

## **Deconstructing gender and sexuality discourses in “Brothers for Life”: A critical look at chronotopes of consumption in HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

Despite batteries of interventions to change the dynamics of HIV in South African communities, increasing HIV prevalence suggests that much more needs to be done to stem the tides of infection. Specifically issues of language and communication around HIV/AIDS merit more attention. One aspect of the efficacy of HIV/AIDS discourses is the question of what extent they may serve to (inadvertently) reproduce sexual practices and mores inimical to HIV/AIDS prevention. This paper conducts a chronotopic and multimodal analysis of a popular South African campaign “Brothers for Life” from this perspective. The campaign is an attempt to promote ‘new’ role models for South African men in order to get to grips with one of the most serious factors behind the spread of HIV/AIDS, namely male violence against women and children. The analysis suggests that past ideals of masculinity continue to find resonance in masculinities of the present, although framed, mediated and reindexicalized in late modern discourses of consumerism. Thus foundational assumptions on figurations of masculinity and male sexuality appear to remain largely consistent across generations.

**Keywords:** Western Cape, HIV/AIDS, gender, sexuality, multimodality, male patriarchy, violence, chronotope

### **1. Introduction**

South Africa has one of the highest levels of HIV/AIDS infections in the world, with the virus affecting all segments and strata of society, old as well as young. According to the South

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is part of the first author’s doctoral research that comprises an investigation into how HIV messages are structured, reworked, circulated across different media and modes and languages, and taken up by citizens. Ultimately, the thesis aims to contribute to health citizenship in multilingual societies. Support from NRF is gratefully acknowledged.

African National HIV survey, which was conducted between 2002 and 2008, HIV infection rates ranged from 10.7% in the country at large to 3.8% in the Western Cape province. More recent statistics from 2010 show that the infection rate of HIV in the Western Cape has increased to 6.12%. Despite all the interventions put in place over the years in an attempt to change the dynamics of HIV in South African communities, infection rates are declining slowly, if at all. One issue that merits attention in this context is the language of HIV/AIDS discourses. Language plays a vital role in the construction of “local knowledge” about the social realities of HIV/AIDS in different cultural contexts (Clemente and Higgins 2010:63). However, much HIV/AIDS discourse remains couched in culturally inappropriate frameworks that remain tied to Western medical science and policy models which cannot cope with a divergent semiotics of body and illness held by much of the world’s population (e.g. Campbell 2003). This also applies to multimodal representations of HIV/AIDS discourses (Mutonyi and Kendrick 2010), as meanings are constructed, distributed, received, interpreted and reconstructed in a variety of representational and communicative modes, and not just through verbal language alone (Kress and Jewitt 2003:1).

However, although much attention to language has focused on getting the message across, relatively less effort has been put into determining exactly what that message might be. In fact, one question is the extent to which existing forms of HIV/AIDS prevention discourses – including those that can be considered culturally appropriate – actually do succeed in contributing to HIV-wary sexual practices, or whether they may sometimes inadvertently reproduce sexual practices and mores inimical to HIV/AIDS prevention<sup>2</sup>. The urgency of this question is motivated by consideration of one of the most serious dynamics behind the spread of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, namely oppressive notions of masculinity and the male prerogative. Each year, more than 70 000 women and girls report being raped or sexually assaulted, a pale statistic when one realizes that only one in nine rapes is actually reported to the police (Marais 2010:228). A distressing feature of sexual violence in South Africa is the involvement of very young people: in the Gauteng province alone, “40% of the rapes reported to the police in the early 2000s involved girls younger than 18 years, and 15% involved girls younger than 12 years” (Marais 2010:228). In addition, while one in ten young women had, at some time, been forced to engage in sexual interaction, one in four young men reported having committed rape, with half of the latter reporting that they go on to rape at least one more time (Marais 2010:228). Such violent chauvinism has deep historical roots; in the 1940s and 50s, sexual violence “was an outlet for power and anger; it was an expression of masculinities that depended on the submission of women” (Mager 1996).

The use of violence to control women continues to be part of current constructions of masculinity, sometimes sadly also legitimated by the victims themselves (cf. references in Marais 2010:228). Marais (2010:228) notes how “violence against women is highly prevalent, irrespective of racial grouping”, making it “one of the truly trans-racial features of society”.

Destructive masculinity is not solely about violence and rape, but also about whether men feel they need to know their HIV status, whether safe sex is practiced as a matter of course, and

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<sup>2</sup> It is beyond the scope of this paper to address the question as to what extent the representation of (traditional) male stereotypes is in itself a dynamic contributing to, or underlying, inappropriate HIV/AIDS behaviours. We do believe that this would be a line of enquiry worth pursuing in future research, as other research does show links between HIV/AIDS and sexual violence, on the one hand, and links between sexual violence and gendered conceptions of masculinity, on the other.

the quality of gendered relationships. Therefore, one task confronting HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns is how to address the entrenched enactments of historical male privilege, and to disturb the cycles of reproduction of disempowerment in which women are complicit. This is a challenge that extends beyond creating an HIV/AIDS enlightened “self”, to a radically transformed understanding of what it actually means to be a gendered “self” and, specifically, a “masculine gendered self”. This is precisely the task that the new South African HIV/AIDS prevention campaign, Brothers For Life, appears to have set for itself. The campaign has as its main goals the promotion of “new” role models for South Africa and the inculcation of more gender-sensitive values. However, the questions which spring to mind and which we attempt to answer are:

- (i) How successful is the Brothers For Life campaign in bringing across alternative conceptions of masculinity?, and
- (ii) Might the Brothers For Life campaign even serve to reproduce the very same masculine stereotypes?

