behind closed doors (Singhal & Rogers, 2003).

In the *Soul City IV* series, neighbors collectively decide to break the ongoing cycle of spousal abuse in a neighboring home. When the next wife-beating episode occurred, they gathered around the abuser's residence and collectively banged pots and pans, censuring the abuser's actions (Photo 8.1). This prime-time entertainment-education episode, which earned one of the highest audience ratings in South Africa in 1999, demonstrated the



PHOTO 8.1. Neighbors collectively bang pots and pans to protest Thabang's abuse of Matlakala. (Source: Soul City Institute of Health and Development Communication. Used with permission.)

importance of creatively modeling collective efficacy in order to energize neighbors, who, for social and cultural reasons, felt previously inefficacious. After this episode was broadcast, pot banging to stop partner abuse was reported in several locations in South Africa. Parrons of a local pub in Tembisa Township in South Africa exhibited a variation of this practice: They collectively banged bottles in the bar when a man physically abused his girlfriend (Soul City, 2000).

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the step-by-step process of designing the *Soul City IV* domestic violence campaign, including aspects of message design, social mobilization, and advocacy. The chapter discusses in detail the formative research and design inputs for the domestic violence storyline, including the pot-banging episode in which neighbors collectively protest a wife-beating situation, modeling a novel way of breaking the cycle of domestic violence. Decisions taken about the delineation of characters, plot, and situations are discussed against the backdrop of cultural and social norms in South Africa. Finally, an assessment is provided of the impact of the *Soul City IV* campaign on domestic violence in South Africa.

Soul City: An Ongoing Multimedia Intervention in South Africa

The Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication (or Soul City, in short) is a nongovernmental organization based in Johannesburg, South Africa. Soul City was established in 1992 to harness the power of mass media for health and development in South Africa.

South Africa faces enormous health and development challenges: An estimated 20% of South Africans (some 4.2 million people) are HIV positive. For children under five years of age, the largest single cause of death is diarrhea. Mainly a legacy of apartheid, this dismal health record existed despite a highly developed mass media system in South Africa: Some 98% of South Africans access radio, 65% access television, and over 40% access newspapers and magazines.

The bedrock of Soul City's health promotion strategy is entertainment-education (also called "edutainment"), defined as the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase audience members' knowledge about an issue, create favorable attitudes, shift social norms, and change the overt behavior of individuals and communities (Singhal & Rogers, 1999; Singhal & Rogers, 2002). In the realm of entertainment-education programming, Soul City pioneered several new directions, including the strategy of having an "on-going" multimedia vehicle to address high priority national health issues. Each year a series of mass media interventions are implemented, including the flagship *Soul City*, a 13-part prime-time television drama series broadcast on South Africa's most popular television channel, a 60-episode prime-time radio drama series broadcast in nine South African languages, covering all regional stations, and some 2.5 million health education booklets, designed around the popularity of the TV series' characters, which are serialized by 11 major newspapers and distributed nationally.

Each year, after the television and radio series are broadcast, several campaign activities are implemented to keep people talking about Soul City and the issues it covers. Such initiatives include the "Soul City Search for Stars" (to recruit talent for next year's television series), and the "Soul City Health Care Worker of the Year" (to recognize outstanding grassroots community workers). The ability of the Soul City Project (including its various media components) to attract advertising revenue allows an unusual opportunity to recover the costs of media production.

The first *Soul City* series (in 1994) focused on maternal and child health, and HIV prevention. The second *Soul City* series (in 1996) focused on HIV prevention, housing and land reform, and tuberculosis and tobacco control. The third *Soul City* series (in 1997) dealt with HIV prevention, alcohol abuse, energy conservation, and violence prevention. The fourth *Soul City* series (in 1999) focused primarily on violence against women, youth sexuality and AIDS, hypertension, personal finance, and small business development. While a fifth and a sixth *Soul City* series were implemented in 2001 and 2002, respectively, the present chapter focuses primarily on the fourth series.

THE FORMATIVE RESEARCH PROCESS FOR SOUL CITY IV

As with all Soul City media materials, extensive formative research was conducted to design the fourth series. *Soul City IV*'s 18-month formative research process included (1) stakeholder consultations, (2) literature reviews, (3) case studies of abused women and abusers, (4) general audience research, and (5) workshops with the National Network on Violence against Women (NNVAW). *Soul City IV* extended the core edutainment vehicle to include a partnership with the NNVAW, a coalition of over 1,500 activists and community organizations in South Africa (Usdin et al., 2000).

Three members of NNVAW, Mpho Thekiso, Lisa Vetten and David Bohlale, worked closely with Soul City in developing the domestic violence series. Vetten's extensive experience in working with abused women, and Bohlale's experience as a male gender activist, brought important perspectives to the project, while Thekiso was critical in mobilizing NNVAW members. Incorporating the "male" perspective was essential to engage men in the audience, as opposed to alienating them. Mmatshilo Motsei, an outspoken survivor of domestic violence in South Africa, also worked closely with the team, providing invaluable inputs in developing the fourth series. The storyline was also extensively workshopped with a group of men (many ex-abusers) working in an organization aimed at transforming other male abusers.

Stakeholder consultations involved in-depth interviews with government and civil society officials who were involved in addressing gender-based

violence in South Africa. Stakeholders were concerned that when the *Soul City IV* series motivated abused women to take action, it could place them at increased risk for harm. So the need to establish a "safety net" to assist abused women was broached. The idea to establish a toll-free telephone helpline for women experiencing domestic violence emerged from these consultations. The helpline was advertised in all campaign materials and activities.

