

Communication for Participatory Development

**"Be a Man": A reception analysis of the *Brothers for Life*
Campaign Posters.**

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*I herby affirm that this project is my own work and all
acknowledgements have been properly made.*

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Abstract: This study evaluates how male students from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Howard College Campus) receive the *Brothers for Life* campaign, specifically their opinions on the campaign's posters. In doing so, the aims were to explore respondents' understanding of the *Brothers for Life* campaign, assess the effectiveness of the construction of the campaign's posters, determine whether the messages on the posters had been decoded as the producer of the messages intended them to be, discover who the respondents felt is the campaign's target audience and discussed the use of professional Sportsmen versus the use of men that are unfamiliar to the public. This study relied on theories such as the Social Ecological Model and the 'circuit of culture' model, as well as the concept of 'modeling' from Bandura's Social Learning Theory. The study was conducted using a qualitative approach with a focus group discussion being the main source to gather information. From the analysis, findings reveal that there is generally a positive reception of the posters. Respondents were seen to enjoy the construction of the posters as well as decode the messages of the posters as the producer intended.

Keywords: Reception analysis, *Brothers for Life* campaign, posters, professional Sportsmen, Social Ecological Model, the 'circuit of culture' model, modeling, focus group.

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Introduction

Brothers for Life is a national Men's Campaign and "draws upon the spirit of Brotherhood that exists among South African men and to encourage men to positively influence each other as men, partners and parents and as leaders" (*Brothers for Life*: 2010). The campaign's target audience is men that are over the age of 30 years and addresses issues such as the risks that are involved with having multiple and concurrent partners, the lack of knowledge of HIV status, as well as the low levels of testing and disclosure of one's status and the problem of violence against women. Aspects that the campaign stands for, involves men who stand for "responsible relationships, responsible parenting, responsible behaviour, brothers who do the right thing and brothers who stand for life" (*Brothers for Life*: 2010). The campaign is a joint initiative by organisations such as John Hopkins Health and Education in South Africa (JHHESA), USAID and Sonke Gender Justice.

This study aims to evaluate how male students from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Howard College Campus) receive the *Brothers for Life* (BFL) campaign, specifically their opinions on the campaign's posters. The major objectives of this study were to: 1) Explore the understanding respondents' have of the *BLF* campaign and whether their understanding corresponds to the objectives of the campaign. 2) Assess the effectiveness of the campaign's posters, taking into account the construction of the posters, which include the images, colours, words used, etc. 3) Determine the effectiveness of the messages of the posters by examining whether the messages on the posters had been decoded as the producer of the messages intended them to be. 4) Determine who the respondents feel is the campaign's target audience and 5) discuss the use of professional Sportsmen versus the use of men that are unfamiliar to the public.

Though the study of the respondents' responses was insightful, a certain limitation was noted. This was with regard to the prescribed length of the research study, which did not allow for a large sample group. As research was only conducted on six individuals, findings from this study should not be thought of as a determinate of the way the campaign or more specifically the posters are interpreted by members of the public, but it should rather be understood as an indication as to how they do.

I believe that this study is of value, as *BFL* is a relatively new campaign and any research conducted on it could be of great importance in assessing the success of the campaign. This study explores whether the intended message of the encoder has been successfully decoded by the reader. This aspect is crucial in all campaigns and if the correct message has not been interpreted by the reader, a campaign can be seen as being unsuccessful in its intension. As I will be focusing on an audience outside of the target audience, it will be interesting to assess, from the responses gathered from the male students, whether the campaign is successful in reaching a wider audience.

Before revealing the findings of this study, main concepts and theories to the study will be outlined in the theoretical framework, leading on from this section is the literature review which includes relevant literature or studies that have been conducted that are within the same area of study. The analysis and findings will then be presented, with the conclusion to follow.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The Social Ecological Model

The *BFL* campaign operates within the Social Ecological Model of health promotion. This model is “rooted in certain core principles or themes concerning the interrelations among environmental conditions and human behaviour and well-being”, however, it is not based “on a singular discipline or theory, but rather on a broad, overarching paradigm that bridges several different fields of research” (Stokols, 1995: 285).

When implementing a health promotion program within the Social Ecological Model there are six guidelines that should be followed based on the central principles and concepts of the model. These guidelines are outlined by Daniel Stokols (1995: 288) and include the following:

- The multifaceted nature of environmental influences on well being;
- The interactive effects of intra-personal and environmental factors on health and illness.
- The relevance of person-environment fit and perceived environmental controllability for individual and collective well-being;
- The importance of identifying behavioural and organisational “leverage points” for health promotion, and considering both personal and other-directed health behaviours as targets for change;
- The interdependencies that exist among a person’s or group’s major activity settings and life domains; and
- The value of combining biomedical, behavioural, educational, environmental, organisational and regulatory interventions at several community levels, and adopting an interdisciplinary, multimethod approach to evaluating the outcomes of health promotion programs.

It can be seen from the core principles within the guidelines in the implementation of a health promotion program, that the Social Ecological Model of health can be characterised by its use of multiple levels of influence on behaviour, namely individual, relationship (social), institutional, community and societal (Elder, 2006: 1). This complex interplay between levels needs to be considered in designing a health promotion campaign.

