

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF AIDS

**Imagined Futures IV
Sexualities and Silences**

Conference Report

**29-30 September 2009,
Pretoria, South Africa**

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Words of welcome

By Prof McGlory Speckman, Dean of Student Affairs, University of Pretoria

Professor Speckman welcomed the participants to the fourth Imagined Futures Conference. He then gave an historical perspective on the silences surrounding sexuality.

The topic discussed in this conference has been taboo for many centuries in the Western world, where the body and sexual preferences were not spoken about. Some people were forced to suppress who they are in the public domain while battling with their identity in the private domain. Pregnant women had to sit at the back of the Church if not married; menstruation was regarded as impurity. For centuries, we denied the existence of people with different sexual preferences and they were excluded from churches and other places of socialisation. For a long time, we could hear “you do not find that in our culture”, and yet, in mines for example, homosexuality was happening. 20 years ago, it was not possible to talk about this freely.

The University of Pretoria has long seen that there is a need for more openness. Thanks to the new order in our country and the changes in society, we have more freedom to talk about our feelings and our body.

The only way to guarantee that the future will happen is to stay healthy. Sexuality does not only focus on questions of reproduction, but on the emotions that go with our body and define who we are.

Education is an important vehicle to help people to open up, and look from today into the future: that is why the Centre of Study of Aids is here, and space is given to students to discuss such topics.

Professor Speckman concluded by encouraging participants to actively participate in the debates and to enjoy not only the conference but also its environment, the campus and Pretoria.

By Kjersti Augland, Programme Advisor, SAIH (Norwegian Student's Academics International Assistance Fund)

Kjersti Augland explained that the SAIH is a partner of the CSA and works with students in Africa and Latin America.

Norway is in a privileged position with regards to HIV/AIDS with 0.1% prevalence. But recent research show that the knowledge among young people has decreased, and stigma still prevails. Young Norwegians are the worst population in condom use statistics in Europe, and they do not feel they are at risk, displaying a lack of knowledge and consciousness.

In 2008 a law was passed in parliament: gay couples got the same right to marry as heterosexual couples, but homophobia and stigma still exist.

Kjersti Augland also explained that in Norwegian universities, there are no formal discussions on gender equality, condom use, sexuality issues and sex orientation, and she expressed how amazed she was by the open discussions in South African Universities. The methodology consisting of reaching out and not focusing only on HIV will impact on students of today and tomorrow and Norwegian students would have a lot to learn from it.

LGBT Emancipation as an Integral Component of African Development and the Reclamation of Ubuntu, by Zak Mbhele, HIVOS SA

Zak Mbhele started by recalling a conference where the audience was asked to define the concept of development. Making reference to the book *Development as Freedom* from Amartya Sen, he defined development as “the process of maximising freedom”, in the political, economical and social spheres.

HIVOS development philosophy is in line with this framework: The organisation supports lobbying and advocacy activities by LGBT organisations, on the grounds that the rights of sexual minorities are connected with freedom, self determination and access to opportunities, i.e. emancipation and development.

LGBT rights (Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender) are Human Rights. Even if we all consider ourselves as promoting Human Rights, we should also wonder if we feel ready to defend the rights of people who are different from us and might make us feel uncomfortable because of their differences. Despite the progress made in combating stigma and taboos around sexuality as part of the HIV/AIDS work, the challenge still remains of combating stigma around LGBT issues, especially in Africa where it is often labelled as “un-African” or a “western disease”.

If the agenda in Africa is development, seen as the maximising and extension of freedom in the political, economic and social spheres, then LGBT emancipation is a test for the depth and quality of development. We are failing.

Discrimination against LGBT people is rife on the continent, even in SA, despite the liberal constitution, the worst affected group being lesbian women in under-resourced townships facing the triple oppression of being a woman, poor and homosexual.

Political development will not be complete for as long as the law does not protect LGBT people. Economic development will not be achieved for as long as economic opportunities are limited by the sexual orientation and the talents of all people are not harnessed. Social development will not be

complete until the expression of self identity is not blocked on the basis of ignorance and misconceptions.

If development is crucial in Africa and if LGBT is an integral component of that development, what needs to be done?

- At a political level, the rights of LGBT people must be guaranteed and the discrimination against LGBT people must be abolished from the law. The human rights of LGBT as citizen must be enforced, in particular the rights of privacy, free administration of justice and free expression.
- At a social level, social actors must seek and receive education on LGBT issues (Faith-Based organisations, Universities, Human Rights organisations, Service providers) in order to become more inclusive and tolerant. They should also recognise the links between LGTB rights and gender and patriarchal oppression.

This long process of socio-cultural transformation will inevitably lead to positive change, for several reasons:

- Some milestones have already been set: the Yogyakarta Principles look at the application of Human Rights standards to the issues of sexual orientation and gender identity; and the recent UNGASS declaration calls for the decriminalisation of homosexuality.
- This change is grounded in the principle of Human Dignity: Human Rights are universal and indivisible. People deserve equal protection from the law.
- This idea corresponds to the African term Ubuntu, which means “I am because you are, I am through you, and you are through me”. And if someone denigrates this humanity, because of

gender, or sexual orientation, they denigrate the common humanity and ultimately themselves because humanity is interwoven and interlinked.

- The absence of LGBT emancipation is causing suffering amongst LGBT youth, who are at higher risk of depression and isolation.

University can be helpful to LGBT people if:

- It is a place of free thinking and exploration, a place where a closeted LGBT meets peers while the prejudices and misconceptions of others are challenged.
- It encourages the creation of LGBT student societies, and gives space for LGBT issues to be raised.
- University policies dealing with discrimination and equality promotion makes explicit references to LGBT issues and uphold the rights of LGBT people.

It is only through the defence of others' rights that LGBT emancipation can be achieved and that LGBT people can live in freedom; freedom from fear, prejudice, discrimination and secrecy.

He concluded by making reference to the recent controversy that revealed that Caster Semenya was intersex, and commended the support and outrage of the public at the invasion of her privacy. According to him, it revealed that the public can display sympathy for someone who is "different" and whose rights have been violated.

Sexualities, gender, identities and rights, by Mary Crewe, CSA Director

Mary Crewe introduced her talk by informing the audience that the CSA (Centre for the Study of AIDS) was celebrating its 10 years of existence this year and that she considered this conference as one of its major achievements, thanks to the Norwegian SAIH and the Faculty of Education.

Mary Crewe chose to illustrate her talk with the story of Caster Semenya and the way the South African political world reacted to the questions asked about her gender.

She first pointed the irony of qualifying Caster Semenya as "our daughter", "our girl" and portraying her in a popular magazine as a stereotypical woman, while she does not relate to the typical African woman, but is a "finely tuned muscular athlete".

