

“Where Angels Fear to Tread, Fools Will!” Who Is in Control of Your Sexual Health? A Discursive Examination of Self-Surveillance in an HIV and AIDS Prevention Campaign

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Abstract

The global community witnessed vigorous and aggressive campaigns in the past three decades since the advent of HIV and AIDS. Various strategies have been used in this regard in order to advocate safer sex practices among the youth. The article argues that although three decades later, HIV infections are reported to be declining in the regions that were worst hard hit, specifically southern Africa, and there is still a need to promote condom-use among youth aged between 15 and 25. Through text and reception analysis, the article examines discourses of sexual self-responsibility in a purposively selected poster (advocating condom-use) from a host of HIV and AIDS prevention posters and banners advocating HIV and AIDS prevention in 2006-2009, from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Informed by Foucault's notion of the “panoptic gaze” and “techniques of the self”, an in-depth textual analysis of the posters is conducted. Norman Fairclough's CDA, augmented by Thompson's ideologies and Kress and van Leeuwen's *The Grammar of Visual Design*, are used to reveal the language and visual strategies used by the originators of the posters to reveal risk governmentality that may be subsumed in the interplay between the verbal and non-verbal features used in the texts. Furthermore, Hall's reception theory is employed to reveal responses of the students through Focus Group Discussions. The article analyses the discursive self “I” and the second-person deictic pronoun “You” as strategies employed by the campaigns to promote self-surveillance and individual agency. The article argues for continued efforts in condom promotion to reduce HIV infections and while doing so, for the inclusion of youth in designing prevention messages.

***Keywords:* risk, self responsibility, discourse analysis, panoptic gaze**

1. Introduction

Health promotion campaigns use risk discourse to persuade individuals to pursue healthy lifestyles. Perspectives brought by risk discourse view lifestyle choices by individuals as putting their health at risk (Lupton, 1993). HIV and AIDS prevention campaigns have virtually sprung in the past three decades, promoting safer sex practices in South Africa and Botswana, creating a dense network of images and texts that appeal to be read and interpreted. Sexual health promotion texts persuading safer sex practices by individuals subliminally use risk discourse in various ways through text and images. Embedded in some texts is the suggestion that individuals engage in reckless and irresponsible sexual behaviours of unprotected sex, multiple concurrent partners and transactional and intergenerational sex.

Gathered from informal talks with students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), where I was pursuing my doctorate in the period 2006 and 2009, and the University of Botswana (UB) where I am a lecturer, risk among youth has binary meanings: to be daring/risky and adventurous/pleasurable; exploring the unknown sexual terrain and being reckless and irresponsible and traversing in forbidden areas by giving in to one's erotic desires and pleasures. HIV and AIDS prevention campaigns in these contexts are thus designed to implore youth to critically assess their sexual behaviour in an era where unsafe sexual practices are detrimental to their health.

In southern Africa, HIV is predominantly transmitted through heterosexual activity. Previous studies have accounted for how universities in South Africa have created contexts of sexual exploration, a growing concern given the threat of HIV infection (Kunda, 2009; Mulwo, 2008; Shefer et al., 2012), especially in light of casual sex, multi-partnering, and coercive and transactional sex. At the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Howard College, Westville, Pietermaritzburg [PMB], Edgewood and Nelson Mandela School of Medicine campuses), researchers revealed conflicting perceptions of female sexual empowerment, with females seeming to be in control of their sexuality and being responsible for safe sex practices (Kunda, 2009), black male students viewing sex as a sign of achievement as concurrent sexual partnership was more popular among males than among females (Mulwo, 2008), and males being incapable of self-restraint (Kunda, 2009). Sex was viewed as a rite of passage to being accepted into "cool" social groups where free sex talk dominated discussions (Mulwo, 2008) and risk behaviour of "towing", a spontaneous sexual interaction with casual partners (Mutinta, 2011). "Towing", though, left some females feeling humiliated while males feeling pride and contentment (Mutinta et al., 2013, p. 132). At another university, coercive and transactional sex was noted as influencing sexual behaviour.

