

A STUDY OF PRINT MEDIA COVERAGE OF AIDS
VICTIMS AND VIRUS CARRIERS COMPARED
WITH GOVERNMENT AIDS STATISTICS

By

ALAN GASPAR NYITRAY

Bachelor of Science in Arts and Sciences

Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma

1984

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
July, 1988

Thesis
1988
1994s
cop.2

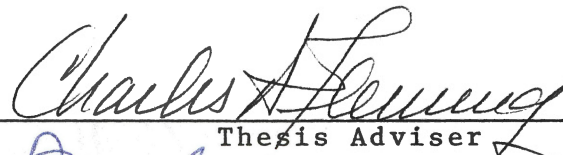


If the freedom of the press is freighted with the responsibility of providing the current intelligence needed by a free society, we have to discover what a free society requires. Its requirements in America today are greater in variety, quantity, and quality than those of any previous society in any age. They are the requirements of a self-governing republic of continental size, whose doings have become, within a generation, matters of common concern in new and important ways.

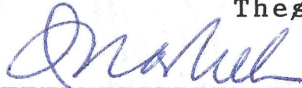
--The Commission on the Freedom of the Press

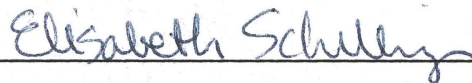
A STUDY OF PRINT MEDIA COVERAGE OF AIDS
VICTIMS AND VIRUS CARRIERS COMPARED
WITH GOVERNMENT AIDS STATISTICS

Thesis Approved:



Thesis Adviser







Dean of the Graduate College

PREFACE

Why is there so much anxiety today about Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome? Nine out of ten people who have the disease or have been infected by the virus are homosexuals or intravenous drug users. In addition, government health experts say these groups will comprise the vast majority of people with AIDS well into the 1990's.

Certainly, AIDS is a terrifying disease that should raise concern among health conscious people. But why has genuine public concern escalated to a level of anxiety that prompts a large segment of society to call for a quarantine of AIDS victims and virus carriers even though all evidence indicates the disease is not passed through casual contact?

Part of the answer to these questions surely lies in the kinds of information about AIDS delivered to the public by the mass media. Unless we know people or have friends who have the disease, the only picture we get of AIDS is what we read, see, and hear from the mass media.

These were the questions and tentative answers that went through my mind as I began this study.

Much gratitude and many thanks go to all the people at Oklahoma State University who helped refine my study to make it more meaningful. If gratitude and thanks have finite quantities, then three of the largest portions would go to

Dr. Gregory Stefaniak, Dr. Charles A. Fleming, and Lisa Schillinger. Dr. Stefaniak gave me the encouragement to begin this study by convincing me that I had a good idea. Day after day, Dr. Fleming was available for the myriad of questions I had. And Ms. Schillinger gave me reassurance and optimism that helped me finish this project and many others.

Many thanks go to Jimmie D. Harris, Jr. for his patience and opinions.

But the most thanks go to my parents, Stephen and Eva. They inspired me to do anything I wanted, as long as I did it well.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background.....	1
The Purpose.....	2
The Objectives.....	5
Statement of Problem.....	6
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	9
Introduction.....	9
Criticism of Media AIDS Reporting.....	10
Public Opinion and Knowledge of AIDS.....	13
Science and Health Communication.....	14
The Historical Perspective.....	15
Media Accountability and Responsibility.....	16
III. METHODOLOGY.....	22
Selection of Samples.....	22
Criteria for Selection of Articles.....	24
Content Analysis.....	26
Categorical Variables.....	26
The Categories and Coding Process.....	27
Risk Groups of Individuals.....	27
Explicit Statistical References.....	30
Hypotheses.....	31
Constraints.....	32
Testing of Hypotheses.....	34
Reliability.....	35
Pretest.....	36
IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	44
Background.....	44
Hypotheses Tested.....	45
Description of Sample.....	45
Description of Newspaper Content.....	53
Comparison of Newspapers.....	61
Description of Newsmagazine Content....	62
Comparison of Newsmagazines.....	70
Comparison of Newspapers With Newsmagazines.....	71

Chapter	Page
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	75
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	85
APPENDICES.....	89
APPENDIX A - CODING SHEETS.....	90
APPENDIX B - PIE CHARTS.....	94
APPENDIX C - QUESTIONS TO THE EDITORS.....	99

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. Number of Articles Randomly Selected From the <u>New York Times</u> During the Sample Period.	47
II. Number of Articles Randomly Selected From the <u>Washington Post</u> During the Sample Period.	48
III. Number of Articles Randomly Selected From the <u>Daily Oklahoman</u> During the Sample Period.	49
IV. Number of Articles Found in <u>Time</u> Magazine During the Sample Period.	50
V. Number of Articles Found in <u>Newsweek</u> Magazine During the Sample Period	51
VI. Number of Articles Found in <u>U.S. News & World Report</u> Magazine During the Sample Period	52
VII. Number of AIDS Stories and References Found in the Newspaper Sample	54
VIII. Frequency of References With and Without Risk Group Mentioned in Each Newspaper, in Percent	57
IX. Frequency of References With Risk Group Mentioned for Each Newspaper, in Percent	58
X. Number of Statistical References in Newspapers to the Two Highest Risk Groups: Homosexual Men and Intravenous Drug Users.	60
XI. Number of AIDS Stories and References Found in the Newsmagazine Sample.	63
XII. Frequency of References With and Without Risk Group Mentioned in Each Newsmagazine, in Percent.	66

Table	Page
XIII. Frequency of References With Risk Group Mentioned for Each Newsmagazine, in Percent.	67
XIV. Number of Statistical References in Newsmagazines to the Two Highest Risk Groups: Homosexual Men and Intravenous Drug Users.	69
XV. Frequency of References With Risk Group Mentioned in Print Media Sample, in Percent.	73