The reaction to Caster's story highlights the complexities of gender, sexuality, rights and culture, and highlights how sensitive we are about race and identity, and how quick we are to react and judge before we know the real facts. It offers a lesson on how to deal with gender and identity difference.

ests had to do with how fast she ran and not with her race, and e abused notably through the leak at IAAF and the lies of ASA. Finally, **because people did not analyse the facts and did not understand her difference, she was treated with the classic denials that come with perceived stigma and being the bearer of difference, the same denials underpinning the way we deal with HIV/AIDS.**

The way we understand sexualities, gender, identity and rights also determine the way we deal with HIV/AIDS. It is important to understand these concepts if we do not want to lock people in socially-constructed identity boxes.

- **About sex, identity and gender:** Sex and identity are about the domain of power relations: Social goods and opportunities are distributed according to gender; which implies that some identities and relationships are considered as abnormal, forcing some people to battle for social inclusion. The ways used by society to regulate our behaviour and punish what is seen as transgression, have been anti-democratic and violate people's rights and humanity.
- **About rights and sexuality:** the violation of sexual rights was first legally challenged by the gay and lesbian movements, questioning the hetero-normativity, whereby heterosexual relations are treated as the norm, and other kinds of sexuality are seen as transgression. **The criminalisation of same sex relation violates the respect for private life.** Sexuality also affects rights when gay individuals or couples cannot be awarded custody of, or adopt children.

- **Our sexual identities are products of history**, in a world dominated by heteronormativity. Some categories were created and they seemed “stable”, such as straight, gay lesbian, bisexual and gender. But transgendered, intergendered and transsexual people prove that these categories are not stable. Mary Crewe asked the audience critical questions: How do we understand these gender variations, accept them and protect the rights of people to their sexual identity? Do we understand the consequences of the implicit social control in the idea that you have to be a woman or a man?

We have to create a society where people are able to practice self-reflection and apply meaning to their actions, thus constantly recreating social institutions, as society and culture are not static.

If we understand the meaning people apply to their actions and how much their sexuality shifts through life, then we must accept and celebrate the different sexualities and identities rather than putting people into exclusionary categories.

But sexual tolerance is only possible in a context of social and sexual integrity, defining a shared framework of values.

Sexual rights need a set of ethical principles and enabling conditions. It is important to be aware of these ethical principles when working on HIV/AIDS, as becoming skilled on HIV/AIDS requires that we understand the societies it is moving through and how patriarchy and culture collude with the epidemic. Mary Crewe encouraged the audience to develop a critical engagement with the world and to challenge the social stereotypes and then outlined the five ethical principles and their link with HIV/AIDS.

- **Sexual diversity:** This is the cornerstone of human development but for decades it has been controlled and despite a growing recognition of people’s sexual rights, many people still feel threatened by sexual differences. It is impossible to be a good HIV educator or counsellor if one is fixed in one’s own world view.
- **Diverse family forms:** the HIV/AIDS epidemic has revealed how precarious the family institution is, with young people being abused, neglected, not living with both their parents, or the new “family form” of child headed households. **But there is a strong contradiction in accepting these child headed households while rejecting other family forms, such as families headed by homosexuals; this is based on prejudice against some people as parents.**
- **Sexual health:** Although good sexual health is essential for sexuality and identity, it is tied into notions of deviance and compliance: Societies produce shame and embarrassment around sexually transmitted infections and people do not seek treatment. But sexual health is also about understanding your own sexual identity, choosing to be sexually active or to abstain, being able to talk freely with your partner without feeling oppressed by social constructions.
- **Bodily autonomy:** Attempts to control women’s sexuality and identity is at the root of most practices of women’s oppressions such as female circumcision, gender based violence. Men also need to have control over their body, through the right to refuse circumcision or rejecting the dominant definition of what it means to be a man. Women need to be able to control their reproductive lives also.
- **Gender equality:** Effective gender work is about liberation of men from oppressive social expectations and behaviours while liberating women from their multiple forms of oppressions. Women and men sometimes collude in their own oppression when they behave in stereotypical ways.

Mary Crewe concluded her talk by highlighting how exciting the challenge of breaking sexual silences around gender, oppression, diversity and identity was. She urged the future leaders present in the audience to create the enabling environment necessary for these ethical principles to work.

Working on HIV gives you the possibility to free yourselves from stereotypes, from the tyranny of culture, to rethink social conventions and categories that shape our sexual identity.

Doing so requires courage and curiosity, and to move away from ignorance to be part of **“shaping a new and imagined future where we can celebrate a wide range of sexualities, identities, cultural and gender formations”**.

How to create a university context where we can learn? By Pierre Brouard, CSA Deputy Director.

Pierre Brouard introduced his talk by responding to Mary Crewe on the concept of “ignorance”, pointing the difference with “ignoring”. Ignoring means one has been exposed to the information and one made a conscious choice to ignore it: This conference is telling us that it is not right to ignore and is seeking to create university contexts where it is possible to learn.

Pierre Brouard chose to use the five recommendations that came out of a meeting he attended on “*Sex Rights and the Law in times of AIDS*” to ask critical questions that could be used as an action framework by the participants.

80% of HIV transmission is related to sex in South Africa, and yet, most of the successful HIV interventions are linked to non-sexual transmission. This is due to the complexity of sexuality issues and the barriers to a gender transformative agenda and Human Rights. The five recommendations are the following:

- **Strive for a greater precision of terminology and generate knowledge about gender, sexuality, sex, identity.**
 - The expression MSM (Men having sex with Men) was created because the terms gay or homosexual were not appropriate. Identity is not static and changes while at University: Is there permission and a space for people NOT to decide on their identity?
 - We need better social research to understand sexuality; the rise of internet for example allows for new expressions of sexuality and identity.
- **Use the law to decrease vulnerability**, notably by decriminalising sex work and same sex relationships. What laws are being used in our country? Are the rights enacted in our universities?
- **Increase investments to broaden social collectives.** Do universities create space for young people to come together, where they can talk about sex, whatever their sexual identity is?
- **Prioritise structural approaches to HIV prevention and move beyond behavioural interventions.** Individual choices and actions are shaped by social and cultural structures. Do we understand gender and sexuality cultures? Do we create an enabling environment and do we have laws and policies for young people to feel empowered?
- **Systematically evaluate** what you are doing.

Reflexions and comments on key note addresses

- One participant said he was very interested by the way sexuality was dealt with at a macro level and considered that we should find a language to integrate sexuality issues in other spheres. He also pointed to the contradictions highlighted by a recent story where Roman Polansky, a French/polish 76 year old Movie Director was arrested at the border of Switzerland to be extradited to the USA for having had sex with a 13 year old in the seventies. While paedophilia is banned in the traditional discourse, the French Government defended the Director, also grounded on a legal issue, as the age of sexual consent was 12 years old at that time. The age of consent is different from one country to the other.
- Clarity on the definition of sexual integrity. We need social integrity before having sexual integrity. The first seems to be lost in SA, going from road rage to the lies of ASA and the bribes of judges. Sexual honesty implies “the understanding of who you are” without trying to pretend. Usually people lie because they do not trust other people’s reactions. We should also try to expose the hypocrisy of society: if it is not allowed to have sex with a 13 year-old, it should also not be allowed to marry a 13 year-old!
- A participant reflected on Zak Mbhele’s considerations about Caster Semenya, pointing that “we still fit her in a box”, considering that she is a woman and defending her from that point of view. We are still thinking in terms of hetero-normativity and we ask her to make a choice as she cannot remain both male and female. Zak Mbhele responded that he was not sure that she had to make a choice, as she seems to be quite comfortable with her identity.