The *BFL* campaign targets all these levels of influence. The mass media aspect of the campaign, such as posters, billboards, television and radio adverts impact on the individual and the social level through reaching people in their homes, where it can be actively consumed and talked about with friends, family and partners (Delate, email, 2010). With regard to the campaign's impact at community level, it involves the taking of services to people and "allowing people to test, access to condoms and providing them with information" (Delate, email, 2010). Lastly, on the societal level, which is the "domain of advocacy" and includes "launches, media articles on *BFL*, participating in policy and strategy meeting all contribute towards addressing the societal level factors, namely policy and service provision" (Delate, email, 2010).

The 'circuit of culture' model

The majority of this study focuses on the 'circuit of culture' model (du Gay et al., 1997). According to Stuart Hall (1997: 1) culture can be defined as a group of people who are able to understand and communicate with each other through a set of meanings that are understood by those within the group. Hall (1997: 22) further states:

To belong to a culture is to belong to roughly the same conceptual and linguistic universe, to know how concepts and ideas translate into different languages and how language can be interpreted to refer to or the world from within the same conceptual map and to make sense of it through the same language systems.

It is through the five 'moments' within the 'circuit of culture' model that culture gathers meaning and these 'moments' work together to create meaning (Gaither & Curtin, 2007: 38). These five 'moments' are; production, representation, consumption, identity and regulation. Of particular relevance to the study are the 'moments' of production and consumption, which will be discussed briefly below.

Production is "the process by which the creators of cultural products imbue them with meaning, a process often called encoding" (Gaither & Curtin, 2007: 39). These producers need to take into consideration all aspects of their target audience (their cultural orientation and demographics) to ensure that the intended message within their product is interpreted correctly. Consumption is when "messages are decoded by audiences" and this audience

“brings their own semantic networks of meaning to the communicative exchange” (Gaither & Curtin, 2007: 40). When material is interpreted as its producer intended it to be, it is said that the reader accepts the “dominant” or “preferred” meaning of the material (Hall, 1980).

The moments within the ‘circuit of culture’ model offer an explanation as to how meaning is created. However, in regard to the production of campaigns, the producers of campaigns may attempt to encode materials with meaning, yet these campaigns may not always be successfully received by their audience as in the moment of consumption, the material is not decoded as was intended. As John Storey (1996: 11) comments “moments of encoding and decoding may not be perfectly symmetrical” as an audiences’ decoding of material does not automatically constitute the same meaning as one initially encoded by producer (Hall, 1997). The most important aspect to be remembered with regard to the decoding of material is that the receiver of a message is an active participant in the creation of meaning, which is an interactive and dialogic process of translation (Hall, 1980; Hall, 1997).

“Modeling” Behaviour

Many health promotion campaigns make use of celebrities to endorse a product or message of a campaign to the public. The use of celebrities in these promotion campaigns can be associated with the concept of ‘modeling’, which is a concept within Albert Bandura’s Social Learning Theory (1971). Within the theory, Bandura discusses the process of an observer’s change in behaviour after viewing the behaviour of another person, therefore, ‘modeling’ is the process of imitating or copying other people’s behaviour (Swartz, 2006: 178). “Models do not have to be ‘real’ people in the act of doing something; in symbolic modeling verbal and pictorial means are used to convey information that lead to certain behaviours associated with rewards (such as TV advertisement)” (Swartz, 2006: 178). Bandura (1986) acknowledges that an observer is more likely to imitate the behaviour of the model if they possess characteristics that are attractive to the observer. Libby Wilson (2009: 1) further comments, “logically, people are likely to imitate the behaviour which they appropriate with success or successful people.” It is this statement that is of value in the use of celebrities within health promotion campaigns as

the public, through the observation of health messages endorsed by celebrities, model their behaviour on that celebrity.

However, the modelling of behaviour in terms of the behaviour being endorsed by a celebrity is not always achieved. Bandura (1986) outlines certain steps that need to be followed in order for the modeling process to be effective. The first step is *attention*, which the observer needs to be paying in order to learn the behaviour. If the model is of interest to the observer, they may give them their full attention which would aid in the learning process. The next step, *retention*, applies to the observer's ability to store the information that they have received. The third step is that of *reproduction*, where the behaviour of the model is performed by the observer. In order for observed learning on model behaviour to be a success, the last step, *motivation* is required. This means that the behaviour will only be continued if there are benefits for the observer.

Literature Review

This literature review consists of two studies that contain elements similar to the areas of interest within this study.

A reception analysis by Rosalia Martins (2007), *Lost in Interpretation? Creating meaning for loveLife's HIV: Face it billboards*, involved young people between the ages of twelve and seventeen, which is the target audience of the *loveLife* campaign. The study's main objectives were to "find out whether the intended audience derived the same meanings from the billboards as they were initially intended by *loveLife*; whether the target youth regard themselves as audience of the communicated campaign; and to assess whether *loveLife* billboard producers had succeeded in communicating the intended message to the reader of the billboards" (Martins, 2007: 4). For the research, two groups were selected from KwaZulu-Natal, one group from a rural school and one from an urban school, as Martins also sought to explore how the respondents belonging to these separate groups identified themselves as the target audience of these billboards. The respondents were between the ages of fourteen to seventeen years old.

