

FACULTY OF ARTS

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**'Take John, for instance'**

**Effects of exemplars in public information  
documents on HIV/AIDS in South Africa**

**study done by Jansen, Croonen & De Stadler**

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'Take John, for instance'

## possible impact of exemplars on

- readers' ideas about the responsibility of the group to which the protagonist belongs
- readers' attitudes about this group
- readers' behaviour towards this group



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## desert heuristic

- people who are responsible for their own disadvantageous situation do not deserve as much help as people who cannot be blamed for their situation



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## Hoeken & Hustinx: results

- desert heuristic was applied if the problem sketched in the exemplar (obesity, for instance) was not considered as very serious
- desert heuristic was **not** applied when readers when the exemplar was about someone suffering from a particularly serious disease, such as HIV/AIDS



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## possible explanation: ceiling effect

- in really serious situations, compassion overrides possible feelings of justice
- this effect might be be gender specific, especially in typically masculine countries, where
  - men tend to be more justice oriented
  - women tend to be more caring oriented



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## possible explanation: ceiling effect

- in really serious situations, compassion overrides possible feelings of justice
- this effect might be gender specific, especially in typically masculine countries, where
  - men tend to be more justice oriented
  - women tend to be more caring oriented
- expectation was not confirmed when comparing Dutch and Belgian readers



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## aims of our study

- Would results similar to those of Hoeken & Hustinx for **fundraising letters** in **Western Europe** also be found in experiments on **public information documents promoting support** for people living with HIV/AIDS in **South Africa**?
- To what extent would the desert heuristic be applied to people living with HIV/AIDS in South Africa?
- Would the possible application of the desert heuristic be related to the gender of the readers and to the ethnic group to which they belong?



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## research questions

1. Will the exemplar that participants read influence their belief about the responsibility of people living with HIV/AIDS in general?
2. Will the exemplar that participants read influence their willingness to support people living with HIV/AIDS?



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## research questions

3. Will there be a relation between participants' belief about the responsibility of people living with HIV/AIDS in general, and their willingness to support people living with HIV/AIDS?
4. Will there be any interaction effects due to the gender of the participant or the ethnic group to which they belong?



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## participants

Ethnic group	Gender	Age	N
Black	Male	M = 22.30 (SD = 4.76)	20
	Female	M = 21.92 (SD = 4.42)	24
Coloured	Male	M = 19.33 (SD = 1.20)	21
	Female	M = 20.15 (SD = 1.90)	20
White	Male	M = 20.45 (SD = 2.44)	20
	Female	M = 19.60 (SD = 1.10)	20



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## structure of text versions

### section 1

- HIV/AIDS is becoming more and more common in South-Africa
- we should not judge people living with HIV/AIDS, but care for them

### section 2 (exemplar):

the story of John, who suffers from AIDS

section 3: HIV cannot be passed on by everyday casual contact between individuals and objects

section 4: how HIV can and cannot be passed on

section 5: we should support people living with HIV/AIDS



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## exemplars

Take the example of John, age 34, who has AIDS.

(Jnr version:) He was contaminated by his wife. She had an affair with a colleague, which she hadn't told John about.

(Jr version:) He was contaminated by a girlfriend. John had quite a lot of different girlfriends, with whom he did not always have safe sex.

He has told his family, who are treating him really badly. They never want to touch anything that he has touched to the extent that they keep on locking things away. A separate plate, cup, saucer and spoon are kept for his use. His friends don't see him anymore. He feels rejected.



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## questionnaire

*manipulation check: perceived responsibility of the protagonist in the exemplar*

- I feel that John is responsible for contracting AIDS
- I am angry with John
- I pity John (1 -> 7, 2 -> 6, 3 -> 5, etc.)