We explore these questions by analyzing how one specific modality in the Brothers For Life campaign, namely posters, provides multimodal engenderings of sexual relations and health. In particular, we look at the ways in which gender identities are linked to sexual health practices through representation of lifestyle and stance and how this is figured through the interaction of language and visuals. As Milani and Shaikjee (forthcoming) remind us, “if we want to grasp fully the intricate relationships between gender and language, we cannot limit ourselves to studying how individuals perform gender through *language*. Rather it is the culturally-shaped *scripts* of what is believed to be ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ in particular socio-cultural contexts that are themselves important objects of empirical investigation”. It is to these “discursive formations” (Foucault 1978; Milani and Shaikjee forthcoming, our emphasis) behind the reproduction and normalization of particular constructs of gender and sexuality that we now turn.

## **2. The “Brothers For Life” campaign**

Brothers For Life is a national campaign primarily targeting men aged 30 and over in South Africa. The campaign was launched on 29 August 2009 in KwaMashu and seeks to address male promiscuity and the risks of multiple sexual partners, the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse in contexts of sexuality, and, more generally, offers advice on how to live well. It takes up gender-based violence and promotes HIV testing, male involvement in Prevention of Mother-To-Child Transmission (PMTCT) and health-seeking behaviours in general. The campaign is a collaborative effort by the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC), the Department of Health, United States Agency for International Development / President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (USAID/PEPFAR), Johns Hopkins Health and Education in South Africa (JHHESA), Sonke Gender Justice, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Independent Duty Medical Technician (IDMT), the United Nations System in South Africa, together with more than 40 other civil society partners working in the field of HIV prevention and health ([www.brothersforlife.org](http://www.brothersforlife.org)).

The campaign comprises multilingual and multimodal resources such as brochures, websites, TV and radio advertisements, and posters. This varied use of mass media is complemented

with a personal, “tutored” advocacy campaign that includes a “Men’s Wellness Toolkit” used to engage men on a range of topics that continue to undermine (sexual) health in local communities. The media components cover the use of television, radio commercials and print media, designed to target a variety of audiences. In all cases, different languages, such as Afrikaans, English, Sesotho, Setswana, isiZulu, isiXhosa, and Sign Language are used. The deployment of various types of media reflect the key ideological role that mass media plays in society (cf. Baker 2008; Fairclough 1995; Litosseliti 2006), producing and circulating realities “in which some identities and beliefs are foregrounded, whilst others are downplayed or even sidelined” (Milani and Shaikjee, forthcoming; cf. also Milani and Johnson 2008, 2010).

In the South African context, as in late modern societies elsewhere, a key trope in the production and circulation of different mass-mediated realities is that of consumption. Consumption is a central dynamic in the formation of subjectivity and identity, where material aspirations, flushed through the possession and display of accessories such as cellphones, sound systems, branded clothing and the latest models of cars, carry great symbolic value and shape representations of self and discourses of identity. Media play a central role in reproducing and organizing consumption-linked subjectivities, with adverts in particular offering important mediated narratives of self built around the co- modification of desire (Stroud and Mpendukana 2010; Bordo 1997).

Not surprisingly, consumption also plays a significant role in the construction, representation and maintenance of gender and sexual identities (Schroeder and Zwick 2004). Stern (2003) notes that advertising plays a major role in forming conceptions of masculinity at the same time as it mediates an understanding of consumption itself, as “advertising links gender identity and sexual desire with almost any product that may be purchased: cars, cigarettes, food, holidays, insurance, sports and hobbies, clothing, furniture, film” (Baker 2008).

HIV/AIDS discourses are also increasingly couched in tropes of lifestyle and consumption. Scalvini (2010) highlights the shift in HIV campaigns to include young, gym-toned men who radiate health, and who are depicted in colourful adverts that exude optimism and encourage a consumer-oriented lifestyle. Connections in these visual representations are made between the models’ lifestyles, on the one hand, and consumer brands on the other (Schroeder and Zwick 2004), suggesting perhaps that HIV/AIDS is simply “business as usual”, and, as part of everyday life, can also become an accessorized lifestyle.

All semiotic artefacts, including advertisements, are part of chains of resemiotized discourses where, in order to fully interpret the message, the reader needs to be familiar with other occurrences thereof in other modalities (Stroud and Mpendukana 2010). With regard to the representation, circulation and “uptake” of masculinity in the Brothers For Life posters, what are the connections with other forms, especially commercial forms, of masculine sexuality and gender across space and time? What are the implications of this for notions of masculinity? Reid and Walker (2005:2) “reflect on masculinities of the past, and how they are refracted into the present and mediated through new possibilities opened up by democratization”. More specifically, what role do tropes of consumerism play in the design of HIV/AIDS discourses? For example, Milani and Shaikjee (forthcoming) trace the emergence of a “new man” in Carling Black Label beer advertisements, contrasting this with very different dominant representations of male characteristics found throughout different periods in South African history. Other authors find continuity with older forms in how gender and

sexuality are represented in contemporary, consumer-oriented media. These authors argue that contemporary depictions have a long pedigree in chains of earlier representations, both commercial and otherwise (e.g. Schroeder and Zwick 2004).

