

Cognitive Frames and Cultural Responses to AIDS Education

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Abstract

Objectives: This study explores the effect of cultural/linguistic models of communication and human interaction on subjects' perceptions of and responses to AIDS prevention television advertisements.

Design: Controlled interviews with linguistic analysis of responses.

Methods: Two subject groups, one consisting of Hong Kong Chinese university students and the other of Western university lecturers were asked to view and then describe a collection of Hong Kong AIDS awareness television commercials. Two hundred retellings from twenty subjects were collected, transcribed and then analyzed for the cognitive/linguistic "frames" subjects operated within in their responses using a methodology adapted from Tannen (1979, 1980, 1984).

Results: Analysis revealed important differences in how the two groups approached the commercials. The Chinese students tended to see the commercials as *stories*, with most of their responses operating in the narrative frame in which they described, interpreted and judged the actions of characters. The Western teachers, on the other hand, saw the commercials as *lectures*, focusing on the information they contained, the technical aspects of the presentation, the possible intentions of the producers, and whether or not the ads were effective in conveying "facts". The differences in focus led the two groups to take from the ads different messages and apply these messages to themselves in different ways.

Conclusion: This preliminary study suggests that people from different speech communities might "read" AIDS prevention messages in different ways and that the design of culturally relevant AIDS education must take into account not just a community's practices and presuppositions regarding sex, drug use, medicine and disease, but also their practices and presuppositions regarding language use.

Introduction

As the HIV pandemic continues its relentless spread across borders and across cultures, increasing attention has been paid by social scientists and AIDS educators to the role of language in the development of effective and 'culturally sensitive' AIDS education materials and programs for prevention and care. Most of the work to date, however, has conceptualized language along rather narrow *semantic* lines, focusing on such issues as native categories and classifications for sexual acts and sexual identities or on particular registers used for talking about risk behavior (for example, sexual slang) (Parker, Herdt and Carballo 1991). Mays (1992), for example, has examined how linguistic differences between how black and white gay men talk about sex and sexuality can affect the way they interpret information about AIDS risk reduction, and Parker (1990) has observed how members of different 'sexual cultures' in Brazil use different labels and lexicons to communicate about sexual activity. Other work applicable to the production of effective interventions and publicity campaigns has concentrated on the potential stigmatizing power of language (Plummer 1988) and metaphors (Sontag 1991), a power which has prompted Callen (1990) to call AIDS "a linguistic battlefield" and Teichler (1980) to dub it "an epidemic of significiation".

Language, however, goes far beyond signs and signifiers, far beyond concerns with what we "mean" and the particular words we use to express these meanings. It also encodes our relationships with the people we are communicating with, what we think we are doing when we are communicating, and a whole host of rules and expectation and ways of seeing the world.

Scollons and Scollon (1995) define language as a system of rules of communication that groups follow composed of four primary elements: the dominant *ideology* or *worldview* at work within the group, the ways members are *socialized* into the discourse system, the set of preferred *forms of discourse* for different situations, and the rules of interaction, or *face systems*, participants abide by when communicating. Over the past twenty years, sociological and anthropological linguists have provided numerous examples of how conflicting cultural expectations regarding these larger elements of language use can lead to misunderstanding between members of different speech communities. Gumperz and Hymes (1972) and Gumperz (1977), for instance, have pointed out how, in interethnic communication, conflicting expectations regarding rules of interaction, prosody, and paralinguistic cues can lead participants to form negative judgements about speakers' personalities, abilities and intentions. In their work with Athabaskan Indians,

Scollon and Scollon (1981) have shown how the different frameworks of Athabaskan and English speakers in such areas as the presentation of the self, the distribution of talk, information structure, and content organization, result in the formation of ethnic stereotypes. In the area of gender and discourse, Tannen (1994) has noted that breakdowns in communication occur when men and women bring different expectations to conversational exchanges, with men emphasizing information over relationship, and women emphasizing relationship over information.

This paper will explore how some of these broader aspects of language use can affect the way people from different groups interpret and act on AIDS prevention messages. In particular, it will examine the cognitive frames through which people view media messages about AIDS, and how their different perspectives are related to differing fundamental cultural expectations about communication and its role in human relationships.

Frame and Stances

When an individual encounters a media message about AIDS, or any other act of communication, the way they respond depends on the way they answer two basic questions. The first is: What's going on here; what is the author of the message *doing*? Is s/he teaching, advising, entertaining, threatening, etc.? The second is: How am I meant to make sense of this message; what attitude am I meant to take up in relation to it? Am I meant to process it as information, interpret it, search for a hidden meaning, criticize it, etc.? The first of these two questions I will call the 'frame question'. The second, I will call the 'stance question'.

Various researchers in fields as diverse as language teaching, linguistics, sociology and artificial intelligence have made use of the concept of "frames" in analysing human behavior, interaction and communication. Alternatively referred to as *frames* (Goffman 1974), *scripts* (Shank & Ableson, 1977), *schema* (Rumelhart, 1975), and *structures of expectations* (Ross, 1975), the notion of framing is grounded in the idea that people organize information and knowledge about new events, objects or situations on the basis of their experience. This experience leads them to build up certain structures of expectation through which they interpret and judge the world. Frames are our "plans for understanding, for acting, and for talking about events" (Dechert, 1983). Bateson (1972), one of the first to make use of the idea of framing, sees frames as psychological concepts that help people to understand the nature and purpose of communication, much like a picture frame delimits and constrains its contents. "In many instances," he writes, "the frame is consciously recognized and even represented in vocabulary ('play', 'movie', 'interview', 'job', 'language', etc.). In other cases, there may be no explicit verbal reference to the frame, and the subject may have no consciousness of it" (Bateson, 1972, pp. 186-187).

One way to study the cognitive frames people bring to their interpretation of messages has been to analyze subjects' verbal responses to linguistic or visual stimuli, as in Tannen's (1979, 1980, 1984) analysis of American and Greek subjects' retelling of a silent film as part of the *Pearl Stories* project (Chafe, ed., 1980). By examining how her subjects organized their retellings of the film, Tannen was able to explore the different sets of expectations that Greek and American participants used when they viewed the film and formulated their subsequent comments about it. The way subjects construct their comments about a film, she asserts, indicates the particular levels of framing through which they experience the viewing process. The Greek participants, she found, structured their responses around the narrative aspects of the film (*storytelling frame*), whereas American participants were more likely to comment upon the technical aspects of the film (*film frame*) and their experience as viewers of the film (*film-viewer frame*). In a replication of Tannen's study with speakers of California English and Taipei Mandarin, Erbaugh (1990) found that even though both Chinese and American subjects employed similar strategies of chronological sequencing in their responses, the Chinese subjects' "stories" contained more detail and elaboration as well as "social and moral interpretation", while the responses of the American subjects tended to contain more "personal" comments and observations about the film as a film.

Frame analysis has also been used in the study of medical discourse, particularly doctor-patient interaction. Evans, Block, Steinberg and Penrose (1986) claim that the lack of "shared frames" is one of the main reasons for doctor-patient miscommunication. Keeney (1990), using his notion of *recursive frame analysis*, found many differences in content to frame and frame to frame relationships between doctors and patients, and Chenail (1991), drawing on Keeney's methodology, documents examples of differences between how physicians, cardiologists and parents organize information surrounding medical referrals of young children with heart problems. He attributes these differences to incongruencies between "institutional frames and client frames", noting that "the doctor, by virtue of being a member of the medical profession,

has a different context than a parent, who has membership in another context, their family” (Chenail, 1991, p.92).