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Number of AIDS Stories in <u>New York Times</u> in Pretest Sample.	40
2. Number of AIDS Stories in <u>Washington Post</u> in Pretest Sample.	41
3. Number of AIDS Stories in <u>Daily Oklahoman</u> in Pretest Sample.	42
4. Frequency of AIDS Risk Groups Reported in U.S.	95
5. Frequency of AIDS Risk Groups Reported in Newspapers	96
6. Frequency of AIDS Risk Groups Reported in Newsmagazines.	97
7. Frequency of AIDS Risk Groups Reported in Print Media.	98

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome is a disease attacking mostly homosexuals and intravenous drug users. The Centers for Disease Control, the United States government's disease monitoring agency, reports that more than 30,000 people with AIDS have died since 1981.¹ Of that number, 72 percent have been homosexual men and another 16 percent have been intravenous drug users.²

In addition to those already diagnosed, at least 1 to 1.5 million people are estimated to be infected with the virus but show no signs of the disease.³ Of this group, a large majority acquired the virus as a result of homosexual sexual encounters.⁴ The disease is primarily spread by sex and by virus infected needles used by I.V. drug users.⁵

The future course of AIDS has been studied by government health organizations. Their predictions reveal substantial increases in the number of people who will contract the disease or be infected by the virus in the next four years:

By the end of 1991 there will have been a cumulative total of more than 270,000

cases of AIDS in the United States, with more than 74,000 of those occurring in 1991 alone.

By the end of 1991 there will have been a cumulative total of more than 179,000 deaths from AIDS in the United States, with 54,000 of those occurring in 1991 alone.

The vast majority of AIDS cases will continue to come from the currently recognized high-risk groups.⁶

As yet, there is no cure for the disease. While at least one drug, AZT (azidothymidine), has shown promise in prolonging the lives of some people with AIDS,⁷ public health officials say no cure or vaccine for the disease should be expected before the next century.⁸

To stop the spread of the AIDS virus, public education will be the most effective means until medical treatment for the disease advances. The Public Health Service says the media will have to take a vital role in educating the public, as if this were "a life or death situation."⁹

This short introduction on the present and expected future course of AIDS is an attempt to introduce to the reader the magnitude of the threat that AIDS poses. It is also a preamble to pressing questions about the media's role in providing comprehensive and accurate information to the public.

The Purpose

There is no dispute that the mass media play a role in health promotion and disease prevention campaigns. The

question for health communicators is not whether health information delivered by the mass media has an effect; rather, the question is how much success have health campaigns in the mass media had? Similarly, mass media involvement in the reporting of the disease AIDS has an effect. But is the media message having the desired effect of providing crucial and accurate information to help control the disease?

The media continue to play a central role in supplying information and misinformation to the public about AIDS. While there have been no national surveys that reveal where the general public gets most of its AIDS information, numerous studies confirm that after high school, a majority of the public gets its information about science issues from the mass media.¹⁰ One localized survey of gay men in San Francisco does give us a clear answer of where many of these men get their AIDS information. A plurality of survey respondents said they looked to the print media for their AIDS information.¹¹

No matter where other sectors of the general population have received their AIDS information, public response to the epidemic has been characterized by a high level of anxiety. Considering the seriousness of the disease, public concern is warranted and needed. But have the media exaggerated the AIDS threat and fueled public fear?

The media are often guilty of reporting singular events as if they were not connected to larger issues that surround the events. Instead of painting comprehensive pictures of

issues that give the public a fuller understanding of the issues, the media focus on isolated events:

The most obvious failing of television news is the inevitable distortion that grows from looking at a slice of life in a way that suggests that one is seeing the whole of it. It is a failing that television shares with the other media...¹²

It is questionable whether the public can homogenize disparate news events so that an accurate and inclusive representation of an issue is realized.¹³

Since readers could be confused by competing messages, it is important that reporters present an accurate and comprehensive representation of an issue. What picture of AIDS has the media been painting? Because of the lack of research aimed at answering this question, an analysis of the print media's presentation of AIDS victims and virus carriers was warranted. This study was designed to accomplish two broad purposes: (1) to contribute to the understanding of how the print media are reporting the AIDS epidemic and (2) to suggest ways in which the media can present a more inclusive picture of AIDS that may help stem public anxiety toward the disease.

This twofold purpose was accomplished by a content analysis of AIDS stories over a two-year period in three newspapers and three newsmagazines: the New York Times, Washington Post, Daily Oklahoman, Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report. Content analysis is explained by McCombs, Shaw, and Grey as:

...an observation technique designed to

take a sample of language (or paintings or music) and analyze that language for the message it carries. The goal is to be able to infer from objective, hard evidence what the sender of the message really means or to obtain some idea of the effect the sender intends.¹⁴

The Objectives

The purposes of this study were accomplished by focusing on how six publications covered the AIDS issue. The print coverage was then compared to statistics of the AIDS epidemic issued by government health agencies.

This study could have concentrated on simply reporting an account of the voluminous AIDS coverage by the media. A descriptive effort would not have been without merit. Extensive examination of the media handling of the AIDS epidemic is needed. However, critical examinations of the AIDS media message are also required. This study examines the AIDS message content in light of government statistics that reveal which groups are bearing the brunt of this disease. An historical analysis of this type explores the media's AIDS reporting as compared with the reality of the AIDS epidemic.

Specifically, the objectives of this study were to determine:

(a) Which risk groups of AIDS victims and virus carriers dominated print media coverage.

(b) How much statistical information about the victims of the disease was the media reporting.

(c) With respect to the first two

objectives, what differences occurred in the coverage of the "elite" newspapers and the Daily Oklahoman.