Gender and sexuality are constructed and performed iteratively through “creative deployment of semiotic means (linguistic or visual) through which individuals align themselves with culturally mediated models of masculinity and femininity” (Milani and Shaikjee forthcoming). With this in mind, we ask what forms of alignment between readers and the representation of contemporary masculinities do we find in the Brothers For Life campaign; that is, how are readers or consumers positioned *vis à vis* culturally mediated models of sexuality, and how does this alignment contribute to present-day semiotizations of gender and sexuality? More generally, what are the larger socio-political ramifications of types of consumer alignment with the local and everyday circulation of these representations of masculinity?

These questions require an approach to masculinity in HIV/AIDS discourses that explores how discourses of masculinity circulate across spaces, contexts and languages, focusing on how engendered representations of HIV/AIDS are produced, consumed, modified, circulated and taken up by target audiences. The complexity of representations in time and space, the alignment of readers with particular depictions of masculinity, and how such representations travel, can be captured in Bakhtin’s (1994) notion of a ‘chronotope’. A chronotope is essentially a way of semiotically packaging links between particular places and times with specific types of persona, thus highlighting how time and space connect with identity. In Bakhtin’s own words,

Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, and becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of the axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope (1994:84)

Silverstein (2005:6) offers the following definition of a chronotope:

[T]he temporally (hence, *chrono*) and spatially (hence, *tope*) particular narrative envelope in the narrated universe of social space-time in which and through which, in employment, narrative characters move.

The notion of ‘chronotope’ captures how aspects of personhood, subjectivity and depictions of social relations are relative to the spatial-temporal narrative envelope, and thus provides a means to discuss depictions of masculinity across time and space (Agha 2007). Importantly, the interpersonal experience of a chronotope and the way in which the personae in space-time are construed derive from the participation frameworks within which they are experienced. Agha (2007:331) explains that “encounters with chronotopes are encounters with characterological figures (voices) embedded within spatio-temporalized locales within which speech participants establish forms of alignments”. This means that the social relations, models of subjectivity, and interpersonal relationships established and mediated through the participation framework are crucial to understanding how the characterological voice (persona) is construed and circulated (Agha 2007).



A chronotope is also a relevant analytical unit with which to chart the circulation and socio-political significance of representations. Agha (2007:322) notes that chronotopical moments can be “linked to each other through communicative chains into processes, which, through inter-linkage of smaller scale semiotic encounters and participation frameworks, yield larger scale socio-historical trends”, and “(re)produce or transform larger scale socio-historical formations”. Thus we are able to situate the Brothers For Life posters in multiple temporal and spatial cycles, thereby capturing how their depictions of masculinity are inserted into chains of production and consumption at different junctures of space and time, involving different personae, and creating various alignments with consumers.

Chronotopes can accommodate diverse semiotic channels and media and, indeed, this is one of the strong points of a chronotopic analysis. The chronotopic representation of personhood in time and place, enacted and construed within a participation framework (Agha 2007) may be in the form of a verbal or visual mode, or in the coordination of meaning-making in language, image and sound (Iedema 2000). The multimodal framework proposed originally by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) provides a useful analytical approach to written, printed and electronic texts where different semiotic resources including language and visual images combine to make meaning. Key features of a multimodal analysis include the participants, props and their arrangement and inter-relationships (the ideational and thematic dimensions), and the way a representation engages the attention of the reader (the interpersonal dimension). This framework is easily compatible with an approach in terms of a chronotopic analysis.

The notion of a ‘chronotope’ thus provides a means of capturing the ways in which masculinity has been represented throughout time and across different spaces. The notion also allows us to trace these representations in space-time across reproductions, circulations and transmutations, and to construe the nature of the different participant frameworks involved in the reading of the chronotope. Ultimately, the notion informs the way circulations, readings and reproductions of masculinity establish robust social categories of larger socio-historical and political significance (Agha 2007).

### **3. Methodology**

The Brothers For Life posters studied here were collected from a series of HIV/AIDS workshops conducted by a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in different communities of Cape Town. The first author attended these sessions as a participant observer<sup>3</sup>. The posters were distributed in one of the workshops that were organized for men only, although there were a handful of women amongst the attendees. Twenty-one participants, of which 15 were men, attended with three workshop facilitators. The first language of the majority of these participants was isiXhosa, although there were also some speakers of Sesotho and Setswana. The facilitators conducted the workshop in English and the participants used English with frequent code-switching to accommodate each other. For the purpose of this article, only two posters are analyzed here.

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<sup>3</sup> This research employs a material and multi-sited ethnographic approach that departs from a position on language as a social and cultural practice in which people make investments and display their understandings of social events and practices, and that investigates rather than assumes what may comprise contexts for communication.

## 4. Analysis

Any representation will comprise a host of chronotopes. According to Bakhtin, (1981:252),

[c]hronotopes are mutually inclusive, they co-exist, they may be interwoven with, replace or oppose one another, contradict one another or find themselves in ever more complex interrelationships.