An extensive literature review helped situate the *Soul City IV* series in a human rights framework, focusing on the rights of battered women and of their children. It highlighted the adverse impacts of domestic violence on abused women, and on the children who witnessed the violence. It noted that patriarchal attitudes endorsing gender violence were handed down intergenerationally. Male children were socialized by their fathers to believe that they were the "captains of the ship," while female children were socialized by their mothers "to endure."

The literature review revealed that while abused women showed a strong desire to seek recourse from the law, various structural barriers prevented them from seeking help, stemming from the indifference of health workers, the police, and the judiciary. So it was decided to depict the reality of police indifference and apathy to domestic violence situations while at the same time role modeling how health workers, the police, and judges should behave in handling such cases. It was clear from the formative research that the police, health workers, and magistrates needed to be trained to better handle cases of gender-based violence. Accordingly, excerpted clips from *Soul City IV* were used to develop training materials for health workers, police, and the judiciary.

The literature review highlighted the important role that society plays in perpetuating domestic violence, which is widely perceived as a "private affair." This attitude, pervasive among members of the general audience in South Africa, as well as among health workers, police, and judiciary, perpetuated widespread tolerance of domestic violence. It was decided to focus the *Soul City* series on shifting social norms away from tolerating domestic violence. Community action was the way to accomplish this goal.

The NNVAW compiled eight detailed case studies of abused women in South Africa. Further, four focus groups interviews, and four in-depth interviews were conducted with abused women. Their narratives brought realism to the storyline. Another focus group was conducted with male perpetrators. Additionally, four focus groups interviews were conducted with the general public, from both urban and rural areas.

Translating Formative Research Findings

The composite picture that emerged from this formative research process was that gender inequality lies at the heart of domestic violence. Women are expected to tolerate abuse, and men believe they have the right to discipline

their partners who are "disobedient." The practice of *lobola* (or "bride price") allowed men to view their spouses as personal property and to abuse them at will. Women were expected to make their marriages work whatever the cost. Domestic violence was culturally tolerated. Women were resigned to accept domestic violence as their lot in life, as something inevitable.

The next step was to translate these formative research insights into clear message briefs for the *Soul City IV* scriptwriters, producers, and directors. A workshop was held with NNVAV members, representing all provinces of South Africa. Consensus was reached on key message issues. It was decided that the television series would be combined with an advocacy campaign to tackle structural barriers that stopped women from seeking help. The message brief was then presented, and discussed intensively in a workshop with the creative team. Mmatshilo Motsei, a survivor of gender violence, attended this workshop, and shared her poignant story. The scriptwriters were then in a workshop with Men for Change, a men's organization that works to reduce domestic violence. The organization includes several men who previously abused their partners. The creative team also watched a number of feature films on domestic violence, immersing themselves in the subject matter.

Scriptwriting

An extensive process of scriptwriting ensued. Story outlines were developed, and developed into scripts. These draft storylines were discussed by audience groups in both rural and urban South Africa. Their feedback, together with that from NNVAV members, was incorporated into new drafts of the scripts. Care was taken to ensure that domestic violence was well integrated into the drama, and that the situations resonated with the audiences' experiences.

Many alterations to the storyline were made. For example, group feedback on the early scripts indicated that Thabang, the perpetrator-protagonist of domestic violence, was portrayed as "too monstrous." Male audience members distanced themselves from Thabang's behavior, perceiving him as a "sick beast." Thabang's behavior was toned down to depict the abuser as a respected person. Also, the domestic violence storyline, initially planned for the first episode, was shifted to the fourth episode, to allow audiences to first see Thabang's "nicer" side, and also to show his family in happier times. This adjustment was important to convey the cycle of abuse in which women remain trapped: They hope that their happy times will return.

Further, in their enthusiasm to convey the intergenerational pattern of domestic violence, the scriptwriters initially created a highly dysfunctional family. Pretesting showed that audience members saw Thabang's behavior as genetically determined, rather than as the result of negative socialization. The storyline was altered to emphasize that violence usually plays out in families

perceived to be "normal." NNVAV members also felt that Nonceba, a friend of Matlakala, the abused woman, was "too prescriptive," when, for example, she said: "I can't allow you to go back." Nonceba's dialogue was modified to support Matlakala to make her own decisions, as opposed to disempowering her by making decisions for her.

The creative process culminated in a rigorous translation process which brought together grassroots activists, community actors, cast members, former abusers, and members of the Soul City team to brainstorm dialogue that would resonate with intended audiences. The presence of Thuli Shongwe, a senior researcher at Soul City, was instrumental in enhancing this creative process. Shongwe grew up in Alexandra Township on the outskirts of Johannesburg, surrounded by domestic violence. She was also immersed in the formative research process and brought feeling and authenticity to the dialogues.

During the formative research, respondents often used the word *ukun-jamezela* (a Zulu word meaning "to endure") to describe what society expects of women who find themselves in abusive relationships. This word denoted the deep sense of resignation and utter helplessness that characterized women's perceptions of abuse as "their lot in life." Women spoke of no choice but to endure an abusive relationship, describing it "as a cross that they must bear." These words and phrases were creatively woven into the characters' dialogues, eliciting a strong sense of audience identification. For instance, Sister Bettina, when advising Matlakala to take charge of her life, turned a popular Zulu expression, "*Ublale phezu kwamalable evutha*" ("You must sit on top of hot coals"), on its head to convey that "you can't sit on a hot stove, and pretend you are not burning." Dialogues were thus often taken directly from the interview transcripts, and embellished to stimulate audience reflection. For example, to challenge the commonly held belief that if a man does not beat his wife, he does not love her, Nonceba tells Matlakala: "Thabang should love you with his heart, not his fists." The use of such local colloquialisms, metaphors, and proverbs helped amplify audience engagement with the series' narrative.