At UB, Seloilwe, Jack, Letshabo, Bainame and Veskov (2001) analyzed behavioural risk factors that predispose students to HIV and AIDS and recommended appropriate intervention strategies. The study investigated knowledge and personal experiences

on HIV and AIDS, sexual behaviour and practices, and perceptions on risky sexual behaviour at UB. Their findings include, abuse of freedom, increased sexual temptations, peer pressure, more casual sex, casual sex such as partner exchange and sex for material goods, exchange of sexual partners, sex seen as a bartering tool for good grades, sex to relieve stress, particularly first year of study, and males considering multiple partnering as prestigious and if not adhering to this behaviour ran the risk of being labelled “sack”. According to the study, sexual behaviour was influenced by: interaction between students and outside communities, early penetrative sexual experience, first exposure to sex occurs between 12 and 14 years, majority sexually active. The study recommends: messages about HIV and AIDS; shift away from mere provision of information to ways of influencing positive behavioural change; peer education and training; partnerships with stakeholders and prompt treatment of STDs. The above accounts, from both UKZN and UB, justify the need for more campaigning, particularly on campuses.

This paper explores overt and covert meanings in messages, through the use of metaphors and discursive strategies that converge on print texts aiming to advocate “responsible” sexual behaviour. The approach follows the premise that “the biomedical system of the 20th century has increasingly drawn attention to the responsibility of the individual to protect and maintain his or her own health” (Lupton, 1993, p. 309). Likewise, some posters and banners with their top-down linear approach seemingly emphasize responsibility on the individual to make choices on sexual behaviour. In the 21st century, self-care practices continue to be given even more attention. The advent of digital health technologies are increasingly playing an important role in healthcare, health education and voluntary self-surveillance, self-quantification and self-care (Lupton, 2015, p. 1). Also, the new mobile wireless computer technologies and social media applications using Web 2.0 platforms have recently received attention from those working in health promotion as a promising new way of achieving their goals of preventing ill-health and promoting healthy behaviours at the population level (Lupton, 2012, p. 1). E-health promotion is a relatively new phenomenon in southern Africa as E-technology is still not all together accessible to some segments of population and also may have cultural implications. Thus, traditional channels of media are still relevant. On campuses, posters, banners and murals still play an important role in channelling messages that promote safer sex practices to students. The analysis of the poster is still relevant given this context. The analysis involves examining metaphors used to persuade responsible sexual behavior and unraveling multiple meanings and discourses emerging from such. Further, it categorizes metaphors and themes that are represented, identifies trends in patterns of meaning derived from texts over time to identify underlying messages and examine how differently the texts are constructed and how they fit in broader societal discourses. The paper thus critically examines expressive features, lexical, semiotic, metaphorical and rhetorical styles used.

2. Foucault's Panopticism

Foucault's notion of panopticism derived from his study of prison structure and surveillance that rendered prisoners self-monitoring, and offers a useful concept in analyzing how HIV and AIDS print prevention campaigns may invite self-introspection and self-monitoring of sexual behaviour. Foucaultian approach lends itself to investigation of power as it tacitly defines discursive practice through continuous surveillance and manipulation (Johns & Johns, 2000). Foucault uses the panopticon prison design as a metaphor for the way disciplinary power operates (Graham, et al., 2017, p. 1). He extends the panopticon metaphor to another metaphor of gaze "... an inspecting gaze, which each individual under its weight will end up interiorizing it to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising surveillance over and against himself" (Foucault, 1980, p. 155). The notion of "gaze" also plays a role with discursive strategies, continually imploring interiorizing of own surveillance, from consistently being confronted by sexual health promotion material.

Foucault (1988) perceives tactics that use discourses as governmentality strategies that are meant to give agency to individuals. Governmentality strategies use discourses to position individuals as agent subjects to persuade individuals to regulate and control themselves, empowering them to search for self-improvement and self-hood (Lupton, 1999, p. 88). Persuasion strategies are used to influence individuals to introspect and reflect on their behaviours in order to control regulation of sexual practices and lifestyles. Governmental discourses thus position individuals as active rather than passive subjects of governance, which is some form of surveillance that requires them to regulate and control themselves (Lupton, 1999, p. 88).

3. HIV and AIDS Discourse in Print Media

In order to understand the nature of discourses, it may be worthwhile to consider the criteria proposed by Parker (1992): discourse is realized in texts; a discourse is about objects, events, concepts, or actions (i.e. an object such as a condom, a disease such as AIDS, or an action such as sexual intercourse); discourses address the audience in a particular way, "making us listen as a certain type of person" (discourse positioning); discourses are structured to persuade—they benefit or support some individuals, groups, or institutions and oppress or attack others. Discourses thus reproduce power relations and have ideological effects. A discourse is not discrete but refers to other discourses, overlapping in a complex interrelationship. A discourse is historically located, and therefore dynamic.