Whereas ‘frames’ have to do with what receivers of a prevention message, such as an AIDS awareness television commercial, think is happening, “stance” has to do with how they conceptualize who they are in relation to the message, what relationship they have to the authors of the message, for example, and whether or not they consider the message relevant to them. R. Scollon (1995) sees television viewing as a kind of *watch* within which viewers take up stances of identity and power in an asymmetrical relationship with the producers of the message. Their responses to the message, therefore, reflect not just how they frame the topic within a system of beliefs and expectations, but also how they frame themselves as receivers of the message. In an earlier analysis of power and identity in news discourse in Hong Kong, Scollon (1994) suggests that receivers of messages take up roles in regard to the discourse corresponding to Goffman’s (1981) production roles of animator, author, and principal. These roles reflect the way they perceive their rights and obligations within the discourse. The role of *receptor* involves the strictly mechanical aspects of reception; the role of *interpreter* involves making sense out of what is said, filling in gaps according to contextual clues; and the role of *judge* is taken up when a viewer makes judgements about the value of what is said.

Methodology

This study examines the frames in which people from different speech communities operate, and the stances they take up with these frames, when asked to give verbal retellings of AIDS awareness televisions public service messages. The two communities I have chosen to observe are English lecturers in Hong Kong from a variety of Western cultures, and Chinese tertiary students majoring in Teaching English as a Second Language.. Five males and five females were chosen from each population. The students were an extremely homogenous group generationally, culturally and professionally. The teachers, on the other hand, were more diverse, coming from a variety of Western countries--America, Britain, Canada, Australia, and the Bahamas-- each with its distinct system of cultural models. Their ages varied as well (31-53), as did their length of stay in Hong Kong (less than 1 year to 10 years), and the number of years they had been teaching (3 years to 21 years). I argue, however, that these teachers also constitute a cohesive speech community of sorts. First of all, they are all members of what the Scollons (1995) call the *Utilitarian Discourse System*, with its focus on individualism, positivism, and the role of communication in efficiently transmitting information. They are, in fact, masters of this discourse system: it is what they teach. Furthermore, the teachers’ shared profession places them in the professional discourse system of ESL teachers, which Scollon and Scollon (1995) describe as characterized discursively by a tendency to pay more attention to the form of messages rather than their function and ideologically by a “strong support for the individualism and egalitarianism of the Utilitarian ideology” (p. 202).

The subjects were interviewed individually. Each was shown ten Hong Kong Government AIDS awareness API’s produced from 1987 to 1994 in chronological order by date of production. The Chinese students watched Cantonese versions of the commercials, while the Western teachers viewed them in English. The visual channel in both versions was identical, and the voice-overs and dialogue were equivalent translations with only a few exceptions (see Jones, 1996).

After each commercial the tape was stopped, and the subjects were asked to answer the question, “what happened in the commercial?” They were told that they could say as much or as little as they wished. Occasionally, the researcher asked questions in order to clarify certain aspects of the response, but questioning was used sparingly and questions were formulated to be as unobtrusive as possible, not asked until the subjects were finished giving their initial comments, and not introducing new elements for subjects to respond to but rather getting them to expand or clarify elements already generated in their initial responses.

The entire process was videotaped, and careful transcripts were made of subjects’ responses. Initial responses were divided into *idea units* which were coded and calculated according to the procedure outlined below. Responses to follow-up questions, however, were not included in the coding and calculation.

Subjects were also asked to fill in a form as they viewed the commercials indicating for each commercial whether they had seen it before, had not seen it before, or could not remember. At the end of

the interview, they were asked to choose which commercial they found the most effective, which they found the least effective, and to give reasons for their choices.

The major difference between the protocol followed in this study and that used by Tannen (1979, 1980, 1984) was the language that subjects used in their responses. Tannen's subjects responded in their native language, Americans using English and Greeks using Greek. Since this study aims to explore how framing affects intercultural communication, all of the subjects were asked to respond in the language with which the two groups normally communicate with each other: English. The students in the study (all in their final year of a degree course in Teaching English as a Second Language) had reached a level of English proficiency at which they were capable of completing the task at hand without difficulty.

Commercials

The ten ads chosen for this study all contain some narrative elements; they all portray people performing actions. Most also contain an informational channel in the form of a voice-over which gives explicit facts, warnings, or interpretations of the story. Ads of the announcement variety) and those containing testimonials of famous people were not included.

In Jones (1996) I point out that one characteristic of the Hong Kong government's AIDS Awareness campaign is a frequent separation of the visual and the audio channel, with the story realized in the visual channel and the audio channel focusing on information. Characters in the stories seldom talk. Rather, they perform a kind of pantomime overlaid by music and a voice-over which presents a message and often a slogan. Seven of the ten commercials chosen for this study were of this type, though the amount of information given in the voice-over varies from the relatively detailed list of facts in *MTR* to the blunt and simple warning in *Youth and Prostitution, Family and Homosexuals*.

AIDS is a killer disease for which there is no cure. Aids is not restricted to homosexuals. It affects both men and women. Any sexual partner could be an AIDS carrier. Always use a condom. It's not 100% safe, But it is safer. AIDS kills. Use condoms for safer sex.

(MTR)

*It only takes one sexual encounter to pass AIDS onto you.
Why risk it?*

(*Youth and Prostitution, Family, Homosexuals*)

The commercials also vary in regard to the complexity and narrative completeness of the stories they contain. Some, like *Homosexuals*, render "whole" stories with rising action, climax, and denouement. Others, like *Family* and *AIDS and Travellers*, also contain complete stories, but present them in a series of flashbacks rather than in traditional narrative chronology. Still others, however, contain only episodes or scenes from stories, a couple walking into a mass transit railway station (*MTR*), a man placing a condom on his bedside table (*Safer Sex*). The last three commercials (*Husband, Girl, Salon*) fit more closely with what Wells calls "dramas". In these ads the characters actually speak audible dialogue and the voice-over is practically dispensed with, reduced to a slogan at the end of the commercial.

One would expect commercials encoded as primarily informational to elicit a more "analytical" response from viewers, while more transformational commercials would appeal more to their emotions or intuition. As will be seen, however, this depends heavily on the frameworks of communication and education through which viewers approach the commercials, and how informational and transformational forms of discourse fit into those frameworks..

Idea Units

According to Chafe (1980), consciousness seems to work through a series of "focuses", the mind resting on one thing and then another in a "jerky" rather than continuous fashion. This series of "focuses" constitutes a "path", or train of thought, determined by "associations between one focus and the next, and by schema--already known paths which have been established for the same or similar areas of information in the thinker's past experience" (p. 12). These focuses of consciousness are expressed, Chafe argues, through linguistic structures he calls "spurts of language" or "idea units", each consisting of all or part of a single simple clause. The criteria he sets forth for identifying these units include intonation, pausing and syntax, idea units usually ending with a clause-final intonation, usually following and preceding a slight break in tempo, and usually consisting of a single clause.

