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**The Pennsylvania State University
The Graduate School
College of Communications**

**AIDS AS INTERNATIONAL NEWS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF
TWO WESTERN AND ONE AFRICAN PRESS COVERAGE OF A
PANDEMIC**

**A Thesis in
Mass Communication
by
Chinedu O. Eke**

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**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of**

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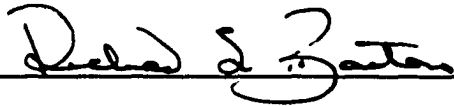
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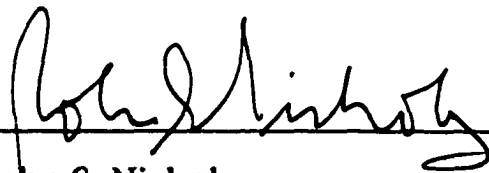
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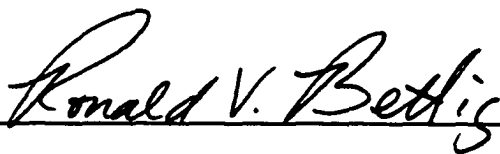
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Abstract

This study is a comparative press analysis of the coverage of AIDS in Western and African presses. In this context, it has been shown that although these presses may differ theoretically, under certain circumstances or emergencies, they will act alike, and in the case of HIV/ AIDS, blame was a common factor.

Methodologically, an analysis of news appeals was applied to research materials in order to reveal patterns of news form regarding the AIDS pandemic as international news. This was achieved by classifying newspaper articles into two major frames; the origin of AIDS and the social impact of AIDS.

The study reveals four types of appeals utilized by journalists in Western and African news reports about HIV/AIDS. For the Western press, the two appeals that emerged include: (1) Appeals to conventional conception, which emphasizes negative stereotypes; (2) Appeals to morality, which classifies issues as guilty or innocent, right or wrong. For the African press, the two appeal types that emerged from the study includes: (1) Appeal to Pan-Africanism, which calls for solidarity among Africans to resist Western domination; (2) Appeal to distorted international social

formation, which highlights the exploitative nature of the relationship between Africa and the West.

The study concludes by making suggestions on how to improve future coverage of pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, and offering potential areas for further inquiry.

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Brothers, Peacocks, Burning Spear, etc.; and to my friends, and students, maximum respect to all you massive! I thank you.

Chapter 1.

INTRODUCTION

The mass media have become an integral part of modern society. People increasingly rely on the mass media for information of varied sorts (Bagdikian, 1997). However, cultural and social, as well as economic differences have prompted the comparative study of different media in different settings. Thus in mass communication theory, researchers have sought to classify the media based on observed cultural, political, economic, and social differences. For instance, Schramm, Siebert and Peterson (1964) were the first scholars to categorize diverse world presses into four theories. These categories included authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and Soviet communist. Furthermore, Hachten (1992) has developed what he terms the five concepts of world press. Within this framework, world presses are classified into the western concept, development concept, revolutionary concept, authoritarianism and communist concepts. In addition to these classifications, Altschull (1994) offers a three-part symphony of the

press. In this context, he divides the world presses into market, Marxist and advancing systems.

These classifications have one recognizable quality in that they all point out the differences that distinguish world presses. Hence, research in this area has tended to follow the foot print of these classifications (Schiller 1989, Martin & Chaudhary 1983). However, as the new millennium begins, it is obvious that some of the categories listed above such as Soviet communist are no longer viable or as widely applicable to presses because of the changed political climate, and the movement toward a global economic system.

Hence, the challenge to international communication scholars is to modify, develop and propose new dimensions of the press that adequately explain the presses' behavior and their relations to the public and the government. This can be achieved by looking at how the presses have behaved in the past, that is, looking for evidence of situations when regardless of the cultural, or political situation, the presses of several nations have responded to the same issue.

Topic

This dissertation will focus on how, comparatively, one African press and two Western presses reported the issue of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) from 1985 to 1990.

Consistent with comparative research traditions, the task here will be not only to identify the differences and similarities in press treatments but to also identify the news form and appeals in news reports. The basis of this approach lies within understanding of influence in the political and social domains of the presses studied.

Politically, this approach will offer insights regarding the relationship between the presses and their governments, and test the assumption by some, that the press is independent of government and, especially in the West, corporate influence. It will also seek to understand the journalistic attitude and reporting style of some prestigious Western press in regards to Africa. Has that attitude changed from the colonial days, especially when diseases such as AIDS are the subject of their discourse?

Socially, the study of the similarities of presses will facilitate the understanding of how a phenomenon such as HIV/AIDS is constructed, packaged, and transmitted within and across cultures.

Understanding similarities between presses is useful for policy makers as well as mass media practitioners because it brings an element of predictability of press reactions when events such as HIV/AIDS occur. Furthermore, the movement toward a global economy necessitates the importance in understanding similarities between presses. In this regard, I explore the contextual and historical background necessary to understand the issue. This will include the philosophical assumptions of the presses which will be derived from the societies from which they evolve.

Because of the nature of the disease and the segment of society from which the first diagnoses were made, journalists initially blamed certain segments of the population (Kinsella, 1989; Farmer, 1990). Therefore, at the heart of this inquiry is the issue of the press blaming a marginalized or a minority group for the AIDS pandemic. These marginalized groups in the West would include homosexuals, intravenous drug users, African Americans, Haitians and Africans.

From the African perspective, the marginalized groups that are most often associated with, and blamed for the spread of AIDS are commercial sex workers and truck drivers. Interestingly, there

is also counter-blaming of the West for the spread of the disease.

Those who adhere to this perspective claim that Western tourists are responsible for the spread of HIV/AIDS virus in Africa.

The greater goal of this exercise therefore, is to extend, refine, the theoretical and conceptual research about press behavior during a national or, in the case of HIV/AIDS, a global emergency. I hope to suggest alternatives to the ethnocentric model of the press in order to offer more insights to the understanding of press behavior in such emergencies. This approach has the potential to be developed into a model of mass communication theory centered on the "blame" phenomenon in other events in mass media research.

The ethnocentric model of the press explains some of the dynamics in cross cultural perceptions of press behavior. For instance, as Barton (1995) has observed, there are fundamental differences in the way the American prestige print press construct domestic news stories compared to international news stories. International news, within this context, is typically ethnocentric, sharply critical of political leaders, biased toward the foreign policy objective of the United States, and complements its world view in

ways that violate the basic assumptions and ideals that define the role of the press in a democratic society.

The construction of the HIV/AIDS story in the press followed the above mentioned pattern but becomes complicated when one factors in the involvement of homosexuals and intravenous drug users in the West. This is because there are no clear geographic, economic, or ethnic characteristics which usually facilitate ethnocentric reactions from the press on certain issues, that distinguishes homosexuals from the general public. Homosexuals are people that are part of every day society, some hold high offices within the press as well as in the government.

In summary, the aim of this project is to compare and contrast the construction of HIV/AIDS as a social phenomenon within the Western and African presses. It will be useful at this juncture to examine in detail how this issue played out in both presses. Within this context, this exercise will seek to answer the following research question:

Research Question

R:1

When viewed from an international communication perspective, what were the comparative treatments of the issue of AIDS in the African and the Western press? What themes, appeals, and assumptions appear in that news? What are the implications of these press constructions?

I examined and analyzed international news reports on AIDS in Africa from the following Western presses: The New York Times, The Times of London, The Daily Nation (Kenya), will be my primary example of an African press. I chose this African paper because the disease was first diagnosed in East Africa before anywhere else in the continent. Moreover, Kenya was one of the first African countries to publicly acknowledge the incidence of AIDS within her borders. In addition, the African press selected is independent of the government and will be more useful for comparative purposes with the Western press. The paper is deemed prestigious and authoritative within the African context, and has a very large circulation. The Daily Nation, for instance, is Kenya's largest daily

newspaper. The Western presses were chosen because they are regarded by most as prestigious and authoritative presses.

Additionally, The New York Times is regarded as an international model of a press in a democracy. The Times of London on the other hand reflect values and political attitudes of a nation involved historically in the development of several African nations.

Chapter 2.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Ideally in a democratic society, the press or mass media informs the public about what they need to know, the people then decide what they want, and the press helps communicate these decisions back to the policy makers. (Linsky, 1986). Relying on this model, the credibility and performance of the news media rests on their function as sources for information.

Therefore, if the news media performs its duties well, the public will be adequately informed. On the other hand, a poorly informed public reflects negatively on the ability of the news media to communicate related facts.

However, Rogers, Dearing, and Chang (1991) have pointed out that the mass media create awareness of an issue but may not provide public knowledge of that issue. Thus, the mass media have the ability to “maximize public awareness and public ignorance at the same time. To be excited about an issue but fail to think it through, [this] makes for the worst kind of citizen. A state of moral frenzy is not public judgment.” (Rogers, Dearing, & Chang, 1991, p.42).

Historical and Epidemiological Background of AIDS.

The Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was first diagnosed and reported in the United States in 1981 (Aggleton & Homans, 1988; Duh, 1989; Kinsella, 1995). It is a disease which is not confined to one part of the world or indeed a specific country (Rochron & Linne, 1989). However, debates have raged within the medical establishment and in the mass media as to the origin of the virus that causes AIDS. Most scholars and researchers in different areas of inquiry on the subject agree that there is no one locale that has been pin-pointed as ground zero for the origination of AIDS (Duh, 1989; Chirimuuta & Chirimuuta, 1989; Feldman, 1989). In short, no one knows the geographical origin of the disease.

In order to fully understand how the African and Western presses constructed the HIV/AIDS story, it would be useful to examine in summary, the history and epidemiology of AIDS. Insight about the disease may offer reasons, although not scientifically valid, why marginalized individuals were singled out in the mass media as the cause of the pandemic.

Unlike other killer diseases such as the Ebola virus, HIV/AIDS is communicable from one individual to another, and because there

is no scientifically proven cure for it, the result was certain death for the infected. This was the scenario faced by physicians and medical practitioners in 1980 in the United States. The patients that were examined from different parts of the country had similar but unusual presentations of the illness. (Duh, 1989)

According to Duh (1989), these patients were young men who previously had been healthy but were all afflicted with unusual illnesses brought forth by diseases that in the past, had not been known to have caused any significant illness. More importantly, however, their illnesses did not respond to usual therapy, and the patients died. These patients suffered mainly from *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia (PCP), a rare form of lung infection, and Kaposi's sarcoma, a normally benign cancer. HIV/AIDS initially, was an enigma to scientists. Its cause was not known, neither was its mode of transmission, nor the reason why the victims all died (Duh,1989).

However, it did not take scientists too long according to Duh (1989) to unravel the mystery of AIDS. Firstly, it was understood that something was destroying the victims' immune systems and leaving them vulnerable to unusual diseases or unable to fight off unusual diseases. Secondly, the routes of transmission led to the

theory that the cause might be an infectious agent or agents. By 1982 amid the debate by scientist of a single or multiple causal agents, a case definition was developed for reporting purposes. Scientists were also faced with the problem of naming the disease.

According to Herzlich and Pierret (1989), the mysterious illness was called 'homosexual pneumonia', 'homosexual cancer', 'gay cancer' or, more frequently, the 'homosexual syndrome'. Clearly, the association with homosexuals was immediately significant in symbolic and social terms, even though epidemiological data at this period of the disease showed that homosexuals were not the only ones affected.

In 1983, a single agent was simultaneously identified as the cause of AIDS by scientists in France and in the United States. Both teams isolated a single virus from a number of AIDS patients. The virus was named *lymphadeno-pathy-associated virus* (LAV) by the French team headed by Dr. Luc Montagnier; while the American team led by Dr. Robert Gallo called it *human T-cell lymphotropic virus III* (HTLV-III). However an international nomenclature committee in order to simplify matters, named the virus *human immunodeficiency virus* (HIV) (Duh, 1989).

Scientists quickly learned that HIV is a retro virus, meaning that, unlike other virus, it contains an enzyme called *reverse transcriptase*, which allows it to reproduce itself. Like other retro viruses, it uses the infected person's cells to reproduce itself, and by so doing, kills the cells. The destructive effect of HIV is that it uses the person's T-lymphocytes - the type of white blood cells that help fight off infection. When the destruction of these lymphocytes reaches a certain level, the person develops AIDS (Duh, 1989).

Historical and Philosophical Origins of Western and African Presses

To understand how one press reports a story differently from other presses, and how it operates, it is useful to define and understand the presses' view of the nature of man in a socio-cultural context. The African society view of the nature of man for example, is quite different from the Western, or Asian society view of the same phenomenon. This point tends to be ignored by Western scholars when they analyze media systems that do not have Western ideological orientation. Hence, it is not rare to come across on a regular basis, the analyses of African, South American, or Asian

presses using Western theories or models.

Mudimbe (1988) has observed that “Western interpreters as well as African analysts have been using categories and conceptual systems which depend on a Western epistemological order.” (p.x; quoted in Airhihenbuwa, 1995, p.xii). The consequence of such approach is that meanings and cultural codes of non-Western cultures are misinterpreted or distorted in reports. Cultural practices in this context “are reduced to archival remains, suggesting the lack of link between the present and the past, and thus creating a sense of historical discontinuity” (Airhihenbuwa, 1995). Cultural and philosophical meanings of the societies from which the presses originate must be examined in some detail before accurate theories describing the presses can be advanced.

In this context, Ruch and Anyanwu (1984) contend that there is no world neutral philosophy applicable to all culture at all times and in all places. They point out that every philosophy is a cultural philosophy that is limited and conditioned by culture. Therefore, although all cultures may observe the same signs; what they signify, for instance, trees, rivers, clouds, and their basic assumptions of theories and standards with which to interpret such facts are

different due to differences of their basic assumptions and theories about reality. This is not to posit that cultures, although different in orientation, lack similarities; but it is to say that these similarities must not be assumed to be identical.

Reality, it is often said, is unique to each individual based on personal experiences and one's view of life. However, when looking at society at large, patterns of what constitutes reality for that society emerge because the same assumptions about a phenomenon (e.g. God) is held by most people in that society. In summing up the main differences between African and Western views of reality, Ruch and Anyanwu (1984), wrote that:

We are dealing with complementary qualities and aspects of reality. Here, both the conscious and unconscious exist harmoniously not because of the synthesis of conscious reasoning but a product of faith. The Western rationalist seeks definitions, proofs and believes in concepts. The African vitalist seeks inspirations, intuitive insight, and believes in the person. The Western rationalist scrutinizes nature and the universe to wrest their forces from them, and he does this by detaching his ego as if he were not present in the world. The African vitalist strives to put himself in immediate and personal relationship with the soul of the world, with God and spirit in order to find the guarantee of his hope as well as evidence of what he does not see. (p.88).

African philosophy, thus, makes no distinctions between the

self and the world, man and nature, subject or object but perceives these elements as unitary in form, i.e., man and nature are one in all and all in one. To this, Airhihenbuwa (1995) adds:

[The] Philosophy of the human construction of reality, as lived in many African cultures, underscores an embracing of multiple truths relative to health, education, politics, religion, valuation, and thus decision-making processes. This ideology, which shuns the "all or nothing" mentality of Western culture and its attendant promotion of universal truths, should be understood not only for its counterpoising principle and quality but as a different genre. (p. ix).

This view contrasts the dominant paradigm in the Western philosophical thought which approaches man's relations to nature from an analytical point of view. In this context, reality is "knowable" primarily through empirical observation and quantitative analysis. Hume, Spencer and Durkheim are key figures in Western philosophy that advanced this view. This is especially so for Hume who advocated skepticism on the relationship of man to nature thus earning for himself the name 'great skeptic'. Hume's skepticism arose from questions and debates that Western philosophers and scholars have engaged in for centuries.

According to Altschull (1990), the questions that Western philosophy seek to answer include, but are not limited to these:

- What is the nature of humankind?
- What is a just society?
- What is truth?
- What is the proper role of journalists?

Understanding these questions enables one to make meaningful comparisons with work of other philosophers [presumably non-Western philosophical traditions] (Altschull 1990). Within this construct, it is possible to lend certain aspects of vitalism to empiricism for a dynamic comparison of both philosophical approaches. For example, in vitalism, the nature of human kind can be assumed to be good and vital, thus, man is not viewed as an entity but as a part of a larger, more complex environment that shapes his understanding of phenomena around him. This approach has also been recognized by counter-enlightenment scholars in the West who have questioned the assumptions of empiricism, and have advocated the qualitative or interpretative approach to the study of complex social realities.

The philosophical questions as identified by Altschull, have been the guidepost of Western thinking in general, depending on the perceived answers. Hence, adaptations of interpreted answers of

these questions to press theories determines the normative and functional duties of that press system. For instance, American journalists' approach to news coverage will be based on the libertarian theory of the press or what Altschull (1994) describes as the market nations theory.

In the same literature, Altschull classifies developing countries' presses in the advancing nations model, as opposed to the traditional development theory of the press which is commonly used to classify presses from these countries (McQuail 1994, 1983, Stevenson 1994, DeFlure 1964). While both models share the similarities in their social responsibility roles, as assigned by Altschull, they differ in their relationship to government and in the issue of truth. In this context, Altschull makes no clear distinction between seeking the truth that he ascribes to the market nations model and serving the truth of the advancing nations model.

However, some questions have arisen in regards to Altschull's categorizations. First, are there assumptions that in the market nations the truth must be sought out? And if so, from where? and how? Second, is it also assumed that in advancing nations the truth is evident, and thus, it is the duty of the press to serve this truth?

The questions raised here indicate the obstacles that Western theories face when applied to non-Western environments, and even when applied to its originating environment, ambiguity still exists.

In summary, the dominant Western society view of man and nature when compared to the African perspective of the same phenomenon reveal wealth of differences such as the ones identified above. In short, the West is empiricist, while the African is vitalist.

The American Press

The American press system is unique in its origin when compared to other press systems around the world. This uniqueness stems historically from the societal context under which it originated, and the philosophical underpinnings that guided the thoughts of its pioneers. The thoughts of these pioneers are embedded in contemporary American press practices.

Revisiting the philosophical roots that have influenced modern day American press, one can see that there were conflicts in thoughts ranging from the nature of man to the role that government should play in society (Altschull, 1990). For instance, there was a philosophical conflict between the ideas of Edmund Burke and those of Thomas Paine. In this context, for the followers

of Locke, the motives and behavior of men must always be suspect. Hence, institutions are required to keep mans' lower nature in check. and Hobbes following the same line of thought, advanced the notion that in the absence of social contract, men were fundamentally brutish.

On the other hand, to the followers of Rousseau and Paine, it was the institution themselves that were evil. Therefore, institutions had to be made subject to the wisdom of the collective people, through the General Will. The great skeptic, Hume was also influential in the philosophical origins of the American press. For Hume, journalists should draw conclusions based on what they can perceive, a line of thought according to Altschull (1990), that is wholly in agreement with the professional ideology of most journalists today.

Journalism in America, thus began in an atmosphere of experimentation and conflict of ideas. The earliest assignment of journalists in the colonies was to combat, in print, censorship of what was said or written. The desire for the freedom of the press in America predates this country's independence from Britain.

This notion of a free press was in fact a major issue that

contributed to the revolution against the colonial government. Hence, when this country gained independence, the founding fathers such as Benjamin Franklin, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, upheld and strongly argued for not just the freedom of the press, but also for freedom of public speech, and religion as well.

These issues of freedom of the press, speech and religion were so important to the founding fathers, that no assumptions that the government will guarantee this freedom were made. Thus the notions of a free press, free speech, and free religion were canonized in the US constitution. Part of the 1st amendment text reads as follows: "The people shall not be deprived or abridged of their rights to speak, to write, or to publish their sentiments; and the freedom of the press, as one of the great bulwarks of liberty, shall be inviolable" (Altchull, 1990, p.46). The above statement was the cumulative result of the experimental and philosophical conflict period in American press system and continues to serve as a foundation upon which the American press system operates today.

The issue of press freedom in this country raised questions regarding such values as fairness or impartiality in reporting, libel,

and most of all, reporting the truth. The early founders of the American press believed in the Miltonian self-righting principle, which states that if left by itself, the truth will prevail against other, or false ideas.

Thomas Jefferson in his interpretation of this Miltonian theory, added that for truth to prevail, free argument and debate must be assured; various points of view must be considered for the truth to emerge. Hence, objectivity or balance in news reporting has been a value espoused by early practitioners of journalism in this country, and is still an essential criterion in contemporary American press. In this context, Jefferson also made the point that printers or publishers should be accountable when they print false reports, in this regard then, "The press is answerable to the law for any consequences of its action that infringe other individual rights or the legitimate claims of society" (McQuail, 1994, p. 129).

Overall, the American press, as can be deduced from the foregoing historical analysis, operates under the libertarian press theory. This theory suggests that the press should be a 'free marketplace of ideas' in which the best is recognized and the worst fail. The general idea of this model is that the press is free to

operate safe from government control. Nonetheless, the press has self imposed regulations or guidelines designed to define its operations and how issues are to be reported.

The African Press

The modern African press derives from models instituted by Europeans during the colonial period (Airhihenbuwa, 1995). However, Ochs (1986) points out that newspapers have existed in Africa since Napoleon's military forces established two in Egypt, *Courier de l'Egypte* and *La Decade Egyptienne*, in 1797. Also during this period, *The Cape Town Gazzete* was founded at the other end of the continent in what would later be South Africa. *The Royal Gazette* was first published in Sierra Leone in 1801 (Hachten, 1971). These were colonial newspapers, read almost exclusively by European elites. Educational opportunities for native Africans were few, in addition, restrictive laws especially in sub-Saharan Africa, prohibited the emergence of a black press until the beginning of independence (Ochs, 1986).

However, a few exceptions existed in the British colonies on the west coast of Africa such as Nigeria and Ghana (formerly known

as the Gold Coast). Although the British style of administration was restrictive in these regions, the British did not pay much attention or try to prohibit the development of indigenous press even when the editorial voices were strong and nationalistic.

Among the earliest African-edited newspapers were the *Anglo-African* of Lagos in 1863 and the *Lagos Times and Gold Coast Advertiser* in 1880 (Hachten, 1971). Ochs (1986) points out that African journalists often derived their political views from the French and American revolutions. For instance, the pioneering Nigerian and Gold Coast editor, Nnamdi Azikiwe, who later became the first President of Nigeria, was educated in the United States. This observation is significant because it lends support that similarities do exist between the presses, and that under certain circumstances, they would behave alike.

Theoretically, presses around the world have been generally classified into the four theories of the press. As indicated above, Altschull (1994) and Hachten (1992) have also advanced models that seek to describe and classify the world presses. To these classifications, Rugh (1979) adds a useful sub-typology which when applied, more accurately reflects the African press.

This typology includes: *mobilizing*, a form of authoritarian system in which the media are actively mobilized by the government in the interest of economic and social development; *loyalist*, in which the press is privately owned but thoroughly loyal to the political regime; *diverse*, in which a mixture of private and public press exist.

Overall, the African press continues to be influenced, and as suggested by Ochs (1986), handicapped by its colonial heritage which began in a conference called by Otto von Bismarck in 1885. At this conference, various European nations divided Africa amongst themselves; Frankel (1985) observed that:

It was not an easy or a neat process. Ethnic groups were cleaved into fragments - the Ovambo are split in half by the boundaries dividing Portuguese-Angola from German Southwest Africa. Others were combined with desperate neighbors: the Ibos and Yorubas of the West African coast were thrown with the Muslim Hausas and Fulani of the north in a country that became British-ruled Nigeria where their rivalries helped set off the Biafra War and still cause problems. (p.12).