HIV and AIDS discourses depict the way society regards and reacts to the pandemic. HIV and AIDS discourses have made people aware of the pandemic and opened up new ways of thinking about sex and sexuality (Harrison, 2000). Sontag's extensive research on discourses used to portray diseases such as AIDS reveals that metaphors

tend to reflect military operations, such as “mobilising of immunological defences” and medicine as “aggressive as in the language of most chemotherapies” (Sontag, 1990, p. 97). Regarding multiple-partnering, Clatts and Mutchler (1989) show promiscuity being represented as dangerous and deviant to perceived societal moral norms. Lupton’s study describes the condom as being “fetished in public health discourse as the answer to AIDS, as a magical talisman against the plague” (Lupton, 1994, p. 317). Reddy (2004) argues that in South Africa, the pandemic has been the site of continuing struggles in gender, sexuality, race, and sexual differences discourses. Lupton (1992) argues that discourse analysis could benefit health promotion campaigns. In this study she describes how condoms and their use were depicted in the Australian press between 1986 and 1988.

4. Metaphors, Messages and Meaning

The exploration of the nature of tropes and their effects on messaging and meaning, particularly regarding HIV and AIDS prevention campaigns, is important. Tropes such as metaphor, analogy and irony are used to present information in an indirect manner in order to persuade and instill a deeper sense of meaning to what is represented.

The discussion is concerned with the metaphor types used to accomplish persuasion in order to induce sexual behaviour change; whether the metaphors would capture the experience or possible experience of those being persuaded and lived experience that captures or alludes to reality (Kirmayer, 1992). Kirmayer (1992) continues to assert that mental representations of concepts may be implicit or explicit thus introducing subjectivities and that concepts might be used without awareness or concern with the metaphoric and literal distinction. He gives the example, “surgeons are butchers” and argues that this assertion may influence the way we think about both occupations. Quite a number of examples can be drawn from HIV and AIDS health promotion messages, where “blurring of meaning” is highly probable. Thus metaphors may not only change the way we view a specific topic, but can restructure a whole domain (Kelly & Keil, 1984; Kirmayer, 1992; Winner, 1988). Language as a metaphoric reinforcer of HIV and AIDS shows the way language behaves in cultural constructions and ultimately in normative conduct.

5. Methodology

Foucaultian discursive framework guides the analysis through the following question, “What risk metaphors are used, and how are they used?” The analysis thus explores textuality, discursivity, context, and receivers of messages. The post-structuralist view is that there is an active relationship between a text and its reader, where reading is viewed as an active process in which the reader interacts with the text (Locke, 2004). Fairclough’s (1995) three-dimensional framework text, discourse and social practice augmented by

Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996/2006) grammar of visual design, and Hall's reception theory guide the analysis. Kress and van Leeuwen's multi-modal theory of communication considers that promotional material often uses various semiotic resources to ensure impact in meaning making of the text. This offers an opportunity for an analysis to look at a whole text as integrated.

6. Text under Analysis

Themes are generated from the predominant use of "You" and "I". The examination of word choice, analogy and images are examined to reveal prevalent themes that reflect persuasive messages of responsibility and the care of the self.

Poster (photographed at the Howard College CHASU notice board in May, 2007)



6.1 Text/context

This poster was designed by the Howard College students for the CHASU HIV and AIDS ABC on campus advocacy of 2005-2009. The CHASU coordinator placed the poster on the Howard College CHASU notice board. The logo on the bottom left hand corner is to make it look authentic. The different shapes, colours and textures of the condom images suggest that the condom images are commercial and not government sponsored.

The image depicts a nude penis and a closet with condoms hanging on hangers. The nude penis is looking into the closet pondering which condom to wear. The phallus is inferred through the image of the penis and condoms are inferred as apparel.

6.2 Textual analysis (Fairclough's 3rd Dimension)

6.2.1 Layout of the text

Salience is given to both the linguistic and visual texts. Salience is achieved by the verbal construction **"You wouldn't go out into the open without cloths"** being at the upper section and visualizing a somewhat emotive appeal to subtly draw the viewer's attention to the rhetoric plea, giving salience to the verbal construction. Regarding the condom images, salience is achieved by them occupying most of the space. The phallic cartoon figure, the head (representing the phallus head), the scrotum, hairs sticking out and other extra effects i.e., spectacles, arms and thin legs depicting caricature/visual pun, are quite humorously designed.