Everything happens here in the campus, even what you don't expect: the silences around "campus sexual cultures" and "campus sexual economies" and implications for HIV programming, by: Tsitsi Masvawure, Department of Anthropology and CSA, University of Pretoria.

Aims

- To draw attention to the silences around campus sexual cultures and campus sex economies
- To argue that the meanings behind high risk sexual practices are more important for effective HIV programming than the actual practices themselves

Methodology

- Ethnographic fieldwork at the University of Zimbabwe.
- Participant observation, in depth interviews with students, informal conversations with 40 students (half male and female).

Findings

Why are students involved in the same high risk behaviours, such as MCP, transactional sex, intergenerational sex or sexual violence and what are the meanings of these practices?

- **University is constructed and experienced in liminal ways:** it is an "in-between and undefined space", a part of and apart from the wider society (geographically, and through its culture). There are certain things one can do in University because one is in an undefined space.
- **The campus "sexual cultures"** are determined by the characteristics of liminal states: Permissiveness, a temporary suspension of the "everyday", transformation towards adulthood, ambiguity and indeterminateness, special and extra-ordinary experiences.
- **Permissiveness:** "it is ok to have sex here" as opposed to high school; there is no restriction on female-male interactions; authorities can abuse this permissive space and date students; "outside men" can come to "hunt for women".
- **Transformation:** Sexuality is central to the process of growing up, particularly for young men who feel peer pressure and "score points".
- Special and extra-ordinary experiences, also for young women who can experience sexual pleasure, and fully exploit their femininity because the space allows them to do so, notably through "flash" sexual intercourse.
- **What and where are the silences?** The realities of the universities challenge our beliefs and risk behaviours happen (i.e. "flashiness", transactional sex, agency and intergenerational sex, non-use of condom).

Conclusion

University constitutes a unique context for experimentation and discovering sexual identity. **Context and meaning are inseparable and HIV interventions should take into consideration the structural factors and not only the behavioural ones.**

Questions/Answers/Comments

- **About the methodology:** What technique was used to enable the respondents to be so open? The researcher explained that she used participative observation and could "blend in the background"; she also noted that the students wanted to speak about their sexual life.
- **The focus of the study** is more on women, what about the risk behaviours of their male counterparts? There are a lot of studies on masculinity and sex violence and the researcher tried to go beyond the usual research on male's violence.
- Can the researcher propose **remedial strategies** to avoid certain risky behaviours, such as not allowing non-residents in campus? Tsitsi responded that some women take conscious decisions, they are not victims, so the intervention should be different from the ones to avoid women being forced into sex. She observed that at university the power relationships are contested.
- **What about the use of condoms?** It is very low and irregular, as happens in the wider society.
- One participant suggested that young women should be sensitised to reproductive health issues before they reach university.

Sexualities and silences, by Choolwe Muzyamba, University of Zambia.

Aim

To give an overview about sexualities and silences in Zambia

Findings

- **Background:** *Choolwe Muzyamba* presented the evolution of the mortality rate due to HIV in Zambia to highlight that the epidemic is a threat to the population.
- **Access to sex education:** There is a high level of illiteracy and poverty in African rural areas, which hampers access to sex education and information dissemination while in urban areas, speaking about HIV to complacent intellectuals is not easy.
- **Gender issues:** The speaker stressed the influence of African culture on gender, and particularly cultural practices and beliefs, such as the belief that males are superior to females, which hampers the ability of women to negotiate condom use.
- **Sexual Reproductive Rights:** Sexual and reproductive rights must be looked at through the broader human rights context. The problem is that some people are not aware of their rights.
- **Gay lesbian and transgendered issues:** *Choolwe Muzyamba* presented the Zambian piece of law forbidding homosexual intercourse and condemning offenders to prison. Hence, the population “turns a blind eye” to gay lesbian and transgendered issues and LGTB are afraid to “come out” and lack information on safe sex practices.

Recommendations

- There is a need to inform the population about sexual and reproductive rights, notably through media and the school curriculum, but also to renew information dissemination methods and develop a comprehensive campaign on sexual education;
- Vulnerable women and men need to be empowered to claim their rights;
- There is a need for a “change of mindset” in society, which should not ignore that LGTB are part of them.

Conclusion

Denying LGTB rights and the silences around them are detrimental to the fight against HIV.

Questions/Answers/Comments

- **About the law against LGBT people:** Can it be revised? Is the University of Zambia involved in fighting the constitution, as students usually do, by demonstrating or complaining? *Choolwe Muzyamba* replied that the National Constitution Review Process now happening in Zambia could constitute an opportunity to revise the law. In Zambia, students are expelled if they demonstrate and that happened in the past.
- **About access to information in rural areas:** A participant pointed that pictures could be used in rural areas to encourage illiterate people to use condom. She commended the fact that in South Africa, information is disseminated in languages other than English. The presenter explained that Zambian information campaigns also used pictures, but additional funds are needed to reach people in rural areas.

Sexualities, gender and identities, by Barrington Zulu, University of Zambia

Barrington Zulu first showed an extract of a video he shot in his university where he interviewed students on the topics of sexualities.

Findings

- Universities can be considered as a “vulnerable area” because of its young population.
- Heterosexuality is the “socially acceptable act in Zambia” and some students enter transactional sexual intercourse.
- Gay and Lesbianism is taboo in Zambia and is practiced in secrecy.
- Gender inequalities are rooted in traditional beliefs. Many rural female students feel challenged by urban female students. The unbalanced gender ratio among students creates competition

between young men to gain the women's favours. The most vulnerable population is the first year young women, who are at the centre of the "gold rush".

- The influence of peers in defining one's identity coexists with the will of students to be identified with "unique characteristics", notably through sexual performance.

Recommendations

- Institutions to strengthen the sexual harassment policy.
- Law on gay and lesbianism to be revised.
- Institution to introduce peer education as compulsory.
- ABC campaigns to be increased.
- Use university students who work in high schools to tackle gender issues.
- Reduce the difference in the enrolment sexual ratio through affirmative action.
- Set up anti-AIDS associations within the campus, to be funded by the University.

