

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of my introduction, I invoked on my sexual status. This should serve to reflect the extent to which I am involved in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Discourses of HIV/AIDS prevention as well as the impact of HIV/AIDS on national development have engaged me at a very personal level. I have sought to galvanise all my involvements to fighting the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. I have attempted to draw from my religious, intellectual, and private life to further the cause against the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. However, this should not mean that I have uncritically accepted mainstream prevention intervention strategies advancing condom usage in fighting the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa. Neither have I adopted the negative attitudes towards voices on the margins advocating alternative strategies such as the message of sexual abstinence advocated mainly within religious circles. An attitude I am currently engaging flows from the idea of progress. The latter forms the philosophical base of the modernisation paradigm of development. Thus, in the second chapter, I place this attitude firmly within the modernisation paradigm of development. This attitude is very negative towards religious ideas, strategies and practice. In this chapter I establish a connection between this attitude and the idea of progress. Whilst progress is embodied in science, technological developments and man who uses science and technology to create, religion is relegated to the backwards and unscientific. The message of sexual abstinence, in so far as it is advanced by religious organisations becomes suspect. However,

mainstream HIV prevention advocating the condom as an ideal preventive device does not have a track record of success in South Africa. This fact should be enough to justify exploration of alternative interventions in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In this study I am advocating exploration of one such intervention.

In development thought and practice, a discourse critical of modernisation development is gaining ground. The discourse is categorised as the alternative paradigm of development. This paradigm seeks to resurrect ideas on the margins of mainstream development discourse. It decenters mainstream modernisation ideas of development that have marginalised other ideas and voices pertaining to development. Instead of focusing on the universally valid, it casts its attention on the locally specific, the peculiar and the communal. Though not dismissive of modern day realities such as hi-tech facilities and the scientific method, it seeks to draw from the latter in a way that does not patronise local ideas, values and practices. This paradigm advocates that in an encounter with local ideas and initiatives, western modern secular ideas and initiatives should be positioned in a way that they are on an equal footing with the former. The local should be approached with a sense of awe and respect and a dialogue should be established with the local. However, in this paradigm, I still detect a theme that universalises certain aspects of the local and in the process marginalising others. A case in point being the erasure of the religious aspect of local life. By invoking the socio-cultural, at the expense of other local experiences and realities this paradigm can

get rid of the more complex areas that it has not developed tools to cater for such as the religious aspect of local communities.

Development discourse flowing from the alternative development paradigm represents one of the most progressive discourses of development of our times. However, the discourse has not managed to factor in the social role of religion. This, I identify as a loophole in progressive discourses of development as the one enshrined in the alternative paradigm of development. Nonetheless, by emphasising awe and respect for the local, and harnessing the local in development, this paradigm opens up avenues into other dimensions of the local context (even unscientific) realities that have not been explored thus far. I see it as opening an avenue into a possible relationship between development, religion and HIV/AIDS.

In the third chapter I gave attention to a model assumption undergirding HIV mainstream prevention interventions. This model is referred to as the KAP model. The model assumes a clear and unproblematic relationship between knowledge and behaviour. Information informed by this model is directed to people as individual rational subjects. This knowledge is expected to have an impact on the individual behaviour for the most part on rational grounds. It is expected of those to whom HIV prevention interventionist strategies are directed to reason out the facts as presented to them and make a choice on the basis of this reasoning. However, recent research exposes the existence of a gap between the

knowledge disseminated and response to this knowledge in terms of behaviour from those who have received such knowledge.

Though sexual abstinence is acknowledge in mainstream discourse of HIV prevention as a risk free choice, it is still, for the most part, relegated to the backburner in mainstream intervention, and it is often outrightly dismissed as an unrealistic option. However, mainstream strategies that are informed by the KAP and with a bias for the condom as a strategy of prevention have not proved effective in curbing the rapid spread of HIV infection in South Africa.

An example of a well-documented discourse on male sexuality¹ I cited in chapter three, demonstrated the shortcomings of the KAP model. This discourse defies the relevance of this model in addressing the problem of engagement in high-risk sexual behaviour by South Africans. The discourse represents men as being incapable of using the knowledge about HIV transmission they have accumulated when faced with the desire and opportunity to engage in sexual intercourse. Research on this HIV and masculinity demonstrates the existence of knowledges pertaining to male sexuality that renders the efforts of mainstream intervention ineffective. With the insights of chapter that highlights the shortcomings of the KAP model I then turned my attention to the strategies deployed in the South African evangelical movement in addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

¹ A discourse on male sexuality representing male sexuality as an uncontrollable force

I began chapter four with a certain amount of awareness from my involvement in the evangelical faith based movement in South Africa about the theological influence that American evangelical movement has had on its South African sister movement. This awareness was supported by the minimal academic literature available on the evangelical faith based movement in South Africa. From the literature I identified the great level of influence that the American evangelical movement has on the theological outlook of its sister movement in South Africa. It is against that backdrop that I embarked on analysing the message of sexual abstinence advanced in South African evangelicalism. I identified the use of what I call the strategy of identification in advancing the message of sexual abstinence among youth. I also identified the use of argumentation and debate to enhance the work done through the strategy of identification.