6.2.2 Linguistic text

The words themselves present a challenge to the viewer. The use of the second-person deitic pronoun **"You"** identifies the viewer as the addressee. By **"Wouldn't go out"**, the modal directive creates the mood of prohibition, aligns the viewer with the negation of construction to refute the false claim that one would dare. The rest of the lexical statement, together with visuals, aim to "contextualize the problem and assumes nature and course of action would be shared by addressee thus invoking on shared cultural values and norms" (Lupton, 1992, p. 48). The modals "wouldn't" and "would" are a challenge that is "ideologically driven as it attacks irresponsible individual behaviour [that] could be construed as accusative rhetoric of blame" (Billig & MacMillan, 2005, p. 477). Also, through the second-person pronoun **"You"**, the declarative and question statements are used together to emphasize and attack moral behaviour.

The designer asserts impersonal authority and casts the viewer as foolish. The construction signifies lack of reciprocity that realises power encoded in the text. The "addressor" assumes an authoritative stance by using a statement that aims to patronise the addressee. Although there is a question mark at the end of the statement, the addressee is not required to respond. The statement is constructed as a matter of fact. Impersonal authority is thereby realised and reciprocity is not required of the addressee. The encoded

power claims omniscient knowledge of the readers' mind and behaviour, a direct postulation of what the reader should do. The designer knows the context very well and the sexual culture of the students and thus addresses them by choosing a code which they might identify with. The designer not only assumes to know how the students think, but also that they are sometimes misguided, so the designer's authority "is firmly based on the reader's folly" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 147).

Impersonal processes are used in the text in terms of relational processes through modulation used in "**You wouldn't**". Impersonal constructs are processes within which the viewer is associated and modulated. "**You wouldn't.**" The result of such a construction is lack of reciprocity resulting in power being encoded in the text (ibid.). This rhetoric construction is a persuasive means used to instil sensibility in the viewers, which they supposedly lack.

Modality as judgment is socially dependent on what is considered real, true or sacred in the social group for which the message is primarily intended through the use of modals "**wouldn't**" or "**would**". The interrogative modality "**would you?**" is interactive and deictic logic that is proven by direct argument increases credibility of the text (ibid.). The hypothetical question "**would you?**" stimulates conversation. The interrogative modality positions the interactive participant as subject to the scrutiny of the represented participant, who is the adviser. The modality judgement is also objective as it is not clear whose perspective is being represented (Fairclough, 1992). It is not clear whether the addressor is acting for the HIV and AIDS prevention campaign managers (we can only assume that the addressor is) as the verbal text is constructed in a way that does not directly reveal the encoder of the message and address the health risk inherent in not using a condom. "It is not clear whether the addressor is expressing a universal perspective or is acting as a vehicle for some other individual or group [though we may assume and even attest that the message is]" (ibid., p. 159). Furthermore, modality here works as an interpersonal function, where the identity function of language in the text aims to set up (a) social identities through discourse, that is the construction "you wouldn't go out in the open without cloths" aims to impress the viewer with the impracticability of performing such an act as it would be culturally inappropriate; (b) the relational function the text aims to play is through verbal utterance, and the represented participant aims to negotiate a proposition (Fairclough, 1992). The text offers some truth to an indefensible claim of a social event that is categorically represented and its perspective universalized (ibid.). The text features another modality dimension by adding the tag question, "would you?" and the utterance anticipates a positive answer and presupposes that high affinity with the proposition is shared between addressor and addressee (Fairclough, 1992) in order to solicit a positive action or solidarity. The discourse enacted in the utterance is rhetorical proposition that aims to persuade condom-use, "modality then is a point of intersection in discourse between signification of reality and the enactment of social relations" (ibid., p. 160).

The elimination of the agent is centred upon the viewer and this could be to establish an equal personal relationship. The viewer is thus represented as having power to decide on what could be deemed responsible.

