

Social Representations of HIV/AIDS in a Higher Education Business Management textbook: A critical discourse analysis.

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Background and Introduction

- **HIV/AIDS-** A critical issue in South Africa.
- UNAIDS (2012) reports that South Africa has the biggest HIV-positive population in the world.
- This was said to be accurate as UNAIDS (2012) statistics indicate that 5.7 million out of nearly 48 million South Africans are now living with HIV.

Background and Introduction

- KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) has the highest rate in the country (South African National HIV Survey, 2012).
- Of great significance is the prevalence between the **youth population aged 15–24** years that is still relatively high (26.6%) (Department of Health [DOH], 2008).
- The age group between 20-24-year olds are said to be attending universities and are registered at the undergraduate level (DMI, 2012).

Rationale

Objective:

- To examine the social representations of HIV/AIDS and in a Business Management textbook. By looking at how and why is it presented in the manner it is.

Research Questions:

- How are the social representations of HIV/AIDS presented in a Higher Education Business Management textbook?
- Why is it presented in the way it is?

Textbook research

- Crawford (2003) maintains that textbooks plays a key role in the teaching and learning process but also a role in **shaping** and **socializing** students.
- Ferguson (2009) claims that textbooks seek to anchor and **social norms of society** that “convey facts, but [they] also spread ideologies.
- Apple and Christian-Smith’s (1995, p. 897) asserts the knowledge conveyed in textbooks is never ‘**neutral**’ as content in text aims to present issues of power and hegemony.

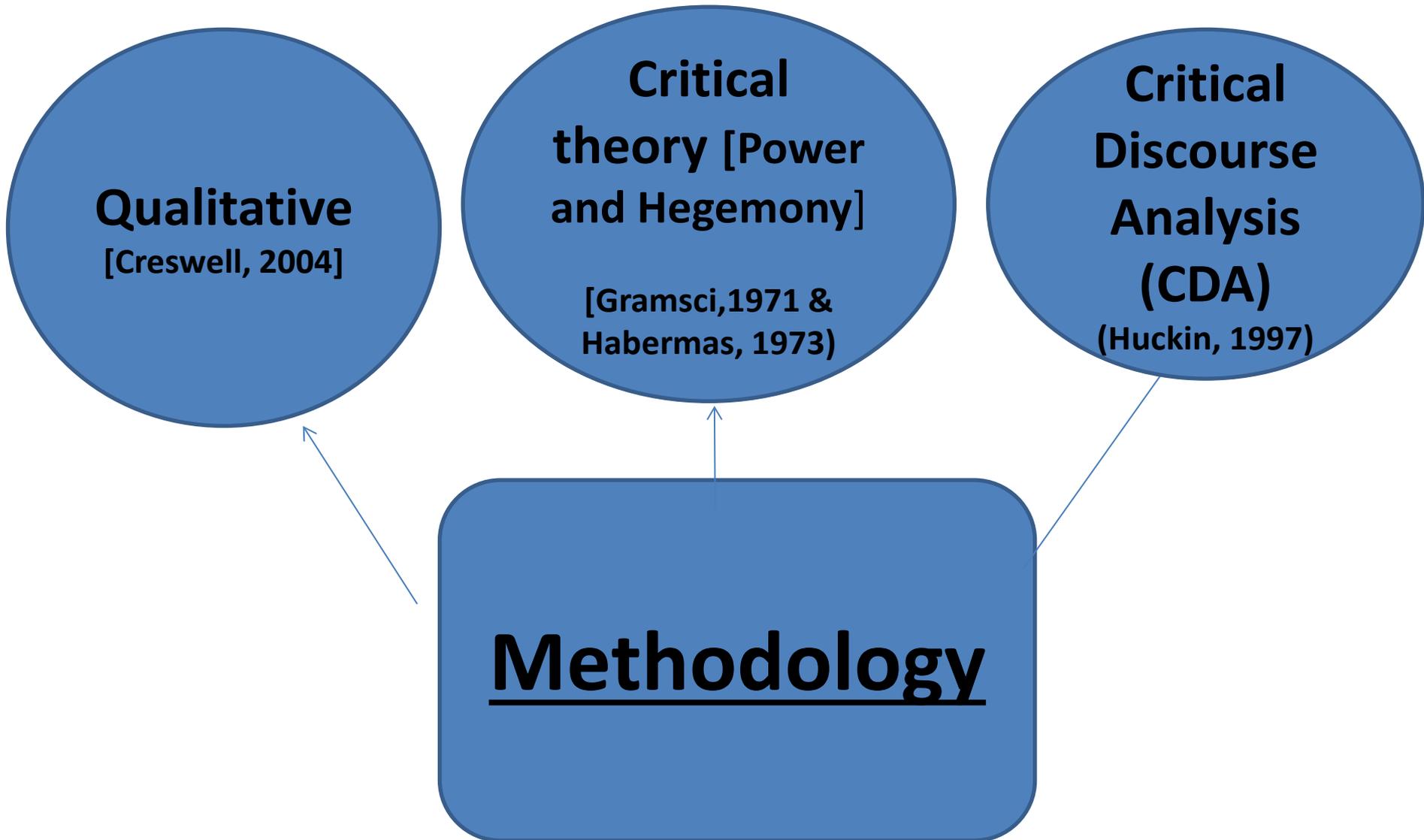
Empirical studies on HIV/AIDS and its Social Representations in text.