In chapter five, in the tradition of the alternative development paradigm, I focused my attention on a particular locality. I defined this locality more in terms of shared beliefs on youth HIV preventive behaviour than in geographic terms. These shared beliefs possess a strong religious base. I designated the locality as South African evangelicalism. Still in the tradition of localising, I narrowed down my attention to the sermons delivered in a conference that was hosted by CAF. In this locality, God is invoked as a resource for the transformation of identity. It is through this transformation that a lifestyle characterised by sexual abstinence can be lived out by young people. Thus, within this local site the condom is

dismissed on the grounds that it does not do the thorough work that God can do to young people. Whilst some preachers such as Dr Seobi channel their energies into demonstrating the fallacies of the condom as a preventive strategy, others such as Dr Molapo and Mr Loate tend to focus more on providing theological explanations for problems pertaining to young people's sexuality and they also provide possible solutions to such problems such as the prayer of conversion, the avoidance of tempting images from the TV, the prayer of deliverance and so on. All these are geared towards constructing a subjectivity that would be able to sustain a lifestyle characterised by sexual abstinence.

To ensure that the message is heard and accepted by the young audience addressed, as in American Evangelicalism, the strategy of identification is utilized to advance the message of sexual abstinence. In this locality, the strategy of identification is deployed to advance the message of sexual abstinence and to undermine alternative messages that threaten the validity of this message. However, winning the students attention and making sense to them is part of the bigger project of identity construction that is believed to be key to enabling these students to being able to live out a life characterised by pre-marital sexual abstinence. It is at this level that prominent scholars in the field of HIV prevention such as Campbell (1997) and Collins and Stadler (1998) are calling for HIV preventive intervention to take place. Where these scholars argue for the negotiation of condom use at the level of identity construction I would propose, in addition to negotiation of condom use, a serious examination of alternative

preventive strategies such as pre-marital sexual abstinence. From analysis of sermons delivered to students at the CAF conference emphasising pre marital sexual abstinence over condom usage, it becomes clear that the spirit of resistance to the condom is, in some instances, instilled on young people. This should shed a glimpse of light about why do some people resist the condom or fail to use it consistently. They are exposed to alternative messages of preventive young behaviour hostile to condom usage. The research results should further hint to the possibility of a significant number of localities that breeds a spirit of resistance to condom usage among South Africans, not only religious localities but cultural also. Still, instead of seeking to alter mindsets of individuals belonging to such communities, local ideas can be explored and engaged and probably be given support. In this way intervention in the area of HIVAIDS can be involved in the construction of identities. Research demonstrates that much resistance happens at the level of self-understanding in reference to one's cultural as well as religious background. This fact provides sufficient grounds for intervention at the localities where much of identity construction takes place.

The tight connection between development and the situation of HIV/AIDS in South Africa should suggest the importance of identity construction in issues of development. Germond (2001: 30) passionately argues for the significance of identity issues in development discourse:

.... individuals and communities have identities constituted in powerful ways by reflexive knowledges and unintentional and non-relational forms of power. They are incarcerated in these identities as much as the development practitioners are incarcerated by their reflexive knowledges. The failure to recognize the power of

reflexive knowledges to construct identity, most importantly through culture and religion, has led to many spectacular failures in development. Development can be severely retarded if the deep structures of identity formation are ignored

It is the “participatory” ideal of the alternative development paradigm that becomes most relevant in thinking about implications of the message of sexual abstinence as a local strategy of HIV prevention for development in South Africa. Thus, from the insights flowing from this research study, I recommend that, interventions that seeks to address the situation of HIV/AIDS in order achieve development goals in South Africa should enmesh themselves in local communities, participate (and not impose) in the religious construction of identities and help reinforce identities that minimise the spread of HIV/AIDS in South Africa and elsewhere. One such identity might be an identity that upholds the message of pre-marital sexual abstinence. The ideal of participatory development is such that the developer, whilst contributing something to the locality also learns new and viable to effecting development. In the area of faith based communities such as the South African evangelicalism represented by CAF in our study, participatory involvement in the religious construction of identities might produce the kind of identities that whilst upholding sexual abstinence as an ideal HIV preventive strategy do not necessarily dismiss the potential of the condom as an alternative preventive device. Thus in the case where a member of the community fails to practice the ideal of pre-marital sexual abstinence, the condom is not resisted (as it seems to be the case currently) but becomes an option. This reduces the chances of resistance that goes with thinking in dualistic

terms about the condom and sexual abstinence as preventive strategies. In the area of HIV/AIDS change in terms of sexual belief and behaviour has development consequences in South Africa and the kind of interventions aimed at reducing high risk behaviour should also be understood in development terms. Thus the message of sexual abstinence, in so far as it is advanced as an HIV prevention strategy, remains a resource to be tapped into in the area of development. Against the backdrop of the negative prospects for development in South Africa in the face of the spread HIV/AIDS pandemic, failure to consider HIV preventive alternatives operating at the local periphery and influencing masses of people, such as the message of sexual abstinence, amounts to a national catastrophe. Incorporation of local ideas and strategies that people hold dearly should generate consensus at the local periphery, improve levels of involvement in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic whilst on the other hand, improving development prospects of South Africa that are currently threatened by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Such are the implications that local strategies such as the strategy of pre-marital sexual abstinence have for development. In the light of recent research work done, including this one, implications for development can only be negative if the local remains marginalised in discourses of development and HIV/AIDS intervention.