There are at least three main but intersecting chronotopes in the Brothers For Life posters that illustrate the linked depictions of masculinity across time and space, and their framing in different participation frameworks. These are the general chronotopes of Transformation, “how an individual becomes other than he was” (Bakhtin 1994:115), with its more specific rendition in the chronotope of the New Man. There is also the general chronotope of Threshold, that is, “places where crisis events occur, the falls, resurrections, renewals and epiphanies, decisions that determine the whole life of a person” (Bakhtin 1994:248), which appears here under the guise of the Game chronotope. Finally, there is the Idyllic chronotope (Bakhtin 1994:224), figured here in terms of consumption, lifestyle, and liberal political values. We will discuss both posters in turn with respect to the chronotopes, cross-chronotopic alignments and participant frameworks they comprise.

### 4.1 The Brothers For Life manifesto

#### 4.1.1. Chronotopes

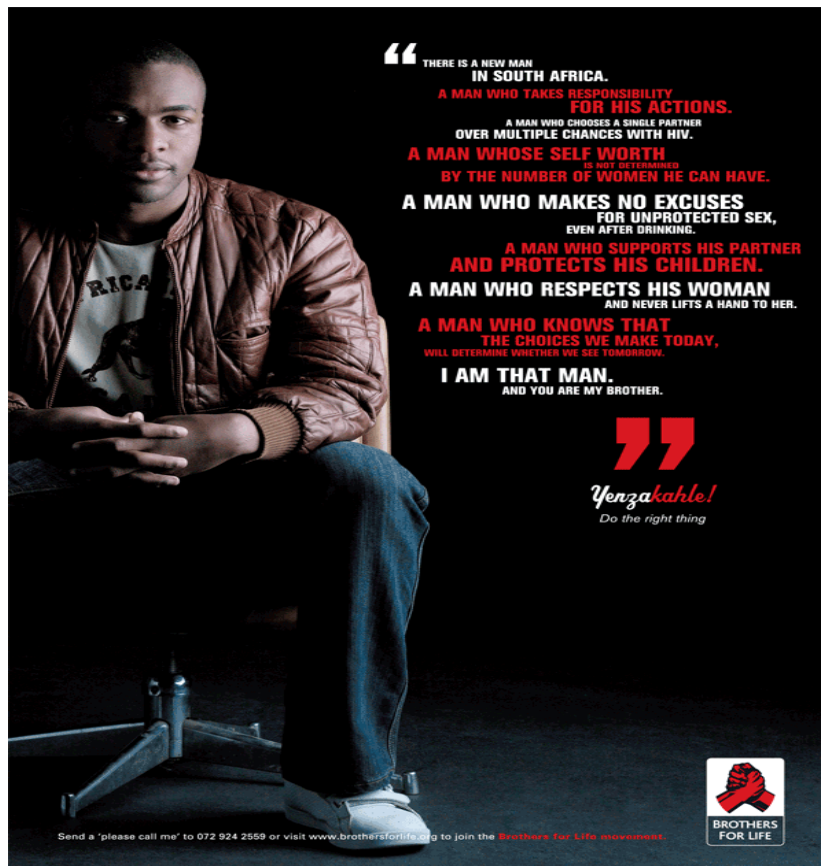


Figure 1. Brothers For Life’s “New Man” poster

Figure 1 visually depicts a young man in the left-most position (or position Given), sitting on a chair with his hands clasped together, his fingers firmly intertwined. He is dressed in a T-shirt, a brown jacket and blue jeans, wearing white sneakers, a fairly standard outfit for young men. In the right-most position, (or position New) is a written message expressing the essence of the Brothers For Life campaign, namely, doing the right thing, respecting life, being responsible for one's relationship, parenting and behaviour as well as living positively. The message is written in English<sup>4</sup> in the form of a direct quote which suggests that the young man is speaking to us and that what we are reading are his words. The campaign slogan "Do the right thing", or *Yenza kahle* in isiZulu, appears in the bottom right-hand corner. This voice presumably emanates from the third-party principal author of the message, the NGO itself.

In this representation, a predominant chronotope is the New Man, a South African male in his mid-twenties circa 2012. This is represented in this image through the fairly classic structuring of information in terms of what is "Given" and what is "New". The position of the image to the left marks it as a point of departure and is in some sense "known", whereas the textual information on the right, signals that it represents the new information. Position New highlights that the information listing the specifics of "a new man in South Africa" needs special attention, and suggests that it may also be socially-contested information. In addition, conventional masculinity is contrasted with modern masculinity on a step-by-step listed negation.

The character "speaks" earnestly to his reader (text in position New):

There is a new man in South Africa  
 A man who takes responsibility for his actions  
 A man who chooses a single partner over multiple chances with HIV  
 A man whose self worth is not measured by the number of women he can have  
 A man who makes no excuses for unprotected sex even after drinking  
 A man who supports his partner and protects his children  
 A man who respects his woman and never lifts a hand to her  
 A man who knows that the choices we make today determine whether we see tomorrow  
 I am that man  
 And you are my brother

The "newness" of the New Man is offset in the implicit comparison and negation of the presupposed features of an older perception of masculinity, e.g. a new man takes responsibility whereas the older masculinity did not; the new man makes no excuses while older masculinity presumably did; a new man never lifts his hand to his partner, whereas one can assume that old masculinity was physically abusive to his, etc. Interestingly, all of the listed characteristics of the New Man are constructs related to being in control, agentive and self-sufficient. They are defined in, and mediated by, constructs such as responsibility, choice, self-worth or self-esteem, honesty, protectiveness, respect for others, standing by one's words and actions, and cognisance or wisdom

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<sup>4</sup> There is an equivalent poster in other South African languages.