From the foregoing analysis, the African press continues to experience changes as the countries from which they evolve seek political systems that best serve their interests. Ochs (1986) has

observed that no thoroughly libertarian media systems are found in Africa. However, Random House reports that there are seven countries in Africa in which the press can be said to be relatively free (NBC Nightly News, May 1,1998). This is partly due to the movement toward democratization, the decentralization, and privatization of once government controlled mass media in some African countries.

Characteristics of the Mass Media

Having looked at the historical and philosophical backgrounds that serve as guide posts for the Western and African presses, it will be useful at this point to examine the sociology of mass communications. This approach is significant because as Smith (1995) has pointed out, the initial analysis of communication processes was built on the concept of a social act. Hence, the model of a communication system is an analog of a social system.

It is implied in mass communication research that the components of a communication model are inseparable from the larger social environment in which they exist (Smith, 1995). Therefore, HIV/AIDS as presented in the mass media is not just a

medical issue but indeed a social one; and the construction of this issue in the press has some influence on public perception of the disease.

A comprehensive and clearer account of the distinctive characteristics of mass communication is relevant in answering the question posed by Wright (1964) who asked what consequences there are for society when its 'basic communication activities' are carried out by mass communication rather than by alternative means of communications.

The characteristics of mass media according to McQuail (1969) are as follows:

- (i). Mass media require a complex organization for their operations. These includes obtaining financial resources, employing skilled personnel, and a formal internal authority structure. This formal organization distinguishes the mass media from informal, unstructured interpersonal communication.
- (ii). The mass media are directed toward a large audience. While the exact size of the audience can not be specified, it must be large relative to other means of communication such as a lecture or a theater play audience.

(iii). Mass communications are public – the contents are open to all who have the means of receiving them. However, unplanned constraints such as differences in language, income, education, may restrict access to media content. Furthermore, deliberately imposed constraints such as legal prohibitions and pricing, may also have the same effect as the unintended constraints.

(iv). The audience is usually heterogeneous because of their large number, and open access; simultaneous contact can be established with audience members although the relationship between the audience and communicator is impersonal. (McQuail, 1969. pp. 7-10).

The summary of characteristics of the mass media outlined above is useful in the present analysis of the HIV/AIDS reports in the African and the Western presses. Its usefulness lies in the normative function of the press, that is, how the press operates which includes editorial decisions, and decisions to publish an article or to censor it. And as has been demonstrated above, the mass media are able to reach a great number of people with information that may or may not affect their lives. This prompts the question: Why did the mass media ignore, or wait for so long to

begin reporting on the issue of HIV/AIDS at the onset of the pandemic? A further look at some other aspects of mass media may shed some light on the question raised above.

Social Functions of Mass Media

The social functions of the mass media are usually explained by looking at several mass communications theoretical perspectives. For the purpose here, I will examine in summary four perspectives which may lend to the understanding of press reports, or lack of it thereof, on the issue of HIV/AIDS. The four theoretical perspectives that will be examined here include: social responsibility, functionalist, political economy, and agenda setting theories of the media and society.

Social Responsibility Theory of Media and Society.

The Commission on Freedom of the Press in 1947, called on the press to be socially responsible (Hutchins, 1947). The standards set by the report which a responsible press should observe includes providing a 'full, truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of

the days' events'; serving as a 'forum for the exchange of comment and criticism' and be 'the carrier of public expression'; giving a 'representative picture of constituent groups in society' and in addition, present and clarify 'goals and values in society' (p.6). In summary, the social responsibility theory encompasses the following ideas:

- The media have obligations to society, and media ownership is a public trust.
- News media should be truthful, accurate, fair, objective and relevant.
- The media should provide a forum for ideas.
- The media should be free but self-regulated.
- Media should follow agreed codes of ethics and professional standards.
- Under some circumstance, society may intervene in the public interest (Hutchens, 1947).

Functionalist Theory of Media and Society.

Functionalism espouses ideas similar to social responsibility, but differs from it in that functionalism claims to explain, rather than prescribe, social practices and institutions in terms of the 'needs' of the society and of individuals (Merton,1957). As applied

to the media institution, the presumed 'needs' have mainly to do with continuity, order, integration, motivation, guidance, socialization, adaptation, etc. In this context, society is viewed as an ongoing system of linked working parts or subsystems in which the mass media are one, each making an essential contribution to continuity and order (Merton,1957). Laswell (1948) was one of the first communication scholar to advance the main functions of the mass media. According to Laswell (1948), these functions were:

Surveillance of the environment:

The mass media extend one's senses in time and space. We are informed of news events in other regions and countries where direct experience is impossible. Broadcast media, particularly, leave us with the illusion of direct participation in remote events, but really give us a highly compressed and synthetic picture. We often rely on a journalistically defined world for our impressions (Stamm & Bowes, 1990).

Interpretation of the environment

The media define what news is - what we should pay attention to. This point is controvertial because no two individuals will agree

completely on what this should be (Stamm & Bowes, 1990). However, a common complaint is that news media are too event oriented; they play-up the surprising, sudden and showy events, underplaying less exciting, time-consuming issues such as the economy or white collar corruption in the business world (Stamm & Bowes, 1990).

Correlation of Events

In this context, the news media are able to link seemingly separate events into general patterns which may signal complex changes in society. In short, they can tie events and link information together, making valuable interpretations based on what they have discovered (Stamm & Bowes,1990).

Transmission of Culture

The mass media transmits cultural values in society, often however, the mass media have been accused of transmitting the dominant culture, that is, the culture of those that control them (Altschull, 1995). In addition, the news media give us a view of

ethnic traditions and nationalities which make up a society. In this context, Stamm and Bowes (1990) posit that for many years in the U.S., African-Americans, women and others were often portrayed in demeaning, stereotyped roles. For example, African-Americans frequently played maids, unskilled workers, entertainers or sports stars. Women were all too often portrayed as servile and dependent on men, or as sex objects. Both groups often found themselves in support roles of dramatic programs or the crowd shots of commercials.

The above observation by Stamm and Bowes (1990) is significant in the mass media construction of the AIDS story, especially in regards to blacks. A review of the images of blacks in the mass media is introduced later in this study in order to show how and why this group was an easy target for the news media to blame for the origin and spread of the AIDS pandemic.

Additionally, McQuail (1994) has reviewed and expanded the initial criteria of mass media function as offered by Laswell (1948). From this perspective, the basic ideas about media tasks in society would be to provide:

Information

providing information about events and conditions in society and the world;

Indicating relations of power;

facilitating innovation, adaptation to progress.

Correlation

explaining, interpreting and commenting on the meaning of events and information;

providing support for established authority and norms;

socializing;

coordinating separate activities;

consensus building;

setting orders of priority and signaling relative status

expressing the dominant culture and recognizing subcultures and new cultural developments;

forging and maintaining commonality values.

Entertainment

providing amusement, diversion and the means of relaxation;

reducing social tension.

Mobilization

campaigning for societal objectives in the sphere of politics, war, economics, development, work, and sometimes religion (McQuail,1994, p. 79).

The functionalist approach, according to McQuail (1994) “has been beset with difficulties partly because of confusion over the meaning of ‘function’ and over the question of who is really likely to benefit. More fundamentally, an agreed version of media functions would require an agreed version of society” (p.78).

This theory has been criticized for its inadequacy in dealing with the issue of power and conflict, although the media are presumed to play a necessary role in processes of social control (Wright, 1974). This approach when applied to the HIV/AIDS treatment in the presses will show that the mass media in this context did not realize or live up to the principles outlined in the functional concept. Hence, this project seeks to discover if the press to provided the right information about HIV/AIDS to the public, press correlated, provided continuity, or mobilized the public against HIV/AIDS. Functional theory as well as social responsibility

theory, therefore, are principles that are used to analyze press form and process.

Critical Political-Economy Theory of Mass Media and Society.

Political economists begin their analyses of society by looking at the economic structure of that society. There is a return of sort to the base/superstructure model or classic Marxism in this school. In this context, there are the assumptions that:

- Economic control and logic is determinant
- Media structures tends toward concentration
- Global integration of media develops
- Contents and audiences are commodified
- Diversity decreases
- Opposition and alternative voices are marginalized
- Public interest in communication is subordinated to private interests. (McQuial, 1994).

Therefore, the general rule of society is determined by

economics especially in capitalist societies. Thus, the laws of capital determine how people interact. They compel individuals to go along, and continually generate conflict as exemplified in the capital and labor relationship.

In regards to the mass media which are key components in social organization, political economists contend that the capitalist class, by owning the means and method of production, have the opportunity to control the rules of society through the manipulation or use of the media. In this context, the interests of the capitalist are transformed into the interest of all. To this end, Bagdikian (1997) notes that:

Authorities have always recognized that to control the public they must control information. The initial processor of news and ideas has political power - the power to disclose or conceal, to announce some parts and not others, to hold back until opportunistic moments, to predetermine the interpretation of what is revealed. Leaders of democracies no less than medicine men, shamans, kings, and dictators are jealous of their power over ideas, as eager to control information as they are to control armies.(p. xlvi).

Additionally, Kenamer (1994) posits that the media serves legitimated individuals and institutions in society, hence the biased pluralism in policy process; in addition, he contends that mass society does not play important role in policy formulation even

though policy makers, interest groups, and the media uses the public to legitimize policy. Therefore according to this school of thought, the mobilization model - which assumes that published media investigations generates changes in public opinion, these changes in turn results in public policy reforms - does not work as the model is outlined. Thus, the perceived role of the media as a link between the public and policy makers becomes an illusion.

To this end, Jhally (1989) lends further analyses to consciousness and culture industries that capitalists employ to sell their ideas to the public. These concepts have been discussed in greater detail by the Frankfurt school and others. (See, for example, Adorno and Horkheimer 1977; Hirsch and Gordon, 1975; Murdock and Golden, 1977; Curan, 1986; Curran and Seaton, 1988, Furgerson, 1990). From the consciousness approach, capitalists may, according to Jhally (1989), use brute force through the police or military establishments to get people to comply; or they may gain the consent of the dominated by convincing the masses to support and identify with the existing system of power and rewards instead of opposing it.

The function of the media in the cultural context therefore, "is

to produce appropriate consciousness in the majority of the people to ensure the reproduction of what is essentially an exploitative systems of social relations" (Jhally, 1989, p. 68). Within this construct, the media is formally subsumed into the larger framework of the capitalist class, and thus, provide the ideology of this class to the people with the intention to make people think and believe that their interests are same as those of the capitalist.

The significance of the Frankfurt school critique according to Jhally (1989) is the revelation "that product of culture industries do not challenge people to think and reflect on the world - instead, as standardized products, the response to them is built into their own structure ... (Thus) the culture industries produce ideology not primarily because they are controlled by corporations, but because that is necessarily the result when culture is treated as a commodity" (p.72). Furthermore, the media sells audiences who perform such functions as marketing of goods to themselves, learning to vote for a political candidate, and reaffirming beliefs in the legitimacy of the politico-economic system (Smythe, 1977).

In the second instance, Jhally (1989) posits that the culture industry has become part of the economic system. Hence, the

products coming out of this sector are commoditized, and following the logic of capital, are sold for profit. Thus, culture is not a product of genuine demand, but rather, a commodity driven to sell itself.

Postman (1975) furthermore, argues that the information viewers receive from television is out of context, patterned into small, neat segments between commercials. The absence of context, and the absence of relationships, discourages thinking, so that the viewer does not realize that he is being controlled or conditioned. Hence, the power of the media rests on the assumption that the audience is used without knowing it. In this context, it then follows that ideology is transmitted without being noticed. Altschull (1994) also makes the point that news broadcast has become entertainment, patterned to reflect advertisement timing like situation comedies. These observations point to the potential deceptive nature of news form which in part is determined by the norms of industry practices and the obligation to meet advertisers needs.

Agenda Setting of the Mass Media and Society.

The agenda-setting perspective is considered in the present analysis of the social role of the mass media; specifically with regards to the media treatment of the issue of HIV/AIDS. The term agenda-setting according to McQuail (1994) was coined by McCombs and Shaw (1972) to describe in more general terms a phenomenon that has long been noticed and studied in the context of election campaigns. An agenda is a set of issues that are viewed at a point in time as ranked in an order of importance (Rogers, & Dearing, 1987).

Additionally, Rogers, Dearing, and Chang (1991) have suggested that agenda-setting study should be more broadly conceptualized as agenda research, defined as “the study of how public issues gain or lose importance relative to other issues over time” (p.7). Although the idea of agenda-setting function of the media had been articulated previously (Lang & Lang, 1959; Educational Policies Commission, 1958), scholarly inquiry on the agenda-setting process of the mass media derive most directly from Cohen (1963), who posited that the press:

May not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers

what to think about ... the world will look different to different people, depending...on the map that is drawn for them by writers, editors, and publishers of papers they read.” (p.3).

In this context, it is argued that due to the normative limitations of the news media, professional news values are applied to information and issues such that the public's attention is focused on a few issues while others are ignored or excluded. Hence, the hypothesis that “the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward political issues” (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 177).

Furthermore, Shoemaker and Becker (1995) point out that mass publics are permanently confronted with specifically focused picture of their environment, which does not reflect its pluralistic nature. Hence mass media create opinions that become the public's because they are convincing or attractive.

The comparative assumption of this tradition regarding cause and effect is that the public hardly plays a role in the formulation of public policy, but rather, the news media determines what they think are important and worthy as consideration for policy.

From this perspective therefore, the media role in political and social communication are to advance what they think should be on

the political agenda, and make these issues part of the political and social discourse. For instance, in a study conducted to determine if media coverage influenced the type of questions asked about AIDS in public opinion polls, and to determine if media coverage influenced the agenda of pollsters, Dearing (1989) found that, in regards to AIDS, news coverage influenced the questions asked by pollsters. This study analyzed ABC News, NBC News, The Washington Post and The New York Times coverage of AIDS and the question asked about AIDS in public opinion polls from 1981 - 1987. From the findings of this study, Dearing (1989) paraphrasing Cohen's (1963) statement, posit that "the press may not be successful in telling survey decision makers what questions to ask, but they are seemingly successful in telling survey decision makers what to ask questions about" (p.326).

Elements of News

Several factors influence topics covered by the news media. In this section, the "elements" or "qualities" (Metz, 1985, p.3) of news are discussed. These qualities directly or otherwise relate to the social behavior of the press discussed above. Few stories would

encompass all these elements.

Timeliness

A factor that influences whether or not something is considered news is “timeliness” (Metzler, 1986, p.23; Metz, 1985, p.3). When an event took place helps determine whether or not it is reported as news.

Consequence

A second factor in news determination is “consequence” (Metzler, 1986, p. 23; Metz,1985, p. 5), which refers to the importance of an event. Political events and natural disasters are examples; additionally, the audience helps determine whether or not an event is newsworthy. (Metz, 1995).

Prominence

“Prominence” (Metzler, 1986, p.23; Metz,1985, p. 5) is a third factor that influences whether or not an event is newsworthy. When something happens to a famous individual it is worthy of attention; however when the same thing happens to someone else it would not be newsworthy. For instance, the

announcement by basketball star, Magic Johnson, that he was infected with the HIV virus, was a news event and received widespread media coverage.

Proximity

“Proximity” is the fifth element of news. This refers primarily to geographical proximity to the news center (Metzler, 1986,p 24; Metz, 1985, p.4).

Conflict

“Conflict” (Metzler, 1986, p. 24) is the sixth factor that determines newsworthiness of an issue. An individual’s battle with cancer is of interest to people. In addition, differing opinions regarding a particular issue (such as the debate over the legalization of marijuana) can make a topic controversial thereby enhancing its news value (Metzler, 1986).

Change

Related to conflict is the potential for “change” (Metzler, 1986, p. 24), which is the seventh element of news. An event that may trigger change is likely to be of interest to individuals, either because they will oppose or support the change

(Metzler, 1986).

Action

Another element of news is “action” (Metzler, 1986, p. 24). A story about people engaged in activities has more news potential than does one about people merely considering these activities or merely complaining about a topic (Metzler, 1986). Action may also encompass violence, either deliberately or accidental.

Correctness

A ninth factor of news is that “the tangible always takes precedence over the abstract on the scale of news values;” this is referred to as “correctness” (Metzler, 1986, p. 24). For instance, a fatality due to cancer is more newsworthy than the etiology of the disease. Such an article would contain human interest dimension.

Personality

The final element is “personality or ‘human interest’” (Metzler,

1986, p. 24). Human interest stories are aired or written “to affect the feelings and sensibilities in some way” (Metz, 1985, p.6). These stories can be about famous individuals or about everyday people, perhaps involved in everyday situations (Metzler, 1986).

News Analysis

The identification and evaluation of news appeals is a method of analysis that is used to understand how the construction of news reports invites political response from citizens or discourages further discourse on issues (Barton, 1990). According to Barton (1990), the analysis of news appeals “involves separating the various appeals made to publics, accounting for the larger international political context of which the appeal are a part, associating appeals with the voices from which the appeals emerge, and postulating a political use of the appeals on the basis of comparative orientations of audiences” (p.18).

News, from this method of analysis, can be understood by looking at the political constituencies that are invited in the discursive frame, how actors are “legitimated” as players, and

political issues defined.

In his interpretation of the work of Duncan (1968), Barton (1990) offers a typology of news appeals that can be constructed separately or in combinations. These include:

Authority

Appeals to uncontested authority. Government authority is the typical example. These appeals tend to close-off, limit political discourse. Appeals to American nationalism are typical of his category (Barton, 1990, p.19).

General Public

Appeals to the unseen generalized, non-discursive public. Vague references to public opinion are examples of this type (Barton, 1990, p.19).

Community Guardians

Appeals to the sense of community needs and values; depending on the context, the appeal can refer to local neighborhoods or to the ideal of the "international community" (Barton, 1990, p.19).

Groups

Appeals that are invitational to groups with highly organized goals and roles constituting a distinctive political "culture," with high levels of knowledge about specific issues and countries, that are motivated and energized through intense interpersonal group communication focusing on political issues. For example, such appeals might be inviting to environmental activists and elite policy groups concerned specifically about the acid rain problem (Barton, 1990, p.19).

Individual

Appeals to the individual's political conscience, and sense of political commitment perceived as the requisite obligation for participating in the society-at-large (e.g., appeals for individuals to vote in local and national elections) (Barton, 1990, p.19).

Ideal Social Order

Within this appeal dimension resides the ideas of a social

order involving an open, participatory democracy. These are the opposite extreme from appeals to authority, for social-order appeals encourage political discourse about policy across audience orientations and across national boundaries (Barton, 1990, p.19).

AIDS as a Social Phenomenon in the Western Press.

The outbreak of a new disease raises concern not just for scientists and health care providers, but for society as a whole. It has been suggested by Herzlich and Pierret (1987) that an epoch and society can, in general, be characterized by the nature and distribution of illnesses, some of which have had unsettling consequences on the social order. As indicated above, AIDS was an enigma when it first broke out and presented a tough challenge for scientists. Social scientist on the other hand faced a different challenge, the spreading of a new disease that could be analyzed in order to understand how a 'social phenomenon' having to do with various fields of reality, especially medicine is constructed (Herzlich & Pierret, 1989).

According to Berger and Luckman (1966), reality, whether biological or social has to be constructed. The press in general are media in which public discourse takes place and issues such as AIDS are constructed. In the context of AIDS, a new reality that crystallized intense feelings and polarized social relations was built up over a very short period of time. This reality was constructed through medical knowledge, and almost simultaneously in public opinion (Herzlich & Pierret, 1989).

Western press treatment of the of the AIDS story in the early days of the disease were similar. Rogers, Dearing, and Chang (1991), have identified four distinct eras in the media coverage of AIDS: an initial era, a science era, a human era, and a political era. Most of the reports were derived from scientific reports issued by the United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. In their study of how six French national dailies treated the issue of AIDS from 1982 to 1986, Herzlich and Pierret (1989) reported that:

AIDS was constructed as a cultural and moral phenomenon upon the basis of concepts borrowed from epidemiology. Placed between quotation marks, terms such as 'risk groups' (or also risk categories, individuals, persons, and populations) were diffuse by the various dailies from May 1993 onwards. By this means of referring to persons who ran the most risk of

catching the disease, a new theme arose that would soon be foremost among the many associated with AIDS. It was not only treated as a subject of intense research, as an economic and scientific battle between the United State and the French, it became, owing to the identity of its victims, a topic about which questions were asked and moral judgments made. Those persons who pushed this theme to the utmost took the spreading of AIDS to be the driving force behind thoroughgoing changes that would, as the twentieth century draws to a close, affect values, life-styles, and particularly sexual freedom. AIDS thus marked a turning point in social trends: the period 'after AIDS' would be lived not only under the physical threat of the disease but also under the sign of global transformation of society. By late 1983, this set of meanings and associated themes had been formed (p.1238).

To this, Pollack and Schiltz (1987) add that French dailies, by frequently and indiscriminately shifting back and forth from the cause to risk factor, gave the impression that this illness infected specific groups characterized by what was considered their sexual deviant behavior. In this context, several articles stuck to the probabilistic concept of 'risk group' much broader labels such as 'homosexual community' or 'homosexual life-style' as though these referred to a homogeneous reality (Herzlich, & Pierret, 1989). This observation is useful because it challenges the assumptions implied in the ethnocentric model of press behavior, but lends support to the suggestion in this paper that by focusing, for instance, on homosexuals, the press shifted the reality of AIDS being indeed an

issue that affected the whole of society, to a homosexual problem.

The French national dailies according to Herzlich and Pierret (1989), started describing, along with the spread of the disease, the 'psychosis', 'paranoia' of, at first, the American 'gays', and then the entire population. In addition, these reports provided the occasion to dwell upon the prevailing interpretation of AIDS as a 'divine punishment' or 'curse' that, as did certain illnesses in the past (the plague was usually cited) befalls the guilty.

There was emphasis in some dailies, according to this point of view that punitive interpretation had, like AIDS, developed in the United States; they related it to 'Anglo-Saxon Puritanism, to 'Reaganism', or besides these religious and political explanations, to the Moral Order movement spreading over the United States in the early 1980s.

The assessment made by Herzlich and Pierret (1989) about the moral interpretation of AIDS in the United States is supported by several researchers such as Clark, 1992; Lester, 1992; Lupton, Chapman, & Wong, 1993; Watley, 1990; McAllister, 1992; Rocheron & Linne, 1989; Kinsella, 1989. For instance, Watley (1990), has shown how the politics of AIDS serves to reinforce conservative

political agendas and to deflect attention from AIDS itself. He showed that the representations in the media conflate HIV with AIDS, providing incorrect information within an institutional structure that promotes itself as purveyor of facts. In this context, concrete issues in the forms of prevention, treatment, and education are down played in favor of a search for meaning in American and European presses (Watley, 1990). For Kensella (1989), the United States mass media was instrumental in the construction of AIDS as a plague-like, almost spiritual response to deviance, having taken six years and twelve thousand deaths to achieve aggressive mainstream reporting.