The 18-month long formative research process led to the creation of the following domestic violence storyline for the *Soul City IV* series.

How Domestic Violence Showed Up on Soul City's Radar

Note: This story of how the issue of domestic violence got onto Soul City's "radar" was gleaned during an in-depth interview with Dr. Shereen Usdin, conducted by Arvind Singhal in Johannesburg in August 2002. It was during Singhal's visit to South Africa in July–August 2002 that most of the present chapter was cowritten by Usdin and Singhal, in collaboration with other colleagues at Soul City.

Often, issues and individuals intersect in unplanned ways, and through chance, circumstance, and design, new possibilities emerge. In a modest way, that is how the issue of domestic violence got onto Soul City's "radar."

Dr. Shireen Usdin, Program Manager for the *Soul City IV* series, saw firsthand the impact of domestic violence while training as a medical doctor in the mid-1980s at the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto. Usdin saw hundreds of cases of battered women with black eyes, bone fractures, miscarriages, stab wounds, and gun shots. The battered women were clinically treated for their physical condition, and then sent home to confront the same dangerous conditions that put them in the hospital in the first place.

A decade later, while earning her MPH degree at Harvard University, Usdin discovered strong parallels in the work of Professor Deborah Prothrow-Stith, a medical doctor who was patching up injured gang members in inner-city neighborhoods, and discharging them back into the same violent environment they came from. When patients threaten suicide, it is considered medical negligence to discharge them back into their stressful environment. This concern prompted Prothrow-Stith to advocate for greater health sector involvement in the prevention of gang violence. For Usdin, this was a Eureka moment. Domestic violence has direct health consequences, and the health sector, as the first port of call for many battered women, has an important responsibility to intervene.

Subsequently, Usdin became an avid reader of literature on domestic violence as a public health issue. Upon return to South Africa, Usdin argued for including domestic violence as a key theme for the *Soul City IV* series.²

THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE STORYLINE

Set in Soul City, a fictional Black township in South Africa, the domestic violence storyline of *Soul City IV* centers around Matlakala, a worker at Masakhane Clinic. Matlakala is married to Thabang Seriti, a respected schoolteacher in the Soul City High School. Thabang has two children from his previous marriage, Bheki and Thembi, and a little girl, Mapaseka, with Matlakala. In the first few episodes, the Seritis seem like a happy family. However, that changes, one day, when Matlakala returns home late from work, and Thabang is furious with her for neglecting family chores. The situation escalates and Thabang knocks Matlakala to the ground (Photo 8.2). The next morning, Thabang tries to make up by helping with household chores. Matlakala forgives Thabang, and the couple seems happy. Nonceba, a friend and Matlakala's coworker, sees her facial bruises and expresses concern. Matlakala tries to cover up by saying that she fell down, but Nonceba suspects that domestic violence was the cause.

²The theme of domestic violence also fulfilled Soul City's criteria for inclusion: It represented a health issue of national priority.



PHOTO 8.2. An altercation between Thabang and Matlakala which escalates into physical abuse of Matlakala. (Source: Soul City Institute of Health and Development Communication. Used with permission.)

Matlakala finds excuses for Thabang's violent behavior. Perhaps he is under financial pressure. One day, Thabang overhears Matlakala telling her father on the phone about the beatings. Thabang is furious: "It's between you and me, Matlakala; it is nobody else's business." Bheki and Thembi are terrified to see Thabang's rage. When Bheki tries to stop Thabang from beating Matlakala, Thabang tells Bheki the man of the house must always be "captain of the ship." Meanwhile, Thembi tells Matlakala that Thabang used to beat her mother. When Matlakala shares this information with her mother, she tells Matlakala to make her marriage work, especially as Thabang's family paid lobola ("bride price") for her.

Matlakala's life experiences a turning point when a white woman, also a victim of domestic violence, is brought to Masakhane Clinic in critical condition. Listening to her tragic story, Matlakala recognizes the strong parallels in her own life: repeated apologies in the ongoing cycle of domestic violence, and the escalation of physical violence over time. When the woman dies, Matlakala knows she could be next.

Matlakala moves into her parent's home, refusing to return until Thabang's family and her family discuss his violent behavior. She wants Thabang to promise—in front of both families—never to hurt her again. When Thabang's father learns of Matlakala's stance, he is furious. He tells Thabang that

Matlakala must be disciplined "according to tradition." A family meeting is held, in the presence of a community elder, who is also the local priest. Matlakala's father takes a strong stand against domestic violence, while Thabang's father emphasizes that cultural tradition dictates that Matlakala be subservient. The community elder challenges the Seriti family's view that culture, or tradition, condones domestic violence. He emphasizes that according to traditional culture, a man who beats his wife is a coward. Thabang apologizes, and Matlakala reluctantly agrees to return.