The other predominant chronotope is one of Transformation. This also has a fairly conventional structuring in Figure 1 in terms of the information dimensions of Ideal and Real. The information positioned in the upper part of the poster (the Ideal position) makes up the force of the message which, in this case, is the attributes that infuse the spirit of the New Man. The lower section of the poster provides practical information on how to become a New Man namely by “Do[ing] the right thing”, *Yenza kahle* and “send[ing] a ‘please call me’ to 072 924 2559” or “visit[ing] [www.brothersforlife.org](http://www.brothersforlife.org) to join the Brothers For Life movement”. This part of the message links the aspirations and ideals of the reader to a concrete site and temporal set up; in fact, it reaches out to two spaces and is thus heterotopic (English- and Zulu-speaking) along multiple axes of time<sup>5</sup>. These two chronotopes complement each other and intersect in that the chronotope of the New Man here links eternal and idyllic values of honesty and the like to a new spatio-temporal anchor, namely present day South Africa and its “new masculinity”.

There is a third chronotope here that contributes to the mix, namely an Idyllic chronotope that appears here in the form of a utopia of consumption, style and liberal values. This resides in the choice and agency of the figure, the anonymity of his surroundings and the individualization (even loneliness) of his aspiration. His depicted desire to tap into and recycle common tropes of late modern consumerism appear ungrounded in any specific time or place, and are thus atemporal and aspatial.

#### 4.1.2. Participant structures/interpersonal relationships

We noted above how the chronotopes of the New Man and that of transformation are also cleverly interlinked, or cross-aligned, in the way the representation is structured as a narration, linking past and present features of masculinity in a trope of change rather than continuity in values. This cross-alignment is mediated through both the alignment of the chronotopes in the representation, as well as in the way in which the participant structure, or interpersonal relations, of the reader is structured as a narrative. Perrino (2011:93) has noted the variety of ways in which “storytellers align the chronotope of the story and the chronotope of the here-and-now story-telling event”, capitalizing on the fact that stories are interactive, dynamic events which are co-constructed by the interactional text (Bauman 1986); that is, the interpersonal or participant relations are present in the story-telling event itself. This is accomplished by storytellers aligning the narrative event with the narrative itself, or, in other words, aligning the representation with the interaction. In Figure 1, we find a story-telling device of alignment of interlocutor with story representation similar to what Perrino (2011) calls “participant-transposition” which is “a practice in which narrators blur the boundary between story and story-telling event [...] by moving the interlocutors into their stories” (2011:97). There are various ways in which this device is utilized in Figure 1. Firstly, the narrator refers to the viewer or reader at the end of his narration with “And you are my brother”, which directly serves to assign a role to the reader of also hosting the characteristics and entertaining the value of the New Man, and creating direct interpersonal involvement on behalf of the reader.

Other features that contribute to the narrative participant structure (interpersonal relationships) in Figure 1 include the urgent, yet simultaneously relaxed, body posture of the protagonist. The way in which the protagonist leans forward in his chair towards the reader is

<sup>5</sup> The salience of this information is ensured, even though it is written in a small font size, through the use of the colour white which coheres with the colour of the shoe worn in the visual image.

a pose reminiscent of a story-telling posture. This suggests that we are about to be told something important that requires our focused attention. As the aim in this particular set of posters is to present and persuade, the interpersonal dimension plays a particularly important role. The feature of body posture is reinforced in the size of the (textual) character depicted in the representation, the perspective and the angle from which the reader is positioned to view the composition, and the engaging nature of the gaze of the actor depicted. In fact, the way in which gaze has been modelled is particularly effective here. The composition portrays direct eye contact with the viewers which serves to invite interaction (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996) and encourages engagement with the composition. Kress and van Leeuwen describe this as a “demand” image (1996:122-123), where the participant seems to demand something of the viewer, in this case, a social relationship. The combined effect of all these visual features in the composition is to create a visual form of direct address, which is repeated in Figure 1’s text “I am that man and *you* are my brother” (our emphasis).

## 4.2. The Game Of Life

### 4.2.1. Chronotopes

Figure 2 is ostensibly a poster promoting HIV testing. Three prominent South African sportsmen are used in the presentation of this message: (from left to right) Teko Modise, a professional football (soccer) player; Graeme Smith, a professional cricket player, and John Smit, a professional rugby player.



Figure 2. Brothers For Life’s “The Game of Life” poster

There are two main chronotopes here. The first is that of Threshold, or the times in which, and places where, crisis events occur, concretely carried by the chronotope of the Game. The second is that of Transformation, as carried by the New Man chronotope. The Idyllic chronotope also intersects with these two main chronotopes. A “game” takes place over a specific period of time and at a predetermined place. It is bound by rules that must be honoured, and a good game builds on the display of thorough prior planning, strategic thinking, team spirit and the integrity and brotherhood of the players. The outcome of a game is generally not known in advance, and small victories do not necessarily mean an overall win. Excitement, tension and anxiety as to outcomes are all features of games shared by most participants, players and spectators alike.