Additionally, Myrick (1996) adds that by presenting the illness in a moralistic frame, the media often work to stigmatize further the issue of AIDS and those affected by it. Furthermore, Seidel (1990) has posited that some messages designed by public officials to create awareness about the disease in the public sphere, and disseminated through the mass media, have enhanced stigmatization. This leads to the observation by Kemp (1988) that:

What's at stake in these representations of AIDS in the popular culture is not an abstract public health/ethical "issue," but

rather who controls the vocabulary attached to the disease. And in the volatile atmosphere of panic and prejudice in which AIDS discourse has developed, this is a vocabulary that apportions guilt and innocence and discovers victims rather than recognizing people actively fighting for their lives and against hatred, indifference, and ignorance. (p. 229).

AIDS and 'Moral Panic.'

The concept of 'moral panic' is useful in understanding the construction of AIDS story in the Western press. British scholars such as Fitzpatrick and Mulligan (1987) have used this concept to describe the press treatment of the AIDS story in Great Britain. Within this context, these authors argue that 'moral panic' was deliberately orchestrated in Britain by the Establishment to divert public attention from worsening economic and political conditions and to "bolster traditional family values and proscribe all departures from these norms" (p.60).

According to Cohen (1972) 'moral panic' is:

A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and

becomes more visible. Sometimes the object of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic is passed over and forgotten...at other times it has more serious and long lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even the way society conceives itself. (p. 9; quoted in Lester, 1989).

The press therefore, is a crucial part of interactive relationship between event, news-making and political and professional actions which results in the stigmatization of particular social groups through amplification of fears of social disorder (Rocheron, & Linne, 1989).

The Western press coverage of the AIDS pandemic continued with the tone suggestive of the concepts of the moral panic until two consecutive events occurred: popular American icon actor and 'closet' homosexual Rock Hudson contracted the disease and subsequently died from it in 1985; and the Indiana school boy Ryan White who contracted the disease through blood transfusion. This period was marked by some of the highest coverage given to the disease by the Western press.

On July 25, 1985, officials at the American Hospital in Paris announced that the famous actor was hospitalized in their facility from an infliction by the AIDS virus. A month after the public

announcement that Rock Hudson had AIDS, another significant AIDS news event occurred. Ryan White, a 13 year old Indiana boy was barred from attending school because he had AIDS. This event was well covered in the press because it raised a controversy on whether a child who has tested positive for the HIV virus should be allowed to attend public school.

These two events although different in their contexts, had significant impact on subsequent press reports on AIDS. For instance, in the Rock Hudson situation, the press picked up the story when the actor developed full blown AIDS, and it was impossible to hide his homosexuality and the fact that he was very ill. The press coverage of Hudson was significant in coverage of AIDS because his film and television roles brought him into the homes of millions of Americans and peoples across the world thereby making him an individual that the general population could identify with - a rugged and charming American hero.

In short, Hudson's homosexuality and the 'evils' associated with this sexual orientation did not diminish press coverage because the press focused less on his sexuality, than on his legacy as an American icon. To this end for instance, Klaidman (1991) has

observed that the August 12, 1995 issue of Newsweek magazine was fairly typical of much of the coverage of Hudson's illness and death. The headline on that edition of Newsweek according to Kliadman (1991) was a single word in large, eye-catching type: "AIDS." Underneath which there was a picture of a disease-ravaged Rock Hudson. Alongside the photograph it was written: "It is the nation's worst public health problem. No one has ever recovered from the disease and the number of cases is doubling every year. Now fears are growing that the AIDS epidemic may spread beyond gays and other high-risk groups to threaten the population at large" (p.146). More importantly was the observation that "Nowhere on the cover, and indeed nowhere inside the magazine, did it say that Hudson was gay. If there was an implication, it was that he was a member of the population at large" (Klaidman, 1991, p.146). The suggestion here is that Hudson as a "public hero" does not deserve to be put in to the same category as ordinary gay men because of the social stigmatization associated with being gay; moreover it could also be that such a revelation would have lessened public sympathy for Hudson.

Similarly, the case of Ryan White, the Indiana school boy that

was barred from attending classes because he had contracted AIDS from blood transfusion caught the attention of the press because of reasons stated earlier. The slight 18-year-old had become a hero of the AIDS epidemic, admired for his courage and grace (Klaidman, 1991). However, Kinsella (1989) points out that the press reported this event in a manner that suggested that there were 'innocent people' who contracted the disease by no fault of their own. The death of White in 1990 was heavily covered by the press with such leading headlines and editorials as: *Once an outcast, AIDS victim Ryan White dies a hero* (Pomarantz, 1990); *Ryan White: A life to celebrate* (Times-Picayune, 1990); *Shining spirit of Ryan White* (Chicago Tribune, 1990); *The triumph of Ryan White* (Atlanta Journal, 1990).

One would think that the overwhelming sympathy over White's death would have mobilized the press to significantly inform readers about the nature of the disease as a social ill whose deadliness affected all; instead as stated earlier, the press response was to classify those who contracted the disease from HIV contaminated blood as "innocent victims". This lack of accurate information to the public by the press may explain why a week after

White's death, Moody Church of Chicago banned a five-year-old infected with the AIDS virus from attending Bible classes (Page, 1990).

In summary, the deceptive nature of news form suggests in these instances and others that the press has economic interest in promoting the images of "guilty" and "innocent" victims. This is achieved through pandering to popular prejudices that help sell newspapers, magazines and TV shows. The danger within this reality however, is that the press does not only reflect public policy, but has the ability to shape it. This ability of the press to influence public policy can sometimes add to its sense of self-importance, and shows how vulnerable it is to partisan politics and economic power-brokering.

To understand the context under which a press blames marginalized individuals or groups in society, it will be useful to examine the press' relationship with a social group over the years. For instance, if one looked at how the press in the United States have covered issues concerning blacks in general, we will see why this group is likely to be blamed for HIV/AIDS; and by extension, the blaming of Haiti whose population is mostly of Africa descent

reinforced the negative image of blacks in this country.

Blacks in the American Media.

The accusation made by Susan Smith of Union, South Carolina, that a black man car-jacked, and abducted her children in 1994 was a major news event. The news value of this story is not what is at issue because the incident could have had a similar media coverage if the accusation was made against any person of another racial background. The issue is that of believability and the mental association of blacks to crimes. It is easier on the part of the white majority to believe that black males, for the most part, are capable of such a heinous crime, and for the mass media to reinforce such a stereotype within the community, as opposed to the belief by the same group that one of their own is capable of the act.

To this end, Donaldson and van Dijk (1988) point out that 'symbolic racism' exists. In this context, the authors indicate that in everyday talk, underlying ethnic prejudices may indirectly appear in "innocent" stories about a black neighbor. Although such stories claim to tell the "facts," they indeed describe how "they" did it (wrong) again, or generally imply that "they" are stupid, lazy,

welfare-cheats, criminals, or lack motivation to learn. In addition, the storyteller may, at the same time, emphasize that he has nothing against "them," and they are his "best friends." Yet, the stories, spreading in the community, and often magnified by the mass media, contribute to the failure in communication and reproduction of racism in society.

According to Donaldson and van Dijk (1988) this type of discrimination serves several functions in society. First, it expresses and conveys dominant group membership and in-group solidarity, as well as norms and values shared by such in-groups. Second, it identifies and describes "threatening" out-groups, against which appropriate action - discrimination - can be rationalized and excused. Third, personal experiences are persuasively upgraded to in-group ones, and result in a redefinition of social reality in such a way that the real victims are categorized as a threat and the dominant in-group members as innocent victims of "them."

Similarly, Scheingold (1984), points out that the repeated message in the entertainment and news media is that crime is perpetrated by predatory individuals who are 'different' from the rest of 'us', and that criminality stems from individual or group

problems. The implication of this observation is that blacks, who account for the majority of crime segments in the mass media (Schengold 1984), are viewed in such light.

Hence, there is an overall subtle attitude of 'us versus them' in entertainment and reporting of criminal and stereotyped behavior in the mass media. This attitude in reporting black issues is not limited to criminal behavior alone, but is reflected in other areas of socialization and culture, as will be explored in this section.

Blacks in Entertainment and News Reporting.

The organization of local news is formatted for the most part, toward Anglo-Saxon males (Altschull 1994). It must be noted that when the talks about freedom of the press, free speech, and freedom of religion were being contemplated, Blacks or slaves as they were called then, and women were not factored in. Thus, the society that all these events took place was dominated by Anglo-Saxon men, and the press was no exception; therefore, news about domestic issues reflected the opinions of these men, and this is still evident today. The result of this is that one large segment of the American population influences the activities of other segments consciously or

otherwise.

Similarly, the press places emphasis on one segment of society while ignoring other segments, thus creating an imbalanced flow of information. In this context, Blacks are often excluded or when shown, are depicted in negative stereotypes. Therefore, one can conclude that based on the historical evolution and ownership of the American press, which is predominantly white, black issues receive little, or no attention except when the issue is negative, sensationalizable or "threatens" national security.

By virtue of being excluded, blacks and other ethnic minority groups become invisible to the rest of society, hence creating the impression among the majority that these groups do not fit into the social structure as viable participants. The Report of the National Advisory Board on Civil Disorders sums it up best when it states that:

The press has too long basked in a white world, looking out of it, if at all, with white man's eyes and a white perspective...their failure to convey the ills of the ghetto, the difficulties of life there, and the Negro's burning sense of grievance [was] inexcusable in an institution that has the mission to inform and educate the whole of our society (Pp.362 - 89).

The commission, for example, criticize the creators of Andy

and Amos, a 1951 CBS black comedy series when it points out that the show creators, Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll, "trained black actors in the nuances of the stereotype with which whites would be comfortable. Apparently to avoid interaction between blacks and whites, Andy and Amos lived in an all-black world in which all the judges, policemen, shop owners, and city clerks were black." The notion of 'we versus them' was thus reinforced.

Although the Kerner Commission made these observations in 1968, the question that ought to be raised is, has the coverage philosophy of the American press changed towards blacks in the 1990's? Fundamentally, the answer is no, although some progress has been made to this end. The fact that shows such as the 1950's series Andy and Amos, which according to Sherard (1982) portrayed blacks as inferior, lazy, dumb and dishonest, clowns or crooks, professional quacks, and thieves without adequate skill or ethics are not being shown today on television, does not signify the disappearance of such stereotypes in the mass media. Instead, scholarly inquiries into the subject have suggested that a more subtle anti-black imagery persists. (Entman, 1992; Brand and Greenberg, 1992; Hall-Jameison, 1992).

In a recent study for instance, Entman (1994) examined how blacks are represented on network television news. He makes a distinction between how local and national television covers issues relating to blacks. In this context, Entman observes that local TV in covering crime stories, depict blacks as more dangerous than whites accused of the same crime, and in political stories, local news makes blacks appear more demanding of special government favoritism than whites. Paradoxically, the employment of highly visible black anchors and reporters on local TV present white audiences with images of black success, messages suggesting that racial discrimination no longer impedes African Americans, hence raising questions as to why crime and demands on the political system persist (McConahay, 1986).

The categories of Entman's analysis are: Blacks as Source or Victim of Trouble, Human Interest and Expertise, Crime News, Verbal Representations of Blacks, and Black Leaders. In the first category, 60% of stories centered on non-positive news about blacks, which included such unpleasant and usually crime related facts as the decrease in black college enrollment, the high rate of drug-related murders in Washington, DC, and the higher death rate of

rates of black men in Harlem (higher than in Bangladesh).

In the second category of analysis which deals Human Interest and Expertise, Entman indicates that there are two ways in which networks can portray blacks as making positive contributions to society (short of overtly preaching good will and brotherhood). First, the "Human Interest" category shows blacks in roles that do not relate to their race. The revelations of such stories are that blacks ("They") can in some cases be like whites ("Us"). Second, using blacks as experts in stories indicate a positive message that blacks are knowledgeable with newsworthy and have insightful things to say; and by this very act of being consulted, these blacks show themselves to have positive social utility.

In the third unit of analysis, Crime News, Entman points out that the main significant difference in the portrayal of blacks and white is that 77% of network news (17 of 22) in which a black was accused concerned a violent or drug crime, versus 42% of crime stories for whites (19 of 45).

In short, the overwhelming majority of black crime stories concerned violence or drugs, while these threatening forms of criminal activity comprised a minority of stories for white alleged

criminals. The author points out that the disparity could reflect a real racial difference in the focus of criminal activity, but some reality are not quantifiable and are thus, subject to opinions and lengthy debates.

However, evidence exists that suggests that blacks are more likely to be arrested than whites committing similar crimes, in which case the media might be accurately representing blacks' higher arrest rate but exaggerating the comparative rate of committing violent or drug crimes (Entman, 1994). This is not to deny that poor blacks, especially males, engage in unlawful activity at a very high rate (Chicago Tribune, 23 Sept. 1990).

According to Entman (1994), blacks are subject to a very high rate of discrimination, unemployment, ineffective schooling, single-parent upbringing, and other experiences that tend not to be reported within the narrative of crime. To this end, McQuail (1994) states that "we have to account not just of relative frequency [of black crime news] but of links and relationships in the text, and take note of what is missing or taken for granted "[like the factors that lead black males to commit crimes, as identified by Entman above] (p.276).

The last two categories of analysis in Entman's study deal with the Verbal Representation of Blacks, and Black leaders. In these contexts, the theme of black stories is that blacks are either positive contributors to the American society, or Blacks as human beings whose racial identity is incidental. On black leaders, Entman suggests that network news places high priorities on dramatic controversy focusing on black leaders who are likely to be in trouble, as in the case of Marion Barry, or Clarence Thomas. Similarly, black leaders are portrayed in network news as critics of government policies, and protesters against discrimination.

The Entman study is useful in that it covers the basic categories of blacks as a social group, and how this relates to network news coverage on television. The mainly negative, and under reporting of black in local or national media systems can be attributed to complex social forces such as political realities, lower socioeconomic status, ingrained negative expectations of black behavior by the larger segment of the population, and stereotypes.

These factors fit into one category of what McQuail (1994) considers as being primary news values - negative. The nature of newsworthiness favors the activities of the elite in society as Galtung

and Ruge (1965) have observed. Very few blacks belong to this elite category in the American social experience, and thus, the majority of the black population are not covered in news reports except when the news is negative or sensationalizable. The generally negative coverage of blacks locally in Western societies may be characterized as having international implications regarding the coverage of Africa, a continent from which black people of the world claim their origin.

Ladner (1993) in looking at how Africa is reported, paints a negative picture of Western media coverage of this great continent. According to him, "Western news copy are muted echoes of the literary racism of Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness (p.9). This observation is shared by voices emanating from developing countries who claim, and rightfully so, that the West's media coverage of developing countries is negative. The implication of such negative coverage is the widely held perception of some Westerners that Africa is uncivilized.

Overall, from looking at the foregoing analysis, one can deduce the ease with which the press will jump to blaming such a group as blacks in addition to other marginalized groups for the

spread of HIV/AIDS.

AIDS as a Social Phenomenon in the African Press.

As in the West, the outbreak of the AIDS pandemic in Africa was greeted with silence, denials, accusations, and blame by the governments and the mass media. Many of these institutions according to Gibson (1994), avoided references of AIDS all together, attributing the cause of its victims' deaths to anything but AIDS. For instance, media and gossip papers would use euphemisms in describing death from AIDS, such as linking the cause to 'just another bad bottle of beer' (The Independent, 1991). Shlachter (1993) has pointed out that it was only recently in Kenya that the Swahili word *ukimwi* ('become wearied') was coined to specifically describe AIDS, replacing the misleading *chira*, which means 'divine retribution.'

Additionally, in African countries where the pandemic hit hard, AIDS was referred in the mass media as 'slim' disease (Haq, 1988; Ndiya-Achola et al., 1990; Schmidt, 1988). This led to the belief that having sex with a fat woman provided safe heaven because she didn't have the 'slim' disease. (Schmidt, 1988).

However, the mass media have also been used to destroy myths about AIDS such as the ones indicated above. This often happens when the elite in society fall victim to the disease. (Rock Hudson comes to mind in the West). In the African context, a bass guitarist, David Mankaba, of a very popular musical group - The Bhundu Boys of Zimbabwe, used the media to destroy such myths, as well as opening the eye of self-imposed blindness of African governments, which influences the media response (Gibson, 1994). Near death, Mankaba asked that the media "tell the world that I died of AIDS" (Agence France-Presse, 1991). He demanded that reports of his death use no euphemisms such as slim's disease or that he had simply died from drinking 'another bad bottle of beer' (The Independent, 1991). Even though other Zimbabweans had died of AIDS by that time, the accurate description of Mankaba's death in 1991 - nearly a decade after the first indication of the AIDS pandemic emerged - was the first time the national media in Zimbabwe recognized AIDS as the cause of death (Agence France-Presse, 1991).

Regardless, Zimbabwe's most prominent citizen President Robert Mugabe, according to Gibson (1994), continues to perpetuate

myths and misinformation by painting homosexuals as the chief culprits in the spread of the disease in Zimbabwe.

The media in this context are likely to echo similar sentiments since they are either directly controlled by the government, or if privately owned, are under constant government surveillance and shadow. For instance, Matimba (1991) points out that in Zimbabwe, the government owns the nation's leading newspaper, The Herald, and can exert significant power over its editorial coverage and comment.

As a result, it generally reflects government policy, which until recently was aggressively silent on the AIDS issue. Similarly in Kenya, the media, most of which are privately owned, nevertheless are careful in their reaction against key government officials and positions because journalists have been jailed, and at one time, reporters from Kenya's largest newspaper, The Daily Nation, were banned from covering parliament because of stories the government deemed too critical (Henry, 1989).

Other factors such as local economies also contributed to the silence of the African press in the early stages of the AIDS crisis. In this regard, some African governments exhibited a high degree of

sensitivity about the ability of AIDS publicity, in their views, to severely harm their economies by hurting tourism or development (Gibson, 1991). For example, in Kenya, "cautious that an all out war against AIDS would have some serious repercussions on the tourism industry, the country's leading foreign exchange earner, government dragged its feet to stem the transmission of the disease" (Inter Press Services, 1991).

The construction of the AIDS pandemic in the African press mirrored that of the Western press when the "us versus them" posture is taken into consideration domestically. In a personal communication (1998), Tom Owino, a Kenyan graduate student at The Pennsylvania State University informed me that the press in Kenya created a sense of panic especially among the youth. He said that all of a sudden the Nairobi night clubs became virtually empty on nights that they are usually crowded because people were scared of contracting the disease. Similarly, he said that local press reports about AIDS reflected opinions of Western news agencies such as the Associated Press.

However, reporting the AIDS pandemic in the African press took a different turn when it became clear that the Western press

and some Western medical 'experts' cited Africa as the originating point of the virus that causes AIDS.

It is well documented that at the discovery of the virus in the early 1980's, the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, whose communiques on important issues such as AIDS are often regarded as gospel truth by many, blamed the origin of the disease on green African monkeys and by default, Africans. Other groups that suffered from such accusations were Haitians, and homosexuals. This was the "official" position of the CDC, and was widely reported in the mass media across the world. Consider for instance, the following statements in the Western press discovered by Konotey-Ahulu (1987) regarding AIDS in Africa:

Zambia expects to have to care for 6000 infants with AIDS in 1987: compare that with under 400 in the U.S. since AIDS first arrived.

In one Central African country, so many people have been dying of AIDS that the government is talking of the need to curtail the tradition of family funerals.

In late 1995, one large bank in Kinsasha has half of its staff sick with AIDS. (Panos Institute, 1986).

The deadly disease AIDS is now out of control in black Africa that whole nations of people are doomed, leaving vast areas of now populated land devoid of single living person within

the next ten years (*Sunday Express*, Nov. 23, 1986).

There are reports from Africa of tens of thousands dying from AIDS. (BBC World Service, April 3, 1987)

Sickening of a continent - AIDS in Africa. (*Guardian* Feb. 5, 1987).

Konotey-Ahulu and other researchers such as Katner and Pankey (1987), Duh (1991) have argued, and traced the origins of the virus to Europe and the Americas. Statements like the ones above by the Western press triggered a shift in reporting of the AIDS pandemic in the African press from issues of sexual deviants or *marginales* to fears of increased Western misrepresentation and consequent domination (Lester, 1992).

In this context, Lester (1992) posits that the AIDS story was constructed around two themes in the African press: (1) politics, the discourse on pan-Africanism, which raises the issue of South versus North, Us versus Them; and (2) economics, the discourse on development, which in the African situation is linked with health, and specifically, access to health care.

Many Africans responded vigorously to the suggestion that they were responsible for infecting the world with AIDS, but predictably their voices were ignored in the West. Well researched

articles in a number of African newspapers and magazines, and African scientists and government officials voiced their protests at international scientific meetings on AIDS. For instance, an international conference held in Dakar, Senegal in 1985 provided a platform for some of the most persistent proponents of the African connection, and was the subject of report by Yinka Adeyemi, the science and health correspondence for the Nigerian Weekly Concord. He began:

To the average European researcher in virus cancer, the notion that Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) has its origin in Africa is now a scientific fact ... Yet, arguments by such scientist whose minds are made up about the African connection are replete with fundamental loopholes and illogicalities that render them not plausible. (p. 46)

This correspondent was familiar with the current scientific literature on the subject, and was highly critical, particularly of Dr. Kevin De Cock and Belgian researchers in Zaire and Rwanda.

It is argued for instance that the 'African connection' school is guilty of bias. Critics ask: What prompted the researchers to go to Zaire and Kigali and not New York or San Francisco and many other Scandinavian cities – where the outbreak of AIDS is equally alarming? Besides, says Wemimo Benson of the Lagos University teaching hospital, it amounts to saying nothing if the researchers went to cities where a disease is

generally believed to be endemic, and based on certain symptoms, conclude that such a disease is rampant in those cities. Critics also say that it is very likely that scientists who subscribe to the 'African connection' theory may have inadvertently mistaken AIDS symptoms for other diseases exhibiting similar symptoms ... malaria fever, pneumonia and tuberculosis. (p.46)

He commented on the racist underpinnings of Western research:

A common notion which cuts through the reasoning of most Western scientists is that a visit should be made to Africa before any researcher concludes whether the disease is new. For instance, De Cock wrote that Ebola, Marburg virus and lassa fever were all initially thought to be new diseases when they first surfaced "but all of them turned out to have been endemic in Africa"

There are even more offensive notions ... Gallo who first identified the AIDS-causing virus in man, said at the Dakar conference: "Viruses closely related to HTLV, but not distinct from it, have been isolated from Old World monkeys. This and other facts led us to propose that the ancestral origin of HTLV is in Africa.

Comments such as this immediately raise problems because of the socio-historic implications. To the ordinary man, Gallo will be understood as saying that: "We (European scientists) conclude that AIDS originated from Africa because we found AIDS virus in monkeys, and Africans are closer to monkeys."(p. 47)

This correspondent argued that African scientists should counteract Western AIDS research, and felt that they had been insufficiently critical:

The task of such research falls on African scientists and particularly the Scientific and Technical commission of the

Organization of African Unity ... Unfortunately, few have dared to challenge the conclusion of European scientists with respect to the origin of AIDS. (p. 47)

However, by November 1985, the situation had changed. A symposium on AIDS held in Brussels was reported in the January 1986 edition of New African:

By the close of the two-day symposium on AIDS in Africa held in Brussels, a stand-off had developed between some Western medical scientists who insisted that the disease was spreading through Africa and, indeed, might well have begun there, and African scientists and government officials who maintained it was unproductive to stress the disease's 'African connection'. (p. 13-14).