The second person deictic pronoun “**You**” repeated twice foregrounds and addresses the reader directly. The rhetorical question and ellipsis are used emphatically to draw the reader in the conversation and implores the reader to identify with the text. The ellipsis also emphasizes anticipation of an answer to the question, though rhetorical. The elliptical construction that anticipates an answer from the interactive participant is a trace of advertising genre. The wording of “**cloths**” could be a deliberate marketing gimmick or just sheer misspelling.

6.2.3 *Visual text*

The visual depicts the male as though he is imagined or fantasized through the caricatured phallic image (ibid.). Visual allusion connotes sexual desire, pleasure and protection. The visual message has a humorous slant and makes public display more acceptable. The different shapes, colours and texture depicted on the condom images may visualize pleasure and bring out fantasies or promise bliss of what might be. The use of differentiated colours on condoms and the soft pencilled phallic figure suggest mixed credibility of promises of bliss that the condom might bring. The metaphorical allusion portrays the condom as a stylish and fashionable commodity and that the message about condom-use need not be boring. Also, the different colours, textures and shapes depicted in the visual may signify reality value and a representation of commercial condoms that are found in the market domain. The logo below is that of KZN municipality. However, condom shapes in the poster are not of the CHOICE brand, which is government oriented. The different shapes suggest commercial brands, reflecting some commercialized culture infused in condom-use campaigns (Billig & MacMillan, 2005).

The condoms (in the closet) and phallus (in a pensive mood) images have a somewhat hilarious erotic reverie. The phallic figure, a caricature, simulates a nude body contemplating whether to wear protection or forego it. Further, hanging in the closet is a choice of condoms in different shades and textures. The finger-like shapes of the second condom and the lines on the third condom suggest texture and could subliminally suggest sensuality and eroticism. Additionally the different colours could also stimulate sense of smell or flavour that goes with some commercial condoms. This is a subliminal persuasive technique with subtle tones suggesting eroticism of sex. The underlying message is simply that sex is not necessarily boring when using a condom.

6.3 Discourse practice level (Fairclough’s 2nd Dimension)

The above poster is an example of an obvious shift in risk discourse in HIV and AIDS prevention campaigns, from apocalyptic imagery to subliminal strategy.

Quite interesting is the observation made by Rhodes and Shaughnessy (1989b) several decades ago that polarity of ideologies still prevails and is enhanced by the subliminal strategy of safer sex being seen as an issue of the individuals' preservation and interest rather than a collective provision and responsibility. The poster above, which was created by students themselves, is an example of such. The second-person deictic pronoun "**You**" challenges the addressee. Further, the rest of the words, together with the pronoun, seem to admonish and challenge the reader's moral being: "**You wouldn't go out into the open without your cloths... Would you?**" Clothes are not just worn in the aesthetic sense, but for covering oneself and for protection from the physical elements. The metaphor of representing the condom, protective clothing, also conjures up in the mind, armour and cover from shame as one cannot go out naked in the open. The different sizes, styles, and textures and the phallic figure connote "humour [and a] novel fun way to have sex" (Lupton, 1994, p. 314). Also, some underlying coercion strategy is hinted. Such analogous rhetoric could bring a powerful effect in the mind of the viewer, the only challenge being whether action required and using the condom would be achieved. The visual is somewhat alluring and has a hilarious appeal.

The visual portrays a [different] type of discourse; discourse of eroticism and unbridled sensuality; the discourse associates condoms with pleasure and possibly wickedly exciting (ibid., p. 314). The condom is somewhat re-sexualized (Gamson, 1990) and portrayed in a different way.

Generalization of values is done here and this is one of the modes of operation of Thompson's (1990) ideology of universalization that legitimizes through generalizing what would be seen to be values revered by society. Some narrativization also applies here using argumentation that gives authority to legitimate the assertion. Furthermore, unification of related processes seeks to unite and join the interactive participants for ideological purposes to establish a collective identity which unites the students in collectively agreeing that they would regard using the condom as a normative safer sex strategy. Hegemonic² power is thus embedded in the text that seeks to coerce students into using condoms as a safer sex measure. This is covert persuasion through discourse that draws the viewer to a particular direction. Recontextualization through the use of the cartoon image and informal construction of the utterance substitutes social roles by transferring ideological notions of influence (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 147-150) from parental reproaching into this particular context.