(d)With respect to the first two objectives, what differences occurred in the coverage of the newsmagazines and the newspapers.

(e)What kind of reporting could present a more comprehensive and accurate picture of AIDS.

Statement of Problem

The problem can be stated: What was the relationship between the coverage of AIDS victims and virus carriers in the New York Times, Washington Post, Daily Oklahoman, Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report and the reality of the epidemic as reported by government health agencies?

This chapter presented questions central to the print media's coverage of the AIDS epidemic. Chapter II reviews academic research and popular literature relevant to these questions.

Chapter III outlines the method this study uses to answer questions about the print media's role in AIDS news coverage. Chapter IV describes the study's findings. And Chapter V includes a discussion of the findings and presents recommendations for media coverage of AIDS.

END NOTES

¹ AIDS, per se, does not kill people. However, it leaves the body vulnerable to other opportunistic infections that can result in death. Whenever this study says "people die of AIDS," it is understood that other infections, and not AIDS, cause death.

² Oklahoma, Department of Health, Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome Monthly Surveillance Report (AIDS Cases Reported to the Centers for Disease Control), by Dan Cameron, Oklahoma City, 30 November 1987, p. 1.

³ National Academy of Sciences, Institute of Medicine, Confronting AIDS: Directions for Public Health, Health Care, and Research (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1986), p. 85.

⁴ National Academy of Sciences, p. 89.

⁵ National Academy of Sciences, p. 190.

⁶ National Academy of Sciences, p. 8.

⁷ Eric Eckholm, "AIDS Test Drug Prolongs Lives In Some Cases: Wider Availability Set but Pill Is Not A Cure," New York Times, 20 September 1986, p. A1.

⁸ Rob Martindale, "CDC Reports Dramatic Increase in AIDS Cases," Tulsa World, 5 November 1987, p. 1.

⁹ National Academy of Sciences, p. 112.

¹⁰ Sharon M. Friedman, Sharon Dunwoody, and Carol L. Rogers, eds., Scientists and Journalists: Reporting Science as News (New York: The Free Press, 1986), p. xi.

¹¹ A Report On Designing an Effective AIDS Prevention Campaign Strategy for San Francisco: Results from the First Probability Sample of an Urban Gay Male Community. San Francisco: Research and Decisions Corporation, 1984, p. 113.

¹² William L. Rivers, Wilbur Schramm and Clifford G. Christians, Responsibility in Mass Communications, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1980), p. 158.

¹³ Maxwell McCombs, Donald Lewis Shaw and Davis Grey, Handbook of Reporting Methods (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976), pp. 4-5.

¹⁴ McCombs, Shaw, and Grey, p. 141.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

On June 5, 1981, the first government report of a new disease among homosexual men was published in the Centers for Disease Control Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.¹ The title of the published report, "Pneumocystis Pneumonia-Los Angeles," was purposely worded by CDC employees to exclude the word homosexual or gay. CDC staffers paid attention to this wording of the title for two reasons: they did not want to offend the sensitivities of the gay community, and they did not want to inflame anti-gay prejudice in the general public by announcing an epidemic among homosexual men. This first government report of AIDS was the opening salvo of attempts by the mass media to report AIDS not only as a medical problem, but also as a disease that affected various other groups in decidedly non-medical ways.²

The first AIDS³ reports in the popular mass media occurred later in the summer of 1981. And by the end of 1981, Time and Newsweek had run their first major stories on AIDS.⁴

The Wall Street Journal published its first article on

the new disease in February 1982. A Journal reporter could not convince his editors to run a story on AIDS in 1981. But the next year, an AIDS story appeared in this newspaper under the headline, "New, Often-Fatal Illness in Homosexuals Turns Up in Women, Heterosexual Males."⁵ Apparently, editors felt the disease, which had already killed about a hundred people, now appealed to a larger segment of their readership.

This short introduction to the beginning of popular press coverage of AIDS did not include coverage of the disease in the gay press. In fact, the first signs of the disease were reported in the gay press even before the initial medical article in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Not too long before the government report, a Manhattan gay newspaper, the New York Native, published an article about a strain of pneumonia rumored to be killing homosexual men in New York City.⁶

Criticism of Media AIDS Reporting

The print medium has been accused of omission, inaccuracy, sensationalism, and prudish editing in its coverage of the AIDS epidemic. These criticisms have come largely from members of the media.

A reluctance to mention the sexual modes of transmission of the AIDS virus was examined by a study commissioned by the Washington Journalism Review:

In 1983 the New York Times offered little

specific explanation as to how AIDS was sexually transmitted...The Los Angeles Times' coverage in this period also chose the safety of ambiguity...A short time later, however...L.A. Times medical writer Harry Nelson discarded the euphemism and became one of the first newspaper reporters to tell the simple facts: The risk of AIDS, Nelson wrote, "is associated with passive (receptive) anal intercourse..."

The Washington Journalism Review also looked at print medium AIDS coverage later in the epidemic. The magazine found more specific reporting of the disease's sexual transmission modes in the summer and fall of 1985.⁸ The Review article ended by implying that prudish media reporting of AIDS increased public misunderstanding about the disease.⁹

The media coverage of AIDS has not been extensively examined in scholarly studies. An exception includes a content analysis of newsmagazines by Albert. This study analyzed 80 articles in 34 different U.S. and Canadian magazines from May 1982 through December 1984.¹⁰ Albert concluded that this early period of AIDS coverage highlighted the gay alternative lifestyle and sexual behavior which set AIDS victims and the disease apart from the general population. However, Albert added that since AIDS had many unknown characteristics in this period, "AIDS was labeled the creeping threat, the plague, specter, scourge, public enemy, deadly agent, or mysterious killer." This view of the epidemic also translated into fear in a general populace that already largely condemned homosexuals as deviant.¹¹