One day, Matlakala's friends, Ali and Vusi, while walking by the Seriti home, overhear a terrible fight. Thabang refuses to help with baby Masapeka, saying "It is not a man's job." When Matlakala disagrees, Thabang accuses her of disrespect, and beats her violently. She is hospitalized. Ali wanted to intervene but Vusi tells him that "what happens between a man and his wife is none of our business." Matlakala's neighbors, Mandla and Ivy, also overhear the violence, but do nothing. It is, after all, a "private matter."

In the hospital, Matlakala says she has been mugged, but the doctor suspects domestic violence. He tells her about local women's organizations where she can get help, and gives her the toll-free telephone number for the Stop Woman Abuse helpline. Nonceba and Sister Bettina, a nurse at the Masakhane Clinic, encourage Matlakala to seek help. Matlakala telephones the helpline and is referred to a local women's organization. Phumzile, the counselor, tells her about the new Domestic Violence Act (DVA) and how to get a Protection Order.

After being discharged from the hospital, Matlakala returns to her parents home, where an enraged Thabang confronts her. When Matlakala refuses to return home, Thabang threatens to hit her. Matlakala's father calls the police, who arrive but do nothing, saying: "It's another family dispute." Later that evening, at the local community-policing forum, Matlakala and her father confront the neighbors and the police about their inaction. The police captain is angry. He tells the gathering that the new DVA makes it incumbent upon the police to intervene in a domestic violence situation. Later, at the police station, the captain berates the errant cops for their inaction. Meanwhile, Matlakala gets a Protection Order (PO) against Thabang. To Thabang's great embarrassment, the court official serves the PO to him at school, in front of the school principal.

One day, believing that Thabang is in school, Matlakala visits Thembi and Bheki. Thabang follows Matlakala and asks her to return home. When she refuses, he starts beating her. This time, they act. They come out of their homes with pots and pans, and bang them in front of Thabang's home. By making a loud noise, they make it clear to Thabang that they disapprove of his violent behavior, and assure Matlakala that they support her. The police arrive and arrest Thabang, who is charged with breaking the court's Protection Order. Matlakala is examined by a doctor who fills in a medical form. The doctor

explains that the medical form can serve as evidence in court. Matlakala goes to the police station to charge Thabang with assault. The court hears her case, and Matlakala's neighbors testify in her favor. Thabang's ex-wife, Nomsa, also testifies against Thabang's long-standing pattern of abusive behavior. Thabang is finally found guilty of assault and of violating a Protection Order.

In prison, Thabang meets Jabu, who runs a support group for abusive men. But Thabang is not interested. However, when his son, Bheki, shows signs of violent behavior, Thabang relents. In a poignant scene, when Thabang confronts his son about his errant ways, Bheki accuses Thabang of teaching him violence. This revelation represents a turning point for Thabang. In prison, he reflects upon the consequences of his abusive behavior. He seeks the help of Jabu's support group. Meanwhile, Matlakala emerges empowered from her marital ordeal. She has overcome.

Why Pot Banging?

Note: The story of how "pot banging" became the medium of protesting domestic violence in the *Soul City IV* series was also gleaned during an in-depth interview with Dr. Shereen Usdin, conducted by Arvind Singhal in Johannesburg in August 2002.

In 1995 during her MPH (Masters in Public Health) studies at Harvard, *Soul City IV* program manager, Dr. Shereen Usdin, read a World Bank Report on *Violence Against Women: The Hidden Health Burden* in which Lori Heise and others (1994) documented various community responses to domestic violence. In certain Latin American countries, neighbors banged pots and blew whistles outside the house of the abuser to indicate their disapproval, preventing further harm to the woman.

Two years later, while Usdin interviewed a battered woman in a Cape Town shelter (as part of the formative research for *Soul City IV*), the Latin American story suddenly resurfaced. Usdin heard the woman describe the moment when she walked away from her abusive relationship, closing the door of her home. She said what was most difficult for her was to say goodbye to her kitchen. She described her kitchen as a "safe place" where her husband never entered. There she could be "free" with her friends and she had some measure of control. She recalled her "gleaming pots and pans."

For Usdin, this posed a poignant question: Weren't the pots and pans that the woman recalled with pride really symbols of her oppression? If so, could these symbols of her oppression be turned into instruments of her liberation? Accordingly, in *Soul City IV*, the community's disapproval of domestic violence in their neighborhood was expressed through collective pot-banging outside the home of the abuser, protecting the woman from further harm. Pots and pans, symbols of a woman's oppression, were turned into agents of her liberation.

DECISIONS ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

The female and male protagonist, as well as other key characters in the domestic violence storyline, were chosen carefully, given that three *Soul City* series had been broadcast previously, and it was vital to maintain character consistency from one series to the next.

Selecting Matlakala as the woman protagonist involved a series of careful decisions. Various established characters in *Soul City* series I to III were considered for this role, including the well-loved Sister Bettina, the nurse at Masakane Clinic. However, she was unsuitable because her husband, Vusi, was by now established as a positive male role model. Matlakala was most suitable, as she was single in *Soul City* series I to III, which afforded an opportunity in *Soul City IV* for her to marry Thabang, a newly introduced character. Further, she was perceived by audience members as likeable, happy, and self-confident. Likeability was important to ensure that audience members would not automatically find reasons to blame her for the abuse she faced. Her state of happiness and self-confidence allowed *Soul City IV* to depict the debilitating impacts of domestic violence on a battered woman, leading to depression, plummeting self-esteem, and despair.