Foucault's concept of governmentality and the panopticon that translates into self-regulation and self-surveillance of one's own sexual health and activity is at play here. The language reproaches, patronizes, interrogates and is also humorous. The intersection of the linguistic and visual semiotics is gendered; the utterance and the visuals are seemingly biased toward the male voice "**You wouldn't go out without cloths**", the condom images and the phallic image connote the male gender. The voice is reproachful yet persuasive, full of taunt and perhaps mischief, but is a suggestion or

reminder of what would be seen as appropriate behaviour. The identity constructed may connote a stereotype: the male is supposedly the one responsible for making decisions regarding sexual choice and protection. In university contexts this may reinforce the stereotype that females should be passively involved in sexual choice decisions. The male is constructed as the agent and is depicted as actively and practically positioned to ensure condom-use. The construction derived from the intersection of the linguistic and visual semiotics grants the male interactive participant agency by proposing responsible behaviour thus according him the domain of control, control of safer sex practice.

6.3.1 Interdiscursivity (constitutive intertextuality)

Some interdiscursivity can be discerned from the echoing of a parental frame of reference brought into the university context that may also be culturally and socially influenced. This interdiscursivity may bank on the presupposition of knowledge of the sexual lifestyle behaviour of the university youth.

Interdiscursivity could also be embedded in the colourful and textured design of the semiotic sign, signifying the various condom brands that abound in the commercial and consumer environment. The campaign may also be perceived to promote consumerism through its promotional gimmick of using ellipsis to emphatically anticipate an answer or action from the interactive participant(s). This promotion genre adopts the “basic logic of marketing that tries to determine the tastes, desires and fears of the audience in order to play them” (Gamson, 1990, p. 13). The different colours and textures alluding to condom variety on the market are meant to conjure up these varieties in the reader’s mind.

The mix of information, the advertising style could signal a way of “reacting to a dilemma” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 115), which health communication faces in the midst of preventing the spread of HIV. Condom-use advocacy has been and is increasingly being drawn towards consumerism. Health communication “should bow to the consumer” (ibid.) and condom campaigns should be made attractive and alluring and yet should not seem to sell sex. Furthermore, the direct address “You” is a marker of informality in modern advertising (ibid.).

The text implicitly alternates between risk and social discourse, which rhetorically aims to draw the addressee to self-introspection of safer sex practices and persuasion of condom-use and marketing the condom. The marketing of the condom is suggested by the different shapes, sizes, colour and textures represented in the text. There is a mix of a discourse type of advertising discourse and covert risk discourse imbued in health communication. Contradictions may ensue: the “telling and selling” (ibid.) of the idea of using a condom (health prerogative) and the marketing and selling of the condom (consumer prerogative). The text may be a site of “hegemonic struggle and change upon the conditions and mechanisms for the emergence of a new discourse type, which is constituted through a novel configuration of existing types and specifically the emergence

of hybrid information and publicity (telling and selling) discourse" (ibid., p. 115). The sentence "**You wouldn't go out without your cloths, would you?**" through rhetorical positioning tries to "minimize impositions on the client, thus mitigating the authority of the text producer with a shift towards the core of advertising meaning" (ibid., p. 116), which could be highly unlikely or impossible.

6.3.2 Students' reading of the text

The participants at Howard College reacted positively to the poster, though one had a misgiving regarding the phallic figure. The participant observed that the poster is different from the ones they often see around. "This poster is different. It is so refreshing! It is unlike the ones we see around, though I would say it somewhat makes me uncomfortable as it touches a private subject" (Howard College male participant 2). The other participants asked for clarification on the "private subject". To which the response was:

You see, the figure looking on at the condoms hanging in the closet? What does it look like? Now with these ladies here, well, it's like pornography. Maybe, that's what I think. Too bold I think to create a picture like this one. (Howard College male participant 2)

The contradictions in the above assertion could indicate the unease that sometimes accompanies the subject of sex, which is regarded as a private matter. It is quite paradoxical that, whilst some focus group participants reported the emerging sexual culture on university campuses that seem to have brought sex in the public sphere, others find it a private matter. One participant commented that sex had invaded the public sphere as it is a subject that is widely publicised in front covers of health magazines, TV soaps and commercial advertisements. He argued further that some HIV and AIDS prevention campaigns like LoveLife and TV series like *Intersexions* approach the subject somewhat in a revolutionary way in a bid to raise awareness on risky factors that influence the spread of the epidemic and to instil sexual behaviour responsibility among the youth.