As opposed to highlighting the gay alternative

lifestyle, other criticism of the media charges that some media AIDS messages exclude the issue of homosexuality altogether. Frutchey suggests that the non-promotion of gays in AIDS messages can lead to three results: "the suggestion that even mentioning gay people is unacceptable: they should remain invisible...the notion that the gay population is isolated sexually from heterosexuals and that bisexual contact does not occur...and [that] AIDS is only serious now that heterosexuals are contracting it in high numbers."¹²

By far, most criticism of media AIDS coverage has come from the media themselves. This criticism has centered on media sensationalism of the disease and inaccurate reporting. For example, the press has been maligned for its handling of celebrities who die of AIDS,¹³ and for sensationalizing minor AIDS developments.¹⁴ The media also have been accused of not reporting the high incidence of the disease among homosexual men. This criticism focuses on alleged evasiveness and dishonesty in reporting who is most likely to get the disease.¹⁵

One other piece of criticism of AIDS/media coverage is more recent. Reporter Jon Rappoport asked several U.S. editors why they refused to carry a May 1987 London Times story that implied a relationship between a smallpox vaccine distributed in Africa and high numbers of AIDS cases on that continent. Various newspaper and wire service editors said the story was unfounded and could confuse readers.¹⁶

Possibly because of the disease's relative newness,

press coverage of AIDS has not been extensively researched. While Albert's study looked at newsmagazines from near the beginning of the epidemic through the end of 1984, quantitative examinations of newspaper and newsmagazine AIDS coverage after this period are nonexistent. The lack of scholarly material on post-1984 media AIDS coverage gave further impetus for this study.

Public Opinion and Knowledge of AIDS

One of the purposes of this study is to suggest ways the media can present a more inclusive picture of AIDS to stem public anxiety toward the disease. Several polls are released each year that provide evidence of the public's misunderstanding of AIDS. Anxiety is certainly one product of misinformation about this fatal disease.

One of the earliest polls on public attitudes toward AIDS was conducted by Gallup in 1983. In that survey, 91 percent of the respondents said they had heard something about AIDS. Of those respondents who had seen or heard some AIDS information, 25 percent said they thought they could get the disease through casual contact.¹⁷ A little more than two years later, in September 1985, about a third of respondents in a Washington Post-ABC News Poll said they "believed it was unsafe to associate with someone who had AIDS."¹⁸

A Gallup survey in 1987 found the general public more fearful of contact with the AIDS virus. More than 40 percent said they avoided people who they thought might be

suffering from AIDS.¹⁹ Another Gallup poll in November 1987, recorded more than 40 percent of respondents saying they are concerned they will contract AIDS.²⁰

Finally, the National Center for Health Statistics, a government agency, published a survey of a random sample of 3097 Americans in January 1988. One of every four respondents said it was somewhat or very likely that a person could contract the virus during a blood donation. More than one in three said a person could get the virus from a mosquito or from eating in a restaurant where a cook had AIDS. And almost 70 percent said kissing with an exchange of saliva was likely to transmit the virus. AIDS medical experts say there is no record of anyone getting AIDS from these transmission routes.²¹

Science and Health Communication

Most societies believe the mass media have an impact on health behavior. But what is the strength of the impact? In other words, how well do mass media disease prevention campaigns work? And what factors make them more likely to influence beneficially the behavior of the public? These questions are essential to the current mass media campaign to prevent the spread of AIDS.

Berlo advocates a widely accepted view that the purpose of all communication is to persuade the receiver of the communication.²² In light of this theory, it can be said that all mass media messages people receive about AIDS affect and help form their knowledge about and perception of

the disease.

While all communication affects the listener, Lazarsfeld and Merton have developed a theory, called monopolization, that communication has its greatest impact when there are no contrary messages competing for the listener's attention.²³ Applied to AIDS communications, monopolization would require a mass media message that did not conflict with the message delivered from health professionals who study the disease.

Other research has commented on the limitations of the mass media in modifying health behavior. Alcalay contends that mass media can only play a role in reinforcing a health message rather than acting as a catalyst for behavior modification. And because health communication is a common topic in interpersonal communication, Alcalay reminds that mass media's impact is always tempered by competing messages from friends and acquaintances. Furthermore, because of the nature of mass media's channels of communication, there is little opportunity for feedback. Studies show that educational messages designed to change behavior work better when there is opportunity for the receiver to ask questions.²⁴ It's reasonable to assume these limitations also apply to the AIDS message in the media.

The Historical Perspective

For the purposes of this study, a content analysis of the New York Times, Washington Post, Daily Oklahoman, Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report was used.

Examinations of these newspapers and newsmagazines produced findings about the message disseminated by these publications. But, as stated in Chapter I, this study was also designed to evaluate and assess the message delivered by these print media by comparing their "picture" of AIDS to that of government reports.

Berelson says three methods connected with content analysis have been used to evaluate communications:

(1) evaluation of performance against such a priori standards as "balance" or "social purpose"; (2) evaluation of performance by comparing one body of content with another (the internal criteria); and (3) evaluation of performance by comparing content with a non-content source (the external criteria).²⁵

This study uses the second and third "evaluations of performance." The AIDS content of the newspapers and newsmagazines was measured against a non-content source -- government health agency reports. Comparisons also were made among the newspapers and newsmagazines and between the two media.

Media Accountability and Responsibility

The American Society of Newspaper Editors Statement of Principles says their mission is to "serve the general welfare by informing the people and enabling them to make judgments on the issues of the time."²⁶ This statement implies that people may not make correct decisions about issues if they are not informed or are incorrectly informed. It follows that a public misinformed about AIDS, or

incorrectly informed, may make incorrect decisions concerning the disease.