The meeting was apparently so fractious that the 50 African representatives from 15 countries felt obligated to issue their own statement which stated:

The symposium did not show any conclusive evidence that AIDS originated in Africa. Therefore, efforts directed at associating Africa with AIDS do not contribute to future control programs. The African representatives also dismissed what many scientists take to be an important link between AIDS in Central Africa and the occurrence of Kaposi's sarcoma, a form skin cancer. Kaposi's sarcoma has long been endemic to Central Africa, but has occurred rarely in Europe and the USA until it began afflicting a high proportion of AIDS sufferers. However, the Africans' communique in Brussels denied that any relationship had been proved between AIDS and Kaposi's sarcoma. The communique went on to point out that the test for the presence of the AIDS virus used in Africa is unreliable and gives a falsely high number of positive

results. The document also said that so far, all evidence that the disease originated in a virus common to Green Monkeys was merely hypothetical, and there are other, equally tenable, hypotheses concerning the disease's origin. (p.13-14)

African scientists also rejected accusations of complacency:

But despite their opposition to Western scientist's theories linking Africa with the origin of AIDS, the African representatives did not take a 'head in the sand attitude.' In their communique, the African group called for help to install safe blood-banks to minimize the risk of AIDS being transmitted through blood transfusions. They also called for help in setting up cheap laboratory method to diagnose the disease. (p. 14)

Furthermore, in clear opposite to the reporting of AIDS in the

Western press, this issue of New African presented a detailed and more accurate information about the AIDS situation:

Across a swathe of Central Africa is an area known as Lymphoma belt, so named because of the high prevalence of lymph disorders in the region, with Burkitt's lymphoma and Kaposi's sarcoma amongst the most common. Although it accounts for a sixth of all malignancies in some parts of the area, Kaposi's sarcoma is generally an indolent disease, often affecting only hands and feet, proving responsive to drug treatment and rarely proving fatal. In Western AIDS cases however, Kaposi's sarcoma spreads rapidly and aggressively throughout the whole body whose defences have been destroyed by the AIDS virus, it is not responsive to treatment

Even the procedures used in diagnostic testing for the presence of the AIDS virus in the blood – which were developed in the West, largely for Western patients – are now suspected of giving false positive results when African serum is tested. This is particularly the case in regions where malaria is endemic. This is because people living in such regions tend to

develop high concentrations of malaria antibodies in their blood which may be cross-reacting with the AIDS test, thus giving erroneous results ...

Testing blood serum which has been frozen for storage has proved particularly problematic, and claims that the AIDS virus has been identified in sera which dates back to the 1950's need to be studied very closely. (p.14)

However, it was obvious that Western governments were paying more attention to other arguments than to those presented in the African media, and when the proposal was made to screen Africans seeking entry into European countries, the reaction was bitter. For instance, the editorial of the April 2nd , 1997 issue of The Herald in Zimbabwe contained the following comment:

There is every indication that the AIDS scourge could leave this world dangerously polarized between the white North and the black South. That is how any intelligent person will interpret the ethno-centricism and open racism which are rearing their ugly head in the wake of the AIDS syndrome. First, futile attempts , backed by dubious scientific claims, were made by the West to pinpoint Africa as the place where AIDS originated. Then some countries in the Northern hemisphere tried to impose restrictions on visitors from some African countries unless these people were first certified free from AIDS in their own countries.

Now there are even more disturbing reports to the effect that some European countries will not allow African students entry to take up scholarship unless the students produce in advance giving them a clean bill of health.

If these moves are genuinely intended to check the spread of AIDS, one wonders why students from other European countries where AIDS is also know to be prevalent as it is in

some African states, are not affected by the same restriction? Or why the United States of America, where the highest number of AIDS have been reported, has not found it necessary to curb visits by Africans there.

The trend in Europe is hideous and worrying. If allowed to continue, it could lead to most, if not all European countries getting rid of African students by using AIDS as a scapegoat, and with that the aid to these countries give to Africa. Other countries whose ethnocentric or racist views are known to all, might also use AIDS as a pretext to clamp down on immigrants. In the light of all this, it will not surprise anyone if some African countries are found to withhold information on AIDS for fear of repercussions from European countries on whom some depend helplessly for financial and other assistance.

What is needed is not to divide the world, but to foster the closest co-operation in battling humankind's common enemy, AIDS.

Similarly, Philip Ochieng, a leading Kenyan columnist, made more detailed comment on the issue of AIDS and African immigration to Europe in the January 1987 issue of New African;

The British Government's threat to subject visitors from certain African countries to "screening" against AIDS is remarkable in its disregard for the consequences. There was a time when Britain could propose such a blatantly discriminatory program and get away with it – but that time has long past ...

What is suggested in Britain's latest move is that these countries have not only the biggest number on AIDS cases in the world but that the disease itself originated from here. Why is it that we never heard of AIDS or anything approaching it until it appeared in the US and Europe? Why is it that those areas of Africa most in contact with Europeans and Americans over the past 15 years are the worst affected by AIDS? What is the only logical conclusion to draw?

Again the methods used to determine the spread of AIDS in the West and in Africa are vastly different. In the West, the emphasis is on actual cases reported and projections based on lifestyles. In Africa, a few people mostly prostitutes, are rounded up and subjected to screening. Whenever AIDS *antibodies* are discovered, the medical boffins juggle their calculators and come up with figures that suggest that half of the entire population is suffering from AIDS! If the same system of calculation was applied to California, the result might well indicate that every citizen there had not only contracted AIDS but had died from it!

It seems to me that the West was once again looking for a whipping boy when AIDS first emerged and Africa, as usual, was convenient. Unfortunately for the West, this line will no longer wash in Africa. In fact Africa and other Third World countries should think twice before allowing Europeans and Americans past their borders. If Britain is really concerned about the spread of AIDS, then it should screen its own citizens before allowing them to depart to other countries lest they carry their deadly virus with them.

To single out Central African countries as potential AIDS carriers on the flimsiest of evidence is nothing but racism. It is only another attempt to bar the entry of colored immigrants into Britain. It comes in the wake of visa impositions on the black commonwealth countries.

Any selective war on AIDS especially when it is couched in terms which smack of racism can only anger other parts of the world, making co-operation impossible, and thus enhancing the survival chances of this new and deadly disease. (p. 25).

It is quite obvious from the above reaction that African journalists, while not worried that they can blame a certain section of their communities for the AIDS pandemic, would not entertain the idea of foreign press citing Africa as the source of the disease.

Chapter 3.

RESEARCH METHOD.

A qualitative research approach is an appropriate method for the analysis of the data collected for this project. This is because this method enables a comprehensive or detailed analysis of the data. Qualitative research methods have traditionally challenged the assumption within the dominant paradigm that knowledge is acquired through empirical or quantitative analysis of social phenomenon. This research approach is rooted in the counter-enlightenment movement, and when combined with the vitalist approach discussed earlier, serves more as a continuum of the interpretative tradition. However, before discussing the merits and some of the drawbacks of this approach, it will be useful to identify and define the major components of qualitative research method employed in this research.

Textual Analysis

Textual analysis according to Hansen, et. al. (1998) seek to discover what occurs where, in which context, discussed in which terms, using which vocabulary or terminology, and the relationships

and differences. In this regard, the historical and philosophical assumptions that govern these presses would play a vital role in how the data are analyzed.

Additionally, vocabulary and lexical analytic method will be applied to the data as part of textual analysis. This method may offer more insight in to the rhetorical posture of the presses which are being evaluated here because it allows for the analysis of symbolic meaning of words. Using a lexical approach to examine headlines of press reporting on race for instance, Van Dijk (1991) observed that:

Words manifest the underlying semantic concepts used in the definition of the situation. Lexicalization of the semantic content, however, is never neutral: the choice of one word rather than another to express more or less the same meaning, or to denote the same referent, may signal the opinions, emotions, or social position of a speaker. . . Not only do they (words in newspaper headlines) express definition of the situation, but they also signal the social or political opinion of the newspaper about the events. That is, headlines not only globally define or summarize an event, they also evaluate it. Hence, the lexical style of headlines has ideological implications. (p. 53).

This approach is useful especially when analyzing news reports from non-Western countries because as indicated above, empiricist methods may explain trends of reporting in Western presses but may not necessarily apply to vitalist African presses.

Frames and Themes

Within this framework, news articles will be categorized into themes and frames. This approach is useful because it reveals different major elements in the news discourse. According to Altheid (1996), “communication and media formats enable us to recognize various frames that give general definition of what is before us” (p.30). Gamson and Modigliani (1989: 3) have noted that:

media discourse can be conceived of as a set of interpretive packages that give meaning to an issue. A package has an internal structure. At its core is a central organizing idea, or *frame*, for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue . . . This frame typically implies a range of positions, rather than any single one, allowing for a degree of controversy among those who share a common frame (in Tuchman, 1991; p.89).

Goffman(1974) has also referred to frames as “schematic of interpretation ... which enable people to locate, perceive, identify, and label ‘occurrences of information’” (p.55). Frames focus on what will be discussed, how it will be discussed, and above all, how it will not be discussed. In short, frames are the focus, a parameter or boundary, for discussing a particular event (Altheid, 1996).

Additionally, Entman (1993) has suggested that:

Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to

promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (p.52).

Themes on the other hand are general definitions or interpretive frames; they are the recurring typical theses that run through several reports (Altheid, 1996).

Analysis of News Appeals

After categorizing the articles into frames, a method of analysis based on news appeals will be applied to interpret the data and this will give further insight to how the presses under study here constructed the AIDS story. According to Barton (1990), the analysis of news appeals involves:

an attempt to understand the specific ways news language invites political responses among citizens or discourages further discourse ... It involves separating the various appeals made to publics, accounting for the larger international political contexts of which the appeals are a part, associating the appeals with the voices from which the appeals emerge, and postulating a political use of the appeals on the basis of the comparative orientations of the audience (p.18).

This approach is useful for analysis because facilitates the examination of audience orientations toward AIDS as international news. For example, some audience members have been conditioned

over the years to expect certain angles on stories dealing with pandemics or natural disasters, especially when the source of the story is from another region of the world.

According to Barton, analysis of news appeals, “can be described in terms of the political constituency they invite into the discursive frame and by the ways they define political issues and actors as “legitimate” players. Within this construct, the framework of textual structures, and hence appeals, are influenced by historical, social, cultural, cognitive, and political contexts” (p.18).

The primary qualitative research method employed in this study is textual analysis applied from a critical perspective. Within this approach, elements such as the categorization of the data into frames, and application of news appeals will be used to interpret the news texts. For instance, textual analysis can reveal the news slant of the news organizations under consideration.

In order to achieve this, analysis begins with a critical evaluation of news reports and an application of the concepts discussed in the preceding pages. This method of analysis will closely resemble other works done in the same area such as Eli Lester’s (1992) textual analysis which focused on AIDS and the

moral panic. In this instance, Lester examined the construction of the AIDS story in one Euro-Africa news magazine New Africa, published in London. Another instance of the utilization of this method of analysis appears in the work of Konotey-Ahulu (1987) who sought to refute accounts in Western news media of the AIDS pandemic rapid spread in Africa. In both of these instances, the authors quoted extensively from the news reports under analysis.

However, the method employed here goes a step further in that it combines news appeal and historical context as part of textual analysis in order to inform about news form, and thereby, a better understanding of news slant.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), the term *qualitative research* “represents any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification.” (p.17). In this context, it can refer to research about persons’ lives, stories, behavior, but also about organizational functioning, social movements, or interactional relationships. For clarity, Strauss and Corbin (1990) posit that the term *qualitative research* in their definition refers to nonmathematical analytic procedure that result in findings derived from data gathered by a

variety of means. These include observations and interviews, but might also include documents, books, videotapes, and even data that have been quantified for other purposes such as census data. The reason for the clarifying their definition stems from the instances where some researchers gather data by interview and observation – techniques normally associated with qualitative methods. However, they then code the data in a manner that allows them to be statistically analyzed which will indicate that they are in effect quantifying qualitative data.

Components of Qualitative Research.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) have identified three major components of qualitative research. First, there are the data which can be derived from various sources. In qualitative research, Interviews and observations are the most common sources (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Patton (1990) points out that description and quotations are the raw data of qualitative inquiry. In this context, the data do not include judgements about whether what occurred was good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate, or any other interpretive judgements. The data simply describe what occurred.

Qualitative methods consist of three kinds of data collection: (1) in-depth, open ended interviews; (2) direct observation; and (3) written documents. The data from interviews consists of direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. The data from observation consists of detailed description of peoples activities, behaviors, actions, and full range of interpersonal interactions and organizational processes that are part of observable human experience.

Document analysis in qualitative inquiry yields excerpts, quotations, or entire passages from organizational, clinical, or program records; memoranda and correspondence; official publications and reports, personal diaries; and open-ended written responses to questionnaires and surveys. (Patton, 1990; p.10).

Additionally, Altheide (1996) has suggested that qualitative document data are very individualistic because the main investigator is "involved" with the concepts, relevance, processual development of the protocol, and internal logic of the categories, or the way in which the items have been collected for purposes of later analysis.

The second component of qualitative research consists of the different analytic or interpretative ways that are used to arrive at findings or theories. These procedures include the techniques for conceptualizing data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Also known as coding, this process varies by training, experience and the purpose of the research. Other procedures such as non-statistical sampling, the writing of memos, and diagramming of the conceptual relationships, are also part of the analytic process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Written and verbal reports make up the third component of qualitative research. These according to Strauss and Corbin (1990) may be represented in scientific journals or scientific conferences and take on various forms depending upon the audience and the aspect of findings or theory being presented. Thus, someone may, for instance, present either an overview of the entire findings or an in-depth discussion of one part of the study. Additionally, Burgess (1984: 182) has identified three forms of qualitative research reports:

- descriptions which make little or no reference to a theoretical perspective.

- analytical discussions based on concepts emerging from the study
- substantive accounts intended to contribute to general theory.

Other scholars have attempted to discern the essential nature of qualitative research report. For instance, Lofland (1971: 5) proposed that, (a) the report should get “close to the data” and should be based on a relation to the subject of the inquiry for a substantial period of time; (b) it should be “truthful” and written in “good faith”; (c) it should contain much descriptive material and liberal quotations from those studied (or in this specific instance, the data); (d) the procedure for data analysis should be explicit. (in Jankowski & Wester, 1991). Within this context, the approach to this study is based on the identification and analysis of news appeals. This is achieved through categorizing the data into frames and themes for analytical purposes.

Typology in Qualitative Research Methods.

Several approaches to qualitative analyses have evolved over the years depending on the focus of the researcher and the subject area that is being addressed. In general however, four types of

approaches have been identified (Patton, 1990) within the qualitative tradition. These include: basic research; evaluation research; action research, and applied research.

Research Approach

For this project, evaluation research is the most applicable approach. This is so because the purpose of this method is to contribute knowledge that will help people understand the nature of a problem so that we can more effectively control and understand our environment. Thus, the aim of evaluation research is to generate potential political solutions to human and societal problems.

Evaluation qualitative researchers are able to bring their personal insights and experiences into recommendations that may emerge (Patton, 1990). To achieve this goal, textual analysis will be utilized or applied in the interpretation of the news texts.

Chapter4:

ANALYSIS OF NEWS SAMPLES WITH FINDINGS.

The mass media, as I have tried to show in the preceding pages, play important role in shaping peoples perception of different issues in society, and AIDS without doubt is one of these issues. This study's aim is to compare and contrast the reporting of AIDS as international news and as a social phenomenon with universal implications within the African and the Western presses. For this purpose, I chose the Daily Nation (Nairobi, Kenya) as a representative of the African press; The New York Times and The Times of London were chosen as representative of the Western press. Within this context, reporting the issue of AIDS in Africa as international news is the primary focus. News articles written in the five year period beginning from Jan. 1985 to Jan. 1990 will be used for analysis. This time period was selected because more stories on HIV/AIDS were published in the selected newspapers when compared to other time periods partly due to high profile AIDS cases such as that of Rock Hudson, and the increasing public

awareness of the pandemic. The unit of analysis is individual articles.

For the Western papers, a total of eighty two articles specifically addressing the issue of AIDS in Africa were collected. These numbers represent a complete inventory of all articles including editorials for the time period of 1985 – 1990. Of these, The New York Times had forty nine articles while The Times of London had twenty one articles. The number of articles collected from The Daily Nation was 91. Most of these articles appeared in the “Around Africa” and “World News” sections of the newspaper; and are wire reports from The Associated Press, Rueters, or Agence France Presse. The reports therefore reflected the perceptions of the news agencies from which they were collected. For the purpose of analysis here, specific articles that are direct responses to Western media reports about AIDS in Africa will be utilized. This approach is useful because it offers a better comparative element, and is relevant to one of the research question being explored.

As shown in the table below, the total number of articles collected from the three newspapers was 161. Of this total, 126 articles were used in the analysis. The 35 articles excluded did not

fit into any one major frame that emerged in the course of the analysis, and were diverse in content to allow for the creation of another frame. In addition to individual articles used, other articles that appear in the analysis were systematically selected because they were published in three or four part series, and thus were more useful because of their in-depth reports on the issue. They therefore serve as representative samples of several other articles that fit in to the same frame.

Newspaper.	Jan. 1985 Number of articles.	1986	1987	1988	1989- Jan. 1990	Total number articles.
The New York Times	9	8	15	12	5	49
The Daily Nation	11	27	31	12	10	91
The Times of London.	5	4	7	2	3	21

Total number of articles collected for the three newspapers = 161

Number of articles analyzed (N) = 126

Themes: Origin of AIDS = 70 articles; Social impact of AIDS = 56 articles.

Frames

Consistent with the research method proposed here, a closer examination of the data collected reveal two broad frames in which the AIDS discourse was constructed in the presses. These include:

- (a) The Origin of AIDS
- (b) The Social Impact of AIDS

These two frames are not mutually exclusive, but rather, are often intermixed in the discourse of AIDS as international news. In addition, several themes emerge within each frame. These themes within the framework outlined above are useful in the understanding of the analysis of the discourse of the AIDS pandemic in the selected presses. However, before proceeding with such analysis, it will be useful at this point to revisit the research question proposed here:

R:1

When viewed from an international communication perspective, what were the comparative treatments of the issue of AIDS in the African and the Western press? What

themes, appeals, and assumptions appear in that news? What are the implications of these press constructions?

Origin of AIDS.

Most scholars and scientists as shown in the earlier part of this project agree that the origin of AIDS is not known. However the accounts of the origin of AIDS in the Western press does not reflect this consensus.

Instead, consciously or not, these accounts point the finger or blame Africa as the source and origin of the pandemic. This approach by the Western press follows a literary trend as old as the relationship between the Africa and the West. Ungar (1985) points out that from the earliest references in literature, both scholarly and popular, the African continent suffered from the vision of “darkest Africa” – a place of savages, jungles and chaos.

In addition, the ideas about Africans’ closeness to the “natural life,” their similarities to apes and other dark animals, their tendency toward promiscuous sex and other sins fueled the negative perception of the continent in the West and hence, the ethnocentric and often racist attitude found in Western publications about Africa.

To this, Herskovits (1961) noted that Africa's "people were held to have fallen behind in the march of progress, with ways of life representing early stages in the evolution of human civilization."

Therefore, the association of black people with dirt, disease, ignorance and an animal-like promiscuity has in no way been eradicated as evidenced in the reports about the origin of AIDS and its direct linkage to Africa in the Western press.

The Animal link

For reasons that will be made clear here, Western scientists and their presses scrambled to the African continent in search of clues to the origin of AIDS even though the virus was first diagnosed in the West. The quest to discover the cause of the disease led to the publication in Western newspapers, including the ones under consideration here, of unsubstantiated information regarding the origin of AIDS. It seemed that no matter how ridiculous the story was, as long as a scientist could be found to back it up, or speculate on it; and the story can be said to have occurred some where in Africa, it was credible and fit to print. In addition, the story is

legitimized for printing if it appears as a publication in a scientific journal.

The New York Times published two stories specifically addressing the issue of the origin of AIDS. The first story from The Associated Press appeared on March 7, 1986. It was titled "Links to AIDS Is Seen In Virus Affecting Pigs." According to the writer:

An African virus that causes a disease in pigs that resembles AIDS may have been present in some American AIDS patients, according to a new study. Evidence of infection with African swine fever virus was found in 9 of 21 American AIDS patients tested, according to the study to be published in *The Lancet*, a British medical journal. The study challenges the belief that acquired immune deficiency syndrome is caused solely by the virus HTLV-III. "I don't think we're trying to say that HTLV-III is out and A.S.F.V. is in" as the cause of AIDS, John Beldekas, a researcher at the Boston College School of Medicine, and principal author of the study, said. "What we are saying is that AIDS is complicated. It can't be explained solely by HTLV-III." Jane Teas, a former cancer researcher, suggested in a letter to the *Lancet* in 1983 that African swine fever virus might have some link to AIDS. She had learned that an epidemic of swine fever had occurred in Haiti about the same time that AIDS was discovered there.

The claim made by this research team proved unreliable as their hypothesis of the link between a virus that afflicted pigs and the AIDS in man could not be proven. However, the issue here is that the pig virus was African. Would this team have come to their conclusion if the same virus was, say, Irish or Italian? And the

suggestion that because an epidemic of swine fever had occurred in Haiti about the same time that AIDS was discovered there is just too simplistic an explanation then, and now. It would be equivalent to stating that the AIDS virus was caused by the mad cow disease that killed several people in England, assuming for instance, that the virus was discovered in England when mad cow struck.

The reality, of course, is that the virus that causes mad cow and the AIDS virus are completely different, and do not interchange for one another. The same thing goes for the pig virus and the AIDS virus. AIDS patients have been known to have other viruses such as the hepatitis B virus. Additionally, the mention of African pig virus and Haiti may be characterized as an attempt to link these two places together as the possible sources of the AIDS virus, especially since these two locales were accused of harboring the AIDS virus.

In another report published on August 27, 1986, Erik Eckholm writing for The New York Times, informs of a discovery by French scientists. The article titled "French Scientists Report Discovery of AIDS Virus in African insects." Begins as thus:

Specimen of numerous insects from central Africa have been found to contain the AIDS virus according to French scientists, who stressed that despite the discovery, transmission to AIDS

to humans from insects was extremely unlikely. Other scientists called the discovery a puzzling one, if confirmed, could yield new insights into the virus that causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome. But some were skeptical, noting that mistakes could be made in the process used to establish the virus's presence.

Eckholm, by initially reporting the findings, and noting the doubt of other scientists to the insect link of HIV infection in humans, succeeds to a certain extent in warning his audience about the potential dubiousness of the findings. But he, like other Western writers, follows the same pattern of indiscriminate negative generalization about Africa as the title of the article suggests, and as we shall see below. He continues:

Genetic material from the AIDS virus was found integrated into the DNA, or genetic structure, of insects from Zaire and the Central African Republic, Dr. Jean-Claude Chermann of the Pasteur Institute said yesterday in a telephone interview from Paris. He said the material had been found in mosquitoes, cockroaches, tsetse flies, and ant-lions from Zaire, and only in mosquitoes, ticks, and bedbugs from the central African Republic. Dr. Chermann said that the finding raised intriguing questions but that no evidence so far indicated that the virus reproduce inside the insects. He agreed with American experts who said disease patterns in Africa and elsewhere showed that AIDS was not spread by insects.