Questions/Answers/Comments about the law against Gay relationships in Zambia:

- A Zambian participant, coming from "a CBO where 80% of the population is against the law" stressed that one should be careful when proposing to revise such law and measure the consequences, as giving rights to LGTB could lead to dangerous consequences.
- Another participant from Zimbabwe stressed that giving the same rights to LGTB as heterosexuals "might be right in one society, and it might be wrong in others". It is the same issue as when one proposed to distribute condoms in churches. The question is to reflect on how best we can talk about these issues so that society can accept.
- Another participant was of the opinion that the Zambian constitution will not be changed. While South Africa gives rights to LGTB, they are still a minority everywhere. He pointed that qualifying Zambia as a "more traditional" place is a wrong generalisation. **There are always ways to promote rights without offending churches: South Africa chose to create a civil union to avoid disturbing the institution of marriage. Finally, enabling a minority is about democracy.**

We must critique our own understanding and perception. We always wear glasses and we need to take them off and wear other ones; at first we might not see well, but it is important...

the participants and using humour.

Session 2: Gender and HIV, Rory du Plessis, UP, communication, arts and media Department

Rory du Plessis's presentation was extremely energetic and non-conventional. He used his acting talents and physical presence to make the audience reflect and displace its points of view, notably by moving on the stage, provoking

About transformation and change

Rory Du Plessis surprised the audience when he made them realise that in the late 19th century, the train, as a new invention, was considered by the church and society as "disgust and a sin". Similarly, some years ago, the Church stood for apartheid and said that blacks and whites were not the same. His point was not to discredit the church, the law or society but to show that one becomes anxious when there is transformation and change.

The HIV epidemic is a mirror that reflects the inequalities of society, and in particular gender disparities.

About Gender

- **Sex** is timeless; it is biologically determined, and encompasses the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women.
- **Gender** is socially constructed. It reflects the roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. Society tells us what to wear (blue or pink) or how to sit. Society prescribes values to colours, to objects. And societies vary: It is socially acceptable and recommended for men to wear skirts in Scotland!
- **We rather look at the differences than the sameness:** We all have eyes, a nose, only the genital areas parts are different.

- 2/3 of world's illiterate are women and they face institutional, financial, social, cultural and familial pressure.

Education, gender, culture and HIV

It is difficult for someone illiterate to understand biology and HIV awareness concepts: *"I am not concerned by white cells because I'm black"* once said a participant in an IEC session. The implications of not knowing women's anatomy, coupled with cultural beliefs can also lead to harmful practices such as "dry sex", which constitutes a risk factor for HIV. Finally, in languages where sexual parts cannot be named, it is difficult to report sexual abuse.

About gender stereotypes and perceptions

- The myths of the Western and African cultures are based on patriarchal values. Mr du Plessis showed some western adverts that are based on gross gender stereotypes.
- Women are taught not to have sex and men are presented as threats "a man is like a bee, one will come to sting you".
- In biology, the egg is seen as passive and the sperm active but the latest research show that both are equally active.

Conclusion

We must unwind our society and our culture, challenge patriarchal values. In the context of Aids fatigue, where reproductive matters are seen as dangerous and bringing HIV and pregnancy, we need to talk about sex and pleasure, about sexuality, which means talking about society, as when a couple is in the bedroom, the same patriarchal values are at play. We can bring other approaches and other understandings!

- Men are seen as individuals who cannot control their hormones: if man does not have sex often, "the sperm goes to the brain and the man becomes mad". The implications for HIV prevention are severe, as, how to discuss consensual sex if men are taught that they can do what they want?

Questions/Answers/Comments

About "blacks and whites"

- A participant shared her discomfort about the story Mr du Plessis told about a "black people" and their perceptions about the disease, as she felt they were derogatory. Mr du Plessis answered that when mentioning a research, we need to unpack who said what. He said he could not apologise for the findings but he could apologise if he offended some people.
- A second student was of the opinion that "We tend to be too emotional about black and white comments, we tend to politicise these things", while you need to give the background of the respondents if it is relevant.
- Another participant felt that a lot of black people "are in denial about the truth that surrounds them" and that **"we should be honest about ourselves and create awareness about HIV, whatever our colour is"**.
- Another emphasised the importance of the information given by parents: her grandmother told her that she should "stay away from boys and if she doesn't, her fingers will grow long".
- Another proposed to use the term "African" instead of "Black", while Rory du Plessis considered that "it is important to define us as all being African, whatever our colour is".

About different social paradigms

- A participant remarked that when talking about sex, biological and physiological sciences also belong to certain sociological paradigms. She considered that it was not in the paradigm of her culture "to transform latex into condoms".
- We cannot consider sex as the only defining characteristic and Caster Semenya saga showed that sex cannot be a biological constant either.
- Rory du Plessis agreed that **we need to move away from sex and gender to consider the individual**; we still use the sex/gender framework because there is still a huge imbalance between genders.

So many doors have not been open yet... how do we move forward?

Mr du Plessis proposed to use the African approach and notably use the aunts or other women to give sex education. Literacy is not required to do that!

We could use African myths, turned in a positive way: “a man is like a tree, he needs to grow his roots before pollinating”

Key note Address, 30 September 2009: *Reflecting on silences (and noise) in a study of student heterosexualities at a local university campus*, by Tamara Shefer, University of the Western Cape

Aims of the presentation

- To share the findings of a qualitative study conducted at the University of Western Cape, exploring how students talk about sexuality and their sex practices in the light of HIV, and to compare the results with a similar study that was conducted 15 years ago.
- To ask questions about our work on HIV, and the intersection between gender and HIV: To what extent have we silenced some areas of work?

Findings

- **Sexualised campus and pressure to be sexual**
There are sexualised sites on the campus, such as the “condoms square” or “the barn”. Some men come from outside the University to find partners.
There is pressure to be sexual, with a special vulnerability of young girls who “need to fit in” while men need to prove prowess.
- **Sexuality and substances**
The use of alcohol facilitates sexual practices for both men and women; women “feel more confident and more assertive”, while men said they let women get drunk so that “they are easy”.
- **Transactional sex**
Engaging in sex for material gains was not happening in 1990, as revealed in the study Tamara Shefer conducted at that time. The difference comes from an increasing consumer ideology, where access to clothes, cell phones, cars becomes very important, as highlighted in the 2008 Survey on HIV prevalence incidence behaviour and communication published by the HSRC (Human Sciences Research Council). Having a “Sugar daddy” or a “Minister of finance” is for some related to dire poverty, while it is for others about accessing material goods and a certain lifestyle or status. It is difficult to negotiate safe sex in this type of relationship.
- **Traditional gender roles**
Traditional roles are still prevalent. Men are dominant and sex appears as a male domain. There is still the perception that men cannot control their sexuality. Women are silent on their sexuality and there is a lack of positive voice on women’s sexual desires. Double standards prevail: When it is not seen as appropriate, women will be punished for being sexual while men are rewarded. Finally, there is a common perception that men are polygamous and women are monogamous.
- **Condoms and safe sex**
There is a general sense of being knowledgeable, but safe sex is not consistently practiced. This is related to gender power and construction of gendered sexual identities: Women are coerced to have sex without a condom and are uncomfortable to carry condoms. But some people speak about increased use. The situation was different in the study written 15 years ago, where knowledge was not high.
- **Denial of Risk**
There is a tendency to deny risks, a certain “othering of AIDS” where a lot of people think “it can’t happen to me”.
- **AIDS fatigue?**

There is a feeling among young people that they “heard a lot about HIV at school and in other places”, leading to a tendency to ignore and distance themselves from new interventions. This raises important issues for prevention interventions.