A further criterion implied by Chafe, who sees idea units as embodiments of “focuses of consciousness” such as “temporal orientation”, “characterization”, and “evaluation”, is that idea units are usually restricted to one type of focus. From the point of view of frame analysis, we can expand this notion to the observation that it is typical for idea units to be restricted to one particular “frame” and one particular “stance”. Thus, separating subjects’ responses into idea units provides a way to measure the relative amount of time speakers spend in particular frames, what sorts of language functions are typically performed within those frames, and what sort of “paths” they follow as they move from idea unit to idea unit, and from frame to frame.

Frames

Tannen (1979, 1980, 1984) analyzed subjects’ responses to the *Pearl Film* in terms of four distinct frames of reference, ranging from the *storytelling frame* to the *subject-of-the-experiment frame*. This study, while drawing heavily on Tannen’s general principles, uses a slightly different collection of frames and criteria for assigning utterances to them. In Jones (1995) I suggested a structure for the analysis of the encoding of television commercials, arguing that media messages function simultaneously within a number of inter-nested frames, corresponding to the physical environment of the television screen (*physical frame*), the narrative acted out within that environment (*narrative frame*), the status of the message as a “commercial” (*generic frame*), and the position of the message within the wider social discourse (*social frame*).

Tannen combines elements of what I refer to as the physical and generic frames in her concept of the *film-frame*, in which she places all utterances in which subjects refer to the film as a film, both from the technical point of view of what physically occurs on the screen, and as a message produced or mediated by various people: actors, director, etc. A silent movie and a public service commercial, however, operate in different ways in terms of aims, content and perceived authorship. Unlike the *Pearl Film*, the AIDS API’s my subjects viewed have clear intentions (to persuade), convey explicit messages (in the form of slogans), and emanate from identifiable *principals* (Goffman, 1981), in this case, the Hong Kong government. Thus, what Tannen (1979) characterizes as “referring to the film as a film” functions in this study on two rather distinct levels: there are the *physical* aspects of the commercial as an audio-visual text, including such aspects as lighting, soundtrack, and the positioning of people and objects within the space of the television screen, which I will continue to label the *physical frame*; and there is also a level on which the commercials exist as *messages*, texts whose intent it is to persuade, which I call the *generic frame* or, more specifically, the *commercial frame*. For the purposes of this experiment, I also find it necessary to add two further layers from Tannen’s analysis to my model: the *experiment frame*, in which subjects attend to the mechanics of the interview itself, and the *viewer frame*, corresponding to Tannen’s *film-viewer frame*, in which respondents focus on themselves as viewers of the commercial and their own processes of understanding, interpreting and interacting with the text.

In order to examine how these patterns of response are reflected in subjects’ comments about the ten commercials, each *idea unit* in their initial responses was coded according to the level of framing indicated in it using the following criteria:

The Physical Frame: Attention to the physical frame is evidenced by statements about the actual pictures appearing on the screen, descriptions of setting, objects, logos and symbols as well as things like music and sound effects.

The Narrative Frame: The narrative frame is signalled by descriptions or interpretations of the actions of characters and the relationships between them.

The Viewer Frame: Respondents are seen to be operating in the viewer frame when their statements contain information about themselves and their experience with the commercial. Sometimes subjects use “generic” pronouns like “you” and “we” to characterize themselves as viewers.

The Commercial Frame: The commercial frame is characterized by reference to the perceived “message” of the commercial or the intentions of its makers.

The Experiment Frame: The experiment frame includes “brackets” subjects use to signal either the beginning or end of their response, or comments about the procedure of the interview or their perception of themselves as subjects.

The Social Frame: The social frame is indicated by comments regarding social/cultural knowledge or practice.

Stances

The *stances* coded onto subject's idea units correspond to what Scollon (1994) sees as the "roles" viewers take up in relation to the message. Idea units presented as objective observations about, for example, the actions of the characters or the content of the voice-over, were seen as instances of *reporting*. When subjects made connections or came to conclusions about elements in the commercial based on their own knowledge or experience or the context of the viewing, their statements were coded as *interpreting*. Interpretations included inferences about the motives or emotions of the characters as well as the intentions of the makers of the commercial. Finally, statements regarding the value, "goodness", or effectiveness of elements in the commercial were coded as *judging*. This is not to suggest that language can be neatly parcelled out into these three rather limited categories; statements of reportage may also include implicit interpretation or evaluation, and interpretative remarks often suggest judgements. Rather, these stances seek to describe how subjects "package" their language within their relationship they assume in relation to what they have seen and the act of talking about it.

Results

Frames

In the framing of their responses to the commercials, the Western teachers and Chinese students exhibited extremely disparate patterns, each group focusing on different frames of the message and enacting different receptive roles within those frames (see Appendix).

The Chinese students tended to see the commercials as "stories", spending more than 60% of their idea units in the narrative frame describing the actions, relationships and motivations of the characters. As expected, all subjects devoted more time to the narrative frame when decoding commercials of a more transformational nature. The students, however, unlike the teachers, even saw commercials of a more informational nature in terms of the story they told.

- (3) a male and a female walk along the Tsim Sha Tsui eastern coast..
- (4) and...I think..uh it's night
- (5) and maybe they have just had a walk...in there..
- (6) and they are going home by MTR..
- (7) and--..and in the MTR station on the stage..
- (8) they see the advertisement box...advertising box...
- (9) and they can see it's a warning about AIDS in the box
- (10) and so they hold each other's hands tightly...
- (11) and...um...and the speaker in the advertisement always emphasizes AIDS is a
- (12) ..um...um...untreatable diseases...

(S1/MTR)

Western teachers, on the other hand, spent only a quarter of their time in the narrative frame, choosing instead to focus on the commercials as "commercials", describing what they believed the "message" being conveyed was, discussing techniques used to convey that message, or making conjectures about the makers' intentions in nearly 40% of their idea units. So focused were they on the messages contained in the commercials and the devices used to convey those messages that they often they failed to see any story at all.

- (7) so the they're targeting it..it seems mostly at heterosexuals
- (8) which em..is evidenced by that comment
- (9) and by the fact that all the couples shown are straight...
- (10) it shows them in sort of familiar setting..very familiar settings
- (11) like um..eh well at the Arts Centre and the waterfront at Kowloon..
- (12) don't know that there was a story there really..
- (13) but just the setting is kind of familiar places..
- (14) like the MTR
- (15) so it's trying to get you I think to..
- (16) feel that you also travel on the MTR
- (17) you also know..that area of Kowloon..

(18) so it affects you..could affect you um...
(T2/MTR)

The Western teachers spent a substantial number of idea units, more than twice as many as the students, in the physical frame, describing these images and the music that accompanied them. Like the Americans in Tannen's (1979) study, the Western teachers chose images, colors or music rather than the narrative thread characteristic of student responses as the "coherence principle" (p. 54) of their responses.

(10) and um..it's interesting that the couple is shown mainly in fairly neutral colours..
(11) and all the um..all the ads and warnings that are shown..
(12) the triangle and things like that are in black and white..
(13) which I think adds to the striking terroristic sort of effect..
(T5/MTR)

Sometimes the images were seen as so separate that multiple shots of the same characters or setting were interpreted as shots of multiple characters or settings:

(2) they were showing scenes with men and women in bars..
(3) young people's locations such as discos..um
(T2/Bar)

In contrast, the Chinese students saw the commercials in terms of "actions" rather than images, using narrative structure as their coherence principle and formulating their responses as complete stories with "setting", "complication", "climax", and "denouement":

(6) it's in a bar where..where.. most people would find (laugh)
a partner..
(7) a man..a woman..you know.. um..approach a man..
(8) and maybe this woman has interest with uh um..in this
man..and um--..
(9) and--..and then another man..you know they..
(10) he stared at another man (laugh)..
(11) maybe..well..afterall he's interested in that man..yeah..
(12) and then they went away together..
(13) perhaps..uh..uh..they would (breath)..have sex that night (laugh)
(S3/Bar)

The students did offer "social interpretations" to the stories they told, but when they explicitly stated what they took to be the "message", their interpretations were tacked onto the ends of the stories like "codas", in the same way storytellers attach "morals" at the end of their tales.