Martins used the 'circuit of culture' (du Gay et al., 1997) as the theoretical framework to her research. Martins primarily focused on the 'moment' of representation within her research as Martins aimed to discover how the billboards, as a representational system, carried meaning that was produced by *loveLife*, to its intended audience (2007: 12).

Findings from this study revealed that the different respondents assigned different meanings to the *loveLife* billboards. The messages of these billboards were not obvious to all respondents and therefore, the intended messages assigned to the billboards by its producer were lost. All respondents felt that they were the target audience of the campaign, however, the respondents also felt that the messages the billboards' were trying to convey were of a too

complex nature for those below fourteen years old to comprehend. This is a problem for the campaign's target audience starts at the age of twelve. It was interesting to note that the urban respondents identified more closely to the audience of the billboards than the rural respondents.

Martin's study is of relevance to the current study to be conducted on the *BFL* campaign posters as many of the same questions that were addressed in Martins study are addressed in this project. These questions regard whether the initial message by the encoder of the material is being successfully decoded by the audience, and the effectiveness of the campaign in view of the construction of the posters. The theoretical framework employed within both Martins and the current study adopts the 'circuit of culture' model. Within Martins study, the respondents were made up of the target audience of the campaign. However, the current study will be made up of a secondary audience, consisting of male university students. It will be interesting to assess whether they feel as though they are or are not the intended target audience of the *BFL* campaign. Also, it will be interesting to see whether the use of simple messages on the *BFL* campaign posters, compared to the *loveLife's* more abstract billboards, could lead to a more successful interpretation of the campaigns intended messages.

The following study by Robin Larson et al. (2005) "*Celebrity Endorsements of Cancer Screenings*" used data from a survey conducted from December 2001 through to July 2002 in the United States. This study presented "the first data from a nationally representative sample of Americans of screening age about their exposure to celebrity endorsements of cancer screening and whether such endorsements influenced their decisions about cancer screening" (Larson 2005: 693). It considered two ways in which celebrities delivered messages about the need to go for cancer screenings, either when celebrities endorsed cancer screening on the news due to their own diagnosis or when they did it through involvement in promotional campaigns.

To begin the research, random-digital dialing was used and 4 000 households were obtained for the original sample. This number was significantly reduced and was restricted to those within the recommended age groups which the screening tests recommended, which were women forty years and older; men fifty years and older. People who had a history with cancer were not

used in the study for obvious reasons. The final sample group consisted of 500 people who included 360 women and 140 men. Data was gathered by professional interviewers via telephone interviews by the Centre for Survey Research at the University of Massachusetts.

The findings revealed that over half of the respondents had seen or heard celebrity endorsements of cancer screening tests. Although most of those respondents stated that these celebrity endorsements would not increase the likelihood of them going for cancer screening tests, however, one-fourth of them that had seen or heard these celebrity endorsements stated that it made them more likely to go for cancer screening tests.

This study is of interest to the current study as it explores the effectiveness of health campaigns that use celebrities to endorse a specific behaviour, in this case, going for cancer screening tests. It is interesting to note that celebrities' endorsement of specific health related problems can in fact result in individuals' increased awareness of a health problem and may even prompt them to take the celebrity's advice. This large scale study reveals the attitudes of people and how a campaign can either elicit action from individuals or no action at all. This is of importance to the current study as it intends to explore the effectiveness of using professional sportsmen, who are celebrities in their own right, on the *BFL* campaign posters. Though the current study will not use a large sample, it hopes to gain understanding as to whether the respondents feel that the use of these sportsmen is more effective than the use of ordinary men, as well as whether the messages the posters contain will prompt any change in ones' behaviour.

Methodology

This section will detail how the research for this project was conducted. The methodological approach is outlined, which includes a brief description of semiotics. This is followed by discussions on the selection of participants, method of obtaining information and the interpretation of the data.

Qualitative, Interpretive Approach

For the purposes of this research project, methods that are qualitative in nature have been employed. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (1994: 2) define this approach clearly below:

Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical material- case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational and visual texts- that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives.

Within this approach, the research will be conducted in an interpretive and constructionist paradigm, with the researchers' goal being to "develop an understanding of social life and discover how people construct meaning in natural settings" (Neuman, 2006: 88). Interpretive research methods aim to "describe and interpret people's feelings and experiences in human terms rather than through quantification and measurement" (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999: 123).

Semiotics

As this study relied on the analysis of 'visual images', semiotics was employed. Semiotics can be defined as the "science of signs" and "it shows how signs relate to one another in order to create and exclude particular meanings" (Silverman, 2001: 198). According to Branston and Stafford (2006: 11):

semiotics does not assume that the media work as simple channels of communication, as 'windows on the world'. Instead they are seen as actually *structuring* the very realities which they seem to 'describe' or 'stand in for'. Meaning is socially produced, whether through words, colour, gesture, music, fashion, etc.