Nowadays sex is a subject that is maybe no longer taboo. We see it everywhere, in health magazines; on their covers! Have you noticed that every feature of *Men's Health* has something on sex? It is no longer a private matter. We then find ourselves reading about it and talking about it. On TV soaps like *Intersexions*, and commercial advertisements and LoveLife campaigns have made sex public. On campus here, we know that some students watch pornography, yes in the privacy of their rooms, but they talk about it with others, their friends. It then becomes an open thing, not an individual thing, of course within their small groups. But it then comes out in the open. (Howard College male participant 1)

The argument above is in line with Foucault's comments on the incitement and the

multiplication of discourses of sex “in the field of exercise of power itself: an institutional incitement to speak about it, and to so more and more; a determination on the part of the agencies of power to hear it spoken about, and to cause *it* to speak through explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail” (Foucault, 1976/1978, p. 18). The poster, together with the *Men's Health* magazine, the TV soap *Intersexions*, has been positioned as an agent of power that stimulates sex talk and thus makes sex a ubiquitous subject. The poster successfully drew the participants to reflect on their sexual environment as they critically engaged and evaluated the imagery.

They further observed that the visual and verbal play employed in the design of the poster could signal a new way of broaching a personal and private subject matter such as sex and safer sex practice.

The words and the images make it so different. I think this is a new way of broaching a subject as personal and as private as sex and protection. It seems it has used the same style as the one used in the lady poster, inviting us to look at condoms differently and hopefully to persuade safer sex behaviour more than ever. Yes, just those thought provoking words make you think differently. The words are just simply put, challenging, yet so meaningful. We don't usually think about why we wear clothes, we just wear them, to cover our naked bodies AND to protect our bodies from the cold and the heat. (Howard College male participant 3)

Yet another participant observed:

The pictures are so humorous! I like this. This is how condoms should be advertised, especially those meant for the youth. The youth like refreshing styles, not formal but easy-going. This could definitely encourage condom-use. The different shapes and colours, and ... they are quite interesting. They suggest I suppose the different types of condoms that are available to use. They in a way also suggest that using condom can be a pleasurable experience too, perhaps to discourage the common thinking that the youth have about “flesh to flesh” sex, that it's better to have “flesh to flesh” sex as it's nicer. (Howard College male participant 4)

The imagery was intended to provoke the internalisation of risk factors associated with unprotected sex with its intended audience. By using light-hearted and humorous verbal and visual imagery, however subtle, the poster was able to elicit a critical reflection on risk-taking sexual behaviour and intervention that could curb the spread of HIV infection.

It is worthwhile to note that this image was designed by one of the UKZN students, who unfortunately could not be identified. While the student tapped on the framework that is usually adopted by public health communication professionals, the poster designer reconceptualised the method for persuading the intended audience to self-

regulate themselves. This was achieved through the use of humour and imagery that the participants could identify with. Their comments reflect this self-reflexivity and self-examination.

A further observation was made regarding the message production:

Well, this not an advert and it seems like one. It definitely is refreshing and it is so different, one would think it is one of the Durex or Contempo or other commercial brands. Yet it is not. Like one of the guys said earlier, maybe this is how condoms should be promoted. You see in the minds of the youth, sex with a condom is boring. So if the health people could use a method that is sooo refreshing as this, it would teach the youth that condomising can still be ok, I mean make sex nice, you see what I mean? This is about avoiding being sick because of AIDS, this is about life. And maybe more youth will become responsible and look at condoms as protection and a nice one too. (Howard College male participant 5)

The narrative above critiques the traditional method of production of condom promotion posters that represent the condom as just a prophylactic device to use in a pleasure-less sexual act. This is some kind of redeployment of the discourse of the condom and positions it as an agent of joy and pleasure and not as a barrier (the discourse that so often used in the public health promotion of condoms) to sexual enjoyment.

Also, the poster was able to achieve "sexual openness" (Burchardt, 2013, p. S498) within this particular FGD as they were initially reluctant to engage with the subject of sex and condoms. This sexual openness was motivated by the redeployment of the discourse of sex and the condom. However, notably, the discussion was mainly centred on the male participants as the females were quite reluctant and uncomfortable to contribute to the discussion.

Although HIV and AIDS prevention is often criticized for adopting the authoritative, top-down stance through its governmentality strategy of prescribing safer sex practices, the poster, whilst tapping on this strategy of surveillance, managed to achieve a discourse of sexual openness.