Cronbach's  $\alpha = .5942$



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## questionnaire

*perceived realism of brochure and exemplar*

- I find the content of the brochure / exemplar realistic/unrealistic, common/uncommon

Cronbach's  $\alpha = .6936$



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## questionnaire

*belief*

- People suffering from HIV/AIDS usually have to blame themselves



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## questionnaire

*attitude*

- I believe that having a close relationship to people infected with HIV/AIDS is
  - wise/unwise
  - good/bad
  - stupid/smart
  - useful/useless
- People with HIV/AIDS need moral support
- People who care for people with HIV/AIDS do something good

Cronbach's  $\alpha = .7541$



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## results

Version of brochure	Perceived realism
Jr	M=6.2031 (SD=1.0745)
Jnr	M=5.7459 (SD=1.1542)

$F(1,123)=6.529$ ;  $p=.024$ ;  $\eta^2=.041$



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## manipulation check

Item	Scores per version
Evoked pity	Jr: M = 4.40 (SD = 2.01) Jnr: M = 5.52 (SD = 1.88)
Evoked anger	Jr: M = 3.65 (SD = 2.09) Jnr: M = 2.13 (SD = 1.77)
Perceived personal responsibility	Jr: M = 5.09 (SD = 1.95) Jnr: M = 2.62 (SD = 1.97)

evoked pity ( $F(1,110)=9.484$ ,  $p=.003$ ;  $\eta^2=.079$ )

evoked anger ( $F(1,111)=18.262$ ,  $p<.0001$ ;  $\eta^2=.141$ )

personal responsibility ( $F(1,112) = 47.116$ ,  $p < .0001$ ;  $\eta^2=.296$ )



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## belief

- independent variables
  - exemplar that was presented
  - ethnic background of the participant
  - gender of the participant
- dependent variable
  - belief that people living with HIV/AIDS in general are responsible for being infected
- covariant
  - perceived reality of brochure and exemplar



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## belief

- no statistically significant main effects of text variable
- no interaction effects of text variable and other independent variables
- statistically significant main effect of covariant *perceived realism*



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## correlations

- perceived realism
- belief that people living with HIV/AIDS in general are responsible for being infected

$r = -.240$  ( $p < .01$ )



'Take John, for instance'

## correlations

- perceived realism
- belief that people living with HIV/AIDS in general are responsible for being infected

$r = -.240$  ( $p < .01$ )

Jnr:  $r = -.329$ ;  $p = .010$

Jr:  $r = -.206$ ;  $p = .102$



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### belief

Version of brochure * ethnic group	Belief that people living with HIV/AIDS are responsible for being infected
Jr black	M = 2.87 (SD = 1.98)
Jnr black	M = 2.95 (SD = 2.04)
Jr coloured	M = 3.52 (SD = 1.96)
Jnr coloured	M = 3.05 (SD = 1.43)
Jr white	M = 4.40 (SD = 1.72)
Jnr white	M = 4.00 (SD = 1.03)



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## attitude

- independent variables
  - exemplar that was presented
  - ethnic background of the participant
  - gender of the participant
- dependent variable
  - attitude toward supporting people living with HIV/AIDS
- covariant
  - perceived reality of brochure and exemplar



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## attitude

- no statistically significant main effects of text variable
- no interaction effects of text variable and other independent variables
- statistically significant main effect of covariant *perceived realism*



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## correlations

- perceived realism
- attitude toward supporting people living with HIV/AIDS

$r = .394; p < .0001$



'Take John, for instance'

## correlations

- perceived realism
- attitude toward supporting people living with HIV/AIDS

$r = .394; p < .0001$

Jnr:  $r = .537; p < .0001$

Jr:  $r = .259; p < .05$



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## correlations between belief and attitude: the desert heuristic

- belief that people living with HIV/AIDS in general are responsible for being infected
- attitude toward supporting people living with HIV/AIDS

$r = -.306; p = .001.$



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## correlations between belief and attitude: the desert heuristic

- belief that people living with HIV/AIDS in general are responsible for being infected
- attitude toward supporting people living with HIV/AIDS

$r = -.306; p = .001.$

white men:  $r = -.463; p < .05$

white women:  $r = .488; p < .029$



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## follow-up study (Eliane Swinkels)

	original exemplar	+ typical male reaction	+ typical female reaction
Jr			
Jnr			



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## pretest results

- typical male reaction: *John does not want to talk about his problem*
- typical female reaction: John talks about his problem with friends for hours
- new versions evaluated as (very) realistic
- expectations: interaction effects of
  - gender of the reader
  - ethnical background of the reader
  - responsibility of protagonist (Jr, Jnr)
  - reaction in the exemplar (typical male, typical female)



Thank you