- Textbook research conducted by Schoeneman-Morris et al., (2005) agrees that text seeks to **represent HIV/AIDS as a social issue and disease.**
- In relation to Schoeneman-Morris et al., (2005), Horn (2010) shows the discourse of HIV/AIDS has become inseparably **intertwined with many other discourses.**
- Plummer (1988) draws on two vital discourses operating in the social construction of AIDS, one that is explicitly influenced by **medical and scientific** discourses.

Empirical studies on HIV/AIDS and its Social Representations.

- First, the medical discourse is overlaid by notions of HIV/AIDS as representing a 'disease'.
- Second, this followed by the scientific discourse that directly links the disease to a plague or death.
- De Waal & Whiteside, (2004, p.13) supports this claim by stating that it is “notion of intercessions of human frailty and a social disease”.

Research methodology



Research methodology

- Huckin's (1997) model of CDA.
- Topicalisation- refers to the positioning of a word element in text (foregrounding or prominence of words)
- By identifying the discourse of HIV/AIDS in the textbook we selected words pertaining to HIV/AIDS such as disease, virus, stigma.
- Thus to determine the position of each word we sort to see how each word was foregrounded as a heading, subheading, tabulated form, bolded and different fonts.

Data analysis

- The first step to analysed the text consisted of approaching the prescribed textbook in an ‘uncritical manner’ (like an ordinary and undiscerning reader).
- Second, the prescribed textbook was then approached in a ‘critical manner’ revisiting the text at different levels, raising questions.
- The prescribed textbook was thus analysed and marked against a Microsoft spread sheet.

Findings and discussion

- **HIV/AIDS is represented as a social disease and concern.**
- This was in keeping with De Waal & Whiteside's (2004, p.13) claim of representing HIV/AIDS as a human frailty and a social disease”.
- This supported the medical and scientific discourses as representing HIV/AIDS as a social construct- strongly influenced by disease and death.
- This further supported textbook research as representing HIV/AIDS as disease, otherness and death (Schoeneman-Morris et al., 2005).

Conclusion

- Institutional materials (textbook) do contain issues of power and hegemony.
- This may affect students' learning in relation to the discourse of HIV/AIDS.
- Lecturers should consider additional support material in lectures and not rely extensively on the prescribed textbook.
- Further empirical studies should investigate to see if students understand lecture material through critical engagement.

Quotation

McGregor (2003) commends that discourse and language can be used to make unbalanced power relations and portrayals of social groups appear to be common sense, normal, and natural when in fact the reality is prejudice, injustice, and inequities. Using just words, those in power, or wishing to be so, can misdirect our concerns for persistent, larger systemic issues of class, gender, age, religion, and culture seem petty or non-existent. Unless we begin to debunk their words, we can be misled and deceived into embracing the dominant worldview (ideology) at our expense and their gain.

Thank you!