Critical deliberations

- Have we been too monotone and too loud?
We know HIV transmission is linked to power, but we mainly focus on giving information and we do not understand aids within forms of inequalities.
- Have we taken gender and other intersectionality seriously in our interventions?
We need to deconstruct masculinity and integrate and fuse the gender issues to promote a more holistic approach.
- **To what extent have we in our research, messages, interventions, reproduced and legitimised traditional gender roles and heterosexual normative practices?**

It is important to highlight the power dimensions and the fact men emerge as perpetrator while women emerge as victims, but we have not gone beyond that, and we have not shown images of men and women challenging these perceptions. We need to highlight positive heterosexuality or positive female sexuality and desires.

Sexuality, as presented in HIV interventions, is monotone and talks focus on heterosexuality penetrative sexuality. There have been silences in our research and HIV practices. **We need to document and facilitate discussions, notably on alternative masculinities that challenge gender stereotypes.**

Conclusion

She concluded by quoting the title of the conference, “Imagined futures” to highlight that we are now challenged to **imagine** alternative genders and sexual practices.

Questions/Answers/Comments

- Young people are sexual and it is good to acknowledge it. **What do you think of the ABC (Abstain, Be Faithful, Condomise) campaigns in campuses?**

It is good that sex happens in campuses and is spoken about, but the problem is the unsafe practices. Mrs Shefer stated that she found ABC campaigns particularly unhelpful in the university context.

The question is: Why do students feel they need multiple partners? The prevention campaigns should deal with the context and look at values, power and broader social processes and ideologies. The messages need to use the fabric of students’ life at this point in time.

- **How do you associate gender and sexuality?**

We cannot separate sexuality from gender, sexual practices and identities are determined a lot by gender power relationships but there are challenges to adequately integrate these concepts and we have not managed to integrate gender knowledge and research into practice.

- **How far do you think the social context has gone in eroding gender stereotypes?**

Universities are “highly gendered raced and classed places”, although lots of efforts have been put on deconstructing these stereotypes. There are real attempts to develop messages that are more appropriate, taking into consideration research findings, but there is a long way to go. We need to interrogate the types of interventions in place and their degree of success.

Session 3: Student Panel Discussion: Sexual and Reproductive Rights

- **Aim of the session**

The “Beyond Borders Partnership” gives one student from each of the seven partner-universities an opportunity to present a burning issue in her/his university, linked with termination of pregnancy, gender or violence amongst others. By doing so, they also give a brief overview of the institutional and in-country context and the measures put in place to tackle the issue.

- **Multiple Concurrent Partnerships in Botswana**

The problem: Many students from rural areas have problems to adapt to their new environment and engage in MCP and/or transactional sex, because their studying allowance is too meagre, or for sexual variety, peer pressure or because of enforced abstinence (when the partner is far away).

Initiatives: The University of Botswana tries to address the problem by organising discussions in hostels, by the “Break the chain” programme, sex education, and giving information on HIV during special events. The speaker concluded by asking each participant to reflect on who is in his/her sexual network.

- **Risky sexual behaviours in Mozambique**

The problem: The speaker placed her talk in the wider context characterised by a large move of young people converging at universities since the fifties, all over the world. The first public university in Mozambique offers study grants to students from all over the country, and students are exposed to different contexts, regarding housing facilities, food and academic material, while the accumulation of money in the capital creates temptations. In this context, students looking for an easy way out of their situation engage in transactional sex, with lecturers to gain good marks, with other students to gain academic material or with partners outside university.

Initiatives: An “Activists Group” organised sensitisation, debates and lectures to prevent HIV and risky behaviour, but *“talking about transactional sex at University is still very taboo and has been very difficult, also because there is a perception that commercial sex does not happen at university where the academic level is high.”*

- **Gender based violence in Malawi**

The problem: Stories of gender violence are often portrayed in the newspapers and happen on campuses. Story telling workshops are organised for victims. But if most people know the policy, they do not know how and where to report abuse.

Initiatives: There are more talks on Human Rights, so gender-based violence is coming out, but there are still too many silences and the judiciary system is male dominated, which brings into question the fairness of the penalties imposed on perpetrators.

- **Gender based violence in Namibia**

The problem: Young girls are educated at a very young age about the duties attributed to husbands and wives, based on stereotypes and not on their capacities, giving decision making powers to men. They also witness what happens amongst the adults, where gender based violence is common. At university, young men have been witnessed beating their partners.

Initiatives: A disciplinary task force on violence on campus has been put in place and a questionnaire designed to assess who the violence involves and the beliefs. 94 students answered the questionnaire. The results showed that 72% of students have experienced violence. Still, few initiatives have been put in place to help combating violence and we have been very silent on the campus.

- **LGBT Issues in South Africa: Are the rights of LGBT people upheld at University? (Harriet Radebe, University of Pretoria)**

The speaker first presented the historical milestones of LGBT issues and the changes that have happened since 1994: Apartheid was against homosexuality, and LGBT people were arrested. Several gay organisations rose in the seventies, divided along racial lines. In 1996, the Constitution ended this discrimination and in 2006 homosexual people could formalise their relationship in a civil union contract.

Even if the South African Constitution is one of the most advanced in the world, social acceptance is often lacking, especially outside the major cities, and police often fails to deal properly with violence against LGBT people.

At the University of Pretoria, complaints can be lodged if a student feels he/she was discriminated against because of race, sex, gender, or social background. A LGBT organisation also exists on UP campus. But the speaker feels it is still a conservative Afrikaans university.

What can be done? Provide funds, safe and

secure location for LGBT organisations.

- **Transactional sex in Zambia**

The problem: The speaker presented an interview of a young woman and man talking about the gains obtained by women from transactional sex and the forms of transactional sex happening on the campus.

Initiatives: There are a lot of HIV organisations on the campuses, but the biggest challenge is on MCP because there is no efficient way to combat the economic issues it is related to. There is no morality in the campus.

- **LGBT issues in Swaziland**

Homosexuality is not well accepted in Swaziland and still a taboo, perpetuated notably by traditional leaders. This was illustrated by the scandal occasioned by the publication of two lesbians on the front page of a newspaper. LGBT people do not “come out” at University and lesbians are “punished” in high school.

Questions, answers and comments

About gender-based violence (GBV)

- What is the link between GBV and intergenerational sex and with the spread of HIV? Young women fear to be left alone and tend to accept everything coming from older men who provide for them, including violence and unsafe sex.
- *A comment on GBV in Zambia:* in some cultures, GBV is tolerated and women consider male violence as a sign of affection. This shows how ingrained gender-based violence is!
- *About GBV in Malawi:* men and women should be empowered to end GBV, what kind of empowerment initiatives are in place? The speaker quoted the example of a lecturer who is challenging gender stereotypes by going to work with her baby.