Discussions of press responsibility often hinge on the media providing a "true" and "full" account of the news. But what do these terms really mean? Rivers, Schramm, and Christians say:

The responsibility of the mass media...is to bring us not merely a true and balanced report of political controversy, but a true and balanced report of all noteworthy aspects of our environment. Are we able to learn enough through the media to understand foreign relations?...Are we getting an adequate picture of the national government, the educational system, labor management relations?...the journalist answers that the news channels carry what will interest the public...the problem is whether the portrait of man that is held by our journalists is adequate for the public in the present stage of civilization.²⁷

Certainly, we could easily ask similar questions of the AIDS epidemic. Are we able to learn enough through the media to understand AIDS? Are we getting an adequate picture of the AIDS epidemic?

Rivers, Schramm, and Christians also raise the specter of the sin of omission. The authors worry in Responsibility in Mass Communication that the media's need to appeal to a broad audience prompts them to show the public only what the public wants.²⁸ In confirmation, much of the criticism of media coverage of the AIDS epidemic has focused on the media's attempt not to offend its general readership with AIDS stories. Isn't this just the "other side of the coin" of the authors' worry? If the media need to give the public

what it wants, then it's reasonable to assume the media
don't want to give the public what the public doesn't want.

END NOTES

¹ "Pneumocystis Pneumonia - Los Angeles," Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 5 June 1981, p. 2.

² Randy Shilts, And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), pp. 68-69.

³ The disease AIDS was not given its current name until the summer of 1982. Before then, the disease was called several different names by the medical and popular press including GRID (Gay-Related Immune Deficiency), Gay Plague, and Gay Pneumonia. Early in the epidemic's history, AIDS was also referred to by the two most common infections associated with the disease: Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia and Kaposi's Sarcoma.

⁴ Shilts, p. 110.

⁵ Shilts, p. 126.

⁶ Shilts, p. 67.

⁷ Edwin Diamond and Christopher M. Bellitto, "The Great Verbal Coverup: Prudish Editing Blurs the Facts on AIDS," Washington Journalism Review, March 1986, p. 39.

⁸ Diamond, pp. 39-40.

⁹ Diamond, p. 42.

¹⁰ Edward Albert, "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome: The Victim and the Press," Studies in Communications, 3, ed. Thelma McCormack (Greenwich, Connecticut: JAI Press Inc., 1986), p. 138.

¹¹ Albert, pp. 154-155.

¹² Chuck Frutchey, "Homophobia in AIDS Education: Counterproductive to Prevention," Focus, January 1988, p. 3.

¹³ Edwin Diamond, "Celebrity AIDS," New York, 2 March 1987, p. 16.

¹⁴ Eleanor Randolph, "AIDS Reporters' Challenge: To Educate, Not Panic, the Public," Washington Post, 5 June 1987, p. D1; William Check, "Public Education on AIDS: Not Only the Media's Responsibility," Hastings Center Report (A Special Supplement), August 1985, p. 27.

¹⁵ George Bain, "Media Watch: Villains, and Victims of AIDS," Maclean's, 20 April 1987, p. 44.

¹⁶ Jon Rappoport, "The AIDS Story Nobody Touches," Moving Up, December 1987, p. 25.

¹⁷ Shilts, p. 353.

¹⁸ Cristine Russell, "AIDS Stirs Public Concern But Not Panic, Survey Says," Washington Post, 26 September 1985, pp. A1-A2.

¹⁹ "Most Support Wide AIDS Testing, Gallup Reports," New York Times, 13 July 1987, p. B6.

²⁰ Hilary Stout, "40% of Americans Fear They Will Contract AIDS, a Poll Indicates," New York Times, 29 November 1987, p. 26.

²¹ "Survey Finds Wide AIDS Ignorance," New York Times, 30 January 1988, p. 6.

²² David K. Berlo, The Process of Communication: An Introduction to Theory and Practice (San Francisco: Rinehart Press, 1960), p. 16.

²³ Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton, "Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action," The Process and Effects of Mass Communication, eds. Wilbur Schramm and D. Roberts (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972) as cited in Rina Alcalay, "The Impact of Mass Communication Campaigns in the Health Field," Social Science and Medicine, 17 (1983), 92.

²⁴ Rina Alcalay, "The Impact of Mass Communication Campaigns in the Health Field," Social Science and Medicine, 17 (1983), 92.

²⁵ Bernard Berelson, Content Analysis in Communication Research (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1971), p. 46.

²⁶ William L. Rivers, Wilbur Schramm and Clifford G. Christians, Responsibility in Mass Communications, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1980), p. 289.

- 27 Rivers, et al., pp. 180-181.
- 28 Rivers, et al., p. 181.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Selection of Samples

This study is a content analysis of three daily newspapers and three national newsmagazines. Two elite newspapers, the New York Times and the Washington Post, and one paper from the Southwest, the Daily Oklahoman, were chosen for the study. The New York Times and Washington Post were selected because of their agenda-setting function in the newspaper world. They were also selected because they were immediately available. The Daily Oklahoman was included to assess differences in coverage from the two elite papers.

The newsmagazines were selected on the basis of their national distribution. The magazines help round out the picture presented of AIDS victims and virus carriers in the national print media.

All issues of newspapers and magazines were taken from dates between June 30, 1985 and July 1, 1987. The selection of this sample period was the result of a pretest conducted by the author. The methodology of the pretest was similar to the present study with the exceptions of the sample period and the random stratification of the issues. The pretest pointed out deficiencies in the design of the study,

helped further refine the hypotheses, and strengthened the results and conclusions of the present study. The pretest is discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter.