(12) so..um..I think this advertisement can show me that..
(13) of you..have s-sex..uh..too casually with any girl
(14) maybe just for money or just for fun..
(15) then it is dangerous..
(16) uh..but..I think the advertisement can..(breath)..
(17) give uh one more message is that eh if you..
(18) if you get AIDS from the prostitute
(19) then you may in you may in turn..transmit the AIDS to your wife
(20) then it is more harmful..
(S10/Family)

Analysis of pronoun usage also confirms the contrast in focus between the students and the teachers. When the students used the pronouns *they*, *them* and *their*, they were four times more likely than the teachers to be referring to the characters in the commercial. 55% of the teachers' use of the third person

plural pronoun was in reference to the makers of the commercial (e.g. “they’re targeting..it seems.. heterosexuals”, “they’re saying use a condom”, “they have one scene of some billboard”, “they fade out”, etc.), whereas less than 4% of the students’ third person plural pronouns were used in this way.

The difference in the patterns of framing between Western teachers and Chinese students, students operating chiefly in the narrative frame, while teachers concentrated on the commercial and physical frames, is reminiscent of Tannen’s (1979, 1980, 1984) finding that Greeks and Americans approach the retelling of a film in different ways, the Greeks presenting it as a story while the Americans talked more about the technical aspects of the film and their experience as viewers. It is also in line with Erbaugh’s (1990) finding that Chinese subjects, “closer to the Greeks (in Tannen’s study)” (p. 27) told more detailed and elaborate stories in response to the *Pearl Film* than their American counterparts. The results also parallel Wanatabe’s (1990) observation regarding framing differences between Japanese and American students. Similar to the Chinese students in this study, Wanatabe’s Japanese subjects “seemed to have the expectation that they should present details as fully as possible, in chronological order,” while the American participants framed their presentation as “briefing or reporting” (p. 192).

This contrast suggests that the students and teachers had different sets of expectations about how a public service commercial should present information, and what the content and tone of that information should be. The Asian students seemed to expect more narrative from the commercials, treating the plot and characters as more salient than the message or technique.

as public we saw the..we saw the ad..we..we will pay attention to the
people in the ad..um..so..uh..if the people in the ads can do something
or even they say something it is better.

(Student 7)

The non-Asian teachers, on the other hand, seemed to expect information from the commercials. They appeared significantly more concerned with the message the commercial had to offer, and the techniques the makers of the commercial used to get the message across.

- (14) so in cinematic terms..
- (15) this is quite sophisticated
- (16) but in terms of message
- (17) it’s stone-aged I’m afraid..

(T4/Family)

Further indication that the students fit the commercials into a narrative framework while the teachers brought to their viewing and responses a more expository framework can be seen in the varying functions the two groups ascribed to particular elements in the commercials. Responses to *MTR* provide a good example: in the commercial, a young couple walks into a Mass Transit Railway station and notices a government billboard about AIDS. The camera flashes two close-ups of the billboard listing facts about AIDS in English and Chinese and then moves to a close-up of the couple clutching hands. Half of the Western viewers commented that the information on the billboard had been presented too fast:

- (11) and there were short flashes of this strange black pyramid..
- (12) and there was facts about AIDS
- (13) but they came on the screen so very quickly..
- (14) okay both in English and Chinese..
- (15) but I don’t think anybody could read them
- (16) in the time that was given..

(T4/MTR)

None of the Chinese students, on the other hand, were bothered by the speed in which the information on the billboard was presented. Instead, they tended to mention the billboard as an element in the narrative.

- (6) and- at the end of the advertisement well..um..
- (7) the couple hold well hold their hands quite tight (breath)..
- (8) maybe they are quite nervous..
- (9) they are aware of that
- (10) and they seen well they saw the billboard in the MTR..
- (11) um they are alert..
- (12) they're afraid they might get AIDS.

(S3/MTR)

Seeing the commercial as a story, the students assumed that the information on the billboard was intended to be read by the characters, not the viewer. The important message for viewers was in the characters' reaction to the information. In contrast, the teachers, bringing a "lecture" framework to the commercials, expected that when information was presented in point form on the screen, it was meant to be read.

Like the Americans in the Tannen (1979) and Erbaugh (1990) studies, Western teachers in this experiment were also much more likely to talk about themselves as viewers of the commercial, spending 13.8% of their idea units in the *viewer frame*, as opposed to only 4.6% by the Chinese students. The teachers used significantly more pronouns to refer to themselves, saying the words, *I*, *me*, and *my*, almost twice as often as the students, and other times using pronouns like *you* and *we* to signal the viewer frame. Sometimes teachers regarded the viewing as an intensely personal experience.

What happened in the commercial?
 what happened..I felt angry basically..
 is basically what happened (laugh)

(T2/Family)

Often when teachers did perceive a story, they chose to tell it within the viewer frame as in the following example in which the subject situates the narrative primarily within the viewer and commercial frames and describes it chiefly in visual terms:

- (1) um..this one *visually* is quite subtle..
- (2) it *shows* um a happy healthy looking young guy
- (3) setting off on holiday..
- (4) um and *you see* him sitting in the plane..
- (5) and then *it's cut to a scene* of him in hospital
- (6) hooked up to a drip..
- (7) *we don't see* the face
- (8) but *you presume* it's the same guy..

(T7/AIDS & Travellers) [emphasis mine]

Teachers' comments in the viewer frame are not just a matter of perspective. The viewers' experience in watching the commercial becomes the real "narrative" in the teachers' responses, supplanting the narrative of the characters. It is as if the teachers interpreted the question "What happened in the commercial?" as "What happened to you when you were watching the commercial?"

Stances: Interpretation

The Chinese students and Western teachers spent approximately the same amount of time in their responses explicitly interpreting what they saw, with students interpreting slightly more than teachers (S=35.6%, T=30.2%). The main difference between the groups was the frames within which these statements of interpretation occurred. Students made most of their interpretative statements in the narrative frame, more than twice as many as the teachers, assigning emotions or motivations to characters, commenting upon the significance of their actions or making conjectures about their past or future behaviour. Teachers reserved most of their interpretative statements for the commercial frame, where they concentrated primarily on finding a "message" in what they saw and describing what they believed the authors of the commercials were "trying to do" and "how they were trying to do it".

Even within the same frames, teachers and students seemed to focus their interpretations on different elements. In the narrative frame, teachers tended to restrict their interpretative statements to the actions or identities of the characters, while students often commented upon the characters' internal states, how they "felt":

In subjects' responses to *Family*, for example, which shows a man returning home to his wife after a sexual encounter with another woman, half the students mentioned that they thought the wife was "suspicious" or "worried", while none of the teachers chose to comment on the wife's internal state. Similarly, in *Husband*, which portrays a man learning that his old girlfriend has "got AIDS", half of the students noted that the man was "frightened" or "shocked", whereas none of the teachers did.