In Namibia there is a Woman and Child Protection Unit, where women can report on GBV, while in Zambia, there is a Victim Support Unit.

A participant suggested that we should move beyond the consideration that traditional cultures silence people, and ask: what can we do to speak up about gender-based violence in universities? What can be done to help students to report cases?

About transactional sex

- A question on the presentation from Botswana: Did students get advice on how to manage the grant they get from Government? Workshops are organised to teach assertiveness and budgeting, but that does not stop transactional sex, as young women “keep wanting more”.
- A participant commented on the fact that men are seen as “investors” while they also want fashion clothes and cell phones. How can they cope in those circumstances? Do they also engage in transactional sex? What mechanisms do they use to acquire the same goods and to fit in?

About GLBT issues

- Do LGBT organisations on the campus promote the use of dental gums and condoms? Do you fight patriarchy and gender stereotypes? Gender stereotypes are tackled by the individual behaviours of each of us and how we express ourselves.

- Do you think homosexuals are also abusing each other? How do you address it? The homosexual community is small in South Africa, and violence exists, but it is very hard to report it. Another participant commented that violence exists within gay relationships and must be looked at with gender lenses as often the partner endorsing the male role attacks the other one.

About morality

Many participants reacted to the presentation from Zambia where the speaker invoked the “lack of morality on the campus”:

- Instead of using a moral argument, that is also used to stigmatise gays and MSM, the question is: How do we ensure that people have rights?
- A participant from Zimbabwe said that “the 40 years of Mugabe’s power are about the moral argument”.
- The speaker responded that transactional sex is mainly linked with the fact that few grants are available and the university fees are expensive, so many women have no other options. He also mentioned that his organisation was campaigning to obtain grants for most vulnerable students.
- Finally, a participant noted that morality is relative and in its name, apartheid was justified, and sex between two people of different races was forbidden. Universities are not amoral spaces, but they are places where several moralities co-exist. He also added that young people are caged at home and released in University, where should fly. The real questions are to identify the various moralities that exist in university and help people to move from more risks to less risk.

Session 4, Chaired by Millica Mwela, University of Zambia

A comparison of high-risk sexual behaviour of male athletes and male non-athletes students at the University of Botswana, by Molly K. Sebele, Department of Physical Education (Tonota College of Education- Botswana).

Aims of the study

To establish whether there are any differences in the sexual behaviour patterns between elite male athletes, male student Recreational Sports Participants (RSP) and male student non-athletes. This research was part of a Master dissertation.

Methodology

Quantitative methodology: 235 questionnaires were analysed, they explored the demographics, sexual habits, sexual health, and issues on HIV/AIDS.

Results

- Although not all determinants of high-risk behaviour showed statistically significant differences, numerically male athletes in this study were shown to have a higher prevalence of risky behaviours such as multiple sexual partners (62% athletes have more than 1 partner, 39% in non athletes) and sexual debut at an earlier age, than non-athletes.
- This finding is in agreement with the exchange theory that suggests different sexual outcomes for athletes and non-athletes. Male athletes are expected to use their status to bargain for sex, and thus to have a higher rate of sexual activity, more partners, and an earlier onset of intercourse than non-athletes.

“Sexual what!?!... don’t you mean shag buddies?”, by Charmaine Thokoane and Lerato Lebona

Aims of the study

To better understand student’s networks to better enhance intervention programmes.

Definitions

- Student culture: University is a different environment from school, determined by less control and a lot of freedom.

- The formal social networks are student societies or any group of young people who pursue a common goal (i.e. in a HIV prevention organisation). The informal networks are any places where students meet, such as bars, restaurants, clubs. The sexual networks do not necessarily merge with the social network.

Methodology

Workshops with groups divided according to gender and sexual orientation

Results

- **The networks**
Some of the networks identified are: “shag buddies” (someone to call anytime), “toe tapping” (after 5 pm, a man puts his feet under the toilets’ door and another man comes in), “one night stands” in clubs, “sub branches”(MCPs), “sugar daddies”, “friends with benefits”.
- **The reasons why engaging in sexual activity**
Pleasure and adventure appeared as a common reason to all the groups interviewed. Heterosexual males also mentioned social pressure, and their “male nature”, while heterosexual females identified money, status, and that it might lead to a relationship.
- **Protected sex**
Homosexual males use condoms most of the time, while heterosexual males do not use condoms with their main partner, but use a condom with occasional partners. Heterosexual females are flexible, and a transaction is possible, depending what they can get out the intercourse.
- **Silences and secrets** form part of the excitement and adrenaline.

Conclusion: University is a dynamic place. How can we use the information collected on the sexual networks and “hook up places” to strengthen intervention programmes to minimise the spread of HIV?

Questions, answers and comments

On the presentation on athletes in Botswana

- Why are the athletes more vulnerable and to what extent? They are more vulnerable because in society, football player notably are regarded as having a high status, similarly to TV presenters and actors. In addition, rugby players have highly masculine attributes, which attract more girl friends. This high status leads them to engage in more relationships.
- 97% athletes said they were heterosexual. What about the 3%? Are they homosexual? It is not easy to state that you are homosexual in Botswana, so it was not mentioned.

On the presentation on sexual networks in University of Pretoria

- To make intervention strategies work, we need to know what is happening on the ground. Thanks for giving us this valuable information.
- This presentation highlighted the complexities of young people’s sexuality and the choices they make. This constitutes an eye opener and shows how we deny issues happening on the campus. What kind of intervention do the participants think are possible?
- What to do with issues of power, economic and gender? There is pleasure in the relationships, but the rationale of young women seems to be: “why not get something out of the men too if they are willing to pay?”.
- Was there a bisexual group? There were bisexual individuals in the group.

General comments

- We are coming from rural areas, where our base is. There are factors that make it difficult to translate into the university environment the matters of culture, tradition and taboos. When we are going back home, to Swaziland or Zimbabwe, can we come up with advocacy tools to deal with the issues we are talking about here?

Session 5, chaired by Mala Nyamanda

Window of hope: Knowledge and perception of children and their parents about HIV in a suburban neighbourhood in Beira, Mozambique, by Edy Nacarapa, Universidade Catolica de Mozambique

Aims

To provide a basis for the design of effective prevention activities for the 10-14 year age group through:

- Evaluating the level of knowledge and information that children have about HIV/AIDS
- Identifying misconceptions of HIV/AIDS
- Identifying children's sources of information about HIV
- Finding out what and how families communicate about sexuality and HIV to children

Methodology

- Questionnaires with 45 questions and semi-structured interviews for children and their parents, focussing on knowledge, attitude, practices
- Total number of respondents: 184 (70 adults with children at the age of 10-14, 114 children at the age of 10-14); Of the total of 114 children, 63 (57.8%) were girls and 46 (42.2%) boys.