A total of 216 issues of the three newspapers was analyzed for AIDS content they contained. A sample this large means approximately ten percent of the universe of daily newspaper issues for the New York Times, Washington Post, and Daily Oklahoman, during the sample period, was included in the sample. Berelson has remarked that

For most purposes, analysis of a small, carefully chosen sample of the relevant content will produce just as valid results as the analysis of a great deal more...¹

Three issues of each newspaper were randomly selected from every month of the two-year sample period. This stratified scheme was used to ensure representativeness of the sample.

Like many other news events, coverage of AIDS seems to run in cycles. Events such as the death of movie actor Rock Hudson, or the development of an AIDS drug, prompted a large amount of AIDS coverage over relatively short periods of time. To ensure that the sample would not underrepresent or overrepresent these events, the stratified sampling method was adopted. Berelson said stratified sampling makes possible not only

inclusion of important characteristics of the universe in the sample but also, if desirable...their inclusion in their correct proportion.²

Because the newsmagazines selected for this study are

published once a week, as opposed to once a day for the newspapers, a different sampling scheme became possible. All issues of Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report over the two-year sample period were included in the study. While a partial sample of this universe may have been sufficient, the author found it possible to complete a 100 percent sample of weekly magazines to strengthen the study's conclusions. While Berelson points out the adequacy of small samples in most cases,³ Kerlinger adds that a large sample is better:

Use as large a sample as possible...Large samples are not advocated because large numbers are good in and of themselves. They are advocated in order to give the principle of randomization, or simply randomness, a chance to "work."⁴

Criteria for Selection of Articles

After the sample population was selected for both the newspapers and newsmagazines, the task remained to identify AIDS stories in each issue.

In the newspapers, stories that mentioned Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome were examined. The researcher scanned the relevant newspaper issues in the sample for words in headlines that gave any indication the story was about AIDS. For example, if any of the following words were found in headlines, the researcher read the story for a mention of the disease: AIDS, tests, gays, homosexuals, drugs, addicts, needles, children, infants, heterosexuals, medical, medicine, cure, blood, hospital, patient,

researchers, gene, rights, and condom.

Newspaper items coded were news, feature, business, and entertainment stories, photographs, and editorials. Newspaper items not coded were opinion letters, medical columns, advice columns, sports sections, obituaries, classified ads, and cartoons. Also, regional supplements for each newspaper were not examined. These particular sections of the newspapers were not considered representative of the news of the entire newspapers.

In newsmagazines, similar criteria for selection of articles were used. Again, stories with words like AIDS, tests, and gays were examined for news of AIDS. During the coding, it became apparent the newsmagazines were somewhat less likely to use "hard" headlines for stories. In other words, stories about AIDS occasionally had headlines that seemed to have little connection to the AIDS epidemic. This quality of newsmagazine headlines forced the coder to pay close attention to any headline that was ambiguous about its article's content. If a headline did not immediately identify the nature of a story, the article was scanned for a mention of AIDS.

Like the newspapers, the entire content of the newsmagazines was not considered representative of the magazines' news product. Content not included in the sample were advertisements, opinion letters, sports sections, obituaries, and cartoons. Like newspapers, the following sections were examined for AIDS content: news, feature, business, and entertainment stories, photographs,

and editorials.

Content Analysis

...a scientific method has been developed - and is being developed further - for describing various facets of communication content in a summary fashion. That method is called content analysis.⁵

The scientific method is crucial to any content analysis. When it is said that the scientific method is used in media analysis, it means the approach used in describing communication content has some external permanency. If the method is scientific, then the findings of every person who uses the same method in the same application would be the same. The method assumes there are "real things" and phenomena that are independent of our opinions about them.⁶

It is this method that has been applied to a description and evaluation of the content of AIDS communication in selected print publications between the summer of 1985 and the summer of 1987.

Categorical Variables

Categorical variables often are used in content analysis because they use nominal measuring scales. The content being studied is broken down into subsets. The objects being measured are then placed in one of these subsets depending on a certain quality of the object. There are no levels of quality for categorical variables. The object either has the quality or it doesn't. When it is

determined an object has the quality in question, the object is placed in one of the subsets:

Categorical variables - and nominal measurement - have simple requirements: all the members of a subset are considered the same and all are assigned the same name...

Also, categorical variables often are used in content analysis because they're easy to understand.

The Categories and Coding Process

This study was designed to determine differences in the AIDS coverage of the New York Times, Washington Post, Daily Oklahoman, Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report. The AIDS coverage of these publications was then compared to a noncontent standard -- government AIDS statistics. To determine if there were differences, two dependent categorical variables were coded.

Risk Groups of Individuals. References to individuals with the disease or AIDS virus were coded. Keeping in mind the qualities of categorical variables, if an individual with the disease was mentioned in a story, then the individual was coded on a nominal scale. In other words, it was simply given a name.

Each mention of a person with AIDS or with the AIDS virus was categorized in one of eight subsets. Seven of the subsets, or headings, were drawn directly from risk categories defined by the United States Public Health Service.⁸ Those risk groups were homosexual/bisexual,

intravenous drug user, heterosexual, blood receiver, hemophiliac, infant, and "other." In addition to these seven government defined categories, all individuals with AIDS or the virus who were not placed in risk groups by the story's reporter were coded in a "no mention" category. This eighth category indicated the reporter did not describe the individual as being in any of the government-defined risk groups. Since many of the individuals were not placed in a risk group by the reporter, the "no mention" category was a necessity for the study.

The categories indicate the way AIDS is transmitted to members of each group. Methods of transmission within risk groups were important to the coder because many newspaper references to people with AIDS indicated only how the person contracted the virus. Individuals in the homosexual category contracted the virus after sex with another homosexual who was seropositive (infected with the AIDS virus). Individuals in the intravenous drug user category contracted the virus after sharing a hypodermic needle with another person who was seropositive. Individuals in the heterosexual category contracted the virus after having sex with a person from the opposite sex who was infected with the AIDS virus. Members of the blood receiver group were infected with the virus after receiving a transfusion of donated blood. Individuals in the hemophiliac category are hemophiliacs who contracted the virus after receiving a blood product infected with the AIDS virus. Members of the infant group are children who contracted the virus from the

mother either in the womb or soon after birth. Members of the "other" category contracted the virus by another means, either known or unknown.