The actual report as can be seen, contradicts the headline that introduces it, even by the admission of the key French scientist involved. Additionally, Central Africa Republic and Zaire do not

constitute Africa as the reporter and the scientist would have us believe. Dr. Chermann, the French scientist claimed in the article, that "roaches might have picked up the virus from blood or excrement, and other insects might have picked it up by biting humans." Granted, if blood-sucking insects were transmitting AIDS in Africa, then there should have been more far more cases in children of school age, farmers, the elderly, street vendors, and even tourists from all over who vacation or go on safaris in the said areas.

American scientists did not venture as far as testing insects for the virus that causes AIDS according to Dr. Harold Jaffe of the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta who was quoted in the article as saying that "the virus is very selective in the type of cells it infects." "Puzzled" by this discovery, he points out that scientists in laboratories had not been able to infect any living animals with the AIDS virus except for chimpanzees, and "if epidemiological studies gave us any hint at all that insects played a role in spreading AIDS, we'd do more detailed studies, but they haven't."

Furthermore, an unnamed scientist in the article rightly points out that "the fact that nearly all the insect specimens from Zaire showed sign of AIDS infection was ground for suspecting that

an error might have occurred” Again we see an example of ‘scientific’ speculation overriding sound news judgement. The question here is, what valuable information does this article hope to impart on the reader? A suggestion that African insects are AIDS virus carriers, and French and American insects are not, as the scientist claims?

The writer, Eckholm, continues with a general overview of modes and patterns of infection between Western countries and Africa.

In the United States and Europe,” he writes, “the disease is most prevalent among homosexual men and intravenous drug users and their sex partners and babies. More than 24,000 Americans have been diagnosed with AIDS since the affliction was first discovered in 1981; more than half have died. In Africa, men and women are affected almost equally and the disease often strikes adults who have had multiple sex partners, leading experts to believe that heterosexual intercourse is the main route of spread there.

Here, we are reminded of who is more likely to be infected with the AIDS virus – homosexuals and IV drug users in the West, and sexually active men and women in Africa – the marginalized folks in the Western press in regards to AIDS . Meanwhile, it had been established that AIDS can be transmitted heterosexually even

in the West as it can elsewhere when Eckholm went to press with this article in 1986. He concludes by quoting the French scientist's opinion of how African insects might have contracted the AIDS virus, and how they transmit it to human.

According to this perspective, the scientist, Dr. Chermann, "speculated that roaches might have picked up the virus from blood or excrement, and other insects might have picked it up by biting infected humans." This same scientist is quoted earlier in the article as saying that " Even if the virus could reproduce in insects, or if the virus could live in the human blood stored within an insect between bites, it is likely that the quantities spread from insect bites would be too small to infect humans... the epidemiological data argue strongly against any transmission by insects." This statement obviously contradicts the one preceding it, but the issue here is not the scientist's claim per se, but rather, the judgement of the journalist and his publisher who deemed the information valuable enough as news for public consumption.

Insects have lived on this planet as long as man has, if not longer. And insects have been co-existing with humans, and biting us and other animals that we often eat as food.

However, it seems that during this period, any story with reference to African origin of the virus that causes AIDS was newsworthy, regardless of how bizarre the story may be. This approach serves no public utility, but rather reinforces the deeply held negative stereotypes about the continent and her people. In addition, the fact that such stories were being published in the prestigious presses of the West makes these reports more acute and more likely to be believed..

The Vaccine Link.

Another scenario on the origin of AIDS explored by scientists, and reported in the Western press was a vaccine connection. In a May 11, 1987 article entitled "Smallpox vaccine 'triggered Aids virus," Pearce Wright, the science editor of The Times of London describes the possibility that while trying to eliminate smallpox, the AIDS virus may have been triggered. In this regard, Pearce cited the only recorded case that may prove the link between smallpox vaccine and the AIDS virus. He writes that:

Further evidence comes from Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington. While smallpox vaccine is no longer kept for public health purposes, new recruits to the American

armed forces are immunized as a precaution against possible biological warfare. Routine vaccination of a 19-year old was the trigger for stimulation of dormant HIV virus into AIDS...The recruit who developed AIDS after vaccination had been healthy throughout high school. He was given multiple immunizations, followed by his first smallpox vaccination. Two and a half weeks later he developed fever, headaches, neck stiffness and night sweats. Three weeks later he was admitted to Walter Reed suffering from meningitis and rapidly developed symptoms of AIDS and died after responding for a short time to treatment. There was no evidence that the recruit had been involved in any homosexual activity.

Clearly, one can assume that this incident was an isolated one considering that thousands of young Americans sign up for any branch of the U.S. armed forces including the reserves every year. The immunization process in the U.S. armed forces is not radically different from other Western countries especially since the U.S. is a prominent member of the military alliance known as NATO whose members share a common military objective.

Therefore, the fact that this particular incident occurred and smallpox vaccine suspected as the trigger, a sweeping generalization is inappropriate. We are told by the author that "there was no evidence that the recruit had been involved in any homosexual activity."

Here, the implication is that homosexuality equals AIDS, meanwhile a heterosexual transmitted route for the virus had been

clearly established at this period. Is it not possible then that this recruit may have contracted the disease from a heterosexual partner?, or from sharing a needle with an infected individual?, or perhaps through a blood transfusion? These are all possible scenarios of how the young recruit could have contracted the disease, but the reader of the article is not told that, instead his non homosexuality is emphasized.

The article continues by addressing the doubts of scientists on the smallpox vaccine link, and the reluctance of World Health Organization (WHO) officials to validate theory because of fear that it might affect other public health campaigns with vaccines such as against diphtheria. However, the author points out that "doubts would have risen if public health officials in Africa had more willingly reported infection statistics to WHO. Instead, African countries continued to ignore the existence of AIDS even after US doctors alerted the world when the infection spread to the United States." Here, the blame is placed on African health officials while the US doctors are exonerated. It is of import to emphasize that the first diagnosis of AIDS was made in the United States. Hence, it is logical then that the first doctors to sound the alarm of the new

disease would be US doctors, so that the accusation of African health officials not reporting AIDS cases to the WHO assumes (wrongly) that AIDS had long existed in that continent before it was diagnosed and reported by US doctors in San Francisco. The author writes:

As epidemiologists gleaned more information about Aids from reluctant Central African countries, clues began to emerge from new findings when examined against the wealth of detail known about smallpox as recorded in the *Final Report of the Global Commission for the Certification of Smallpox Eradication*. The smallpox vaccine theory would account for the position of each of the seven Central African states which top the league table of most affected countries; why Brazil became most afflicted Latin American country; and how Haiti became route for the spread of Aids to the US. It also provides an explanation of how the infection was spread more evenly between males and females in Africa than in the West and why there is less signs of infection among five to 11-year olds in Central Africa.

The paragraph above is speculative because the author admits that “no detailed information are available” to support or substantiate the report. However, to validate the report, the author relied on coincidence of the higher concentration of smallpox immunizations in Central Africa. Furthermore, the assertion that Haiti was the route of AIDS transmission to the US is unsubstantiated because there are no scientific proof that this was the case.

The reason for implicating the Haitians in this instance was, according to the author, that about 14,000 Haitians on United Nations secondment in Central Africa were covered by the immunization campaign. If we were to assume that this association was right, then a country like Cuba should have been devastated by AIDS since over 100,000 Cuban troops were stationed in that region at this period. In addition, the sweeping generalization about the age of infection is false because it assumes that everyone above the age of eleven who was immunized is a potential AIDS victim.

In a May 23, 1997 letter to the editor, Dr. Paul Nunn and Professor Arie Zuckerman of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical medicine, challenged the vaccination theory advanced by The Times of London correspondent:

Sir, Your correspondents speculate in reports on May 11, 12 and 13 that the activation of HIV (human immuno-deficiency virus) infection by smallpox vaccination was the cause of AIDS epidemic, although they fail to distinguish clearly between activation and transmission virus. We do not believe that the facts support their argument for the following reasons:

In Africa both symptomless HIV infection and AIDS itself are found exclusively in very young children and sexually active adults. Very few babies will have received smallpox vaccination since it has been gradually phased out following the last case of "wild" smallpox in 1977. Many case of AIDS in this country, and probably elsewhere, have never been vaccinated against smallpox. Smallpox vaccination is not

therefore a necessary condition either for activation or for the development of AIDS.

Although current theory suggests HIV infection can be activated by naturally occurring infections or, live vaccines, no specific infection or vaccination has been consistently associated with the development of AIDS. You quote the case of the 19-year old US military recruit, at risk from AIDS through heterosexual contact with prostitutes, who developed the disease following his first smallpox vaccination (and eight other immunizations).

He can not have been the first so vaccinated since three HIV positives were found in every 2,000 applicants when HIV testing was introduced for the first time for 308,076 applicants between October, 1985 and March, 1986. There are, to our knowledge, no reports of AIDS subsequently developing in those who were vaccinated.

AIDS is currently spreading fast through Africa at a time when smallpox vaccination has ceased entirely. For the smallpox hypothesis to hold, vaccination many years before HIV infection would have to be able to lead to the onset of AIDS. This seems extremely unlikely since no viable *vaccinia* virus would remain in the body at that time.

If you are also saying that smallpox vaccination brought about a change in HIV itself at some time in the past that then enabled it to spread, it is incumbent upon you to provide a hypothesis for how this may have occurred. HIV is completely different from *vaccinia* and, to our knowledge, contains none of that virus's genetic material or proteins.

In conclusion, smallpox vaccination as a "trigger" for the development of AIDS in previously HIV-infected individual is testable by examining the frequency of smallpox vaccination among AIDS patients and comparing that to the frequency among symptomless HIV carries. The suggestion that smallpox vaccination has changed the AIDS virus demands substantiation. Either way, speculation about a connection between vaccination and AIDS is bound to cause concern about the safety of immunization programs which are already saving millions of lives every year.

However, in another letter to the editor dated May 28, 1987, Dr. John Seale challenged the assertion by Professor Zuckerman and Dr. Nunn that in Africa, "AIDS it self are found almost exclusively in very young children and sexually active adults." This statement according to Dr. Seale, is "inconsistent with the findings of the most extensive study published so far on HIV in African children." This study published in the October 1986 edition of Pediatrics, found that 40 of 368 children (11 percent) aged between two and 14 years of age were HIV infected when admitted to the general pediatric ward at Mama Yemo Hospital in Kinsasha, Zaire.

Dr. Seale agreed with Professor Zuckerman and Dr. Nunn on the erroneous association between smallpox vaccination and the spread of HIV by The Times of London correspondent. According to him, "The theory reported by you (May 11) that the mass vaccination campaign which eradicated smallpox ""is the explanation for the explosion of AIDS epidemic"" is wide off the mark, but too close to the truth for comfort."

The letters cited above are significant because they were written by some members of the scientific community whom

journalist like Wright use as their source of scientific “facts.” Sound journalistic practice demand in depth research of the issue being discussed, such that alternative views may be advanced to the audience. In this piece of reporting however, Wright failed to consult these scientists whose opinion contradicted his judgement and the “facts” he wants his audience to believe.

The debate about the origin of AIDS that has generated much conflict to date is the monkey/chimpanzee theory. In an article titled “Tracing the link in the AIDS family tree,” which appeared The Times of London, the observations made above become very evident when the journalistic form of narrative is taken into account. Although what is being reported are said to be “scientific facts,” the doubt expressed by other scientists about these “facts” are clouded with exotic description of HIV infected chimpanzee and monkey species hopping all over Africa and the near savage natives that interact and often eat these animals uncooked, and thereby facilitating the spread of HIV/AIDS to the human population.

The sub-title of this article reads “Researchers claim to have found the clearest clue yet to the origin of HIV.” The primary

purpose of the author, Thomson Prentice, was to “look at the value of their (scientists) discovery of a virus in chimpanzees.” He writes in the first paragraph :

The latest and most intriguing clues to the origin of the Aids virus have been found circulating in the blood of two chimpanzees from an African rainforest. Scientists believe the evidence could be an important chapter in the history of an epidemic that has infested up to 10 million people world-wide and hope it will help in the development of a vaccine against the disease. Researchers in Gabon, in equatorial West Africa, and at the Pasteur Institute in Paris, say the virus they have isolated from the chimpanzees is more closely related to HIV, the human immunodeficiency virus, than any other organism found previously in African monkeys.

The paragraph above certainly begs the question of what is more intriguing, the initial claim by scientists, which is still debatable, that HIV originated from African green monkeys or the claim of the discovery of the same virus in two African chimpanzees ? The author points out that “other specialist are more cautious but do not doubt the potential value of the discovery.” This sounds like an oxymoron, for if other specialists are more cautious, it means they doubt no mater how small, the findings of their colleagues. Hence, the author if practicing journalistic objectivity, would have addressed the issues raised by these specialists so as to offer a balanced approach to news reporting to his audience.

The author continues by summarizing the debate of the possible origin of AIDS. In this regard, he writes:

Almost since the first days of the epidemic, the question of its origin has intrigued the public at large. Bizarre theories have been put forward, such as that the causative virus may have come from outer space, or have been the by-product, accidental, or deliberate, of laboratory experiments on biological warfare agents. The mainstream consensus however, the mainstream consensus is that HIV is descended from a common ancestor virus, almost certainly carried by one of a host of African primates.

The author here is implying that first, accounts of encounter with alien beings from outer space is bizarre, and yet there are those, especially in Western countries, who claim that they have been visited, abducted, and even experimented upon by these out of the world beings. Secondly, the notion that HIV may have resulted from biological warfare experiments as bizarre diminishes the truth that such occurrences have happened in the past. For instance, the Tuskegee experiments in which the U. S. government deliberately injected innocent healthy black men who were American citizens with strains of the virus that caused syphilis, or the use of cancer causing Agent Orange during the Vietnam war etc.

The observation that “the mainstream consensus, however, is that HIV is descended from a common ancestor virus, almost

certainly carried by one of a host of African primates,” I will argue, goes to the heart of the negative, racist and ethnocentric tone of the article. Webster dictionary defines primates as: “Any of the order primates, which includes monkeys, apes, and man.”

Therefore, by implicating African primates as the source of HIV, Prentice makes no distinction between humans, monkeys, and apes in Africa. Without such distinction, he gets farther ahead of the scientists struggling to decide whether HIV came from African green monkeys or African chimpanzees by adding a host of primates in Africa, and thereby extending the possibility that the virus originated in the black people of the continent.

Further, he claims this position to be the consensus in the mainstream. This position assumes that there is a global consensus on the issue; this of course is far from the truth because as indicated here, and well documented elsewhere the origin of HIV is not known.

The author continues:

When HIV was first discovered in 1983, its background was a mystery. Then, in 1985, a second strain, known as HIV-2 was found in West Africa. In the same year, researchers identified a virus closely resembling HIV-2 in macaques and called it simian immunodeficiency virus SIV. Since then, a group of

related viruses have been detected in both wild and captive monkeys. They have emerged in African green monkeys in the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, and Kenya; in mandrills in Cameroon, Congo, and Gabon, and in sooty mangabeys in Liberia and other parts of Western Africa. The tests have been confirmed in animals exported to the United States, Europe and Japan.”

Again, it is well documented that the first case of HIV was diagnosed in the United States in 1981. Prentice does not inform the reader where this first discovery was made and under what conditions. Hence, he is either deliberately misinforming his audience or he is ignorant of the fact. The scientific source from which Prentice bases his report seems more cautious and at time contradictory to the main thesis of his article. For instance, he quotes Dr. Wain-Hobson as saying that “ the virus was found in only two out of 81 chimps tested in Gabon. Of more than 250 caught in West Africa over the past 20 years none has been found to be carrying the same infection.” Meanwhile we have been informed above that “the tests have been confirmed in animals exported to the United States, Europe and Japan” Is Prentice referring to the to the known 2 chimps or are there other animals? Because if we believe Dr. Wain-Hobson’s account above, then the assertion of

confirmed tests elsewhere of infected exported animals from Africa become suspect.

Furthermore, even if we are persuaded to believe that the exported animals were infected, Robin Weiss, head of the Chester Beatty Laboratories at the Institute of Cancer research in Chelsea, UK., has asked if these animals were naturally infected or not; and because we do not know what happened to these animals on the way to captivity, it is rather too simplistic to postulate the theory that AIDS began by humans catching a viral infection from chimpanzees. The evolution of these viruses according to Robin Weiss is much more complicated than that.

This observation however did not impede Prentice from offering "plausible theories" of the linkage between chimpanzees, monkeys, and man. He writes:

One plausible theory is that people were infected through being bitten or scratched by monkeys carrying the virus, or through eating them or coming in contact with their blood. . . the emergence of what is now called AIDS may, according to this theory, have been due to the well-documented mass migration of Africans in the last few decades from remote areas of the continent into big cities. Among the migrants would have been infected but symptomless HIV carriers, who transmitted the virus to an urban population which had less resistance to it. That transmission probably happened

through contaminated blood transfusions, unsterilized medical equipment, or sexual intercourse.

Citing scientists such as Luc Montagnier, Prentice also reports that “the tree of evolution could be 100 years old and the progenitor of the virus now extinct.” If this were the case, then the entire continent would have been wiped out by now by the disease considering that the incubation period of HIV to a full blown AIDS in humans occur at a reasonably short period of time in evolutionary standards.

In regards to the theory advanced above that links chimpanzees, monkeys, and man; firstly, it has been well documented that HIV is not transmitted by casual contact such as shaking hands, kissing, biting or scratching, or by sharing cooking utensils. Secondly, the suggestion of geographical coincidence and migration patterns may, on the surface, seem a plausible explanation for the origin of AIDS – apes, monkeys and Africans are all there together in the African continent.

Indeed, apes, like human and other material resources of value in Africa, have been acquired by fair or foul means and taken to Europe and the United States over so many years. Additionally,

the “mass migration of Africans” to urban area can be attributed to several reasons principal amongst them the centralization of commerce and government in urban areas by European colonial powers. This voluntary migration pales when compared to the forced migration of Africans to the ‘new world’ during the slavery era.

If African hunters can acquire AIDS from chimpanzees, so can European and American scientists who subject them to experiments, and the staff at the research establishments and breeding centers that supply these animals to the scientists. Additionnaly, there are zoo keepers and circus trainers, Tarzan, Jane, and the film crew of Ronald Reagan in “Bedtime for Bonzo,” etc., all these European and Americans would have been no less risk of AIDS than any African hunter. Therefore, the theory that monkey viruses infected Africans and caused the AIDS epidemic is improbable as to be realistically impossible for the reasons enumerated above and also because there is no evidence yet to support the claim that African hunt chimpanzees for food.

The question of where AIDS originated is still a topic for debate almost twenty years after the first diagnosis. Recently, the

news media in the West published reports of scientific findings by a team from University of Alabama led by Dr. Beatrice Hahn.

This team reported to have found evidence to substantiate a zoonotic (animal to human) of primate lentiviruses. In a nut shell, this study is similar in theory to one speculated about by other scientists in Prentice's article above. HIV-1, according to the team report, "is most similar in sequence and genomic organization to the viruses found in chimpanzees (SIVcpz), but an apparent low prevalence of SIVcpz infection in wild-living animals, and the presence of chimpanzees in geographic regions of Africa where AIDS was not initially recognized have cast doubt on chimpanzees as a natural host and reservoir for HIV-1.

Rather it is been suggested that another, as yet unidentified, primate specimen could be the natural host for SIVcpz and HIV-1." This report is not conclusive, but rather, speculative and uncertain. Hahn and her cohorts did not report that they know for sure which primate is a natural host for the AIDS virus. If anything, they seem to dismiss the chimpanzee connection; but regardless, it is suggested that the primate that is a natural host for HIV is still to be found in Africa.

The news materials in the foregoing analysis rely mainly on scientists and thus, scientific “facts” as bases for the validity of news reports. These news reports therefore, appeal to scientific authority which does not allow for public discourse because journalists generally do not contest scientific facts. In the contexts of the news materials above, the unfortunate oversight by the journalists is that there was no unanimous consensus among scientists on linking the origin of AIDS to animals that reside in Africa. Therefore, the appeal to scientific authority can only be valid or accurate when there is an overwhelming consensus within the scientific community on the issue

Social Impact of AIDS.

The social impact of AIDS is another frame that is explored by reporters of The New York Times and The Times of London regarding cases of AIDS in Africa. Within this context, several themes emerge. These themes include the human interest focus of the AIDS story, economic ramifications, and political implications. These themes are interconnected and as together they reflect a holistic view of the African society.

According to Sociologist Robert Park who wrote fifty years ago in his introduction to Helen MacGill Hughe's classic analysis, human interest "... gives the news the character of a story that will be read for its own sake, even when the reader is not at all concerned with it as news ... It is the ability to discover and interpret human interest in the news that gives the reporter the character of a literary artist and the news story the character of literature." (p.xxi). To this end, Journalists in all aspects of the news media have often responded to the AIDS epidemic by looking for faces behind the statistics. The Times of London and The New York Times were no exemption to this approach.

The Times of London was first in exploring the human interest angle of the AIDS pandemic in Africa. In a three part series entitled "Africa's New Agony" which ran from October 27th to 29th, 1986; reporter Thomson Prentice who had traveled in Burundi and Zaire filed this report:

A catastrophic epidemic of AIDS is sweeping across Africa, scarring the face of the continent and killing thousands of men, women and children. The horrific picture, only now beginning to emerge, offers harsh truths and inescapable lessons for the rest of the world.

The disease has already infected several millions of Africans from the Atlantic coast to the Indian ocean, posing colossal problems to more than 20 countries. Within the next

two years, hundreds of thousands are doomed to die and the inevitable spread of the epidemic out of Africa will add to the fast increasing world wide toll...

In the United States, where possibly 1.5 million people are believed to be carrying the virus, 23,000 cases have been diagnosed...

In Britain, where specialists calculate there are about 30,000 cases of the virus, the figures seem comparatively puny...

The scale of the African crises, however, stuns the imagination...For the foreseeable future, they will be confronted by a hideous, unmanageable disaster.

The title of these series of articles, "Africa's *New Agony*,"

immediately reminds the reader that Africa is a place where disasters naturally occur; the use of the word "new" implies that other "older agonies" have occurred. AIDS is simply the latest of these problems. This set the tone for a catastrophic description of events by the reporter.

From the above, the rhetorical posture of the writer in describing the devastation that AIDS was causing in Africa, and citing the number of AIDS cases in the US and Britain, suggests to the audience that the problem of AIDS in these Western countries pales in comparison to Africa's AIDS problems. In addition, the scope of the AIDS problem in terms of the number of African countries supposedly affected, in this case 20, vastly outnumbers the 2 Western countries mentioned in the article; thereby reinforcing the

notion in the audience that “their problem is immensely larger than ours.” Meanwhile, there is no documented evidence even in recent times of colossal public health problems in 20 African countries.

Thomson, in an attempt to create a visual picture of the scene which he describes, gives his audience a profile of AIDS patients arriving at a clinic in Bujumbura, Burundi. According to him:

The patients are carefully lifted down from the back of open trucks that have brought them miles along dusty, pot-holed roads. Other people come propped up by relatives, in battered taxis. Some who have longer to live manage to walk.

They are young men and women suddenly made old. Some are babies who will never reach childhood. They arrive at the crumbling steps of Louis Rgawasori clinic, a hospital named after an assassinated former ruler, to be taken along shadowy, humid corridors of flaking green.