The Game chronotope is thus ideal for the message of HIV/AIDS testing that the poster carries – an emotionally-charged, spatially- and temporally-bound strategic event that metaphorically captures the HIV/AIDS diagnostic dilemma of South Africa and possibly, the world. In the game of life, you may win or lose – knowing your HIV status is a strategic move that could tip the balance in favour of a win. The Game chronotope clearly depicts the point of transition where crisis events may occur and decisions are made that may “determine the life of a person” (Bakhtin 1994:248). The main feature of the composition is that it allows us to identify the chronotope as a game, the participants as sportsmen, and the names accompanying each figure.

The New Man chronotope is also present in that the figures may be interpreted as tapping into the desirable attributes of the responsible man in 2012. All participants depicted are sportsmen representing South Africa’s three major sports. The connotations of sport are many, but energy, integrity, team spirit, self-sufficiency, sacrifice, hard work, and discipline are some of the more common attributes associated with playing sport. As games seldom, if ever, involve both men and women playing on the game team (especially games such as rugby, football and cricket as associated with the poster), players in these sports also lend themselves to associations with male bonding, as exemplified in the slogan “Brothers For life”. Through the chronotope of the Game, these attributes are projected onto the players themselves, thus inscribing the values of the New Man into the bodies and psyches of the role models with which aspiring adepts for new manhood may identify.

Besides the Game or Transition chronotope, the Idyllic chronotope contributes the most to the organization of the composition. Firstly, the choice of participants and props clearly craft an idyllic situation for many readers. Sports stars are publicized, praised and glamourized and enjoy fame, fortune and a magnificent lifestyle of consumption. They are featured guests in both women’s and men’s magazines, as well as serving as role models for the youth. The fact that no props are present other than the sportsmen’s attire reinforces the idea that the participants are located in a “time-out space”, where they can address unhindered the underlying and valued attributes of sportsmen (such as honesty and fairness) unencumbered by the vicissitudes of any particular game. In other words, the narrative framing removes the sportsmen’s attributes from the actual game itself, which would otherwise have put a more explicitly competitive and aggressive spotlight on the events, and perhaps drawn attention to a specific game.

The Idyllic chronotope is most salient in the general structuring of the composition. Figure 2 has a different organization to Figure 1, namely the prominence of a Centre-Periphery layout

around the Ideal-Real axis. In Figure 2, the placement of the sentence “In the game of life know your HIV status” represents the idealistic situation and the information in the bottom segment of the composition, *Yenza kahle*, “Do the right thing” and [www.brothersforlife.org](http://www.brothersforlife.org) represents the Real information, that is, information on the concrete, strategic steps that need to be taken to attain the ideal. The Ideal information in the upper section of the text paints the perfect or aspired to situation, not what the situation is at the present time (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006). This information is written in capital letters and with a bigger font. The nucleus of the poster is taken up with a powerful visual image of the three sportsmen, illuminated as though under a floodlight with a penumbra of white light, reminiscent of early portrait photography. The effect is to awaken associations in the reader of, for example, the biblical three wise men or some other portent gathering. Another cross-chronotopic feature is found in the use of colour and typography in Figures 1 and 2, such as the predominance of red and white on black background, and the use of capitals and italics in the text (cf. Machin 2007). Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002, 2006) distinguish between two types of saturation with different meanings. There are highly saturated colours which give salience to parameters of “positivity”, “exuberance” and “vulgarity” and low saturated colours which give a subtle and tenderer meaning. With this in mind, it is clear that these posters use low saturation colours. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002, 2006) view these colours as representing fantasy rather than reality.

#### **4.2.2. Participant structure/interpersonal structure**

In comparison with Figure 1, the relationship between the reader and the participants in Figure 2 is less demanding and attention-grabbing, and more encouraging of reflection and mutual contemplation. This composition includes a type of gaze representation that Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) call an “offer” image (1996:124). The angle from which the photo is taken in Figure 2 is a medium-shot image, in that the figures are captured approximately at knee level. The sportsmen’s crossed arms and upright postures signal authority and measured composure, something that is underscored by the visual association with a trio of prophetic messengers.

The position of the hands is an interesting feature in both figures. In Figure 1, the model’s hands are folded, while in Figure 2, the hands of all three sportsmen are hidden. These positions significantly allow the orientation of the bodies to be interpreted as free from sexual connotation, (see below) and can instead be interpreted as postures of authority and narration. The model’s folded hands in Figure 1 create a picture of a relaxed and casual narrative style, whereas the folded arms and hands in pockets in Figure 2 create an air of relaxed authority. Thus, in Figure 2, the traits noted for the New Man in Figure 1, (e.g. responsibility etc.) can be interpreted from the posture of each of the sportsmen.

The position of the protagonists’ hands, and accompanying postures, is intriguing also in how it serves to draw attention to the clasped hands in the Brothers For Life logo. At the same time, the folded arms or interlocked hands (i.e. no open palms or arms hanging by their sides) signal a typical posture of those who are going nowhere for the moment, who are attentive to the reader, and hence suggest a “time-out” scenario of peaceful communion. These men are bonding meaningfully, either with the reader or with each other, which is also reinforced by the Brothers For Life slogan as well as the actual name of the campaign. At the same time, the representation exudes authority and voice – all in a mellowed and socially-tempered expression of authority by respected figures in communion.