The turning point in Matlakala's life comes when she sees her own plight reflected in the story of the white woman dying at Masakane Clinic. Whether the dying woman should be black or white was in itself a carefully thought-out decision. Formative research suggested that domestic violence was perceived mainly as a problem in the black community, despite strong evidence that this social ill cut across racial lines in South Africa. The initial idea for the story was to show the parallel experiences of two abused women—one black, one white. However, in order not to dilute the emotional engagement of audience members with two competing protagonists, the choice was made to primarily focus on the experience of Matlakala, a black woman.³

However, to ensure that audience members did not mistake the domestic violence issue as an issue confined to black women, an abused white woman was deliberately introduced in *Soul City IV*. Rushed into the Masakane's Clinic's emergency room in critical condition after being stabbed and beaten by her violent boyfriend, she survives long enough to tell the story of her abuse. She described to Matlakala the "classic" cycle of domestic violence, from the honeymoon phase with her boyfriend, to tension build-up, to exploration and battering, to his apology, and then the start of another honeymoon period (Photo 8.3). By hearing the white woman's story, including the escalating levels of violence in her relationship—from abusive words, to fists, to sticks, to bottles—Matlakala realized what lay in store for her. Through this

³The focus on Matlakala's experience was consistent with Soul City's primary viewership in South Africa, which is predominantly black (about 90% of the total audience).



PHOTO 8.3. Upon hearing the battered woman's story, Matlakala realizes what lies in store for her in the future. (Source: Soul City: Institute of Health and Development Communication. Used with permission.)

encounter, Matlakala considers the possibility of leaving her long-standing abusive relationship with Thabang.

As a newly introduced character, Thabang, the male protagonist for domestic violence, was to embody the traits of an abuser as identified in formative research. Many battered women felt that their community and family members did not believe that they were being abused, and that their respected, likeable husbands were incapable of such behavior. Thabang was portrayed as a respected, middle-class teacher, who was perceived as "Mr. Nice Guy." Being middle-class was important to convey that domestic violence cuts across economic strata, and is not exclusively a behavior of the poorer socioeconomic class. Formative research pointed to the importance of Thabang being cast as a nonZulu, one of the many other cultural groups in South Africa. A prevailing stereotype is that Zulu men tend to be strong-headed, violent, and warrior-like, and therefore more likely to be wife-beaters. So he was given a seSotho (another cultural group) name: "Thabang Seriti." Thabang spoke in the seSotho language, in order to convey that abusers do not hail from any one specific cultural group.

Formative research directly influenced how Thabang's character would evolve, especially whether or not he would mend his violent ways. Discussions with a group of men, including former abusers, who conduct men-to-men outreach programs to discourage gender-based violence, highlighted

reasons that motivate men to stop abuse: a brush with the law, public humiliation, the loss of a job as the result of violence, fear of arrest, fear of losing one's family, and the debilitating psycho-social impacts of violence on children.

How did *Soul City IV* incorporate these learnings in shaping Thabang's character? As Thabang's abuse of Matlakala escalated, he was humiliated publicly both in the neighborhood where he lived, and also at his workplace. The pot-banging, for instance, was consciously crafted to represent a public embarrassment for Thabang in his neighborhood. The DVA court order was also purposefully served to Thabang at his workplace, in the presence of the school principal. Ultimately, Thabang was arrested, losing his job and family. What finally made Thabang turn, however, was when Bheki, his teenage son, directly attributed his violent behavior in school to what he learned from his father. The traumatic psycho-social impact on children was further emphasized in *Soul City IV* through Bheki's deteriorating school performance, and heart-rendering scenes of fear and insecurity when he and his sister, Thembi, witness Thabang's abuse of Matlakala.

Patrick Molefe Shai: Reel or Real Life?

The character of the abusive husband, Thabang Scritti, was played by the well-known South African actor, Patrick Molefe Shai. After *Soul City IV* went on the air, Shai disclosed in a radio interview that he abused his wife in real life, and that acting in the television series had been gut-wrenching for him. Encouraged by Soul City, Shai spoke out against domestic violence on the national media, and appeared in community events organized by the NNVAW to coincide with the television series' broadcast. He continues to do so.

As a celebrity, Shai painted a powerful picture of a man who had moved from being a violent husband to one who respected his wife. Here Shai described in his own words, how his "reel" and "real" life intersected:

"I have been an actor for 27 years, playing a variety of roles with distinction, and honored with four Best Actor Awards. When playing an abusive husband in the *Soul City IV* series, I experienced first-hand the pain and scars I was inflicting on my wife and children.

The events of filming that day are deeply etched in my mind. I was bearing my coactress and as she screamed, her face was transformed into my wife's face. Her pleading sounded just like my wife's and the screams of the children actors became those of my children. Mixed emotions swelled inside me. The performance was too real.

I shouted 'Cut!' Then I ran outside and cried. I have never experienced so much pain while performing a character. But this was not just another performance. I had a rare opportunity to see myself in a state of anger. Only this time, I could control my anger.

What really pained me that day was the realization that inflicting violence is a choice. When I fought with my wife, bringing her pain and fear, I did not

make the right choice. I now know that violence with women is wrong. Thanks to Soul City, today I am a crusader against domestic violence."

Yours truly,

For all the victims of domestic violence,

Patrick Molefe Shai

DECISIONS ABOUT SITUATIONS

The design of *Soul City IV* involved countless decisions, based on formative research results, about how to address cultural and social norms related to gender socialization in South Africa. These decisions were then translated into delineating specific situations in the *Soul City IV* storyline.