Haggard mothers with sickly children clinging to their backs pass silent, brooding hours waiting for medical attention. But when their turn comes, there is little the doctors and nurses can give any of them but kindness.

Next to the above description is a picture of a child laying in a hut with a caption underneath it that read, “Too young to know, too sick to move: Ugandan children stricken with AIDS, await their end inside a mud hut, far from doctors who could not help them much anyway.” Below this is another picture of a man seated down with an obvious concerned look on his face; and the caption under this

photograph read, "Victim: Charles Kasuli, among the 4 million Ugandans at risk."

The narration takes the usual route amongst most Western writers of providing the reader with statistical numbers of people infected with the virus in order to substantiate the claim of a disaster. For instance, Thomson wrote that:

In Kinsasha, capital of Zaire and with a population of three million, as many as 50,000 are believed to carrying the AIDS virus.

In Uganda, one estimate puts the number of people at risk at four million. At least 500 are known to have died in the Rakai area, west of Lake Victoria. Hundred more have perished in neighboring Tanzania and there are similar tolls in Zambia and Kenya.

The reporter makes no attempt to cite his sources for the numbers he quoted. Instead, words such as "leading specialists" and "experts" are used as substitutes for what might seem accurate if names are given. Furthermore, Thomson citing of a WHO figure of the number of people believed to have AIDS in Africa is played down by what subsequently follows. In this regard, he wrote:

The World Health Organization *conservatively* estimates that 50,000 Africans are now suffering from AIDS, but leading specialists believe that the real figure is many times higher.

From a political stand-point, the readers are reminded of how incompetent and untrustworthy African governments can be:

Individual governments are reluctant to acknowledge the real scale of their AIDS epidemic...

The authorities are extremely reluctant to publish figures.

The second part in the series of "Africa's New Agony" includes an interview with Dr. Cassien Ndikumana, Burundi's chief medical officer. He is quoted as saying:

AIDS is not a serious problem in Burundi...Tomorrow, yes, it will be serious. But today there are many other problems demanding my attention.

Now, if AIDS patients have been arriving at Bujumbura's main hospital in truck loads as reported in the first article, then the chief medical officer of the country – who should have adequate knowledge of the state of health of his country is either lying in the above quote or he is incompetent. Similarly, African protests or observations about the disease are easily dismissed through lexicalization or the choice of words in the report:

Whether or not the disease originated in central Africa – as many researchers suspect – or was imported from the US and Europe – as many Africans prefer to believe – international air travel means that AIDS is being exported virtually everyday to the capital cities of the world.

Again, there is a revisit to the origins of AIDS, and the alleged epicenter of the pandemic spread across the world. The audience here is given the impression that in any case, the spread of AIDS is unidirectional from Africa to the rest of the world. The following section in the report illustrates this attitude further:

Burundi is the very heart of central Africa, and at the core of the AIDS epidemic that stretches right across the continent. Some scientists believe that the AIDS virus originated somewhere among these majestic hills and lush valleys, mutated perhaps from the African green monkey, possibly carried unwittingly for generations among the Hutu peasant farmers or the rival Tutsi who now rule Burundi. Over the past 20 years, as huge stretches of land were exhausted by farming, many thousands of Burudians, among them those that have been symptomlessly carrying the virus, drifted to the capital, Bujumbura, in search for work.

The implication here is that these farmers migrated to the city and because of their bad behavior; for instance, that men became unfaithful, and women turned to sex work, hence this began the world AIDS epidemic especially when, as the author indicate, that two international hotels were built for travelling businessmen. Therefore, the logic then is that these businessmen must have contracted the virus after sleeping with local sex workers at the international hotels. However, the alternative argument by Dr. Ndikumana in the same report that travelling businessmen and

other tourists may have introduced the virus is not explored in the article.

The news being analyzed here can be categorized into what I call appeals to conventional conception. Within this appeal dimension, news is oversimplified and the subjects of the news report lack individuality. News in this form relies on the media forming or reinforcing stereotypes and symbols concerning particular incidents such as AIDS. As a result, certain groups are associated with stereotypical activities or events. The media within this appeal framework has the ability to create and instill particular attitudes in audiences toward certain groups within society. The news reports analyzed below further demonstrates this appeal dimension.

The third and final episode in the "Africa's New Agony" series was filed by the correspondent from Kinsasha, Zaire's capital city.

Titled "Nightmare of a Raddled City", it began thus:

Kinsasha, because of the threat of AIDS, is now one of the most dangerous cities in which to live in. It has the unenviable name of the AIDS capital of Africa. Perhaps more than any other city, it contains the nightmares that AIDS invoke.

Here, there is a creative attempt by the author to convey a sense of absolute despair of a city. 'Raddled' which appeared in the

title of the article best expresses this attitude because it means worn-out or broken-down. (American Heritage Dictionary, 1993).

Again, there is contradictory reporting regarding the origin of AIDS. Earlier the audience was informed that AIDS began in the "majestic hills and lush valleys" of Burundi. Now in Zaire, Thomson wrote in this regard that:

Some of the earliest traces of AIDS anywhere in the world were detected in samples taken recently from Kinsasha blood bank stock of 1959.

It is rather difficult to believe that any blood bank will stockpile blood that is over 25 years old for use. However, the author wants his audience to believe this because such extremities supposedly can be found in backward Africa.

Similarly, the author revisited the stereotype and often racist theme of uncontrollable and excessive sexuality of black people.

Within this context he informs his audience that:

Sexual promiscuity is rife in Kinsasha, as in most central African towns and cities. Many men, if not most, have numerous liaisons with different women, including prostitutes, who have been clearly identified in Kisasha and elsewhere as reservoirs of AIDS infection...But although public warnings in newspapers and on the radio underline the hazards, few observers expect much lasting change in sexual behavior.

In addition, the reader is once again reminded of the inadequate African medical facilities:

Medical facilities are fraught with hazards from contaminated blood transfusions, unsterilized equipment, disposable syringes that are used repeatedly instead of being thrown away, chronic shortages of antibiotics, overcrowded wards and untrained paramedical staff.

The readers however, ought not be surprised by the conditions of hospital equipment and other infrastructure in Zaire then under the leadership of despot Mobutu Sese Seko who oppressed and exploited his own people while being protected financially and militarily by Western governments. Zaire has one of the richest deposits of minerals and natural resources in Africa, and as a result, suffered immensely by colonial exploitation.

These are contextual or background information that are lacking in the correspondent's report which, if included, would have illuminated for the audience, the effects the colonial era on Zaire and why Kinsasha is a "raddled" city.

The overall impression that this series of articles tends to impart on the audience besides the "dark continent" mentality, is the notion that African bureaucrats and leaders are incompetent to

handle the AIDS virus, and must rely on “expert teams of American, French, and Belgian researchers” for salvation.

Remarkably, three years after The Times of London story was published, The New York Times published a similar or identical account of AIDS in Africa. This time, it was a four-part series entitled “AIDS in Africa: A Killer Rages On” – with a sub-title, “A Continent’s Agony.”

The appeal, structure, journalistic style, themes, and message in this series are identical to the report in The Times of London, as can be deduced from articles’ titles. For instance, there are descriptions of the landscape that renders it with exotic qualities – a sort of ‘establishing shot’ to orient the readers to primitive settings where the action takes place.

Similarly, there are the statistics of AIDS victims, dead or alive, and future infection projections to go along with the report titled “A Continent’s New Agony” for The Times of London, or for The New York Times, simply, “A Continent’s Agony.” Then, there are human interest angle in which detailed description of the ordeal of some AIDS victims, along with their pictures are presented; also, both series contain accounts of deteriorated medical facilities, and

incompetent governments who were still in denial about AIDS; and finally, reports of how Western experts are striving to rescue Africa from the deadly virus. The emerging news appeal suggests a call to ideal social order within the international community by journalists because they presume that, if not contained, the AIDS virus would spread to other regions of the world.

A review of the remaining stories in The New York Times revealed no new patterns of construction with several exceptions, such as the third article in the four part series. Entitled "With 'Social Marketing,' Condoms Combat AIDS." John Tierney, The New York Times correspondent filed the following report:

Vangu Tsumbu, a former auto-parts salesman, arrived a recent morning to distribute condoms for one of Africa's most successful AIDS-prevention programs. He came as part missionary, part capitalist – a promising blend in disrepute around here since Joseph Conrad found the "Heart of Darkness" near the waterfall.

It was a century ago, in September 1890, that Conrad reached the end of the line on the 1,000-mile trip up the Congo river. He came here to retrieve a dying man named Klein, an ivory agent for a Belgian company that claimed to be working solely for the "moral and material regeneration" of the jungle's natives.

'Vilest Scramble for Loot'

Conrad saw it differently. He stood on his steamer's deck at night smoking a pipe, listening to the waterfall and morosely reflecting as he later recalled, on "the vilest scramble for loot ever to disfigure the history of human conscience."

In his story, the company's inner station became the "Heart of Darkness" and Klein became Kurtz, the proselytizer from the International Society for the suppression of Savage Customs who turns into Congo's most zealous ivory collector. He takes to decorating the station with the skulls of uncooperative natives, which even his profit-conscious regional manager finally acknowledges to be "unsound method."

The main focus of this article was to describe a technique used for AIDS prevention through the distribution of condoms to villages on the Congo river. Vangu Tsumbu the distributor is the main character in the story. However, one must pause and question the inclusion of Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" as a comparative element to Vangu's activities in the narration of the story.

It seems the reporter had found a real life example to substitute for the fictional characters in Conrad's work. And his elation from this find caused him to drift back into one of the most infamous degradation ever accorded to a continent and her people in history, as exemplified in the Heart of Darkness.

As if to redeem himself from his illusion, the correspondent added:

Mr. Vangu, who reached Klein's riverbank by airplane and a dugout canoe, brought a more refined technique for inducing behavioral change.

It is quite obvious that Tierney could have written his report on Mr. Vangu's activities without resorting to the shallow comparisons, and mixing fact and fiction. The appeal to the audience is clear: this is an updated version of an old story, the environment and people have not changed in 100 years. And to support this argument, there is a picture of Vangu in his canoe with a caption that read:

Vangu Tsumbu is part missionary and part capitalist, selling condoms for one of Africa's most successful AIDS prevention programs. Mr. Vangu, holding a bag at the center, recently passed out samples to boatmen in a dugout canoe on the Congo River near the spot where Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" was set.

This type of reporting by Western journalists as evidenced in the literature review and the ongoing analysis is not done by accident. It is not being suggested here that the Western journalists whose articles are used for analytical purposes in this project are racists, rather, what is being revealed here is that these modern journalists unconsciously or otherwise, use literary style that date back to the colonial periods in their description of AIDS in Africa. Conceptually, these news reports can be generally categorized into two news appeals identified by Barton (1990). These include: **Community Guardians and Ideal Social Order.**

Within this construct, invitational co-orientations “that represent points around which news discourse and politically active people might converge and, in so doing, activate the discourse of public internationalism” (Barton, 1990) become useful in the analysis of AIDS as international news. From this perspective, Barton posit that in internationalization co-orientation:

Some news appeals are framed in an international forum, using a mix of international images, voices, and languages to present issues of concerns to Americans in the context of international community. These reports can be organized within a broad range of journalistic controls over the international context; some include foreign spokespersons who define the issues; others selectively represent international images while using field reporter and domestic politician or military authorities to introduce, define, and otherwise interpret the issue at hand. The extent to which these reports provide “other-culture” insights through which Americans might enlighten their understanding of international affairs determines the relative transnational communications potential of this coordination. (p. 29).

This finding is useful because the data being interpreted here reflect the internationalization of AIDS as news when the actors involved are taken into consideration. The main actors in addition to the disease itself, include the general African population, the African governments, foreign and local scientists, the African health care systems, and the international community as a whole.

Community guardians is a news appeal to the sense of

community needs and values; depending on the context, the appeal can refer to local neighborhoods or to the ideal of the “international community” (Barton, 1990, p.19). Within international political action and invitational discourse, there are the convergence of news forms and audience orientation. In this context, “Politically active people may read news presentations as arguments for a policy of isolation and confrontation on one hand, or, on the other, as an invitation to develop, defend, and participate in policies that work toward international cooperation” (Barton, 1990 p. 25).

Accounts of AIDS in Africa in the Western press are framed as a threat to the well being of the international community. Therefore in their effort to “guard” against the spread of the virus, these presses explore different dimensions of the AIDS story which ranged from the origin of the pandemic to the human interest and economic angles. For instance, the sexual values or practices in Africa are brought under sharp focus and scrutinized in an effort to suggest that such behaviors if not curbed, would contribute immensely to the spread of AIDS in Africa and abroad. Meanwhile, the same can be said of the numerous red-light districts of major Western cities such as New York, Amsterdam or London where

sexual promiscuity can be easily found.

Therefore, as the guardian of the international community in this context, the Western press sought to warn non-African peoples of the impending catastrophe known as AIDS that was emerging from Africa. This posture by the Western press can be attributed as a factor in the decision of the some countries such as the United Kingdom, India, China to institute mandatory AIDS tests for migrant African students. The British government in addition, barred its war ships from docking at the Mombasa port in Kenya because it feared that British soldiers may contract the disease if they went ashore. It also contributed to the US government decision to implement mandatory AIDS testing for those immigrants who wish to apply for permanent residency.

Similarly, the impact of the community guardian appeal went beyond the official actions of nation-states. For instance, the United States Red Cross has a policy of not accepting donated blood from Africans because of the "high risk" group for AIDS that has been assigned to individuals from the continent.

In an August 11, 1987 editorial of The Times of London entitled "Out of Africa," to cite another example, it was revealed that

Glasgow University whose researchers were supposedly in the forefront of the race to develop an AIDS vaccine had officially discouraged its students from going to Africa for elective or practical studies because of the risk of infection. A spokesperson for the University, Fiona Miller, indicated that similar advice was being given by other universities. The goal of these governments along with NGOs like the Red Cross, and universities in implementing such policies against Africans is to protect "their people" against the ravages of AIDS from potential African carriers.

The philosophical and epistemological underpinnings of Western thought which strongly revolves around the belief that cognition or knowledge is acquired through empirical methods, lends credibility to the application of community guardian appeal in the reporting of AIDS in Africa because numbers that reflect statistical projections are generally accepted as more believable than mere speculations in the West.

Within this conceptual framework, Western scientists who are apt to provide figures or numbers of infection rates in the continent, and who are able to speculate on the potential risk of AIDS in Africa to the international community are routinely quoted in the news

articles. Thus, the use of “scientific facts” and scientific sources in these news reports, function to legitimize for the Western audiences, the conclusions drawn by the journalist about AIDS in Africa.

This approach often known as objectivity amongst mass media practitioners, removes the reporter as a participant in the news process besides writing the story. Hence, news generated by this method become spotty due to lack of context, and lack of in-depth analysis. Conversely, the community guardian news appeal may also be interpreted, within this context, as a call for the international community to act in terms of implementing preventive measures and overall health care strategy.

As indicated above, some of the news reports in this analysis can also be categorized into the appeal dimension of ideal social order. According to Barton (1990), “within the appeal to ideal social order reside the idea of social order involving an open, participatory democracy. These are at the opposite extreme from appeals to authority, for social order appeals encourage political discourse about policy across audience orientations and across national boundaries.” (p19).

In this regard, the discourse of the political, social, and

economic implications of the spread of HIV/AIDS on a global level, served as the catalyst that prompted governmental and private entities to commit financial and medical resources to contain the spread of AIDS in and from Africa. For instance, The Times of London in its February 4, 1987, reported that the European Community's executive commission was planning to set up a joint anti-AIDS campaign with affected African countries. According to this report, "The joint program would be based on tightening control at the blood banks in certain African states, providing medical equipment and setting links between laboratories." (p.6a).

Similarly, it was reported in the March 31, 1987 edition of The Times of London that the British government was donating 3 million pounds "for the global fight against AIDS particularly in Central Africa."

In addition, the researchers who first identified the AIDS virus raised funds for the fight against AIDS in Africa. According to the May 5, 1987 edition of The Times of London, "they are giving up 80 percent of their royalties from sale of diagnostic tests they have developed to a foundation which spur international effort." In this regard, Luc Montagnier, the French scientist who is credited as one

of the first to isolate the AIDS virus, was quoted as saying that “A special action force to help Africa is urgently needed. Apart from the potential disaster on that continent, what is happening there will affect the rest of the world, through immigration, trade and tourism.” (p.3b)

Barton (1990) has pointed out that appeals can be combined in news discourse. Therefore, it can be rightly argued that the goal of community guardian news appeal is to suggest as an extension, an appeal to the ideal social-order. This news appeal is evidenced in the narration of the AIDS story in Africa by the involvement of the World Health Organization as a principal body responsible for facilitating discourse about AIDS between the forementioned actors. The spread of AIDS was regarded as a threat to the ideal social-order of the international community, as Luc Montagnier pointed out above. Thus, the debates that followed the news reports of AIDS in Africa included such topics as preventive methods and global health policy concerns because AIDS was indeed a global issue.

In addition, this appeal dimension may also have been responsible for encouraging the African actors to legitimately regard the AIDS pandemic as serious health problem within the continent

instead of the denials and counter-accusation of the West. The result of this was the realization by these actors that regardless of how derogatory Western rhetoric of AIDS in Africa may be, there was the need to create a better awareness of HIV transmission and the consequences of contracting the virus.

This was achieved through health promotion campaigns that stressed monogamous relationships, or the need to use a condom during sexual contact. Similarly, there was a realization of the adverse economic consequences that may result as potential tourists to the said affected regions cancelled their travel plans.

Historically, the accounts of AIDS in Africa in the Western presses under observation here are rooted in the "*ideologeme of scenic contamination.*," i.e. an ideological value, opinion, or prejudice often manifested in the form of protonarratives (Jameson, 1981, p.87). Ideologies according to Van Dijk (1991) are seen as "interpretation framework" that "organizes sets of attitudes" about other elements of modern society. Ideologies, therefore, provide the "cognitive foundation" for attitudes of various groups in societies, as well as the furtherance of their own goal and interests (Dellinger, 1995)

During the colonial period, imperialists viewed foreign lands as active forces capable not only of resisting attempts to reshape them but also of exerting a baleful influence on those who would make the attempt. Thus imperialism was touted as a defensive measure designed to control and hold at bay the unpredictable forces inherent in these lands, and thereby minimizing the risk to those laboring on the empire's behalf.

Scenic contamination therefore personalizes alien environments or landscapes in order to depict such "scenes" as potential threats to the physical (and moral) well-being of the imperialists (Bass, 1988).

While the underlying text of contamination may be just as racist as that of contamination by "Others," it nevertheless allows racism "to remain conveniently invisible, disseminated throughout the texture of social life and thus 'naturalized' as custom, habit, spontaneous practice" (Eagleton, 1991, p. 116).

White (1978) has noted that the stigmatization of cultural "Others" as sources of disease contamination generally involves an overtly racist projection of images of filth and defilement onto subject population, usually for the purpose of validating the

“purity” of the imperial race. Thus, the racial segregation of populations (as was the practice in British India and Africa) was justified in the name of protecting the “health” (both physical and moral) of imperial administrators and bureaucrats.

The logic of scenic contamination is still relevant and can be applied in the interpretation of modern texts that deal with viral outbreaks in non-Western lands. Scenic contamination in this context functions on an insidious as opposed to an overt level.

According to Bass (1998), the idea of scenic contamination has long been a common organizing principle in discourse seeking to describe the relationship between the nations of the West and those of the Third World. Perhaps unwittingly, these texts use the conventions associated with this idea in their descriptions of emerging viruses such as AIDS. In turn, these conventions enable them to “frame” the idea of disease transmission in a particular way (p.432).

Within this context, the AIDS story fit the profile of “risk” or “hazard” discourse and provides an example of the manner in which science writers, publicists, and scientists themselves have

sought to provide a symbolic legitimization for science via the “unscientific” vehicle of narrative.

In this regard, all employ common elements of this tradition, commented on by various rhetorical critics, such as stressing the positive nature and need for scientific research and portraying scientists in a heroic fashion as humanity’s front line of defense against those natural forces that would threaten us (Lessl, 1985; Nelkin, 1987; Hornig, 1989).

However, Bass (1998) has argued that these accounts go far beyond the legitimization of science in their efforts to advance interpretations regarding the nature of the underdeveloped regions of the world; the relationship between viral diseases and these regions; and the relationship between such regions and the technologically advanced nations of the United States and western Europe. Therefore, these interpretations are not value-free conclusions drawn from objectively-based, scientific observation, but are rather attitudes drawn from the narrative conventions of scenic contamination.

In protonarratives of scenic contamination, the scenes’ active nature is first identified metonymically with some negative human

quality-i.e., the equation of “savagery” or “barbarism” with “the jungle,” “unnatural desire” with the “tropics,” “unforgiving” and “brutal” with “the desert,” etc. Within such an environment, native peoples do not function as independent agents in their own right; rather, they are relegated to secondary roles and their natures are presented as being derived from the environment itself. Just as such a scene reduces indigenous inhabitants to being little more than derivations of itself, so is it capable of working its insidious influence on outsiders (Bass, 1998).

Writing for the December 8, 1985 edition of The New York Times for instance, Lawrence K. Altman, M.D., recounted his past and present experiences in Africa:

It was twenty years ago and I was an epidemiologist leading an immunization campaign in West Africa. The refrigerators aboard the trucks we drove carrying vaccines to villages at *the edge of the Sahara would not work in the 100 degree heat.* When an official of the sponsoring Agency for International Development in Washington learned about this, he suggested that we park the trucks in the shade.

From the window of the American Embassy in Ouagadougou, Upper Volta, (now Burkina Fasso) where I read his cable, *I gazed over the expansive shrub-dotted savannah in absolute wonder. Where was I going to find this wonderful shade ?* To make a point, I telegraphed home for an emergency shipment of 10,000 Dutch elm trees. The trees, it may not be hard to imagine, did not come. *And we stumbled along as well as we could in our campaign against*

measles, which for some unknown reason was, and is, particularly severe in Africa.

Eventually, our team from the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta turned our efforts, along with many others, to combating smallpox, whose ultimate eradication in Africa and elsewhere became a milestone in medical history. And the eradication raised hope that by freeing third world countries from a major killer, these countries could improve their economies and health care and then go on to tackle other pressing problems.

Now, on returning to Africa as a medical reporter for The New York Times, *I am reminded of what I often heard on my first trip: "Africa always offers something new." And indeed, a new menace, AIDS, confronts much of the continent now.* If the number of cases continues to rise unabated, and if effective prevention and treatments are not found soon, AIDS might become as much as a scourge in Africa as smallpox once was.

Sections of the quote above have been emphasized to demonstrate the adaptation of ideologeme of scenic contamination in the article. Following this logic, Africa remains a source of pollution and contamination as suggested in Conrad's jungle. Thus, the doctor's agreement with what he had "often heard" that "Africa always offers something new," confirms the long standing perception of Africa as a birth place of new diseases, including AIDS. Hence, by means of age-old stereotypical conventions of scenic contamination, Africa is portrayed as a source of pollution and an object to be quarantined and controlled.

Within this construct, the centuries-old process of cross-cultural transmission of disease appears as but the most recent site of struggle between nations of the West and those of the Third World, and accounts of disease transmission become but one of the many "residues" of imperial thinking that continue to exist "in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in political, economic, ideological, and social practices" (Said, p.9).