Main Findings

Knowledge

- 20-30% of children and adults had misconceptions of HIV, e.g. that mosquitoes transmit HIV or that HIV can be caused by black magic etc.
- ¼ of the children did not know anything about HIV
- Most of the respondents know that anti-retroviral treatment exists and would go for it.

Attitude

- 20 -30% of the children think that "A man always has the right to have sex and the woman cannot refuse sex"
- 10% would accept to engage in transactional sex, e.g. for material benefits or for passing exams.
- 25% would accept sexual relations on request of the boy-friend.
- 80% of the respondent children want to help and visit PLWHA.

Practice

- 20 (17.5%) of the 114 children confirmed that they already had sexual intercourse:

Conclusion

- Media are the most important source of information about HIV. Are messages in the media adequate and specific for children?
- The second most important source of information is teachers. Have they been prepared enough to inform children?
- HIV education of children should be linked with education on sexuality.
- There is a lack of communication in the family.

Sexual and reproductive rights/health at the Copperbelt University (CBU), by Nawa Sanjobo, Copperbelt University, Zambia

Aims of the presentation

To share the experiences of CBU in sexual, reproductive health and HIV and AIDS interventions, that started in 2008 in collaboration with the Norwegian Students' and Academics International Assistance Fund (SAIH). CBU has 6 schools, 6,045 students and 723 members of staff.

Methodology

- The interventions focus on various issues, including sexual behaviour, pregnancy and child birth, unintended pregnancies and abortions, gender inequalities, women empowerment, harmful cultural practices and participation of men in reproductive health activities.
- Students and staff were trained to enable them to facilitate Peer Education interventions, Psychosocial counselling, Adherence counselling and Training of Trainers (TOT).
- The following activities, amongst others, took place: Sensitisation Workshops for the 1st year students on Sexual and reproductive health issues, drugs and substance use), VCT, Safe motherhood, Sexual and reproductive health and rights workshop, Campus outreach, sensitization of the community on various forms of stigma, women empowerment workshops, production of IEC materials, organization of debates, condom promotion and distribution, integration of HIV and AIDS and Sexual and Reproductive Health Issues in the University Curriculum, sexual harassment survey.

Results

- Improved knowledge and understanding by the students and staff of the dynamics of HIV infection and sexual and reproductive health and rights and improved motivation to do peer education.
- Reduction in social exclusion of people living with HIV and AIDS at University.
- The sensitization campaigns in the community have lead to an increased number of people accessing services for sexually transmitted infections and VCT.

Silences and denials: Everyday experiences of young people in negotiating AIDS, sexuality and gender in rural Zimbabwe, by Eve Musvosvi, University of Pretoria

Aim

- To explore how children learn, understand and experience sex, gender and AIDS, and the platforms they use.
- To explore if and how the context of economic, political, legal, social and health Aids crisis in Zimbabwe impacts on children's sexuality.

Methodology

- Ethnographic fieldwork with the main sample comprised of 25 girls and 25 boys (4-16 years).
- The main tool was participant observation- attending social function, sports, funerals, National AIDS day competitions; observation of children's performances, drawings, dreams, fantasies, stories.
- Other tools used: Focus group discussions, interviews and analysis local school, clinic records.

Findings

- **Silences and denials**
 - Adults treat children's performances as innocent
 - The definition of childhood in Education Policies is contested
 - There are no rights to reproductive health for children
 - There is no HIV education at school
 - Gendered experiences are occurring during childhood.
- **Children's performances**
 - Chiweshe children are appropriating new social spaces to address their sexual, reproductive health, survival and political interests through performances (funerals, rallies, and competitions) where they contest adult-centric knowledge of their sexuality without any punitive measures.
 - Performances are reflections of possibilities and realities, not just unreal fictions.
- **Sexuality and HIV**

- The children's performances reveal a shift from emphasis on reproductive sex, to an emphasis on pleasurable, reciprocal, non penetrative sexual relations.
- High level of AIDS awareness, but also misconceptions, and myths the children have are also revealed.
- Girls and boys reconstruct their bodies as sexually desirable and mature.
- **Gender dimensions**
 - Most of the performances by the boys alone in continuity with the dominant masculine and political discourse.
 - Girls are also constructing their sexuality during village social activities and kitchen parties.
 - Genres seemed less misogynistic when girls joined the previously male dominated performance group.

Conclusion and implications for AIDS research and programming

- Performances have much potential as a starting point in researching sexuality with children, as a knowledge acquisition device and an information sharing resource amongst children.
- Consider the child/youth as an expert on his/her own situation.
- Start at local concepts and understandings.

Questions, answers and comments

- About the initiatives in Copperbelt University: Were the interventions evaluated to check if effective? Continuous measures will be done.
- About the study in Zimbabwe:
 - What is the role of teacher? Has he been trained on HIV? The speaker responded that as it was a child-centred study, there was no focus on teachers. However, studies on the roles of teachers exist.
 - What was the methodology of the research? It was participant observation of various gatherings: ZANU PF forced rallies, funerals, children's performance at the funerals of a MDC teacher. Children are seen as innocent, but they were politically subversive in their performance. Most of the children belonged to child headed households.
 - Comment: it is true that a lot of children's issues have not been researched, but in South Africa, since 1995, there has been a lot of narrative research.

Session 6: VCT – an entry point or a stumbling block? Panel Discussion, chaired by Pierre Brouard, CSA Deputy Director

Panelists: Ray Lazarus – Clinical Psychologist and Befriender trainer and mentor – CSA, Claudia da Rocha Kustner – Clinical Psychologist and HIV co-ordinator, institutional office for HIV and AIDS – UJ, Gary Shaw – Befriender and honours student in anthropology, Ntshediseng Tlooko – Befriender and 3rd year psychology student, Dora Ramogobeng – Befriender and 3rd year communications management student

Introduction, by the Chair

VCT is encouraged at university and it is an entry point to change. But is it a good vehicle to tackle sexualities and silences?

- VCT is a short intervention and decontextualises the clients: Is there enough time to talk about issues such as sexuality, sex choices, gender based violence? How to open up to the counsellor, who is a stranger?
- On the other hand, VCT can allow interesting issues to be opened up, may trigger a process of change (but may not sustain it) and is a unique opportunity to speak about issues when the client is vulnerable.