Students were also more likely to attribute personality traits or habitual actions to characters based on the story:

- (4) and then perhaps the girl was very sociable..
- (5) sociable..sociable girl
- (6) and then perhaps she would like to make friends..
- (7) a lot of male friends

(S4/Girls)

In most of the commercials shown to the subjects, the *outcomes* or *endings* are left out, leaving the viewer to guess what is going to happen to the characters. The students were much more willing to do this, using future tense forms nearly twice as much as the teachers did, transforming the incomplete narratives in the commercials into full stories in their retellings. Related to this use of future tense forms is an air of inevitability associated with the subjects' expectations about HIV infection (the belief that HIV infection is an inevitable consequence of "casual sex", that AIDS is an certain consequence of HIV infection, and that death is an inevitable consequence of AIDS). This orientation can be seen in the following remarks by the students:

- (12) all the things are having sex with other women..
- (13) and that's why he died.

(S5/Family)

- (4) and it implies that uh.. not only will the man get AIDS...
- (5) but also his family..his wife,,will also get AIDS
- (6) and the last part they're uh..I think..uh..er..they want to show that
- (7) the ending of such kind of relationship is death.

(S7/Family)

- (12) because he..and he decided not to go to that man's [hou] home...
- (13) because he knows that..uh..it will lead to um..(laugh) horrible diseases.

(S1/Homosexuals)

Students also made more statements explicitly pointing out causal relationships in the stories, more than eight times as many as teachers made, and used the word *because* more than twice as much as teachers. That is not to say that causal relationships were not implicit in the teachers' retellings, but that the students chose to make them more explicit in order to link up elements in the narrative,

- (8) and why why why why why did he die^...
- (9) well just because um...
- (10) he well he has..he had sex with somebody...
- (11) and so he was infected with AIDS
- (12) and therefore..so um..he died..
- (13) and then his family (breath) w-as very sad..yeah

(S3/Family)

Often interpretation is not explicit, but rather manifests itself in more subtle exercises of lexical choice. Implicit interpretation typically occurs in the reporting mode when a speaker takes up an ostensibly objective stance while expressing interpretation covertly through the way s/he names objects and actions.

Again, students were more likely to engage in interpretative naming, especially in the narrative frame. More students than teachers, for example, referred to the main character in *Girls* as a “student”, and to the figures in the photographs in *AIDS & Travellers* as “prostitutes”. Erbaugh (1990) found that her Chinese subjects used more explicit terms to describe characters (e.g. “fruit picker” rather than “man”), “prefer(ing) nouns which define social status and relations” (p.31). Similarly, the Chinese students in this study refer to characters in terms of their social roles and relationships (husband, wife, friend) more than the Western teachers .

In terms of the way students and teachers interpreted the message in the commercials, particularly important to note is that the two groups sometimes had very different ideas about what the ads were trying to say. In responses to *Bar*, for example, five teachers mentioned the advocacy of condom use as the ad’s primary message, as opposed to only one student. Meanwhile, five of the students reported that the main message conveyed was that condom use is unsafe, because it is not 100% effective.

Stances: Evaluation

The Western teachers were much more evaluative in their responses to the ten commercials, making explicit judgments in 16% of their idea units, compared to only 2.3% by the Chinese students. Furthermore, most of the teachers’ judgements were negative. They often began their comments with a judgement and sometimes they framed their entire response as an evaluation:

- (1) (breath)...I think that’s an appalling public announcement...
- (2) I can see it being a drama..
- (3) I could see it being..um..a television play or something like that..
- (4) (breath)...where it’s function would be quite different..
- (5) it might be to um..for sort of social comment or-
- (6) or um..a play about modern society...
- (7) but that one seems designed..
- (8) seems targeted at making people feel scared after the fact...
- (9) and I think that’s that’s appalling..

(T2/Husband)

Occasionally judgements arose out of their own inability to recall or understand what had happened. Rather than “owning” their confusion by simply reporting it, they attributed it to the commercials; it was the message that was “confused”, not them, confirming Scollon’s (1993) observation that “when communication fails” Westerners often put the blame “on the sender for failing to package his thoughts or feelings properly” (p. 42):

- (14) so I think the message is somehow confused

(T4/Bar)

and he sort of thought about it and then thought twice..and left on his own^ did he^ leave on his own^ (laugh)..I can’t remember..forgettable..I think that one..forgettable (laugh).

(T8/Bar)

Teachers’ judgements concentrated on ways in which the commercials and their makers had failed to conform to their framework of what AIDS education should be and do, a framework arising from the discourse system of which they are members. The Scollons (1995) point out that the *Utilitarian Discourse System* prefers certain “forms of discourse” modelled around the “C-B-S” (clarity, brevity and sincerity) style. Members of the discourse system are educated to value communication which resists the use of rhetoric, and presents information plainly without appearing to be making an “attempt to influence the listener except through his or her exercise of rational judgement” (Scollon and Scollon, 1995, p.108). Further, ideal communication should support the egalitarian and individualistic ideology of the discourse system by displaying a stance of symmetrical solidarity and not appearing intrusive or infringing on the rights of individuals to make their own choices.

The teachers saw the primary function of the ads as providing information, and often complained when they felt they had not been given enough:

(1) Well this one is high on moralizing and low on information..
(T4/Bar)

They also demanded that this information be presented relatively free of ambiguity, with all important terms clearly defined.

(17) there's no definition of casual sex..what's casual..
(18) well you know who with, when..it's not indicated..
(19) so basically it's you know don't pick people up in bars..I suppose..
(T4/Bar)

And they felt the ads should offer practical solutions:

(21) but again where are the condoms..**where..where?**
(T4/Salon)

Particularly prominent was the idea that AIDS education should be non-threatening, that it should not be designed to elicit fear or anxiety from the viewer. Instead, they believed the ads should take a positive approach.

(35) so I think that one is really..chilling..
(36) it's not supposed to be chilling
(T2/Husband)
(11) this is just scare-mongering..I think...
(12) not helpful
(T4/Girls)

Some of the teachers also criticized what they perceived to be an authoritarian stance in the ads, which violated the principles of egalitarianism and symmetrical solidarity they perhaps expected from the messages.

(10) they give a very strong message in that authoritative voice..
(11) that's booming down like it's coming down from God..
(T7/MTR)

Many also demonstrated a resistance to what they perceived to be the promotion of stereotypes in the ads, indicating adherence to the utilitarian principles which in interaction promote the uniqueness of each individual and in communication value specificity and originality:

(36) it's it does for me it doesn't push too many eh..
(37) push too many stereotypes..
(37) some of the other ones...
(38) I felt like they were trying to show like a stereotypical person..
(T6/Salon)

Finally, teachers objected to ads that seemed to be intruding on the individual's right to make his or her own moral choices. In fact, morality and education are seen by them as two separate things:

(25) and there are some quite useful artistic intentions involved
(26) but that the educational intentions are subverted
(27) by the need to um..to make a bow..
(28) to conventionally accepted morality in Hong Kong..
(T7/AIDS & Travellers)

When asked which of the ads was "most effective", the majority of teachers chose either *Safer Sex* or *Salon*. What they liked about these commercials were those elements in them which promoted the

utilitarian sanctity of information and the individual. *Safer Sex* portrays a man, practically alone (as the figure in the bed behind him appears to be asleep), exercising his individual freedom to make choices, and displaying a practical measure to avoid HIV infection--a condom.