In protonarratives of scenic contamination, the imperial "ideals" of spreading justice, converting the heathen, and honestly acquiring wealth, represented in the person of the imperial agent, become infused with the negative qualities embodied by a malevolent environment. The result is an unholy abomination or hybrid that perverts the idea of empire, the identity of the imperial agent, and, in extreme cases, his very humanity (Bass, 1988).

There exists however, a diachronic adaptation of the ideologeme of scenic contamination. This is manifested in the difference in perception between imperialists of the past and their contemporary counterparts, of underdeveloped world. Thus, for imperial agents such as Conrad, the alien world of the empire was a stationary one. For one to be affected by this world, he or she must

experience it directly. In this context for example, Kurtz, Conrad's main character in The Heart of Darkness could not have suffered the dehumanizing effects of the African environment had he not traveled there. In other words, one could not be infected by a malevolent environment unless one went there (Bass, 1998).

On the other hand, Connelly and Kennedy (1994) have posited that in the modern West, the underdeveloped world is seen less as a stationary location than as movement. Within this context, Said (1993) observes that scenes of mass protests in the Third World and worldwide migrations of the refugees of conflicts, "undocumented immigrants," and the "starving populations of the Southern Hemisphere have all challenged basic understandings to art and theory of government, the principle of confinement" (pp. 326-7).

Therefore, unlike Conrad's jungle which was stationary, Africa in modern times can now reach the rest of the world through its agents of contagion, like lethal viruses such as AIDS, and infect it with its primeval savagery. This observation lends credibility to the position here that the Western press assumed the appeal posture of international community guardians, that sought to preserve an

international ideal social order, through a reporting style whose goal was to alert the rest of the world of the impending invasion by African HIV carriers.

Theoretically, the appeal of ideal social order coupled with the concept of ideologeme of imperial contagion within a framework of International news analysis as has been shown here are reflections or products of socialization and institutional practices. Therefore, my analyses of two Western newspaper reports in regards to the first research question posed here would point to, what I refer to as an institutional news reporting bias. Within this context, I do not assume as indicated earlier that there was a deliberate tendency on the part of the reporters to mislead its audiences about the prevalence of AIDS in Africa, rather, I am positing that profound cultural elements, such as socialization and institutional or organizational structures that have influenced the perception of the reporters over many years, are reflected in their news reporting about AIDS in Africa.

Thus, the elements or characteristics of Institutional reporting bias from the foregoing analysis, was a rhetorical style that tended to blame, marginalize, and ostracize persons living with

HIV/AIDS in Africa, and by extension, the continent itself. This institutional bias in reporting by some Western journalists is evident by their use of language that for the most part disregard the social and economic implications of their news slant for the countries under investigation. Furthermore, this approach served to maintain and reinforce already held conventional beliefs that the audience has about Africa in general – a backward disease ridden area where sexual promiscuity is the norm – in short, the idea of Conrad's dark continent.

To this end, news reports about the AIDS pandemic in Africa in the two Western newspapers were clouded with exaggerations, speculations, and sometimes unverifiable claims that reinforced negativity as a primary news value in Western media. Additionally, by setting the AIDS pandemic in Africa as an agenda for public discourse, the news organizations involved also intended to profit from the stories that followed. Which is why many of the stories may have been slanted to suggest an impending doom of a continent. This approach is of course intended to sell the newspapers especially when the headlines resembles those found on tabloid publications.

As noted earlier, the purpose of this project is to comparatively analyze the reporting of AIDS as international news between two Western presses and one African press.

Initial reports about AIDS as international news in Kenya's Daily Nation focused on the prevalence and spread of the AIDS pandemic in other countries, particularly neighboring African states. Most of the reports appeared in two sections of the newspaper: the "Around Africa" section, and the "World News" section. These reports were mainly derived from News Agencies such as AP, Reuters, AFP, APS, and Xinhua. For the African countries, headlines such as the following introduced the news report: "Tanzania acts to halt AIDS" (AP), "Rwanda reports 319 AIDS cases" (AP), "City [Kigali, Central Africa Republic capital] is cleared of 'the trade' as AIDS strikes" (AP), "Traces of AIDS detected in Harare" (AFP), "500 die of AIDS in southern Uganda" (AFP), "AIDS, Uganda confirms 37 deaths this year" (AP), "AIDS kills 30 on Uganda-Zaire border" (AFP), "AIDS toll reaches 93 in Sudan" (AP), "Zimbabwe worried by AIDS cases" (AP), "AIDS case in S. Africa sex scandal" (AFP), "How AIDS is affecting Zaire" (APS), "AIDS a blessing to Liberian economy" (Reuters), "Ugandan AIDS orphans facing

uncertain future” (APS), “25 killed as AIDS invade Ethiopia” (Reuters), etc.

The purpose for citing some of the headlines that spanned a period of five years is to show that like the Western press, the Daily Nation sought to deflect attention of its specifically Kenyan audience from the AIDS problem. In other words, the impression created was that although there may be AIDS in Kenya, the prevalence of the disease in other African countries or other in other parts of the world is much greater.

As can be seen in the news wire headlines, most of them Western, it was during this period that the Western press were reporting about the devastation caused by AIDS in Africa. Therefore, it can be argued that because most of the reports were derived from Western news agencies, the Daily Nation had no control over their content, but then again, an editorial decision was made to publish the materials.

However, the posture of The Daily Nation changed from reporting of the AIDS pandemic in other countries to reacting as increasingly, Western news reports pointed at Africa and more

specifically, to Eastern African countries such as Kenya as the possible source of the AIDS pandemic.

In the face of such accusations, the issue of AIDS as international news in The Daily Nation, became something other than a strictly a global health problem to be found in other countries. The discourse became conflated with political and economic issues in this Kenyan press, particularly since tourism is one of Kenya's largest industries.

This is especially true because beyond the negative portrayals of Africa in regard to AIDS in the Western press, concrete actions by some foreign governments such as the British ban of her ships from docking in Kenyan's port cities made it apparent for the Kenyan government and the Kenyan population that those negative reports were not just rhetorical, but can lead to detrimental actions against their country.

Within this context, as indicated above, AIDS as international news in The Daily Nation was constructed around the two frames identified earlier – The origin of AIDS and the social impact of AIDS. However, unlike in the Western press, the themes as found in The Daily Nation reflect the sometime dominant news discourse in the

African press since the struggle for independence from colonial powers in the late 1940s. This discourse generally focuses on neocolonialism and cultural imperialism as means of domination by the West, and thus, the need to resist the West, politically, culturally, and economically.

This approach is best exemplified in two January, 1987 editorials in The Daily Nation. Entitled "Some issues for London to ponder;" and "Let's have the real facts on AIDS," the editorials addressed the decision by the British government to ban its vessels from docking at two Kenyan port cities because British authorities feared the possibility of their soldiers contracting HIV in their recreation activities. Similarly, the newspaper questioned the wisdom of the Indian government in its decision to expel three Kenyan students who allegedly tested positive for the AIDS virus.

More frustrating for the Kenyans, was the refusal by British authorities to offer a meaningful explanation or apology for this action when they were asked to do so by the Kenyan government. Rather, the British responded by stating that they had nothing to apologize for because their duty was to protect British soldiers.

Within this context, The Daily Nation published two editorials in a week span to address this issue. The first editorial published on January 14, 1987, dealt specifically with the economic impact of Kenyan AIDS reports in the Western press. It called on the Kenyan government to defend her people against false accusations by foreign agents. Excerpts from the first editorial which reflect the aforementioned themes read as thus :

A couple of years ago when the first AIDS death was reported in Kenya, a Kenya travel firm lost, almost in one stroke, Sh50 million worth of contract it had painstakingly negotiated with European firms. The Europeans were unconcerned that the case involved a non Kenyan that has spent many of his years in Europe. He had only come to Kenya terminally ill, looking for the kind of care which he possibly could not get in Europe where he had contracted the disease in the first place.

That case in a small way demonstrates the kind of price is paying because of all this scare about AIDS, much of which is unsupported by facts, and some of which is possibly ill-motivated.

The scare has intensified in recent weeks in the foreign press with some gratuitous help from some governments otherwise friendly to Kenya.

These include the well publicized ban on British troops from using Kenyan coastal resort areas, and India's expulsion of three Kenyan students said to have been diagnosed with the AIDS virus.

We do recognize the duty of those governments to act in the best interest of their people. But such actions, when necessary, must be carried out in a manner that does not damage the interest of the other party.

In other words, those countries that have been forced to take the actions they did should have done so having some regard for Kenya's interests.

Unfortunately, we have ended up with one untested case being used to smear a vital sector of the Kenyan tourist industry, and three positive individual cases (also indiscreetly handled) casting doubts on the entire Kenyan student community in India and indeed on Kenyans in general.

In the first case, the British did not have any grounds to work from. They had not tested their men before they came here to determine whether or not they were clean so that they could say with certainty that any subsequent positive diagnosis pointed to Kenya.

It is obvious that the thousands of AIDS cases identified in the West, including Britain, involve people who can't even point out Kenya on an African map.

And India should have asked the affected students to leave quietly and settled the matter through the normal diplomatic channels. In that way the interests of both sides would have been served.

Publicizing such cases harms not only Kenya but it also makes it more difficult to foster the kind of atmosphere conducive to the greater co-operation which governments are striving for.

... In the meantime, the Kenyan government has a duty to stop such damaging speculation, which is making life difficult for Kenyans abroad as well as costing those of us at home millions of shillings.

The government says, and many Kenyans agree, that this AIDS scare has been blown out of proportion to its prevalence in Kenya. It is now the government's duty to give every one interested the right picture.

The fact that 65 out of 100 prostitutes tested were found to have the virus, or a few scores of Kenyans and non-Kenyans residing here have contracted the killer disease, does not mean that 20 million Kenyans have it. That is the message that needs to be sold out there. And the cost is justified given what the county is losing at present.

Again, the rhetorical style utilized here falls into the category of Barton's community guardian news appeal. As noted earlier, appeals can be combined with "a host of other rhetorical elements including invocations, metaphor, and proofs, all of which contribute to argument about policy." (p. 19). This is evident here as The Daily Nation conflated economic and political issues in its response to the action of foreign governments towards Kenya in regards to the AIDS pandemic. In addition, the newspaper called on the Kenyan government to perform its duty as the primary and legitimate voice of Kenyans in the international community, and suggested that the government offer alternative explanations or "give every one interested the right picture."

Within this context, The Daily Nation served to protect or guard its community against the negative political and economic ramifications derived primarily from Western press accounts of AIDS in Kenya, and by extension, sought to preserve its community needs and values. However, the first editorial that was published seemed not to have had the intended effect, or the punch to swing the Kenyan government into action in this regard. Hence on January 19, 1987, The Daily Nation published a second editorial

that addressed the same issue, but this time the tone was more forceful:

The initial heat generated by the illogical banning of the British troops from using recreational facilities in Malindi and Mombasa lest they contract the dreaded AIDS may be subsiding. But the way the touchy controversy was handled by the British authorities have raised quite a few eyebrows and left a number of lingering questions ... What irks us, as Kenyans, is the overtone in the statement that, in discharging its duties, it (British authorities) does not give a fig who suffers in the process. This is why it can shrug off indignant reaction to its deeds without any concern.

That statement illustrates graphically the extent to which, despite proclamations to the contrary, Third World countries such as Kenya are taken for granted so that the priorities of developed nations may be observed. By announcing loudly that they mind only the welfare of their soldiers they are assuming that we do not have any responsibility for our own people, our country and its image abroad.

This is the kind of colonial mentality that has made it impossible for "developing countries" to be taken seriously in their effort to rid their societies of the scourge of underdevelopment. History has demonstrated that under no circumstance will more powerful country accept the burden of its own folly if the same can be shifted to a less powerful society, preferably African.

This is why we put it to them in them in the strongest possible language that we have the duty to defend our people against blatant misinformation being calculated deliberately to harm the credibility of Kenyans and, in this case, injure the economy of the country.

Already, Kenya's hitherto lucrative tourist industry is experiencing the sting. Charter flights from several European countries, including Austria and West Germany, have been cancelled because of the malicious AIDS report. We have no reason to think that things won't be worse because of the

insistence by the British Defense Ministry that it was acting on "facts" gathered by British doctors.

It does not matter to us that reports from Britain tell of an increase in the number of tourists expected to come to Kenya. The tourism industry would not have arrived where it is now if it had relied on the Britons. We want to retain our loyal visitors year in and year out, and they do not have to necessarily come from Britain.

It is instructive that the Foreign Office has chosen to regard this issue as a minor one that need not officially responded to. Its silence may mean that it agrees with the reasons for the action and even the action itself. We should not have expected less – though it is strange from a government which says it is friendly to Kenya.

What we did not expect is the silent acceptance of this abusive and derogatory treatment by our relevant authorities. Would it be that they see sense in the allegations of the British Defense Ministry? Shall we take it that such devastating blows on Kenya will be taken with humility?

Is there anybody who feels responsible enough to tell them that we may require their AIDS clearance chits before they are let into our country?

Beyond the appeal of community guardian which is strongly manifested in the editorial, there is an equally strong call to a political action by this paper to its government. In this regard, the first high level reaction from the Kenyan government was by Health Minister Peter Nyakiamo. In the February 3, 1987 edition of The Daily Nation, the Minister asserted that " Once wrong results are published, as in the case of AIDS in Kenya, it is difficult to withdraw them and they are frequently quoted ... when it comes to AIDS, we

have witnessed undue haste and impatience to pronounce results before scientific investigations are completed.”

Additionally, Kenyan President Arap Moi added a stronger objection to the suggestion that AIDS was rampant in Kenya. In a front page report on the February 7, 1987 edition of The Daily Nation entitled “*Shun propaganda on AIDS, says Moi*”, the president told the Kenyan public or wananchi to “ignore the malicious propaganda emanating from outside the country that the AIDS disease was rampant in Kenya.” He added that “cases of the disease in Kenya were minimal, and that the countries spreading the propaganda had astronomical instances of the disease.”

Additionally, on page 8 of the same issue, it was reported in an article entitled *58 new AIDS cases reported in the United States every day* that:

In the last three months of 1986 there were on the average 58 new cases of AIDS per day in the United States, the country worst hit by the killer disease according to a study by the WHO. The daily average for the same period in 1985 was 35, against 20 in 1984, and 10 in 1983. US health authorities said that as of December last year, 27,704 adults and 394 children had been listed as having AIDS, of whom 15,757 have already died. If the progression of the disease continues at the same rate, the number of dead will multiply by 10 in the next four years they said.

The report above is significant in that it lends support to the claim by Kenyan president that the AIDS pandemic was more rampant in the West, specifically in the United States. The Daily Nation succeeded in its community guardian appeal because it generated the appropriate reaction within the Kenyan context from government ministers and the president. But even more importantly was the reaction of some in the public domain to the suggestion that AIDS was rampant in Kenya as evidenced in two letters to the editor published February 10, 1987 with a bold headline: *Westerners really hate Africans*. In the first letter, Maina Mbure of Nakuru wrote:

It's pathetic, disgusting and heartbreaking to read about the British ban on soldiers to visit our coastal towns of Mombasa and Malindi for fear that they may catch AIDS. I genuinely feel like crying. When one reads such a report, one is forced to ask how long the West will keep on abusing and insulting Africa.

All the evils on the planet are creations of the West. During our forefathers time these evils never existed. There was nothing like VDs, pollution, homosexuality, and all other evils that exist today. One funny (peculiar) is that Westerners want always to blame Africa for most of these evils. Now with the coming of AIDS, Africans have been blamed for it. The West does not want to be associated undesirable things and events. The bad can only come from Africa, It's time we Africans know that the white man from the West hates us to the core. Before him we are inferior and must always be associated with useless things and those that are termed dirty and evil. So when Britain claims that 65% of Mombasa and Malindi prostitutes have AIDS and will transfer it to their soldiers, this is meant to hurt us. Britain knows very well that if any of

them contracted AIDS, it was not in Kenya but way back in Britain and her associates – America, France, Germany and the rest should know that if Africa is to be given any name it must be a holy one and not those dirty and degrading names.

In a second letter published on the same day, P. K. Shaghai of Kakamega wrote:

Several claims that AIDS originated in Africa hurt the intelligence of Africans to the bottom of their hearts. This is a groundless abuse from Western countries. As history puts it, sexually transmitted diseases followed white settlement in Africa. Such diseases were among the first short-term effect of colonialism. Definitely African started falling victims to such diseases.

Now another disease has come in the arena. It is known as AIDS and has fatal results. If this killer disease had its origin in Africa, I strongly believe that our still developing Africa's population could be very small indeed. As a matter of fact, polygamy was commonly practiced by African communities. This was one way to avoid unchecked sexual adventures. In fact, abnormal and shameful practices like homosexuality were not rooted in Africa. Homosexuality being one of the principal acts through which AIDS is transmitted is common in Western countries. African ways of life could not encourage a disease of this nature.

These letters are significant to the discourse about AIDS in The Daily Nation because they may have reflected the mood of the much larger Kenyan public during this period. Again, it can be concluded that The Daily Nation was successful in its community guardian appeal because of it invited and got political response from the

government and public in defense of the Kenyan people and the tourist industry in that country.

Overall, the findings would point to a three part systematic approach by the Daily Nation in its coverage of AIDS as international news within the context of the two frames identified. Firstly, the newspaper centered its reports on the spread of AIDS in countries other than Kenya. This approach suggests that the newspaper down played the existence and spread of the pandemic in Kenya due to social and economic reasons.

Secondly, the focus on the incidence of AIDS in other countries by the Daily Nation shifted to its strong rebuttal of Western press reports that AIDS originated in Africa. These Western press reports highlighted East Africa as a possible source of the disease origin, and thus, the rampant spread of the pandemic in Kenya. In its response, the Daily Nation accused the Western press of racism and neocolonial practices designed to cripple Kenya's tourist industry, and hence the economy. Therefore key themes revealed in the discourse are the conflation of racism and neocolonialism which had direct economic effects on the tourist industry.

Thirdly, the Daily Nation increasingly focused on the spread of AIDS in the West, perhaps as a way to further down play or deflect for its audiences the reports that AIDS was spreading rapidly among African populations. Ironically, this tactic as has been shown above, was utilized by the two Western press. In short, it is evident that by reporting on the existence and spreading of the AIDS pandemic in distant lands, both the African press and the Western press in a systematic way sought to assure their audiences of the almost AIDS-safe environment in which they reside.

Chapter 5.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.

The preceding chapter utilized news form analysis as a method for understanding the reports of AIDS as international news in one African, and two Western presses. Within this context, news appeals have revealed the journalistic posture of news writers in both instances. In the case of the Western presses, news forms and its application can best be said to be a reflection of values. As suggested earlier, journalists are, in one form or the other, influenced by the environment from which they have culturally and socially evolved. This thereby makes it possible that stereotypes and negative values learned in these environments may be reflected in news reports--especially when the subject of the reports are perceived to be the "other."

News appeals as Barton (1992) has shown, are one aspect of news form that invite audiences to take action or participate in public discourse on social issues. Revisiting this model is useful because it illustrates the logic behind the thesis presented here: Barton's news forms need to be extended or modified to fully

accommodate the findings of this research. News appeal analysis is used to understand how the construction of news reports invites political response from citizens or discourages further discourse on issues (Barton, 1990). According to Barton (1990), news appeals “involves separating the various appeals made to publics, accounting for the larger international political context of which the appeal are a part of, associating appeals with the voices from which the appeals emerge, and postulating a political use of the appeals on the basis of comparative orientations of audiences” (p.18).

News, from this method of analysis, can be understood by looking at the political constituencies that are invited in the discursive frame, how actors are “legitimated” as players, and how political issues defined.

The findings of this research support the news form that appeals to groups as advanced by Barton (1990). In this context, news appeal seeks to reinforce audiences’ already held beliefs or attitudes. As the findings above suggest, the initial reports about the outbreak of the AIDS pandemic in Africa in the two Western press under examination here supports the concept of a news appeal that sought to maintain or reinforce already held negative

beliefs about the continent within a group - the Western community.

Within this context, what I have already referred to as elements of institutional news bias in Western news reporting, which includes blaming, unverifiable sources, exaggerations, and lack of context, were employed by The Times of London and The New York Times journalists in the reporting of AIDS pandemic in Africa.

As shown here, this type of negative reporting in the Western media also has domestic implications, that is, the perception generally held by the majority can be negatively skewed when the focus of the news report is a minority group such as blacks.

This may explain why according to Quindlen (2000) in the United States for instance, "A black electrician gets on the train at night and there is barely perceptible embrace of purses on the laps of women around him. A black lawyer stands with upraised hand and watches the cabs whiz by. A mall security guard trails the only black customer through the store. . . [and] On the highways, being stopped because of race is so common place that there's even a clever name for it: DWB, or 'driving while black.'" (p.84).

These observations support research by Entman and others which have concluded that the negative portrayals of blacks in the media lead to the perception of blacks as criminals. Similarly, the negative portrayal of Africa in Western news media, as the findings of this research suggest, increases the likelihood that the audience's perception of the continent will be negative.

As indicated earlier, several factors contribute to negative or exaggerated reports about AIDS in Africa in Western news media. Principal among these factors is the warped ideology or the persistent belief that Africa is the "Dark Continent." This belief is reflected in the writing style of some Western journalists and suggest a continuation of pre-colonial/colonial writing style of Western observers of Africa.

Within this context, not only are the African people inferior, the land in which they live on is cursed and has the ability to resist any attempt to transform it. This observation is clearly highlighted especially in the event of natural disasters in the continent. For instance, on March 1, 2000, the World Service of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in a short wave news broadcast from London stated that the recent floods that have besieged

Southern Africa and Mozambique in particular was a sign that Africa is cursed.

According to the reporter, "In Africa if people do not destroy each other, nature will destroy them - this is the curse of Africa." The news appeal here is not to solicit public sympathy, but rather, it is designed to reinforce the negative perceptions that audiences may have about the "dark continent." This style of reporting is evident in the two Western newspapers' accounts of AIDS in Africa.

The African press utilized here for comparative purposes employed news forms that appealed to the status quo but contrasted sharply with the appeals found in Western news reports. Within this context, the news appeal reinforced the perception that news reports emanating from Western countries—especially about the African origin of AIDS and the historical exploitations of the colonial period--still regarded Africa as inferior. Thus, the West used the AIDS pandemic as a means to continue its imperialistic domination of Africa by highlighting the negativity long associated with the continent.

This news form, called Appeal to Pan-Africanism and discussed later in this Chapter, seeks to discredit news report from Western

countries, and more importantly, seeks to create the perception that Africa has always been a victim of false accusations and misinterpretations by Westerners. By reinforcing these notions, the appeal creates resistance among audience members to what is generally accepted as falsehood in Western news reports and by extension, a resistance to socio-cultural, economic and political exploitation and imperialism.

These are news forms that seek to promote certain ideas that may reflect the social needs of some individuals, groups, or culture. Within this context, this it serves as a framework for interpreting text or images which, in turn, organizes audience attitudes toward issues or events. Therefore, this appeal dimension does not present news as a matter of truth or reality but rather, news is presented in a slant that is integrated into the ideological system of the reporter and audience. Hence, audience perceptions or readings of the text or image are structured so that they will not regard the report as "simply reporting the facts as they were." Rather, the audience's interpretation of the relevance of the overall text would be based on ideological or group values that are generally accepted by a majority in society.