Therefore, the meaning of a sign is never completely fixed, however they “can be used in creative ways to establish a favoured set of meanings” (Silverman, 2001: 201). Barthes (1967: 89ff) introduced the concepts of denotation and connotation to the study of signs. Denotation refers to the surface meaning of signs; however Barthes insisted that there was a deeper level of meaning to be found in images, this level is what is referred to as connotation. Silverman (2001: 201) comments “At this level, the system of meaning is used to signify a system of connotation. This system unconsciously informs the viewer about what the surface meaning of this image implies.” The images within the *BFL* posters have been created in a way that have meanings deeper than the surface level of the images.

Selecting Participants

A small sample group of six people has been selected for the project as qualitative researchers prefer to work with small samples (Durrheim & Painter, 2006). From this small sample group I was able to “get an in-depth opinion from participants” (Durrheim & Painter, 2006: 139) that was conducive to the limited length of the project. Non-random sampling was used, namely the technique of ‘purposive sampling’ which describes the way a researcher selects participants based not only on their accessibility but also due to the valuable information they can bring to the research (Durrheim & Painter, 2006: 139). This technique was employed in the study as participants were selected based on demographics such as gender, age and occupation. Specifically, the study’s sample group consisted of male students, between the ages of 18-23 years, who attended Howard College, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The sample group consisted of males of different ethnicity, specifically black South African males and white South African males. The respondents participating in this study permitted the use of their first names, however, did not feel comfortable disclosing their surnames.

Gathering information

It is important to outline the data gathering process from its initial stages. That being said, it must be mentioned that two weeks before active research began, *BFL* campaign posters were strategically placed at locations around the Howard College campus. Sites included outside men’s toilets, by the cafeterias and in buildings frequented by a large number of students. The

posters contained images of both professional sportsmen and ordinary men. The sportsmen shown within these posters included John Smit (professional rugby player), Teko Modise (professional soccer player), Graeme Smith (professional cricket player). The *BFL* campaign uses professional sportsmen who belong to different ethnic groups and who represent different sports, to appeal to a wide audience.

The primary method used in gathering information was through a focus group discussion. A focus group describes a situation “where respondents are offered some topic or stimulus material and then encouraged to discuss it amongst themselves” (Silverman, 2001: 83). According to Barbour and Kitzinger (1999), this form of group interaction is able to generate data. Focus groups are able to “create an atmosphere for natural discussions to take place and participants; ideas and thoughts are influenced by others as they would in a real-life setting” (Krueger, 1998: 33). Before the focus group was conducted, an interview schedule was developed (see Appendix 1). After the participants in the study had signed the consent form (see Appendix 2) the discussion began. During this focus group the technique of aided and unaided recall was used. *Unaided recall* is when an individual, unassisted, is able to describe the posters they have seen and what appealed to them about the posters. *Aided recall* involved the same posters that were positioned around campus being shown to the focus group in order to generate discussions about these posters. All data gathered from the focus group discussion was recorded, as accurately as possible, in a note pad.

Information provided by Richard Delate, Country Programme Director of John Hopkins Health and Education in South Africa, was invaluable to this study as he was able to provide background information on the construction of the posters, messages and aims of the campaign. The information was acquired through the exchange of emails.

Interpretation of Data

The data received from the research was in the form of words. When working from a qualitative approach, it is the task of the researchers to give the data meaning through translation and making the data understandable (Neuman, 2006). The findings from this study are discussed in relation to the research questions proposed at the beginning of the research

process. Answers to these questions are provided and reveal the perceptions of the participants with regard to their view on the *BFL* posters. The answers are also linked to theoretical concepts and to prior research conducted within the field.

Findings and Analysis

This section presents results obtained from the focus group discussion. These results are presented under two main headings, namely, *unaided* and *aided recall*. Within these sections are sub-sections which aimed to guide the focus group discussion in accordance with the research objectives.

Unaided recall

Respondents' awareness and understanding of the *BFL* campaign

It was revealed that all respondents in the study had been exposed, by the media, to the *BFL* campaign. This was through adverts on television during the FIFA Soccer World Cup, radio adverts, billboards and posters. The respondents' understanding of the *BFL* campaign revealed a number of opinions. Words used in association with the campaign were "be a man", "be responsible", "be careful", "have safe sex", "HIV and AIDS", "trust", "unity" and "a fraternity thing." *Bongani* (19 years) relays his understanding of the campaign as "trying to get men to stand up, be faithful and take care of themselves", while *Skhu* (22 years) comments that its aim is to "unify men and be proud of being a man." Many of these comments reflect the campaign's own ideas of what *BFL* stands for¹. These comments are important as they reveal, judging from the respondents in the study, that there is a general awareness and understanding of the *BFL* campaign in the public which is a significant finding considering the campaign was only launched August 2009.

Aspects from the campaign that respondents were able to recall

All respondents could recall the use of professional Sportsmen within the campaign, and all respondents, with the exception of one, were able to recall the dominant colours used in the campaign, namely black, red and white.

¹ Aspects that the campaign stands for, involves brothers who stand for "responsible relationships, responsible parenting, responsible behaviour, brothers who do the right thing and brothers who stand for life" (*Brothers for Life*: 2010).