Since categorical variables were used, a reference to an individual with AIDS or the virus could be placed in only one category. An individual with AIDS who might be placed in more than one category was never presented in a story; however, such an occurrence is possible. For instance, consider the following hypothetical news story:

Mary Doe has tested positive for the AIDS virus. She is an I.V. drug user, has had sex with other I.V. drug users (males and females), and recently received a blood transfusion because she's an hemophiliac.

While the hypothetical news story is highly unlikely and somewhat absurd, it points to a coding problem not encountered in the six publications used in this study. Mary Doe could be categorized in any of five risk groups. Since she was initially infected with the AIDS virus by only one mode of transmission, a ninth category (possibly called "multiple risks") would be misleading. The Public Health Service has not constructed any such category and apparently places such individuals in the risk group that represents the most likely cause of Mary Doe's infection.

Again, only individuals with AIDS or the virus were placed in categories that represent government risk groups for AIDS. The researcher did not code aggregate references. Obviously, an aggregate reference cannot be placed in a risk group. The limitations of this aspect of the coding scheme are detailed later in this chapter under "Constraints."

Explicit Statistical References. This coded variable was a statistical reference to the two risk groups that comprise 90 percent of people with AIDS: homosexual men and intravenous drug users. The statistical reference item was included in this study to get a picture of these publications' inclusion of government statistics that indicate the disease is occurring mostly among homosexual men and intravenous drug users. Only an explicit reference to homosexuals (or homosexuals and intravenous drug users) as the risk group of most people with AIDS was coded. For instance, the following representative examples were coded as a reference to the pertinent statistics: "most cases of the disease have appeared in homosexuals" or "homosexuals make up almost 75 percent of U.S. AIDS cases." Many newspaper stories only implied that the majority of AIDS cases are in homosexual and intravenous drug user risk groups. These references were not coded. Representative examples include: "homosexuals and intravenous drug users are at highest risk for the disease" or "the disease will spread beyond the high risk groups -- chiefly homosexual men and IV drug users." Neither of these references clearly states that most cases of AIDS are in homosexuals and IV drug users. While these examples point out a relatively fine line between coded and noncoded statistical references, it is clear the codable examples leave no doubt that homosexuals and IV drug users comprise a majority of the U.S. AIDS cases. The noncodable references presented can be

interpreted to mean that homosexual men and intravenous drug users are simply at a higher risk of getting the disease. They do not necessarily imply that these two groups are, in fact, the groups burdened with a large majority of AIDS cases.

The statistical reference was also broken into two more subsets depending on the placement of the reference in a story. The position was defined as either the first half or last half of the story. Clearly, a reference placed nearer the beginning of a story would be more likely to be seen by a reader.

Hypotheses

Initial, tentative answers to a problem eventually must be put in the form of hypothesis statements. A hypothesis is a statement of a relationship between variables that a researcher hopes to prove or collect evidence favorable to its proof:

This use of the hypothesis is similar to playing a game of chance. The rules of the game are set up in advance, and bets are made in advance.

The research question posed in the present study is whether there are differences in the way AIDS is covered in the popular press and if AIDS coverage in the print media is substantially different from the picture of the disease reported by government health agencies. To specify further the relationships being examined, the following hypotheses were constructed:

H₁ - The amount of coverage of homosexual men with AIDS or the virus in the New York Times, Washington Post, Daily Oklahoman, Time, Newsweek and U.S. News & World Report will not correspond to the incidence of the disease in homosexual men as reported by government health agencies.

H₂ - Statistics confirming that most cases of the disease are in homosexual men and intravenous drug users will be largely absent in the New York Times, Washington Post, Daily Oklahoman, Time, Newsweek and U.S. News & World Report stories about AIDS.

H₃ - Less coverage will be given to homosexual men in the Daily Oklahoman than in the elite newspapers or the newsmagazines.¹⁰

Constraints

All research has limitations that must be noted to help prevent readers from drawing incorrect conclusions not intended by the researcher. The present study is constrained by certain phenomena common to most content analyses. It is also limited by phenomena that are unique to the present study.

Generalizability of conclusions is important to any research design. It is a measurement of external validity. In other words, can the study's conclusions also be applied to other newspapers or newsmagazines? Although two of the largest and most respected newspapers in the country and one other mid-sized newspaper are used in this study, they may not be representative of the newspaper coverage of some other newspapers. However, the combination of different sized newspapers in different regions of the country along

with three national newsmagazines allows the researcher to generalize in some measure about the content of national print news coverage on the AIDS epidemic.

Related, is the problem of randomization. The generalizability of results to the universe is important for internal validity. Since the newsmagazine sample size is equal to the size of the universe for the three magazines during the sample period, internal validity with respect to these publications is strongly supported.

Internal validity with respect to the three newspapers is more tentative. Instead of taking a 100 percent sample as with the newsmagazines, a ten percent sample of newspapers was coded. However, using proper sampling procedures, a small sample can be representative of the universe.¹¹

The exclusion in this study of aggregate references is another factor that impacts content validity. One hypothesis states that the coverage of homosexual men in the six publications will not correspond to the incidence of the disease in homosexual men. Since the coding scheme recognizes only individual references to homosexual men, groups of two or more are not represented in the results. Parts of the picture of AIDS coverage are missing from the findings. However, no research can recreate the whole picture of anything. The coding scheme devised for the study is representative of print media reports of individuals with the disease or virus.