For instance, the popular Zulu saying "*umuzi ngumuzi ngomfazi*" (literally "A home is a home because of a woman") embodies the social pressure on abused women to stay with the abuser no matter how harmful the home may be to them. A woman is expected to endure abuse without complaint. Religious and cultural norms dictate that "It is her duty to make the marriage work," and coping with an abusive husband "is a cross that she must silently bear."

The social practice of lobola, the bride price paid (in cash and/or kind) by the groom's family to the bride's family, entraps the woman in an abusive relationship. Lobola is perceived as conferring "ownership" of the woman by the man and his family, exemplified by the Zulu saying "*Ingcwaba lomuntu wesifazane lhlapbo endeke kbona*," which means "The grave of a woman is with her in-laws." There exists no respite for a woman; she is trapped until her death. By "owning" the woman, a man has "license" to discipline her when she disobeys him. Also, the patriarchal mindset "*ga go poo pedi mo Sakeneng*" (a seSotho proverb meaning "Two bulls can't stay in the same kraal") specifies the woman's subservient position in the home.

How were these cultural norms addressed in *Soul City IV* in the context of Thabang's abuse of Matlakala? Frustrated by Thabang's recurring abuse, and subsequent hollow apologies, Matlakala insists on a meeting between both families, mediated by a community elder, a priest. Formative research suggested that family mediation represents the first step in addressing marital discord. The presence of the community elder represented a credible voice that could articulate an alternative conception of culture. Combining the role of the community elder with a priest helped in countering the negative socializing aspects of religion.

In the conflictual family mediation, Thabang's father repeatedly blames Matlakala's behaviors as the cause of domestic violence, accusing her of not playing the role of a dutiful, obedient spouse, despite the payment of lobola to her family. The respected priest challenges Thabang and his father (and

thereby the audience members) to examine the practice of lobola in another light. He explains that the purpose of lobola is to cement the relationship between the bride and groom's family, and is a way for "the groom to thank the bride's family for having given birth to the woman he loves." The dialogues and exchanges between the two families and the elder were generously laced with proverbs, metaphors, and local colloquial sayings (such as "A home is a home because of a woman") to evoke audience identification with longstanding cultural traditions, stimulating reflection on their current relevance.

During the course of the mediation meeting, Matlakala's mother undergoes a major shift in her own thinking about whether or not Matlakala should continue to "bear the burden of her cross." Prior to the meeting, she espoused the traditional line, pressuring Matlakala to *Ukunyamezela* ("endure"). As the meeting progressed, she begins to realize the injustice meted out to her daughter by Thabang's family, reconsiders her interpretation of lobola, and is convinced that prevailing cultural practices should not justify women's



PHOTO 8.4. Intergenerational socialization of domestic violence as Thabang tells his son Bheki that a man must always be the "captain of his ship." (Source: Soul City. Institute of Health and Development Communication. Used with permission.)

oppression. She clearly sees the harmful impact of patriarchal beliefs on Thabang, realizing the harm that she did to Matlakala by perpetuating her subservience.

This perpetuation of "harmful" intergenerational gender socialization, from father to son and mother to daughter, is carefully portrayed in an intense scene between Thabang and his son, Bheki, after Thabang violently abuses Matlakala. Distraught by the incident, a traumatized Bheki leaves the room, only to be accosted by Thabang outside their house. Thabang reprimands Bheki for crying (men don't cry), advising him that one day, when he grows up, he will understand that a man must always be "the captain of his ship" (Photo 8.4).

ADVOCACY AND SOCIAL MOBILIZATION

The *Soul City IV* series was conceived as an integrated health promotion intervention. As noted previously, formative research showed the need to address domestic violence intersectorally, including removal of structural barriers, especially the indifference of the police and judiciary, which discouraged abused women from pressing charges. In early episodes, when the police were called to attend to Thabang's violent behavior with Matlakala, they trivialized the situation: "We have far more important matters to attend to."

Soul City and the NNVAW formulated an advocacy campaign to complement the fourth television series, focusing on expediting the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act (DVA). While the law had recently been passed in South Africa, its implementation was inordinately delayed. This legislation aimed to break the barrier of police indifference by holding the police accountable for responding to domestic violence. Failure to assist abused women could lead to disciplinary action, including suspension or dismissal. So in later episodes, the indifferent police were taken to task for ignoring the tenets of the DVA.

Advocacy activities included direct lobbying of the government and media advocacy (to generate maximum coverage in the news media), combined with social mobilization in the form of community mass meetings and public marches (Usdin et al., 2000). The advocacy campaign, run contemporaneously with the *Soul City IV* series in late 1999. Various community events were held to protest the silence on domestic violence and to pressure the government to implement the DVA. *Soul City IV* actors, including Patrick Molefe Shai, who played Thabang, actively participated in these community events. Many events coincided with the broadcast of certain highly emotional episodes, especially the one broadcast during the week of National Women's Day. Episodes were shown on huge screens at some of these mass meetings.

Numerous excuses were given by the government for tardiness in implementing the DVA. Resources were lacking to train health workers, the police, and the magistrates in the new DVA. The Soul City-NNVAW partnership assisted the South African government in raising funds to expedite police and judicial training in the DVA. NNVAW activists addressed the South African Parliament, pressuring legislators to act. Also, each episode of the *Soul City IV* series ended with a slide that announced that the DVA would be implemented shortly. This message put pressure on the government to speedily implement the act.