6.4 Social practice level (Fairclough's 1st Dimension)

The Howard College/ Nelson Mandela CHASU coordinator explained that the aims of the poster production were to give students the opportunity to critically engage with issues of HIV and AIDS and design messages that would hopefully address their specific contexts and needs:

The poster is one example of those materials that we encourage students to design. They are encouraged in this way to critically engage with issues of HIV and AIDS and to design messages that will reflect their specific contexts as they are the ones who know exactly what is happening in their contexts.

The coordinator further argued that the messages are catchier, relevant and create discussions among students in their various halls of residence.

The messages that they come up with are catchier, relevant and are able to make students reflect on their sexual issues and the risks that they encounter everyday on campus. It also helps them to discuss the issues in their various halls of residences, for those who stay on campus.

He further disclosed that the messages motivated students to engage eagerly with each other regarding issues relating to HIV and AIDS prevention:

The messages always get excited by these issues, especially the ones who stay on campuses and they are mostly the black students. The students are aware of HIV and AIDS and so they are able to measure the risks they encounter. But what I don't understand is some of them still do not act on the knowledge they have.

The students were also encouraged to tap into their everyday popular speech. He explained that the message design followed a framework suggested by the CHASU coordinator. The language and visual features of the poster reflect the context specific situation of campus life and speaks more to the student than the generic materials that are imported from elsewhere which address a universal audience.

At the production stage, we formulate a framework that the students can follow in the design of the messages. We don't impose ideas but guide of the general themes and then encourage them to use the language and images that are popular within their contexts. The message then ends up speaking to the students is therefore relevant to them, unlike the material that we sometimes import from elsewhere.

At PMB, the CHASU coordinator explained that the student-designed message production (though not specifically referring to this particular text) accorded a participatory, bottom-up approach that is dialogic and invited a critical interrogation and reasoning that is encouraged by Freirean pedagogy: "the message production is participatory, following the Freirean pedagogy of critical consciousness" (PMB CHASU coordinator). The comments by the Howard College and PMB campuses' CHASU coordinators are in line with Burchardt's (2013, p. S496) assertion that in South Africa, the spread of HIV infection has motivated widespread strong advocacy for the promotion of open public debate on sexuality.

The poster offered a fresher and new approach to condom persuasion. The message is humorous and makes light of a subject that some people still feel uneasy to discuss in the public sphere. The poster eroticizes the condom and invites a new way of approaching the subject of sex and safer sex. The condom promotion material seems to be pleading

with individuals to realise that erotic desires are dangerous and that understanding one's own sexuality is key to responsible decisions. However, the material lacks information about sex and sexuality to address the emotional and psychological conflicts that young adults undergo. The texts implore individuals to act responsibly by choosing to use a condom if they are to succumb to their erotic desires so as to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS.

The discursive self "I" and the second person deictic pronoun "You" allude to the panoptic gaze of self-surveillance. The condoms in "the closet" and the phallic figure that seems to be in a pensive mood suggest that choice(s) through deep thoughts. Regarding power, agency is transferred from institutional gaze to internalized gaze.

The students' reading of the text resonates with the producer's intention, that of creating dialogue, a Freirean approach that promotes critical consciousness and problem solving. A fresher strategy to promote the condom that reflects on context specific material, humour and cartoon image suggests that condom advocacy need not be boring.

6.5 Conclusion

In using risk metaphors (linguistic and visual), the text inadvertently directs the pandemic to be socially constructed through choice of vocabulary and visual codes to encourage responsible sexual behaviour. Yet what is lacking in the material is the information on the joys of sex and understanding of sexuality to address the emotional and psychological conflicts that the youth undergo. The chief issue is to assist youth to construct their sexual identities based on the broad cultural values that trickle down to specific sub-cultures prevalent in contextual spheres.

Notes

- 1 Internationally, the AIDS ribbon has been central to promoting stigma reduction in relation to HIV and AIDS. It has actively been promoted as a symbol of hope and as a means of symbolic support to those living with HIV and AIDS. (<http://www.org/hivaidinfo/faq/ribbon.html>)
- 2 Hegemonic power is realised through discourse construction that aims to construct alliances by integrating the addressee into the discursive event in order to win his or her consent (Fairclough, 1992).

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