I thought that one was by far the most effective..and most positive..well that's I mean because it's the most positive..there they are..they're getting on with their lives as people do..they're having sex..they may be screwing around..but there's still something they can do about it right there..

(Teacher 2)

Salon, while it does not actually give much information, does present information as the solution to the problem of HIV/AIDS in its slogan, "AIDS, The More You Know, The Less the Risk."

which one do I like the best^..ah..well then number ten..that one's the best one for me..because as I said before..it's just sort of encourages you to find out things..and it doesn't try to threaten you.

(Teacher 5)

The students, approaching the ads from a different discourse system, were far less likely to make explicit judgements about the commercials, and when they did, they were more often favourable. Furthermore, their comments suggest that the ways they formulated their judgements were quite different from the utilitarian criteria applied by the teachers.

Rather than information presented in a clear and systematic way, the students seemed to be looking for "good stories" that affected them emotionally rather than cognitively. They often used words like "effect" and "impact" when evaluating the commercials:

it brought me great impact..and we we can know the..effect of making love..with some strange women..and uh..yeah..it brought me impact..yeah so I like this one.

(Student 9)

Whereas the teachers criticized commercials for not saying enough, students criticized commercials in which not enough "happened".

the one I like most..family..or uh the also two..no the eight and the ninth one..that means the girl and the husband that kind of thing..that means I will know the effect immediately..but..from the advertisement of safer sex I just..uh..huh..he will use a condom..and um..and uh..he will make love..uh..with a prostitute..so..what's the effect..I'm not sure.

(Student 9)

The commercial deemed "most effective" by the majority of the students was *Family*, in which scenes of a man establishing intimacy with a woman in a night-club are intercut with scenes of the man's wife and daughter attending his funeral. They preferred this ad not just because it conformed more closely to the *transformational* framework they brought to the viewing, but also because it more closely exemplified the ideology of their discourse system in which an individual's actions are seen not just in terms of how they affect the actor, but also in terms of the impact they have on the group of which the actor is a member, in particular the family. The importance of the family unit in Chinese society has been pointed out by many researchers (see for example Hsu 1985; Scollon and Scollon, 1995). Just as the "individual making choices" seems to operate as a kind of "icon" for the teachers, the family unit functions as an icon for the students:

because in Hong Kong..not not in Hong Kong..perhaps I will say in Chinese culture..perhaps it is that we are quite emphasize the importance of family..and then you must have a husband..a wife..and then you have a lot of children..if you have got such kind of things..and then you and then all the people will say that you have a happy family..and then..but if there is some kinds of troubles in this family for example if the husband have..eh..som—have contracted from some kind of disease..and which is incurable..and then it will become a great threat to the family..because if

you do something wrong it will destroy your family..your wife..your children or grandmother grandfather etcetera etcetera..so..become a great trouble.

(Student 4)

Western teachers' objections to moralizing in the ads may come from the utilitarian separation of the concepts of *education* and *socialization* (Scollon and Scollon, 1995), according to which education is meant to inform, whereas moral decisions are seen as private matters. In Chinese culture, however, there is no such separation. Moral education is an intricate part of public school in all Chinese societies (Wilson, 1980), and such training often takes the form of "stories...consciously constructed to elucidate moral rules" (p. 123). The idea that education could be "subverted" by the expression of moral rules and standards would doubtless be incomprehensible to many Chinese. Thus, rather than objecting to the commercials for being threatening, students seemed to accept this tone as an inevitable part of the genre.,

This should not be interpreted as suggesting that the Chinese students were less judgmental than the teachers. Actually, students displayed a significant amount of evaluation, but rather than presenting it as judgement, they preferred to use the more subtle tool of evaluative language within the reporting mode. Overall, students exhibited slightly more instances of evaluative language, and, in the narrative frame, they used evaluative verbs, adjectives and adverbs eight times more than the teachers did. But again, most of their evaluation was directed not at the commercials or the people who had made them, but at the characters within the stories and their actions:

(5) that means that when some people go uh go to the bar..so often..

(6) maybe..er-..they are not so good..

(7) especially girls

(S9/Bar)

Confusion and Distortions

Confusion and distortions are particularly strong evidence of framing, demonstrating, among other things, disattention to a particular frame or especially resistant sets of expectations which do not allow conflicting information to be processed. Sometimes distortion or confusion can result when the elements encoded in the message are different from those of the viewer's system of coding. Steffenson, Joag-dev and Anderson (1979) and Pritchard (1990), for instance, found more distortions in readers' recollections of stories from a different culture, and Carrell (1987) observed that when texts violate expected story schemata both quantity and temporal sequencing of recall can be affected.

The teachers produced more than twice as many distortions per idea unit in the narrative frame than the students. These distortions ranged from misrepresenting settings to falsely reporting about characters and their actions. Teachers, for example, mistook men for women (T1/2, T2/2, T3/2, T6/2, T10/2), a brothel for a doctor's surgery (T2/3), a disco for a church (T6/5), and a father hugging his daughter for a social worker taking a child away from her parents (T10/5).

As might be expected, the students, members of the discourse community in which the ads were produced, seldom reported difficulty in understanding what they had seen in the story. In contrast, teachers often admitted being "mystified" by the narratives, unable to see the logical connections between people and events. In all, the teachers reported confusion nearly four times more than the students:

(1) well, I don't understand that one at all..

(2) I think if I didn't know it were about AIDS uh..

(3) it would be a very strange advertisement..

(T10/Family)

It might be argued that the confusion and distortions reported by the teachers, as well as the corresponding tendency for students to retell the stories in more detail, resulted from the fact that more of the students had seen the ads before on local television, and so were already more familiar with them. While this is certainly a factor, many of the teachers, having resided in Hong Kong for a number of years, were also familiar with the ads. Furthermore, patterns of confusion and distortion, as well as broader

patterns of framing and stances, were consistent across ads, even for those commercials which more teachers than students reported having seen. In responses to *Salon*, for instance, which seven teachers reported having seen before as opposed to six students, teachers reported confusion seven times in their responses, while none of the students reported any confusion at all. Sometimes, in fact, having seen the ad before only increased teachers' reports of confusion, as they added memories of past confusion to their reports of present confusion.

Another possibility is that teachers felt more secure about admitting uncertainty when they felt it. However, judging from the accuracy and richness of detail of students' responses in the narrative frame, it seems unlikely that they were experiencing confusion but not admitting it. In fact, when true instances of ambiguity arose in the commercials, students seemed more likely to report the possibility of multiple interpretations.

In *Safer Sex*, for example, in which one character's gender is obscured by the fact that s/he is facing away from the camera and covered with a sheet, nearly half of the students pointed out that they could not be sure whether it was a man or a woman, as opposed to only one teacher. Eight of the teachers chose to assign a gender to the character, five describing the character as a woman, and three identifying the character as a man. One teacher failed to see the figure at all, insisting that the main character was going to bed alone, a "fact" that figured prominently in his negative evaluation of the ad:

oh I didn't think that was very effective.. for one thing why would a guy be wearing a condom and going to bed alone..you know

(Teacher 6)

Nowhere were the differences in patterns of confusion and distortion between teachers and students more apparent than in the two commercials featuring representations of gay interaction, *Homosexuals* and *Bar*.