Of the six respondents interviewed, two made reference to the *BFL* posters that they had seen around the campus. These respondents could recall the professional sportsmen seen within the posters, such as John Smit and Teko Modise. Not one person recounts having seen any posters with everyday men in them. When questioned as to what caught their attention about the posters, these respondents agreed that the sportsmen within the posters and the colours used. It can be seen that not just the graphics caught the attention of respondent, *Skhu*, as he was able to recall the phrase from a poster, "*Be a man...*" *Skhu* was also able to recall the campaign's logo and described what he remembered as "clasping red hands."

When questioned as to what the message of the poster was, the two respondents could remember the general message of the poster they had seen. As mentioned above, *Skhu* recalled a phrase from the poster he had seen with Teko Modise (see Appendix 3), he was also able to recall the message of the poster, he stated "it had something to do with always knowing your HIV status." *Jason* (23 years) was also able to recall the general message of the John Smit poster (see Appendix 4) he had seen and its message, which he commented was "about being careful to use a condom when you are drunk."

From the above, it can be seen that though less than half of the respondents had seen the posters scattered around campus, those that had seen the posters were able to recall a lot of the posters' details, even more importantly, the messages of the posters were remembered by these respondents.

The posters, according to Delate (email,2010):

"reflect the overall campaign look and feel and are designed in a manner so that the audiences can rapidly recall and make the connection to the *Brothers for Life* campaign. All signs in the campaign from the logo to the payoff line all work together in this manner to create a mental picture of who and what *Brothers for Life* stands for."

The respondents' responses are a good indication that the objectives of the campaign have been reached as all those participating in the study could connect certain aspects, such as

colours and Sportsmen to the campaign, and all respondents showed a general understanding as to what the campaign represented.

Aided Recall

This section reveals the opinions of the respondents of the study after they had been showed the campaign's posters. It is divided into four different areas, it explores the respondents' opinion of the construction of the posters, what the respondents felt about the messages within the posters, who the respondents felt the target audience of the campaign are, and lastly, what the respondents felt about the use of Sportsmen in the campaign.

Respondents' views on the construction of the posters

All respondents made note of the colours that had been used in the posters. *Bongani* described the colours as "eye-catching and bold" while *Simon* (21 years) stated that he liked the use of the "manly, strong colours" within the posters. All respondents, with the exception of one, agreed that the use of black as the background in the posters was effective as it resulted in the figures within the posters to "pop-out." *Welile* (18 years) commented "it looks as if they are stepping out of the darkness and are not ashamed to be telling men to do the right thing." *Nhlakanipho* (18 years) was the only respondent who felt that the black used within the poster made it appear "cold" and would have preferred the use of a white background, which he feels would attract more attention from people passing by. *Welile* also commented on the use of red in the campaign which he stated "symbolises blood." He further commented "people can connect the use of red to blood and HIV."

In discussing the text used in the posters, the respondents commented that in all of the posters, with the exception of one, the text was easy to read as the writing was large and made use of bold, eye-catching colours. Another important point was raised by *Jason* as he stated, "it is good [the text within the poster] because there are not many words in the poster and I can read it as I walk past, instead of stopping to read it, which I wouldn't do." The only poster that the respondents did not feel was effective was the poster displaying the 'manifesto' of the campaign (see Appendix 5). All respondents agreed that they would not stop and read the text

as there was far too much writing on this particular poster. *Simon* firmly stated “I would not waste my time reading this poster, just looking at it makes me tired.” *Skhu* issues a closing statement on the posters saying they are the “a creative way to reach all those ignorant males out there.”

This semiotic analysis of the posters of the respondents though reveals different understanding and interpretations of the elements used within the design generally reflect a positive response regarding the construction of the posters and its use of colour, graphics and wording.

Respondents’ interpretation on the messages within the posters

With reference to the ‘circuit of culture model’ (du Gay., 1997), which attempts to explain how meaning is created, the following section reveals the findings of the focus group discussion. Previously mentioned, the receiver of a message is an active participant in the creation of meaning, which is an interactive and dialogic process of translation (Hall, 1980; Hall, 1997). This aspect is of relevance to the study as it would be expected for respondents to interpret the messages in different ways. Discussed below are the ‘moments’ of production (which is the process by which the poster is imbued with meaning, otherwise known as encoding) and consumption where the posters were decoded by the respondents and meanings that they associate to the posters were revealed.

The messages of the campaign are encoded in an extremely literal manner. All respondents felt that the messages within the posters were simple and easy to understand. *Jason* commented, “the messages in the posters don’t need to be studied to be understood, they get straight to the point, I like that.” *Simon* further commented “it is unlikely that people will misinterpret the messages, they are very clear.”