## 5. Discussion

We now return to our two research questions posed above, namely, how does the Brothers For Life campaign depict masculinity in the New Man, and how does this connect to other depictions in other modalities, genres, places and times? Marais (2010) refers to work that traces patriarchal ideals of masculinity in South Africa back to the disempowering roots of colonial and apartheid emasculation (black Africans) and to the militarization of society brought about by a defensive apartheid (white males and females). In these contexts, notions of manhood increasingly emphasized available resources such as courage, strength, risk-taking and male camaraderie, while women and their bodies were often instrumentalized. Masculinity was equated with “skill, bravery, power, passion and strength” (Milani & Shaikjee forthcoming:20). The New Man campaign clearly challenges some of the most extreme expressions of masculinity, but the image of the New Man across the board is very much one of “traditional” heterosexual masculinity, albeit in ways that are more in tune, as Milani and Shaikjee (forthcoming) point out, with middle-class consumerist aspirations than was previously the case. Schroeder and Zwick (2004:44) note that “consumption, or at least representation of consumption, shifts hegemonic masculinity from the realm of aggression, bodily force, competition and physical skills to the domain of consumption, including taste, expertise, discernment, and bodily appearance” (cf. also Benwell 2002, Gill 2003). And although patriarchal and chauvinist practices are rejected in the Brothers For Life campaign, this rejection takes the form of an affirmation of, arguably, the same basic values that underlie traditional masculinities – male camaraderie, strength, endurance, foresight and the invisibility and “ownership” of women, which all remain paramount.

Both Figures 1 and 2 promote male bonding and a celebration of team spirit. The New Man finds physical articulation in the bodies of sports celebrities, a common feature of HIV/AIDS posters, and more generally, a common feature of most advertisements. The three sportsmen in Figure 2 are more than likely to be associated in the minds of the general public with healthy and mindful living, and to be associated with desirable characteristics of team spirit, such as commitment to the sports that they play and, in this case, their respective partners. Just as importantly, there is a sharp male-centeredness in the way these values are depicted; in the text accompanying Figure 1, the model talks of “*his* woman”, “the number of women *he* can have”, “support[ing] *his* partner and protect[ing] *his* children” (all emphasis is ours). Both representations work through the creation of a comfortable masculine space, something that is also depicted in the ambiguity of the advertisement’s signum, “Brothers for Life”. Far from leading to competition among the “brothers”, the hegemonic masculine ideals being pedalled are the very foundation for their bond as brothers. Thus, despite a recontextualization of the meaning of “masculinity” in genres of consumerism, the male values which are promoted here still construct a particular ideology of controlled and agentive masculinity through which women are defined.

Looking at other recent representations of masculinity in South Africa, it is noticeable that the Carling Black Label advertisement also strongly emphasizes values of bonding which are almost identical to those depicted by the Brothers For Life posters referred to here (Milani and Shaikjee forthcoming). Milani and Shaikjee (forthcoming) note in the Carling Black Label advertisement how women figure, if at all, as the men’s protected accessories. Thus, they come across as objects of male patronage and subjects of interpellation solely through



the male voice<sup>6</sup>. Although these values are refracted through tropes of consumption, they nevertheless remain conventional, and *Brothers For Life* is fundamentally a (re-) contextualization of traditional masculinity. Therefore, the male remains “in control” and “rational” in *Brother’s For Life*, and does not show emotion freely (cf. Schroeder and Zwick 2004:44). Neither is there any visible presence of female dialogue that could temper this monologic voice.

How then are readers or viewers aligned with the chronotopic representation of masculinity in the *Brothers For Life* posters? How are social relations and roles constituted through participant frameworks? In addition, how do the alignments mediated through participant frameworks contribute to the figurations and readings of masculinity? In the *Brothers For Life* posters (as well as the Carling Black Label advertisements), male bodies are the objects of the reader’s gaze – in some cases, even demanding the gaze, with an “energy and inspiration” perhaps taken from “gay iconography” (Schroeder and Zwick 2004:44). Although men are increasingly encouraged to view their own bodies as “sites of management” (Schroeder and Zwick 2004:25), Dyer (1982) suggests that images of men specifically designed to be gazed upon and admired nevertheless unsettle patterns of gendered gaze, producing a “certain instability”. According to Dyer, the only way to maintain gendered power relations and avoid feminization of males, while simultaneously representing men as objects of desire or gaze, is to explicitly disavow elements of passivity. Historically, representations that positioned male bodies as objects of elicited gaze belonged to the genre of pin-up posters, where male pin-ups – designed to be desired – diverted their gaze away from the reader. In the *Brothers For Life* posters, a disavowal of passivity is cleverly accomplished by inverting desire and consolidating conventional male authority by having the protagonists in both posters direct a powerful gaze straight at the reader, thereby signalling power and integrity. Together with gaze, male integrity is also rescued through individuation of the participants; all three of the male figures in Figure 2 are known to the general public and are also named in the posters themselves, which means that they are not abstract and anonymous objects of fantasy and desire, but fully socially-named and interpellated individuals with public biographies. Furthermore, the homo-social bonding implicit in a “brotherhood for life” avoids any connotation of (homo)sexual desire through having the participants not showing their hands. This is because, as previously mentioned, the way in which the hands are clasped in front of the body, hidden away from sight in trouser pockets, or resting in folded arms contributes to perceptions of body posture in terms of (narrative) authority. Over and above this, however, the poses are also significant markers of standoffish non-intimacy, perhaps stereotypical of heterosexual males. Finally, the campaign’s choice of sportsmen as protagonists also contributes to readings of conventional masculinities in both compositions.