Bar focuses on several couples in a bar. The first few shots show the growing intimacy between a man and woman, signalled by such "tie-signs" (Goffman, 1971) as leg touching and food play. Meanwhile, a man behind the couple rebuffs advances from another woman by neither responding to her tie-signs nor establishing any with her. Suddenly something seems to catch his eye. The camera cuts to a young man in a football jacket sitting at a table alone. The man who failed to respond to the woman walks, instead, over to the young man in the jacket and whispers something in his ear, and the two of them leave together. As they exit, the older man puts his arm around the younger man's shoulder while the voice-over cautions against casual sex.

Apparently, in viewing this commercial, many of the subjects were unable to integrate information that did not conform to the cultural models signalled by the setting and the initial interaction. While half of the students interpreted it as a portrayal of same-sex coupling, only two of the teachers did. The students who saw the gay story were, for the most part, able to produce fairly detailed renderings of the characters' actions and intentions:

(5) but it seems like the first man who appear in the advertisement is a.. ah-- homosexual guy..

(6) so even that a sexy or beautiful girl sitting beside him..

(7) and maybe asks him to..uh..yeah--

(8) but the man haven't pay any attention to the girl..

(9) but when there's a smart..smart man..(laugh)..

(10) he says something to that man...

(11) and so they may be (laugh) going to do such thing (breath)..

(S1/Bar)

Most of the teachers failed to see the homosexual content in the ad, even when prompted:

Were there any gay couples?

I didn't notice any gay couples..there were people there who might have been gay but they were..ah..sort of unattached..so I didn't notice any particular sort of gay theme about it at all.

(T2/Bar)

Subjects' responses to *Homosexuals* also suggests that Chinese students and Western teachers brought to the commercials different sets of expectations regarding representations of gay interaction. In the commercial, two male characters meet at an outdoor cafe. Their growing intimacy is signalled by increasingly animated talk, and an episode in which one character reaches for the bill, the other places his hand on top of the first's to prevent him from paying, and their eyes meet. Then one character leaves the table, and the other follows. The final shot shows one character beginning to get into a car which the other has already entered when he sees a Hong Kong government AIDS Awareness poster on the side of a public light bus and suddenly and resoundingly slams the car door.

Nine of the ten students reported this as a gay narrative, while only four of the teachers did. Most of the teachers admitted that they had trouble making sense of the story at all:

- (1) I have to admit this one I didn't get at all..
 - (2) I have no clue what's going on..
 - (3) as far as I could tell
 - (4) these two guys..are having a drink..
 - (5) first I thought it was some kind of foreign locale..
 - (6) because I remember there was an AIDS commercial
 - (7) about picking up AIDS in Thailand or something (breath)..
 - (8) that they're having a drink..
 - (9) and then one guy seems to say no to..the bill (laugh)..something like that..
 - (10) and then he goes off and gets on a Hong Kong public light bus..
 - (11) and sees an ad..
 - (12) and..I have no clue as to what's going on in this story..
- (T5/Homosexuals)

Even teachers who recalled a gay plot sometimes hedged or reported resorting to the experiment frame to aid their interpretation:

- (9) it looked all very respectable..um..
 - (10) I..didn't get the feeling that there was..
 - (11) that they were trying to pick each other up
 - (12) or that there would be any kind of..sexual innuendoes there..
 - (13) until..well because of this experiment
 - (14) I knew it was about AIDS..
 - (15) so I ..knew that..it was trying to portray
 - (16) two gay men picking..
 - (17) you know cruising each other..um..
- (T7/Homosexuals)

The students perceived the narrative in terms of a seduction and rejection. Elements prevalent in their recollections included (1) the length or manner of the characters' conversation as a sign of growing intimacy, (2) the episode involving the bill showing confirmation of intimacy, (3) the eye contact between characters acting as an invitation, and (4) the slamming of the car door to signal a refusal of the invitation. Few of the teachers mentioned any of these elements, and when they did it was often to report their inability to decode them:

- (22) there was a lot in that commercial I didn't understand..
 - (23) when they showed the bill and one went to pay for it
 - (24) and the other one..reached over and stopped him..
 - (25) I didn't understand what that was all about..
 - (26) and then it seemed like he one of them went away
 - (27) and then got on the minibus..or something..
 - (28) I couldn't get what it was all about there.
- (T7/Homosexuals)

Students, on the other hand, confidently, and sometimes in great detail, offered up explanations of the codes employed in the narrative:

- (10) because when the man intended to pay the bill...
- (11) the other man um paid it for the man..
- (12) and use (laugh) his eyes to say something to the other man
- (13) and..and then...it intended that the other man...um..
- (14) he want to go to the character one's home..or..yeah..

(S1/Homosexuals)

The contrast between Western teachers' and Chinese students' interpretations of these commercials may partly be a consequence of the overall tendency of the students to attend more to the narrative frame. It may also be an indication that members of these two groups have different frameworks through which to interpret gay interaction, and so tie-signs encoded by the authors and animators with reference to one cultural model were difficult to interpret for those decoding the commercial with reference to another cultural model.

Another factor has to do with respondents' overall framework for AIDS and the degree to which they associate it with homosexual behavior. Notably, students spent more time in the social frame when discussing *Homosexuals* than any other commercial (13.3%), and statements made in that frame when discussing *Homosexuals* and *Bar* often posited a link between homosexuality and AIDS:

- (3) because this one is about..er..
- (4) I think the main cause of AIDS..
- (5) the homosexuality...
- (6) that means if a man..er..um..uh..
- (7) has a sex with er um another man..
- (8) that means some kinds of homo relationship
- (9) I think uh..they will get AIDS..

(S9/Homosexuals)

Conclusion

The way individuals respond to health education messages depends largely on the frameworks of expectations of the *discourse systems* of which they are members. These frameworks include preconceptions not just about the topic of the message but also about the proper form and function of the message and the appropriate ways to respond to it. Thus, how health educators in different cultures approach their job depends not just on how particular cultures view the issues of health, morality and education, but also on how they see communication.

In Western societies it has long been assumed that the proper function of public health discourse is to inform, and that its proper form is the straightforward and "objective" reporting of "facts". Cultural critics (Alcorn, 1989; Bolton, 1992; Goldstein, 1991) have often criticized governments, the media and individuals for constructing a "moral model" around AIDS rather than promoting a more "medical model". Scholars like these argue, along with the teachers in this study, that appropriate AIDS education materials should present individuals with enough information to make reasoned decisions about such behaviour as sexual activity and drug use without infringing on their individual rights to make such decisions and without appealing to emotions like guilt, shame, and fear. Educational materials employing dramatization, excessive rhetoric, and appeals to the emotions are seen as both intrusive and ineffective. Baddaley (1990), in his examination of audience reaction to different styles of media AIDS education in Britain, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and the United States, supports this non-judgmental, anti-rhetorical approach, finding that "the campaign materials that were perceived by the viewers as the most effective from an educational standpoint were those which presented hard facts in a simple and straightforward manner. Complex and emotional campaign techniques drew negative responses" (p. 116). Such research, however, has thus far been restricted to Western countries where most of those receiving the messages are either adherents to or at least familiar with the basic philosophies of the *Utilitarian Discourse System*.