It would appear that the respondents are correct in their description of posters being simple to translate. This is evident in *Welile*’s statement, “yes, we hear that we must wear condoms and be careful of having unsafe sex all the time, we know that, but it is important to keep hearing it so that people keep doing it.” This almost directly correlates to the intended meaning by the producer of the poster, as messages on condom usage were intended “to reinforce the

behaviour amongst those currently using condoms, while seeking to influence those who may have stopped to start doing so again and to influence those who have not used condoms to use condoms" (Delate, email, 2010). Message of 'testing' within the campaign "aims to target and encourage men to undergo testing and know their status." This encoding is seen to be correctly decoded by a respondent who states, "Everyone should get tested just in case they have the virus, if they know their status they can stop it [HIV] spreading." Contrary to Storey's (1996: 11) statement that "moments of encoding and decoding may not be perfectly symmetrical", it appears from respondents' responses that the messages of the posters were decoded as they were initially encoded by their producer. Therefore, the dominant or preferred reading of the posters was understood by respondents.

Comparing the results of this study to those of Martins' study (2007), who found that due to the nature of the abstract billboards of the *loveLife* campaign, the respondents assigned meanings to them that were not as the producer of the billboards intended. However, it was found in this study, due to the construction of the posters in their simple manner, which the posters did not lead to a variety of interpretation, but that the messages were simple and effectively translated. Therefore, it could be seen from the responses of the respondents that they prefer the use of graphics that depict people, preferably recognisable figures, and clear-cut scenarios, where the readers do not have to negotiate meanings.

Identifying the campaign's target audience

The *BFL* campaign's target audience is men 30 years and older. The reason for this choice in age group is because though South Africa is starting to see a reduction of HIV prevalence amongst teenagers, as well as the increased use of condoms, HIV infections remain high amongst adult men. It is recorded that HIV prevalence in men from the ages of thirty to thirty-four, peaks at twenty-five percent (*Brothers for Life*, 2009). When respondents were asked who they felt was the target audience of this campaign, their responses were as follows.

The respondents' responses to this question were shown to differ. Though, all respondents agreed that the campaign is targeted towards men within society, the age of these men was not agreed on by all. *Jason* was the only respondent who felt that the campaign did not have a

specific age bracket in mind, but was a campaign that appealed to all men in South Africa. He commented, "the issues shown in the posters are relevant to all men in this country."

Other respondents had varied opinions as to the target audience of the campaign. *Nhlakanipho* felt the target audience was men who were 22 years and older, while *Bongani* felt the posters were intended for men 25 years and older. *Welile* and *Skhu* both felt that the posters were aimed at adult males, *Skhu* commented that he thinks the posters are aimed at "men in their late twenties, early thirties who are working and settling down." *Simon* makes an interesting comment as to who he feels the campaign is aimed at from the presentation of the posters. Though he also feels the campaign targets people in their late twenties, he also stated "the people in the posters are well-dressed and clean, campaign comes across as being for people with money, a more affluent audience."

When questioned as to why they felt the target audience of the campaign was as they had mentioned, the respondents generally agreed it was due to the age of the representatives seen within the posters that had influenced their decision. *Skhu* stated "there are no young sportsmen or people in the posters, all are older and seem to have families." *Simon* also commented "putting younger sport stars in the posters like Francois Stein would include men of a younger generation."

It can be gathered that the majority of respondents felt as though the campaign targeted a more mature audience as the messages were delivered by representatives older than themselves and in a serious manner. However, all respondents still felt that the messages within the posters were relevant to their own lives. *Simon* stated "young men sleep around and are risking getting HIV or causing a girl to fall pregnant so the messages still apply to me and my friends." *Weile* also comments, "the messages are important because we need to protect ourselves now so that we will be healthy later in life."

As indicated above, the majority of the respondents were correct in assuming that the campaign did not target their age group, but was rather intended for an older audience. The campaign is designed for men 30 years and older, however, they still felt the messages were

relevant to them and their lives. Therefore, from the respondents, it is evident that the posters are reaching their intended audience as well as a larger audience.

Respondents' opinion on the use of professional Sportsmen in posters

According to Delate (email, 2010), "The reason for choosing sports personalities is simple- people idolise and worship sports personalities, to many people they are role models that they model themselves on." The following feedback assesses the effectiveness of using Sportsmen versus the use of people that the public are familiar with, as seen in prior campaign posters.

All respondents agreed that they preferred the use of Sportsmen within the posters, instead of the use of men that the public is unaware of. As mentioned in the *unaided section*, all respondents agree that the depiction of Sportsmen is the most eye-catching aspect of the campaign. *Jason* stated "seeing a familiar face in a poster would cause someone to take interest in what is being said in it." *Weile* brought up an interesting point, commenting that the use of Sportsmen is very effective as the campaign is appealing to men and the majority of men actively follow sporting events, they are considered to be "real men". He also adds to this statement by commenting that the use of Sportsmen in the campaign is more effective than the use of actors from successful South African television shows as men are more interested in sport, whilst a larger women audience would be interested in the use of actors. Posters (see Appendix 6 and 7) depicting people that the respondents did not know were considered "boring" and "not of interest", one respondent going so far as to say, "I don't know these people, why should I listen to what they are saying."