Designing *Soul City IV* to Facilitate Training

As noted previously, formative research identified the urgent need to train police, health workers, and magistrates in domestic violence issues, including gender sensitization, and the tenets of the new Domestic Violence Act (DVA). Training of lay counselors in domestic violence was also identified as important.

Segments of *Soul City IV* series were developed which could later be edited onto a videotape for training purposes. For example, when a battered Matlakala is in the hospital, the attending doctor role models how health workers can sensitively inquire whether or not domestic violence was involved. The scene depicted the important role that health workers, who often represent the first port of call for abused women, can play in breaking the cycle of domestic abuse. The doctor gives Matlakala the toll-free telephone number for the helpline, thus connecting her with available services.

Similarly, the story of *Soul City IV* was designed to be useful for police training. Initially, the police are portrayed as indifferent. When called to assist Matlakala, they refuse to help, and trivialize domestic violence by dismissing it as a private affair. Their police captain takes them to task, explaining that they have contravened the new Domestic Violence Act, which mandates the police to respond or face disciplinary action.

Similarly, the scene in which Matlakala visits a counselor was designed with later training in mind. In fact, the originally scripted scene was refilmed because it showed an unsympathetic counselor sitting across the desk from an abused Matlakala. The newer version was more compassionate, with both the counselor and Matlakala sitting next to each other. This scene modeled how counselors should listen to abused women in a nonjudgmental and nonprescriptive manner, and help them make appropriate decisions for themselves.

IMPACTS OF SOUL CITY IV

The impacts of the *Soul City IV* multimedia series and the Soul City-NNVAW partnership were independently evaluated through a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods: A before-after national sample survey, a

community-based study of two sentinel sites, ethnographic observations, semistructured interviews, focus group and in-depth interviews, local and national media monitoring, document review, and secondary analysis of existing data bases.⁴ This triangulated approach to data collection was designed to assess the impacts of *Soul City IV* at the level of the individual, community, and society.

Soul City IV reached an estimated 16.2 million people in South Africa through radio, television, and print, achieving a 79% penetration among its target audience, including a 62% penetration among rural audiences. The television series achieved top audience ratings (it was consistently in the top three rated television programs in South Africa), winning six coveted Avanti Awards, including the prize for South Africa's Best Television Drama.

An analysis of the quantitative data showed that those exposed to *Soul City IV* were significantly more likely to say that domestic violence is not a "private affair," and that abused women should not "put up with it," compared to those not exposed to the *Soul City* series (Singhal et al., in press). As a woman viewer from Umlazi Township noted: "[Soul City] has opened our eyes as women, we know now that if we are being abused we don't have to keep quiet about that. We should report it, and there are steps to follow if we want to report the abuse." Exposure to the series was also associated with shifts in audience members' subjective norms about domestic violence. Audience members with higher levels of exposure to *Soul City IV* were more likely to recognize ill-treatment as "abuse," more likely to disclose abusive experiences, and more likely to reflect on how to stop abusive behaviors. Qualitative insights, such as the following statement from a married man in a rural area, provided additional support for such a claim:

"Since I have started watching *Soul City* I have realized that I am an abuser... I have tried to change and it's not that easy... Because I have that picture of abuse in my mind whenever I think of doing it, I stop. It's quite tough to make that conscious decision but you have to stick to it and as time goes by it will be easy just to talk about your problem without even resorting to violence."

⁴Several studies were conducted of the *Soul City IV* series, which are available from the Soul City Institute of Health and Development Communication, Parkstown, South Africa. They include (1) Samuels, T., Mollentz, J., Olusanya, R., Claassens, M., Brahmner, S., & Kimmie, Z. *An evaluation of Soul City 4: Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE)*. October, 2000; (2) *Soul City Series 4—Qualitative impact assessment*, data collection and data processing by Social Surveys, under supervision of K. Hall and K. Daniels; Audience Reception Analysis by Esca Scheepers; and Violence Against Women analysis by Esca Scheepers and K. Daniels, October, 2000; (3) *Soul City Series 4—Qualitative impact assessment*, data collection and data processing by Social Surveys, under supervision of K. Hall and K. Daniels; analysis by Esca Scheepers, October, 2000; (4) *Impact evaluation of Soul City in partnership with the NNVAW*, researched for Soul City by Women's Health Project, N. Christofides, January, 2001; and (5) *Impact of the Soul City/NNVAW partnership on policy implementation at a provincial government level*, researched for Soul City by Strategy and Tactics, M. J. Smith, January, 2001.

An analysis of qualitative data suggested that *Soul City IV*'s audience members identified with role models in the television series (such as Matlakala), and felt empowered to address the abuse they faced in their daily lives. As one woman noted:

"I used to suffer just like Matlakala. He would come home drunk and I would be harassed, kicked out of the house. . . . Then one day *Soul City* came along. . . . I liked that they were talking about woman abuse. . . . I called my husband in while it was still on air. He listened the first time and said nothing. The second time he asked me why are they having a program like this? I said to him it's because they know that men are abusing their wives. . . . I am tired of you coming home drunk and beating me, so I want you to hear for yourself what you are doing to me. I want you to listen very well so that when we go to the authorities you should remember that I have tried to make you to understand what you are doing to me. He then asked if it truly is like this, and I said yes. He thought about that for quite some time. . . . Then one day he came home and told me that he wanted to change. Today he talks to me freely and my child knows his father, before he did not because he knew the one who used to only fight. I really never thought it could be like this."