Outside of the *Utilitarian Discourse System*, however, this neat moral/medical dichotomy sometimes becomes muddled, because it is based on beliefs about science, education and socialization that may not be shared by other discourse systems. The different frameworks teachers and students brought to the AIDS education materials in this study, and the different ways they evaluated the materials, are, to a large degree, reflections of the different principles of their respective discourse systems. The teachers, applying the rules and expectations of the *Utilitarian Discourse System*, brought to their viewing of the ads the following principles:

- 1) education should be “morally neutral”
- 2) education should respect the rights of the individual
- 3) health decisions are individual decisions
- 4) education operates best through a straightforward presentation of “facts”

The students, on the other hand, appeared to bring a different set of principles to their viewing of the ads, principles similarly derived from the rules and expectations of their discourse system:

- 1) morality is an intrinsic part of education
- 2) education should train the individual in how to fulfil his or her role in the family and in the society
- 3) health decisions have consequences beyond the individual
- 4) education operates best through a process of “direct transmission” (Scollon, 1993) or “empathy”

The separation of education and socialization has been a powerful concept within the *Utilitarian Discourse System* since the establishment of formal government-controlled public schooling (Scollon and Scollon, 1995). While not without detractors (present, for example, in the on-going debate on school prayer in the United States), the pretence, if not the practice, of “morally neutral” education remains central to most formal schooling in the West, and to modern Western conventions of health education. Though epidemics and plagues are often occasions for the violation of this principle, consistently precipitating “moral crusades” whose leaders attempt to link the notions of sickness and sin (see Fee and Fox, 1988), most mainstream health educators in the West approach disease as the result of amoral physical factors and attempt to inform people of how these factors operate. Doctors and researchers in Europe and North America, for example, criticized the use of the word “promiscuous” in early medical writing about AIDS because it was seen as both “judgmental” and “inexact”, and therefore inappropriate for medical discourse (Bolton, 1992). Furthermore, whether or not people follow the advice of health professionals is seen as an individual decision.

In Chinese society, however, moral education is seen as much a responsibility of the school as it is of the home. Wilson (1980) points out that formal schooling in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the People’s Republic of China lays heavy emphasis on training students in their obligations and responsibilities as members of families and of society, and on the consequences of not fulfilling these obligations and responsibilities. Illness is also seen in moral terms primarily because it interferes with a person’s ability to discharge his or her duties as a member of the group. Health decisions are family decisions. Kleinman (1980) writes:

Their tenure in the family places upon them privileges and obligations, the chief of which is to improve the family fortune, while not bringing shame on it. Related to this obligation is another, requiring them to treat their own person and body as if they are as inviolable as the family. Since neither belongs to them alone, injury to the person is in part injury to the family. (p. 134)

Different discourse systems also have different notions about communication and its role in either exchanging information or ratifying relationships. Scollon (1995) has pointed out that Chinese and Americans use different metaphors to describe communication, Americans seeing language as a “container for ideas”, and Chinese seeing language in terms of “bodily secretions”. Such metaphors provide insight into the ideas and attitudes behind the preferred forms of discourse within the two discourse systems. For Westerners communication is regarded as an efficient vehicle for the transmission of ideas, as long as the

ideas are packaged in a logical and straightforward way. Chinese, however, see communication as, at best, an imperfect means of understanding others' thoughts and intentions. Real knowledge can only come from direct experience.

The consequences of differing philosophies of language and communication can be seen in the different forms of discourse prevalent in socialization practices in Western and Eastern cultures. Socialization involves not just apprenticeship in rules of behaviour, but also apprenticeship in the patterns of discourse through which such rules are normally expressed within a given culture. Shweder and Much (1987), in their comparison of methods of socialization between Indians and middle class Americans found that in India moral arguments are often presented in the form of a narrative account, whereas socialization of American children is based on rational analysis of rights and obligations. Metzger (1980) observes that moral ideas in Chinese society are derived from and exemplified in narratives of the struggles between heroes and villains. These stories, he says, provide frameworks within which new problems and situations are judged. Fung (1994) further shows how stories told by and about children in Chinese families operate as an intricate part of their moral education.

It is therefore not surprising that the students in this study not only saw the function of the AIDS awareness API's they watched as "moral education", but also brought to them the essentially narrative framework which their culture associates with this task. And, for the most part, the makers of the messages fulfilled their expectations, presenting strong stories with identifiable heroes and villains and clear "morals". This is not to dismiss the criticism of the campaign lodged by the teachers in this study or by myself in Jones (1996). It is only a reminder that such criticism itself comes from cultural frameworks, and that the design of culturally appropriate health education materials depends not just on an understanding of a culture's beliefs about health and disease, but also on an understanding of its beliefs about language.

The suggestion that people from different cultures "read" public health messages in different ways has important implications for AIDS education. First, it indicates that attention to the form of the message may be just as important as attention to the content and the 'language' used to express that content. Whereas some groups might benefit most from a straight-forward informational approach, others may be more receptive to lessons couched in the form of stories, arguments, chants, comic strips or some other form of discourse. Second, it implies that Western AIDS educators, especially those acting as advisors in cultures different from their own, should be cautious about interpreting the "moral stories" used in AIDS education in those cultures as indicative primarily of a "moralistic" attitude towards HIV/AIDS when what they might be more indicative of are deep rooted conceptions about communication.

The dilemma, of course, is that different genres inevitably carry with them ideologies, and the format of the "moral story" seems particularly susceptible to oversimplification of the issues and stigmatization of certain groups, and, in particular, people living with HIV/AIDS. In the context of Hong Kong, for example, there is some indication that reliance on narrative lessons in AIDS education has resulted in viewers distancing themselves from the characters in the stories, underestimating their own vulnerability to infection, and viewing AIDS as the "deserved" consequence of socially undesirable behavior (Jones, Jones, Jones and Lau). This is not to say, however, that narrative forms are unworkable. Rather than attempting to alter a culture's deep-seated expectations about the format health education should take, a task almost doomed to failure, a more sensible approach might be to try to work creatively within natives' traditional forms of discourse to produce message that are not only appeal to native conceptualizations about language use but also encourage personal responsibility in risk behaviour and compassion for those affected by the epidemic.

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Appendix

Frames in Subjects' Responses to AIDS API's

Frame	Teachers	Students
Experiment Frame	2.7%	2.7%
Social Frame	1.8%	2.6%
Commercial Frame	39.4%	24.2%
Viewer Frame	13.8%	4.6%
Narrative Frame	26.5%	61.2%
Physical Frame	15.8%	6.5%

Stances

Stance	Teachers	Students
Reporting	51%	59.4%

Interpreting	30.2%	35.6%
Judging	16%	2.3%
Misc. (Brackets, etc.)	2.8%	2.7%

Frames/Stances in Subjects' Responses to AIDS API's

Frame	Percent of Idea Units	
	Teachers	Students
EXP	2.6%	2.7%
SOC--JUD	0	.1%
SOC--INT	.9%	2.2%
SOC--REP	.9%	1.3%
CM--JUD	12.2%	1.7%
CM--INT	17.6%	11.7%
CM--REP	9.4%	11%
VW--JUD	1.7%	.3%
VW--INT	1.9%	1%
VW--REP	10.2%	3.6%
NAR--JUD	1.4%	.2%
NAR--INT	7.8%	19.5%
NAR--REP	17.3%	37%
PHY--JUD	.7%	0
PHY--INT	1.9%	1.2%
PHY--REP	13.2%	6.3%