From the respondents' responses, it appears that the first two steps outlined by Bandura (1986) that need to be followed in order for the modeling process to be effective have been partially achieved. The first step, *attention*, is perhaps the most important step as it initiates the entire process, be it a successful or unsuccessful outcome, with regard to behaviour change. This step was seen to be achieved as all respondents agreed that the models used in the campaign captured their attention, as they were people of interest to them due to their status as professional Sportsmen. The second step, *retention* of information from the campaign, including the posters, is shown to have occurred within the study, as two respondents were

able to relay messages from the posters, unaided, which shows that this information had been stored. The other respondents, though they could not recall detailed messages from the campaign, they were able to associate words they felt represented the campaign.

This study was unable to determine whether the third step, *reproduction*, and the fourth step of the process, *motivation*, had been implemented. However, answers from respondents regarding the messages of the campaign are positive and could be associated to the third step of *reproduction*. *Jason* commented, "when I see John Smit, I want to know what he is saying and follow what he is saying, because I respect him." *Bongani* also pointed out that "when you see a sportsman promoting the right thing, you also want to do the right thing" while *Simon* stated "I would use the message coming from someone I respect over someone I have never heard of." These answers create the impression that the messages have been received and are being implemented; however, this cannot be proven.

With the above being said, this study has found similar findings to the study done by Larson et al. (2005) in that the endorsement of a specific health related issue, by a celebrity or professional Sportsman could result in an individual's increased awareness of a health problem and could prompt them to take that person's advice.

Conclusion

By analysing the respondents' responses, this study's aim was to evaluate how male students from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Howard College Campus) received the *BFL* campaign, specifically their opinion on the campaign posters. The key areas of the study were to explore the understanding respondents' have of the *BLF* campaign and whether their understanding corresponded to objectives of the campaign; assess the effectiveness of the campaign's posters, taking into account the construction of the posters, which included the images, colours, words used, etc.; determine the effectiveness of the messages of the posters by examining whether the messages on the posters had been decoded as the producer of the messages intended them to be; determine to whom the respondents feel is the campaign's target audience and discuss the use of professional Sportsmen versus the use of men that are unfamiliar to the public.

The project began by outlining the theories and concepts of relevance to the project and its findings. The Social Ecological Model was briefly outlined, with particular attention placed on the implementation of a health promotion campaign based on the core principles of the model which was of importance as it serves as the framework behind the *BFL* campaign. The 'circuit of culture' model was also discussed, as well as and concept of "modelling" within Bandura's Social Learning Theory. The next section, the literature review looked at different studies that were related to this project's main areas of focus. The methodology followed which revealed the project would be employing a qualitative approach, which led on to the disclosing of data received from the respondents during a focus group discussion. The findings were linked to theories and concepts within the theoretical framework, as well as parallels being drawn from prior research conducted in the same field which was presented in the literature review.

The findings have been briefly summarised according to the study's research objectives. The respondents confirmed that they had heard of the *BFL* campaign prior to this research and from their responses it appeared that they had a good general understanding of what the campaign stands for. Furthermore, the campaign's objectives appear to have achieved their aim of creating "a mental picture" of the campaign within the public as the respondents were able to

recall, unaided, colours used in campaign as well as representatives. Some were even able to recall the logo and messages. After showing respondents posters from the campaign, the general consensus of the posters was positive, respondents enjoyed the use of Sportsmen as well as the colours which they felt were “eye-catching” and “bold.” With regard to the decoding of messages, it was seen that the messages were decoded as the producer of the posters had intended. This can be attributed to the simple messages of the campaign that allow for correct interpretation. When questioned as to whom the respondents felt the campaign was targeted at, the majority felt it was aimed at adult males, due to the images of the older representatives seen in the posters, as well as the serious manner in which the messages are carried. However, all felt that the messages were still relevant to their lives. Finally, the respondents all preferred the use of Sportsmen over people they did not recognise. They mentioned that the Sportsmen is what caught their attention and they were interested in what they had to say.

Though this research revealed some interesting findings, future studies could be conducted that expand upon this study by the inclusion of more participants. Another example of how this project could be expanded upon is that it could compare the findings from these students to findings from members belonging to the intended target audience. It would also be of interest and importance to conduct research on a females’ perspective of the campaign, and their opinion as to whether they deem it a success.

In closing, the BFL campaign aims to “create a movement of men that will ignite and spread through South Africa” (*Brothers for Life*, 2010). With the use of high profile Sportsmen and adverts during the Soccer World Cup, the campaign has certainly generated attracted attention, however, at this stage it is yet to be determined the extent to which the campaign has achieved its objectives and only time will be the judge of the campaign’s overall success.

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Appendix 1- Interview Schedule for Focus Group Discussion

Unaided recall

- Have you seen the Brothers for Life campaign posters around campus??
(if answer yes to this question, will proceed)
- What do remember about the poster?? (general perceptions)
- What caught your attention about the poster?

Aided recall (show focus group the posters)

- What do they feel about the construction of the posters? (ie- the use of colours, wording, graphics, etc.)
- What meanings do they derive from the posters?
- Who do you feel is the intended target audience of this campaign?

- What do you feel about the use of well-known sportsmen in the campaign posters?

- What is your understanding of the Brothers for Life campaign?

Appendix 2

To Participant.

My name is Tamryn Maxwell and I am an honours student at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal within the department of Cultural, Communication and Media Studies.