Quantitative data showed that the *Soul City IV* series stimulated public discussion and dialogue on domestic violence. Some 36% of the audience members talked to someone about domestic violence in the period during and shortly after exposure to the series. Overall, the research shows that the *Soul City IV* campaign can be credited with enhancing audience members' self and collective efficacy, and for creating a supportive environment for individuals and communities to take action.

Those exposed to the *Soul City IV* campaign were more likely to tell the abused person about the telephone helpline, and more willing to call the police in the event of someone being abused. Quantitative data show that *Soul City IV* influenced audience members to help other abused women, as well as to help themselves. Some 14% of the respondents said that they did something to stop domestic violence in their lives, or in the lives of someone close to them, in the period shortly after the *Soul City* series was broadcast.

Survey results showed that those exposed to the various mass media elements of the *Soul City IV* series were more willing to stand outside the house of an abuser and bang pots (Fig. 8.1). Several reports of pot or bottle banging were noted in various communities. Some 4% of the respondents said they had made a noise in public to protest against domestic violence.

Further, the Soul City-NNVAW partnership was highly effective in raising audience members' knowledge and awareness of organizations working to stop domestic violence, and in enhancing access to local support services through the telephone helpline. Some 39% of the survey respondents knew about the helpline. Among those who knew, 16% of the women and 13%

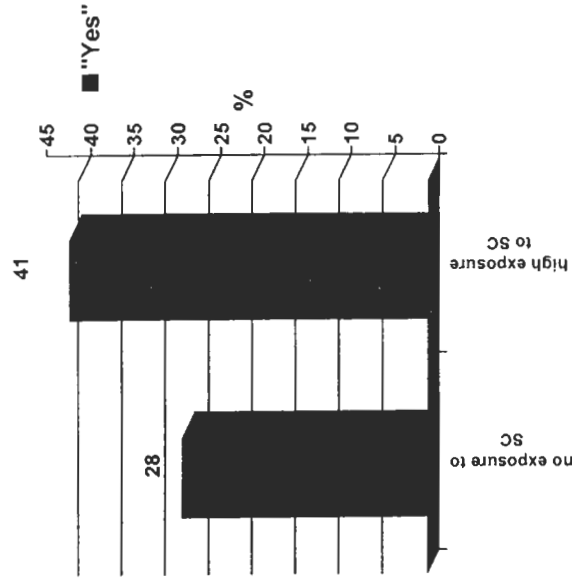


FIG. 8.1. Those exposed to the *Soul City* series were more likely to bang pots to protest domestic violence

of the men had saved the telephone number for future use. Four percent of those who knew about the helpline had called the helpline at least once.

Social mobilization at the grassroots level through the NNVAW network and the media advocacy campaign elements contributed to the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act. As a female viewer in KwaMhlanga stated: "Soul City influenced us to organize the citizen's march, emotions were high." A representative of the South African Police Service noted: "There were pressures [to implement the DVA] . . . from occasions where people held marches and stuff like that."

Soul City IV mobilized communities to take action. For example, in Mamelodi Township, close to Pretoria, a group of women protestors marched to the court where a man was on trial for battering his wife to death, and shouted "Thabang, Thabang" (the name of the wife-beater in the *Soul City IV* storyline). A few weeks previously, these women actively participated in the woman's funeral, covering her grave with soil—an activity that is usually conducted by men.

CONCLUSIONS

The *Soul City IV* series exemplifies the step-by-step process of designing, developing, and implementing an entertainment-education campaign on

domestic violence, in partnership with a grassroots organization, the National Network of Violence Against Women (NNVAW). The campaign was comprehensively integrated with advocacy and social mobilization activities to well as influence the socio-political environment through policy change.

Theoretically, the *Soul City IV* campaign highlighted the importance of modeling new sociocultural realities in entertainment-education television—as exemplified by the depiction of collective pot banging to stop domestic abuse. The campaign also emphasized the importance of modeling both self-efficacy and collective efficacy so that individuals and communities could be empowered to break the silence on domestic violence, question prevailing attitudes, and take action to change social norms.

The bedrock of the *Soul City IV* domestic violence campaign was an 18-month formative research process which included stakeholder consultations, literature reviews, case studies of abused women and abusers, target audience research, and workshops with the NNVAW. The formative research helped shaped the domestic violence storyline, including the pot-banging episode in which neighbors, who previously felt inefficacious, collectively protest a wife-beating situation, thus modeling a novel way of breaking the cycle of domestic violence.

Impact data from the 1999 *Soul City IV* campaign suggest the potential of entertainment-education programs, enhanced through formative research, social mobilization, and advocacy, to impact individual, community, and societal changes.

The impacts of *Soul City IV* continued in 2003, some three years after its broadcast. The series shifted attitudes and social norms, creating a climate less tolerant of domestic violence. The national toll-free telephone helpline, established to provide a safety net for abused women, continues to operate. The training packages continue to be used to change the attitudes and behaviors of the police, judiciary, health workers, and lay counselors. The DVA is in place and organizations within the NNVAW are currently involved in monitoring its implementation.

This chapter points to the advantages of analyzing in detail a single episode (or several related episodes) of an entertainment-education program in order to understand the rigor and the many steps involved in producing effective entertainment-education. Data gathering from both message designers and the audience of an E-E program provides a holistic understanding of how the process of message design (and its subsequent production) impacts message reception.

Finally, a key lesson from the *Soul City IV* domestic violence campaign is that in order to be effective, entertainment-education must be designed with the active involvement of those most affected.

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