This news form may also rely on the assumption of cultural superiority and ethnocentrism in the context of international communication to convey and reinforce ideological values. This is achieved, as Bass has observed, through the use of protonarrative which entails the use of metonyms with some negative human quality to narrate a story. For instance, the equation of “savagery” or “barbarism” with the “jungle,” “unnatural desire” with the “tropics,” “unforgiving” and “brutal” with “the desert,” etc. Within this context, attempts by critical voices to counter such narrative posture in the mainstream media are muted, ridiculed or framed as threats to society.

Therefore, by failing to present opposing or alternative points of view from the international community, the descriptions of events within this news form are more likely to be accepted as the truth by audiences. Another example of this news form would be appeals to the ideology of democratic principles. For instance, the US invasion of Panama in 1989 was reported to be based on the need to “restore democracy” in that country. However, Panama had never been a democracy prior to the invasion. This significant

piece of information was never reported in the US mainstream media.

News within this context reinforced or supported the government's position thereby making it difficult for oppositional voices in the international community--such as a UN General Assembly's resolution that condemned the invasion--to be heard. Similarly, news of the US invasion of Granada and the war with Iraq are examples where this news appeal was utilized by the mainstream media to mobilize public support and lessen critical discourse of US foreign policy in these regions.

Within the Western press therefore, other news forms in addition to those identified by Barton and confirmed by the analysis above, emerge as the findings of this research suggest.

These include:

a). Appeals to Conventional Conception

Within this appeal dimension, news is oversimplified and the subjects of the news report lack individuality. News in this form relies on the media forming or reinforcing stereotypes and symbols concerning particular incidents. As a result, certain groups are associated with stereotypical activities or events. The media within

this appeal framework has the ability to create and instill particular attitudes in audiences toward certain groups within society.

Examples of this news form are manifested in the generalized headlines such as these found by Konotey-Ahulu (1987) regarding AIDS in Africa:

Zambia expects to have to care for 6000 infants with AIDS in 1987: compare that with under 400 in the U.S. since AIDS first arrived.

In one Central African country, so many people have been dying of AIDS that the government is talking of the need to curtail the tradition of family funerals.

In late 1995, one large bank in Kinsasha has half of its staff sick with AIDS. (Panos Institute, 1986).

The deadly disease AIDS is now out of control in black Africa that whole nations of people are doomed, leaving vast areas of now populated land devoid of single living person within the next ten years (*Sunday Express*, Nov. 23, 1986).

There are reports from Africa of tens of thousands dying from AIDS. (BBC World Service, April 3, 1987)

Sickening of a continent - AIDS in Africa. (Guardian Feb. 5, 1987).

Similarly, some of the headlines of the Western news materials used here also reflect this type of news form. For instance, the series of news stories in The Time of London entitled "Africa's New Agony"

– ‘new’ serving as a reminder to audiences of previous agonies, and thereby reinforcing the negative stereotype that audiences may have about the continent. “I am reminded of what I often heard on my first trip: Africa always offers something *new*. And indeed, a *new* menace, AIDS, confronts much of the continent now,” wrote Dr. Lawrence K. Altman for The New York Times ; or The New York Times series entitled “AIDS in Africa: A Killer Rages On – A Continent’s Agony.”

Headlines within this context are significant because they summarize the content of the text. In short, they are the gist of the story. According to Van Dijk, given their semantic, cognitive, and ideological relevance in processes of communication for news topics about “race,” headlines have the ability to bias audiences because they summarize, what, according to the journalist, is the most important aspect of a story.

This summary by the journalist implies an opinion, or a specific perspective on the event. This is strategically used by audiences to construct the overall meaning of the rest of the text before the text is actually read. Furthermore, the information in the headline is the information that is best recalled by the readers and

therefore, serves an important function in influencing the use readers will make of this information on later occasions (Schwarz and Flemmer, 1881; van Dijk and Kintsch, 1983). Therefore, when the majority of headlines about Africa in general are negative, the audience's perception of the continent is likely to be negative, stereotyped or exaggerated. This is especially so when one considers the fact that ethnic or cultural stereotypes and prejudices are not innate. They are learned through language and dialogue with others, as well as by interpreting the meaning of text and images. And, the press or media play a significant role in the reproduction process.

As shown above, headlines of news from Africa tend to be more negative than positive. For instance, the transition to a democratic government in Nigeria after four decades of military dictatorship barely made it in the news here in the US. However, there was significantly more coverage dedicated to the famine in Ethiopia or the mass killings of a religious cult in Uganda.

Negative headlines, in addition to other factors mentioned here, reinforce negative conventional conceptions that audiences may already have. Thus, audiences may choose to read or not to

read a text based on how “catchy” the headlines are. Therefore, headlines that convey the death of millions of Africans from AIDS are more likely to attract an audience’s attention than one which informs readers of 100 cases of AIDS in Ivory Coast.

b). Appeals to Morality

In this news form, the media act in establishing certain concepts of deviance. This is achieved by framing news issues in terms of guilt and innocence, morality and immorality. To this end, emphases in news stories are based on identifying the negative characteristics that defines the deviant group. Similarly, legislative solutions as well as social sanctions directed against the target deviant group are articulated or proposed in this news form. An example would be the suggestion that individuals who have tested positive for the virus that causes AIDS be suspended or dismissed from their jobs. In this case, it was falsely reasoned that infected individuals were a threat to public health in general.

The ability of the press to utilize a news form that specifically appeals to the morality of its audience can be powerful enough to affect public policy against the perceived deviant group. In this

context, the deviant group is often excluded from public discourse concerning the issue, and are thus denied constructive input in the outcome of the final policy.

For the African press, two inter-related appeals can be identified. These are:

a). **Appeals to Pan-Africanism**

This news form is rooted in the colonial era when Africans sought to be independent from the colonial powers. News in this form highlights the continuing Western domination of Africa with the aim of creating resistance either on an individual level or as a group. Within this context, this news form serves to rally its audience to celebrate the African perspective of events. An example of this kind of news form is illustrated in the following report on the issue of the origin of AIDS by Philip Ochieng, a leading Kenyan columnist for New African;

The British Government's threat to subject visitors from certain African countries to "screening" against AIDS is remarkable in its disregard for the consequences. There was a time when Britain could propose such a blatantly discriminatory program and get away with it – but that time has long past ...

What is suggested in Britain's latest move is that these countries have not only the biggest number on AIDS cases in the world but that the disease itself originated from here.

Why is it that we never heard of AIDS or anything approaching it until it appeared in the US and Europe? Why is it that those areas of Africa most in contact with Europeans and Americans over the past 15 years are the worst affected by AIDS? What is the only logical conclusion to draw? Again the methods used to determine the spread of AIDS in the West and in Africa are vastly different. In the West, the emphasis is on actual cases reported and projections based on lifestyles. In Africa, a few people mostly prostitutes, are rounded up and subjected to screening. Whenever AIDS *antibodies* are discovered, the medical boffins juggle their calculators and come up with figures that suggest that half of the entire population is suffering from AIDS! If the same system of calculation was applied to California, the result might well indicate that every citizen there had not only contracted AIDS but had died from it!

It seems to me that the West was once again looking for a whipping boy when AIDS first emerged and Africa, as usual, was convenient. Unfortunately for the West, this line will no longer wash in Africa. In fact Africa and other Third World countries should think twice before allowing Europeans and Americans past their borders. If Britain is really concerned about the spread of AIDS, then it should screen its own citizens before allowing them to depart to other countries lest they carry their deadly virus with them.

To single out Central African countries as potential AIDS carriers on the flimsiest of evidence is nothing but racism. It is only another attempt to bar the entry of colored immigrants into Britain. It comes in the wake of visa impositions on the black commonwealth countries.

Any selective war on AIDS especially when it is couched in terms which smack of racism can only anger other parts of the world, making co-operation impossible, and thus enhancing the survival chances of this new and deadly disease. (p. 25).

While rejecting the Western perspective of events surrounding the origin of AIDS in Africa, the author above also takes an offensive

posture by reminding audiences of previous exploitative behavior by the British, and how this must not be allowed to happen now. Furthermore he urges African nations to screen European migrants for the AIDS virus before allowing them entry into their countries.

b). Appeals to Distorted International Social Formation

This news form seeks to call attention to the negative things that the West does to non-Westerners such as exploitation, blame, and ridicule. News in this form is framed in the context of insider/outsider; for instance, the insider being the West, while the outsider is Africa. This news appeal questions the credibility of the insiders and seeks to invoke doubt or suspicion in audiences concerning the intentions of the West. An example of this news form in regards to the origin of the AIDS virus is manifested in this report by Yinka Adeyemi, the science and health correspondence for the Nigerian Weekly Concord. He wrote:

To the average European researcher in virus cancer, the notion that Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) has its origin in Africa is now a scientific fact ... Yet, arguments by such scientist whose minds are made up about the African connection are replete with fundamental loopholes and illogicalities that render them not plausible.

It is argued for instance that the 'African connection' school is guilty of bias. Critics ask: What prompted the researchers to go to Zaire and Kigali and not New York or San Francisco and many other Scandinavian cities – where the outbreak of AIDS is equally alarming? Besides, says Wemimo Benson of the Lagos University teaching hospital, it amounts to saying nothing if the researchers went to cities where a disease is generally believed to be endemic, and based on certain symptoms, conclude that such a disease is rampant in those cities. Critics also say that it is very likely that scientists who subscribe to the 'African connection' theory may have inadvertently mistaken AIDS symptoms for other diseases exhibiting similar symptoms ... malaria fever, pneumonia and tuberculosis.

A common notion which cuts through the reasoning of most Western scientists is that a visit should be made to Africa before any researcher concludes whether the disease is new. For instance, De Cock wrote that Ebola, Marburg virus and lassa fever were all initially thought to be new diseases when they first surfaced "but all of them turned out to have been endemic in Africa"

There are even more offensive notions ... Gallo who first identified the AIDS-causing virus in man, said at the Dakar conference: "Viruses closely related to HTLV, but not distinct from it, have been isolated from Old World monkeys. This and other facts led us to propose that the ancestral origin of HTLV is in Africa.

Comments such as this immediately raise problems because of the socio-historic implications. To the ordinary man, Gallo will be understood as saying that: "We (European scientists) conclude that AIDS originated from Africa because we found AIDS virus in monkeys, and Africans are closer to monkeys."(p. 46 - 47)

This correspondent argued that African scientists should counteract Western AIDS research, and felt that they had been insufficiently critical:

The task of such research falls on African scientists and particularly the Scientific and Technical commission of the Organization of African Unity ... Unfortunately, few have dared to challenge the conclusion of European scientists with respect to the origin of AIDS. (p. 47).

As stated earlier, the goal of this news form is to create a sense of doubt in the audience, especially when the issue under consideration such as the origin of AIDS has the potential to further stigmatize Africans. Within this context, this news forms invokes topics such as the colonial past and the imperial present to illustrate the continual perpetuation of Western dominance over Africa.

Overall, the news forms identified here for the Western and African presses suggests a bi-polar struggle between these regions that highlights the need for each to promote or persuasively advance its interpretations of the AIDS issue to a global audience. The Westerners, on one hand, accuse Africans of denying the “high” prevalence of the AIDS pandemic in the continent; Africans, on the other hand, accuse Westerners of racism and imperialism. However, accusations from both sides are over-simplified and, to a large extent, preclude constructive discourse on the prevention of the worldwide spread of the AIDS pandemic.

As stated earlier, cultural realities play a significant role in the way news is constructed and how audiences interpret news reports. As important as this observation may be, culture in itself is not a category covered by the media. The focus within this context is usually on problematic cultural differences and deviance, and those practices of other groups that are thought to cause difficulties for the dominant group. Hence, the dominant culture is never problematized or effectively challenged because it is presupposed.

Suggestions for Improving News Coverage of Pandemics

How can we improve coverage to avoid distortion? HIV/AIDS presents a unique opportunity to examine the role played by the press in informing or misinforming the public about a public health issue. This research suggests that both the Western and African presses misinformed their audiences in the early stages of the pandemic, and some continue the misinformation even in the present. For example in a January 7, 2000 edition of Newsweek magazine, Jeffrey Bartholet in an article entitled, "The Plague Years," wrote:

In a continent already ravaged by wars and mired in poverty, AIDS is wiping out much of a generation. Families are being

destroyed, skilled workers cut down. The disease began in Africa and spread, in part, because of social instability – via migrant workers, refugees and women who had few other means to support themselves other than prostitution...Now the disease sows further instability that, in turn, ensures the kind of desperate conditions where AIDS flourishes (p.34).

This study examined the reporting of HIV/AIDS in the period (1985 – 1990) when reporting such as the one above could have been excused because of the newness of the pandemic which may suggest that journalist were not adequately informed and therefore make blunders; However, it is evident that this sort of misinformation continues in some Western press in the year 2000. Again, consider this report filed by Henri E. Cauvin for the June 11, 2000 edition of The New York Times on the debate in South Africa regarding if gay men should donate blood. In a section of this report, Cauvin writes about the risk factors for contracting HIV, according to him, “One of those risk factors is male-to-male sex, ... Others include using intravenous drugs, having sex with prostitutes, and *traveling through Africa*” (p.12). Are we to seriously believe that a simple travel to Africa means that one would automatically contract HIV? Of course not!

The African press reactions were prompted by reports in the Western press such as the ones above that accused Africa and

Africans as source and carriers of the virus that causes AIDS. A closer examination of the Bartholet's article reveal similar news slant that Western writers have utilized in their description of AIDS and its effects in Africa. He writes quite confidently that AIDS originated in Africa even as most scientists have agreed that the origin of the disease is unknown. Additionally, he made a point by reminding his audience about how war ravaged and poor the continent is.

This sort of reporting highlights a case of cultural insensitivity which undeniably would generate a defensive response from most Africans. There is a recognition here that a large number of existing press practices and standards even when followed faithfully, have the tendency to produce unfortunate press coverage of events like AIDS. The results are that news reports may disproportionately place at risk only a small portion of the population, that may not easily capture daily breaking events, that may present extraordinarily high possibility of inflammatory interpretation, and that may involve areas of scientific knowledge not easily understood or conveyed by those without requisite scientific knowledge. (Schauer,1991).

Therefore, to begin to answer the question posed above, the press, first and foremost, need reporters that are sensitive to cultures other than theirs. This suggestion may seem like a mountainous task but can be achieved through primarily, what future media and press practitioners are taught from high school and especially in a university setting. In short, there ought to be a reconceptualization of curriculum and pedagogy. My experience from teaching upper level international communications courses has shown me that most students are highly receptive to information about other cultures; unfortunately, very few courses are designed to expose students to foreign cultures thereby making it difficult for them to be sensitive and appreciative of others that may be different. The study abroad programs at universities need to be expanded to include more developing countries instead of the tendency to concentrate majority of these programs in Western Europe and Japan. Within this context, media literacy should be emphasized, and audiences taught to be critical readers of media messages.

Another way that distortion of information in the press can be avoided is for publishers to hire or employ correspondents from

within the local area under examination, or individuals with specialized knowledge of the area.

This practice may facilitate a decrease in *spotty* information, in other words, decrease in points of information concerning events without any accompanying in-depth analysis regarding their background and issues involved. For example, majority of the leading stories about AIDS in Africa in the Western press examined here began with descriptions of a continent that is "ravaged by war," "mired in poverty," and "lacked social stability," etc.

However, questions, whose answers may reveal the source of these social ill are seldom asked or explored in news reports. For example, the power vacuum left by European colonists resulted in power struggle amongst ethnic groups which often led to civil wars. Similarly, the cold war between the West and the East contributed immensely to the social disintegration of some African societies such as those in Angola, Ethiopia, Somalia, Liberia, Zaire, etc. In this instance, the two super powers supplied arms to African governments or groups that were loyal to either the communist or capitalist bloc.

Within this context, the looting of national treasuries by despots or dictators in the continent was accepted by both sides of the ideological conflict, as long as either side got what they wanted. The effects of this scheme is still felt today because the guns supplied by the Americans and the Soviets did not disappear with the end of the cold war; and monies stolen in billions of dollars have not been returned back to their countries of origin – they are mainly deposited in Western European and American banks.

With this kind of contextual information, one may begin to see the causes of much highlighted social ills in Africa which indeed have contributed to what Bartholet described as “the kind of desperate conditions where AIDS flourishes.” Detailed analyses therefore are important to understanding the whole story behind issues. Within this framework, indigenous correspondents it seems, would be in better positions to provide detailed *contextual* information because they have the conceptual tools and structural insights to analyze events more accurately in their societies than foreigners.

However, in order to fully understand why news is reported from one perspective or the other, one must consider the power

structure within news organizations. As shown here and elsewhere (see Altschull, 1994), most modern media are profit oriented enterprises and therefore serve the interest of those that own them through preserving and defending the dominant ideology or the status quo. Because the owners of the media are primarily interested in making profits from their investments, information or news are structured to please advertisers and other capitalist interest. Within this context, dissenting or critical voices are tolerated to an extent to give the illusion of a democratic society where all have the right to speak and write freely; however, dissenting and criticisms are effectively silenced or ridiculed in the main stream media when they pose a real threat to the status quo.

Therefore, to effectively change how news is reported so that it serves the public need, structural and organizational changes must be made in news organizations. This proposition may seem difficult considering the recent consolidation of media outlets in the hands of few trans-national corporations whose ultimate goals are to make profit, and entrenched media routines. However, to counter this trend, there need to be more publicly funded media, and mixture of private and public media whose goals are not entirely

directed at making profits. Similarly, there should be support and recognition of media in developing countries, and the unique role they play in their societies.

Additionally, Cook (1991) has suggested other steps that journalists should take in order to avoid the misrepresentation in news reports about pandemics such as AIDS. Although Cook's suggestions are primarily directed at American journalists, they can as well apply to journalists within an international communications context especially since "globalization" or as some would argue "Americanization" implies the adoption of Anglo-American press model in new democracies around the world. I have briefly summarized the main points of Cook's proposals below.

The first advice that Cook gives is for journalists to realize that even the "general audience" can use – and be interested in – news that is neither about them nor reported from or toward their supposed perspective. The media in within this context, must resist the pressure of "reporting what the public wants to hear" – especially if there is not sufficient proof of accuracy in the story. Commenting on an incident in which a husband accused a black robber of murdering his wife in Boston for instance, Ed Siegel,

television critic for the Boston Globe, wrote "The media fell into public pandering...The general, i.e., white, public wanted saturation coverage of the murder of a white couple and they got it. The general public does not want saturation coverage of the murder of a black person, unless it's a child, and they don't get it." (p. 69, in Cook, 1991). Similarly, the Susan Smith story discussed earlier is another example of the media bowing to public pressure. It is very significant therefore, that the media should start recognizing the diversity of its audience and the variety of its interests with an appropriate plethora of topics, storylines, sources and conclusions. It is obvious that a dynamic relationship exists between the public and the press, however, in the instances cited above and in reporting the issue of AIDS, the press should serve its social responsibility role by better informing the public rather than reinforcing the public's negatively held stereotypes.

Secondly, Cook points out that "Getting all sides of the story means that reporting cannot stop with experts. Experts have no lock on the truth, and one should not treat scientific and medical sources as Delphic oracles" (p.6). This observation is significant because as shown here, there is a tendency for journalists to rely on "experts"

and the statistics that are brought forth to substantiate claims that often a time fall short of the truth. For instance, if the early projections of the spread of AIDS in Africa became a reality, the continent's population would have been wiped out completely. This is not to deny that there are high incidences of the pandemic in some parts of the continent. However, the scientific predictions in the early stages of AIDS outbreak in Africa, which journalists regarded as undeniable evidence of fact, and thus, presented these evidence as the truth were well off the mark.

This point supports critical observations by others (Nelkin, 1986; Burnham, 1987, Dornan, 1990) suggesting that the press, as revealed by this research, frequently oversimplify, dramatize, and sensationalize science news.

In order to avoid these distortions in science news, journalists must approach science sources with skepticism, and be critical of the scientific facts with which they are provided. Furthermore, journalists reporting on epidemics such as AIDS must seek variety of voices on the issue to ensure that they have not prematurely closed off public discourse, and to allow different kinds of expertise to better inform the discussion.

The third suggestion that Cook makes is for journalists not to assume that telling “both sides” of the story is responsible journalism, particularly if one side is vivid and the other is not. Within this context, journalists must realize the futility of striving to be objective, and strive to provide balanced accounts. However, absolute balance may be difficult to attain unless one subscribes to the idea of two sides of a story; nonetheless, journalists need to be more cautious about whether both sides deserve equal attention.

Additionally, the press in developing countries such as Kenya should strive not to be pawns to the dictates of their government officials especially if these officials are not fully informed on the issue at hand. There is a tendency that politicians often will politicize already volatile issues such as AIDS in order to gain political grounds while appearing to resist Western domination. This type of posture by politicians make it almost impossible to have a frank public discourse of the issue in the press.

Within the context of a public health issue such as AIDS, dwelling on the negative characterization of Africans and the effects of the disease on the continent in the Western media removes from the more essential task of informing and educating the public about

how to better protect itself from the disease; and this should be a goal for any press whether developed or developing.

Suggestions For Future Research.

The ongoing discourse about AIDS as international news has shown that culture plays a significant role in how the public perceives information from the media. Future investigators may look into the processes of stereotype formation across cultures and the role that the media or press plays in creating or reinforcing these stereotypes. Also, what contributory role, if any, have the media or the press played in reversing some negatively held beliefs about those generally regarded as being on the margin. Finally, as shown here and elsewhere, journalists necessarily depend on sources to help provide them with information or create events that become news. Further research that explores how these sources are used and which sources are called upon is essential to the overall understanding of news gathering and the making of news.

Conclusions.

The mass media play a significant role in how the public perceives several issues. With regards to the AIDS pandemic, twenty years after the first diagnosis was made, there is still the tendency in the mass media in the West especially to portray AIDS as a black issue simply because there are more individuals infected with the virus in the African continent than any other continent. It should be noted that India with an infected population of four million people has the highest infectious rate than any country in the world (ABC News). Nonetheless, to define AIDS as a black or African issue in the media and elsewhere, is to misunderstand both the nature and the magnitude of what needs to be done.

On an optimistic side regarding prevention and possible cure, HIV/AIDS has been recognized as a threat to the global community by its inclusion on the top of the agenda of the United Nations security council. To this end, US ambassador to the UN Richard Halbrooke noted in a January 2000 address to the UN general assembly that "The spread of this disease could not be contained in

Africa, and the destruction of Africa from AIDS will not be limited to the continent. If we do not work with the Africans themselves to address these problems, we will have to deal with them later when they will get more dangerous and more expensive.”

Furthermore, President Clinton has identified AIDS as a threat to the national security of the United States. Within this context, the administration has refused by a presidential executive order to enforce drug patents in AIDS afflicted countries. This in turn has prompted some large drug companies to promise discounts on AIDS drugs in developing countries. This action, it should be noted, is intended to prevent the manufacture of cheap imitation drugs that could cost these firms billions of dollars in revenue. Regardless, it is a step in the right direction as the availability of AIDS drugs will prolong lives of infected individuals.

The media can also play a major role by creating awareness and by seeking public political support for policies such as those initiated by the Clinton administration recently, and those that United Nations agencies have been carrying out over the years.

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