Discussions by the panellists

- On one hand, VCT is a proper vehicle to talk about sexuality as the counsellor can use his/her skills to encourage people to open up. On the other hand, there is limited time and a fear to be judged. Sexuality makes people feel uncomfortable, and it is difficult to challenge some perceptions such as “men should supply the condom”. Increasing the time of counselling might be a solution but how to deal with the individuals who do not want to talk and stay long? The solutions might be to build a better relationship so the client feels more comfortable. **Acting as a role model for openness and creating a safe space are powerful instruments.**
- VCT is a good vehicle because counsellors engage with people like themselves. **VCT is the meeting point of everything we discussed here.** We use the medium of sex to communicate about everything else and we can touch on different issues, such as transactional sex, sex networks, within the “big picture”. Issues such as rape can be referred. The question is more: **How do we attract more students and different students to check their status?**
- The outcomes of VCT sessions are to learn more about HIV, to consider the own risks of the clients and find ways to prevent the transmission of HIV. There is not enough time to explore the client’s life forces that determine his behaviour, especially because the client is usually anxious about his/her status, so he/she does not want to spend time discussing sexuality issues. **Behavioural change requires time. Hence, one solution could be to transform VCT from a once-off event into an ongoing process and organise monthly sessions during 6 months, so that the client gets to know the counsellor.**
- The negative reaction of some of South African Youth when viewing two men kissing in the Generations TV series highlights the need for a dialogue on sexualities and gender based issues. Ideally VCT should provide such a platform. It is a safe space to talk about HIV and clients should be encouraged to address issues around sex, sexuality, gender and risks. However, realistically, in a context where Human Resources in the health sector are not sufficient, counsellors tend to rush the counselling time and judgements replace empathy. Counsellors are often burnt out and do not get any opportunities to deal with their own views and perceptions on sexuality, while regular supervision is missing. There is increased lobbying around the advantages of Provider-initiated Testing where the counselling time is kept to a minimum in order to increase testing numbers. This would definitely prevent any discussion around sexuality and gender. **As VCT is one of the only platforms where we can engage in non-judgemental safe dialogue** and thus reduce stigma and raise awareness, the real question is: What can we do to adjust the current VCT model to make it more efficient?
- It remains difficult to break some silences, when the client wants to stop using a condom after a long relationships, and we are sometimes accomplices of this silence, whereas VCT should be an open space where silences are broken.

Even if the time available makes it difficult to address the broad social issues, the most important benefit of VCT is to provide a space which normalizes talking about sex and sexuality, a space where we can talk about feelings, fears and trigger self-reflection.

Questions/Answers/Comments

For pre-test counselling, is a group counselling session practical?

Different panellists responded with the following:

- It is ineffective because some people open up and others cannot. I would rather propose people to come back if they want to talk more.

- The benefit of VCT is for the counsellor to bond with the client and splitting your time between the group participants is difficult.
- Group counselling happens a lot in hospitals, out of necessity. I think we could use it and reframe it into a “group information session on sexuality” as a first step, with an HIV testing facility outside.
- Group counselling is practical if we allow time for students to explore their own issues.

VCT can be dangerous when it opens up wounds, as when the client goes back home, there is no one to talk to. How to address this problem?

- It does open wounds, but the client needs to come back and starts the healing process. Students are a mobile population, so it is important to have good referral networks.

About homosexuality

- *How to introduce the topic of homosexuality?*
 - The fuss created around the TV series Generations was good, as when in media, people start questioning a topic.
 - Posters and other media have been used in UP, and open posters were also put on display where people could write whatever they wanted on the topic. It is important to think creatively.
- *How to de-stigmatise homosexuality?*
Homosexuality should be looked at within sexuality: Why are we obsessed by the differences and not the similarities? Do we want to use lenses of solidarity or lenses of difference?
- *How to speak about homosexuality in countries where it is not legal? What to answer when we are asked if it is acquired or genetic? Many suggestions made here only apply to South Africa, as we cannot use media and people in rural areas will not understand.*
In Botswana, there are Human Rights organisations dealing with the issues faced by gay people and you should link up with them. Lobbying for equality is an initiative that can be taken. The origin of homosexuality may be genetic.

***Do we have concrete solutions?
Finding concrete solutions was not the intention of this workshop as we do not want to prescribe. Participants will go back with questions and ideas and develop their own solutions, as one need to own the solution within one’s particular context.***

Closing remarks

By the Conference Rapporteur, Céline Mazars

During two days we explored and tried to understand the determinants of student’s behaviours in order to develop the best prevention programmes. We looked at the social and cultural structures and micro-cultures that shape behaviours. In doing so, we spoke a lot about categories. Am I gay, lesbian, heterosexual, transgendered? Am I rich or poor and likely to enter transactional sex? Am I Black or White? African or Westerner? Gay in South Africa or Gay in Zambia? A first year student afraid to be stung by a bee or victim of peer pressure? Or am I a young empowered lady seeking pleasure? But we also highlighted that there are a lot of sub-categories and nuances that need to be taken into consideration: In terms of sexual identity, even our biological knowledge was challenged by the “Caster Semeya Saga”. We always find people who do not want to be in “categories”, as categories always induce assumptions in the mind of the ones who are “outside”. We all carry perceptions and the game is actually to be aware and wary of them, questioning them, find who we are and look at people for who they are...

That is what this workshop is helping us to do, by creating a climate where people feel free to express their views, where the opinions of others are respected.

So, what do I need to take back home that will help me working on HIV/AIDS in a more effective way?

- ***To consider cultures as dynamic and something we can change***
- ***To promote alternative values, away from consumerism and status***

- *To promote positive images of sexuality*
- *To promote and lobby for the rights of LGBT people*
- *To promote sexual integrity, i.e. being honest with ourselves and the others*
- *The need to ask questions, being creative and promote the values of ubuntu, as we are all in the same category, the human one!*

By the Student Chair: Banele Senatla

Banele Senatla reminded the audience that they were present to unpack the facts surrounding HIV/AIDS, especially when associated with sexuality; by breaking the silences around these issues.

She then summarised the discussion points highlighted in the various presentations and concluded with the following considerations:

- The silences between adults and adolescents lead to conflict and irresponsible behaviours that can lead to HIV/AIDS and related social problems. But these problems constitute in turn an opportunity for the society to address sexuality and in the process challenge these silences. We need to create a culture of frankness amongst adolescents- regardless of their sexuality.
- Academically, education, research and training are more focused on heterosexuality, while lesbian and gay issues are often left to organisations that deal mainly with concerns of sexual orientation. Deeply entrenched homophobia is the root cause of this situation, as reflected in public claims that homosexuality is not African. But what makes Christianity an African notion then? **What every community needs, is for policies, regulations and resources to include the recognition of same-sex partnerships. The silences about sexualities and HIV/AIDS make it difficult for young people (especially homosexuals and transgender people) to approach services for information and advice about sex and its related risks.**
- Because of our silences, judgments and labels regarding issues of gender or sexual preferences, people are confined to boxes. We need to stop making people feel ashamed of being who they are. Instead, we ought to be ashamed of ourselves for our narrow-mindedness, judgements, prejudices and intolerance towards others.

As Zak Mbhele reminded us when discussing the role of Ubuntu: “I am because you are, you are because I am and I am through me”. Let’s treat each other with respect and dignity.

Conclusion and way forward

The participants, speakers and organisers were thanked and the participants were asked to use the information gained in the workshop to “move forward” in order not to perpetuate the silences. An exciting announcement was shared: the 2008 activities of the programme received a positive evaluation and in 2010, ***the Imagined Futures V Conference will be held in Botswana.***