You are being asked to participate in a research study for the module "Communication for Participatory Development". The project is titled "*Be a Man: A reception analysis of the Brothers for Life campaign Posters*". This project seeks to explore the interpretations and perceptions of male varsity students towards the Brothers for Life posters. From this project, I intend to examine what meanings the reader derives from the posters; to determine whether the posters of the *Brothers for Life* campaign have successfully communicated their intended message; to explore what *Brothers for Life* means to the reader; and to evaluate the use of the well-known sportsmen depicted in the posters.

What is required from you as a participant in this research process is to participate in a focus group discussion, with the focus being placed on your interpretations and perceptions of the posters. The information gathered from your answers will be used only in exerts in the honours project and will be keep in the possession of the university and after which 5 years, it will be disposed of.

Thank you for considering taking part in this project, however before the start of the project, I would like to emphasis that participation in this project is completely voluntary and you may refuse to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable with. You may choose to be

represented as an anonymous participant. You may decide to withdraw from this project at any time.

If you have any questions or concerns with regard to the project, please do not hesitate to contact me:

Cell phone: 071 683 5467

Email: tamtoes01@yahoo.com

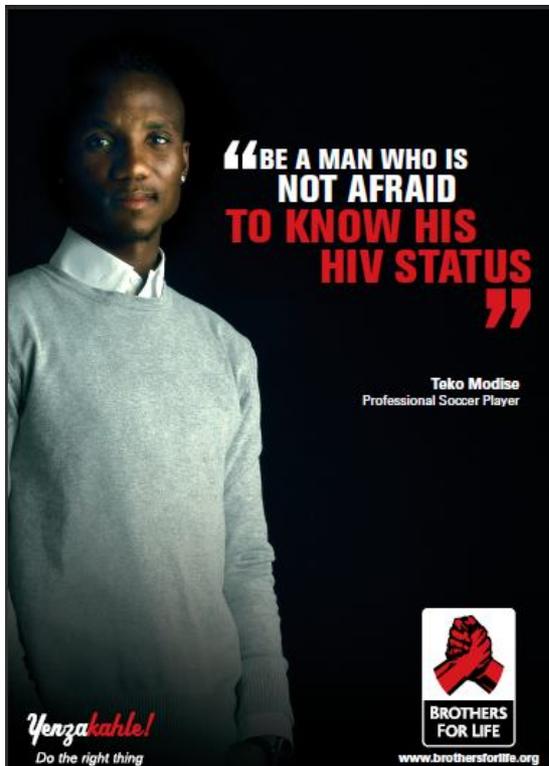
If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, my supervisor, Josianne Roma-Reardon at josianne@onevoice.org.za

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

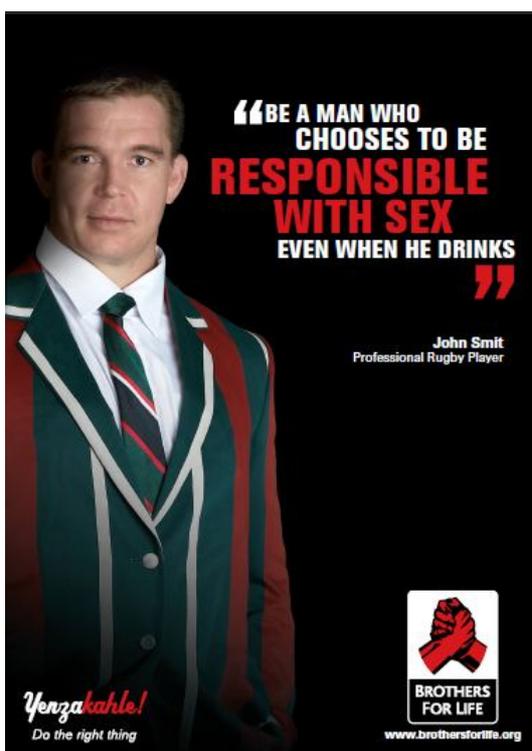
Sign: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3



Appendix 4



Appendix 5



“ 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 DETERMINED
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,
WILL DETERMINE WHETHER WE SEE TOMORROW.
I AM THAT MAN.
AND YOU ARE MY BROTHER.
”

Yenzakahle!
Do the right thing

Send a 'please call me' to 072 924 2559 or visit www.brothersforlife.org to join the **Brothers for Life** movement.



**BROTHERS
FOR LIFE**

Appendix 6



**“ I CHOOSE TO
PROTECT
MY CHILD
FROM HIV
I AM A BROTHER
FOR LIFE
”**

Yenzakahle!
Do the right thing

Send a 'please call me' to 072 924 2559 or visit www.brothersforlife.org to join the **Brothers For Life** movement.



**BROTHERS
FOR LIFE**

Appendix 7



**“ I CHOOSE TO
PROTECT
MY CHILD
FROM HIV
I AM A BROTHER
FOR LIFE ”**

Yenzakahle!
Do the right thing

Send a 'please call me' to 072 924 2559 or visit www.brothersforlife.org to join the **Brothers For Life** movement.



**BROTHERS
FOR LIFE**