The larger scale historical and socio-political significances of these representations of masculinity across genres, times and places reaffirm conventions in the construal of the public body. There is a continuity of forms of representation across time, adopted in commercial advertising, and more recently also increasingly prevalent in non-commercial media such as public health and lifestyle information that articulate some basic societal values in how, and which, bodies are represented in public. Schroeder and Zwick (2004:30), have noted how “the portrait photograph remains encoded within the context of the painting, hence the complexity and contradictions: artfully arranged manipulation of visual elements”; and how the early

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<sup>6</sup> The authors refer here to an image of a woman about to set off on a bicycle and holding the handle bars has her hand protectively covered by that of a male who is carefully supporting and guiding her.

Carte de Visite involved a prior “rigid regime of the posing stand, where men and women [...] created a powerful visual discourse of the body leading to the emergence, reproduction and circulation of a socially and culturally respectable type of body”. These forms of representation meant that the “bodiless middle class became embodied, and the middle class subject became gendered and racialised (Schroeder and Zwick 2004:31).

The Brothers For Life posters also reflect a select construction of bodies for public circulation on the basis of class, gender and race. The “proven regimes of posturing” (Schroeder and Zwick 2004) reproduced here draw attention to middle-class status. The demographic profiles of the male protagonists are racially either black or white, and in the age range of 28 to 40 years. What is interesting is that there are no representatives of the so-called “Indian”, “Asian” or “Coloured” groups here (for no discernible reason, as there are in fact Indian cricketers and Coloured football and rugby players who are very popular and who could serve as enticing role models)<sup>7</sup>. The choice of participants reflects the most sexually-active ages, which could be considered to enhance the reader’s identification and engagement with the message.

However, and perhaps just as importantly, the target group is the most consumption-orientated, and the group most likely to pay attention to posters of this type. Thus, the representation constructs a target group, defined both racially and in terms of age, which is both sexually and consumption-orientated. Furthermore, the common underlying values of masculinity and consumption (i.e. individual agency, choice and responsibility) are tied to a particular social class. The middle-class lifestyle that the depictions of masculinity share across sites and chronotopes also comes with the values of choice and temperate taste associated with aspirations and valuations of luxury (cf. Schroeder and Zwick 2004:45). Both the Brothers For Life posters and the Carling Black Label advertisements (cf. Milani & Shaikjee forthcoming) appeal to our inherited and late-modern values of rationality and reflexive subjectivity, and to an orientation towards moderation in consumption that typify the aspiring classes’ stances towards luxury. Ultimately, these values also underlie the liberal notion of a person as free and rational, values that are also masculinised here, in a way that depicts the consumer market as mainly masculine. In the long run, even female destinies are constrained or led by male choices in Brothers For Life with what it means to be a woman ultimately the outcome of male free will. The timeless values of modernity and neo-liberalism are also affected through the lack of detail in the posters. We noted how these celebrity images differ from many other images of these types in that they lack the variety of common material items which people generally aspire to, such as cellphones, musical instruments and fast cars (Banda and Oketch 2011). One reason for this is the nature of the particular lifestyle item in focus here, namely an HIV/AIDS-free future. However, this lack of props simultaneously contributes to a spatial and temporal non-specificity that accords these values and underlying rationalities of choice and reflexivity a universal and indisputable generality – indicators of the human condition more than just of human contingency.

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<sup>7</sup> This finding echoes the point made by Milani and Shaikjee with respect to the Carling Black Label beer advert that has a similar demographic and age bias. In that context, these authors note that this reflects who drinks or would drink this particular brand of beer. This is not obviously the case here, although the similarities do raise some interesting possibilities for conjecture around how public subjectivities for whatever purpose and on whatever forum are intertwined with/conflated with, desire, aspiration and consumption.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper, we have explored what we believe to be, an overlooked aspect of HIV/AIDS discourses, namely the tendency to couch such discourses in semiotic framings modelled on multimodal representations of consumption and lifestyle. These tendencies reproduce patterns of male patriarchy while at the same time ostensibly claiming to promote a “New Man”. The importance of this remains to be investigated, especially with regard to what extent such representations impact negatively on attempts to foster alternative sexual perceptions and practices

The analysis was based on an investigation of the chronotopes that appear in different contexts of production and consumption, and how these relate to each other and reinforce or transform general perceptions and practices of masculinity. What was noticeable throughout the analysis was the complexity and entanglement of a seemingly simple composition. We cannot easily say that these representations are novel; they are neither wholly traditional nor fully contemporary. The masculinities portrayed in these HIV/AIDS posters are recognizable across different forms of public representations of masculinity, and are continuous with the earlier depictions thereof; that is, combinations of old and new representational systems which Polan (1986) calls “complicated contemporaneity”.

However, the complexity has been reworked into traditional and conventional notions of sexuality and gender. Naturally, there is little space here for queering sexuality or for deconstructing potentially harmful ideas about gender. We ask, given the complexity and diversity needed to produce the uniform and conventional, what would it take to craft a position on diversity?

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