Testing of Hypotheses

Much of the results of the study and their impact on the testing of the hypotheses are apparent after they are converted into percentages. For instance, if 75 percent of the people with AIDS are homosexual men, and only 10 percent of individuals with AIDS in the print coverage are homosexual men, then the substantiation of the relationship in the hypothesis becomes apparent.

However, some hypothesized relationships in this study can not be so easily judged. To help determine significant differences in the results, the statistical chi square test is used. Thus, if infants are represented in 10 percent of the AIDS reporting, and hemophiliacs are represented in 15 percent of the AIDS reporting, chi square will help the researcher determine if a greater amount of news coverage really is being given to hemophiliacs. Chi square can be used to identify the probability that results may have occurred by chance.

Another tool of content analysis is the crossbreak. Like chi square, it is used with nominal data. Crossbreaks are represented in this report by tables that help the researcher and the reader see relationships between variables.

Finally, an effort was made to solicit comments on this study from representatives of the three newspapers in the study. Representatives of the newspapers declined to comment on the study's findings. For the record, the

questions sent to the papers' representatives are entered in Appendix C, p. 99.

Reliability

The scientific method requires that research have some internal permanency. It assumes the results are independent of personal bias on the part of the researcher. If others duplicate the experiment, the results should stay the same. This quality of research is tested in many studies by a reliability measurement.

A person, otherwise not involved with the present study, was enlisted to code a sample of the newsmagazines and newspapers used in the study.

Reliability in this study had less to do with the ability of the coder to spot a story about AIDS, and more to do with recognizing references to individuals with AIDS, and distinguishing a reference to statistics about AIDS. The potential difficulty of coding statistical references was discussed early in this chapter under "Explicit Statistical References."

The reliability coder was given a five percent random sample of AIDS stories found in the newspapers and a five percent random sample of AIDS stories found in newsmagazines. The reliability coder then categorized any references to an individual with AIDS in the risk groups described earlier in this chapter under "Risk Groups of Individuals." The reliability coder also established the existence of the second dependent variable and also its

position in the story. The following equation was used to calculate each of the reliability measurements:

$$R = 2M/N_1 + N_2$$

where reliability, "R," is expressed in terms of percentage of agreement between coders; "M," is the number of coding decisions on which two coders agree; "N₁," is the total number of coding decisions by coder #1; and "N₂," is the total number of coding decisions by coder #2.

Overall coder reliability, or "R," for newspapers was .81. The reliability of the newspapers' first dependent variable was .74. The reliability of the second dependent variable was .96. And coder reliability of the second dependent variable's position in the story was .89.

Overall coder reliability for newsmagazines was .93. The reliability of the newsmagazines' first dependent variable was .86. The reliability of the second dependent variable was .89. And coder reliability of the second dependent variable's position in the story was .85.

Coder reliability for newspapers and newsmagazines was .87.

Pretest

The pretest identified deficiencies in the initial design for this study.

The pretest included the same three dailies used in the present study. The sample period was 1982 through 1986 inclusive. Ten issues of each newspaper were analyzed for

each of the five years in the sample period. In total, fifty issues of each newspaper were studied. This broad but shallow sample did not yield the quantity of results needed for the author to confidently comment and generalize on the AIDS coverage of these three newspapers.¹² However, the pretest did point out periods of more intensive AIDS coverage beginning in the summer of 1985. Figure I, p. 40, Figure II, p. 41, and Figure III, p. 42 are line graphs that show the number of stories found in the pretest sampling period in the New York Times, Washington Post, and Daily Oklahoman. The graphs also contrast periods of heavy AIDS coverage and periods of less heavy coverage.

The peak coverage months correspond to major events in the chronology of the AIDS epidemic. The summer and fall of 1985 included the extensive media coverage of Rock Hudson. The fall of 1986 brought news of the drug AZT. It was the first drug that had shown promise in helping to prolong the lives of some people with AIDS.

The pretest was simply too broad to yield valuable results. But it did point out peak coverage areas with the potential of yielding more substantial results. The explosion of AIDS coverage after Hudson's AIDS diagnosis revealed the beginning of the sample period used in the present study. Instead of a broad and shallow sample, the later sample targeted a more intense period of AIDS coverage.

The pretest also modified an initial hypothesis because the original statement was built on a different

categorization scheme for the first dependent variable. Instead of government defined risk groups as subsets of the first dependent variable, subsets of "homosexual," "heterosexual," and "no mention" were used. Modes of transmission (sex, intravenous drug use, blood transfusions, etc.) were categories under each of the above three subsets.

For instance, during coding, an AIDS victim was first categorized for sexual preference: homosexual, heterosexual, or no mention. Second, the method of the individual's contraction of the virus was coded: sex, intravenous drug use, blood transfusion, other means, or no mention. Appendix A, p. 90, reproduces the coding sheet used in the pretest. This faulty construction eliminated several risk groups which did not allow the categorization of many individuals with AIDS or the virus. For instance, infants with the disease or virus could not be placed in either the heterosexual or homosexual subsets.

Also, the second dependent variable used in the present study was absent from the pretest. In its place was a dependent variable called "mitigating words." This variable was used in the pretest to identify passages in AIDS stories that outlined possible modes of transmission for the virus. It was a dichotomous variable that identified mitigating words as being present or not present in an AIDS story.

In essence, the pretest focused more on how AIDS victims and virus carriers in the press were infected with the virus, rather than on which AIDS victims and virus carriers were in the press. The pretest was intended to

show that people with AIDS portrayed in the press were likely to contract the virus from pathways other than the most common modes of transmission, sex between homosexuals and intravenous drug use. But because of the coding problems outlined above, the pretest variables were abandoned for the more easily quantifiable dependent variables in the present study.

OF AIDS STORIES/PRETEST

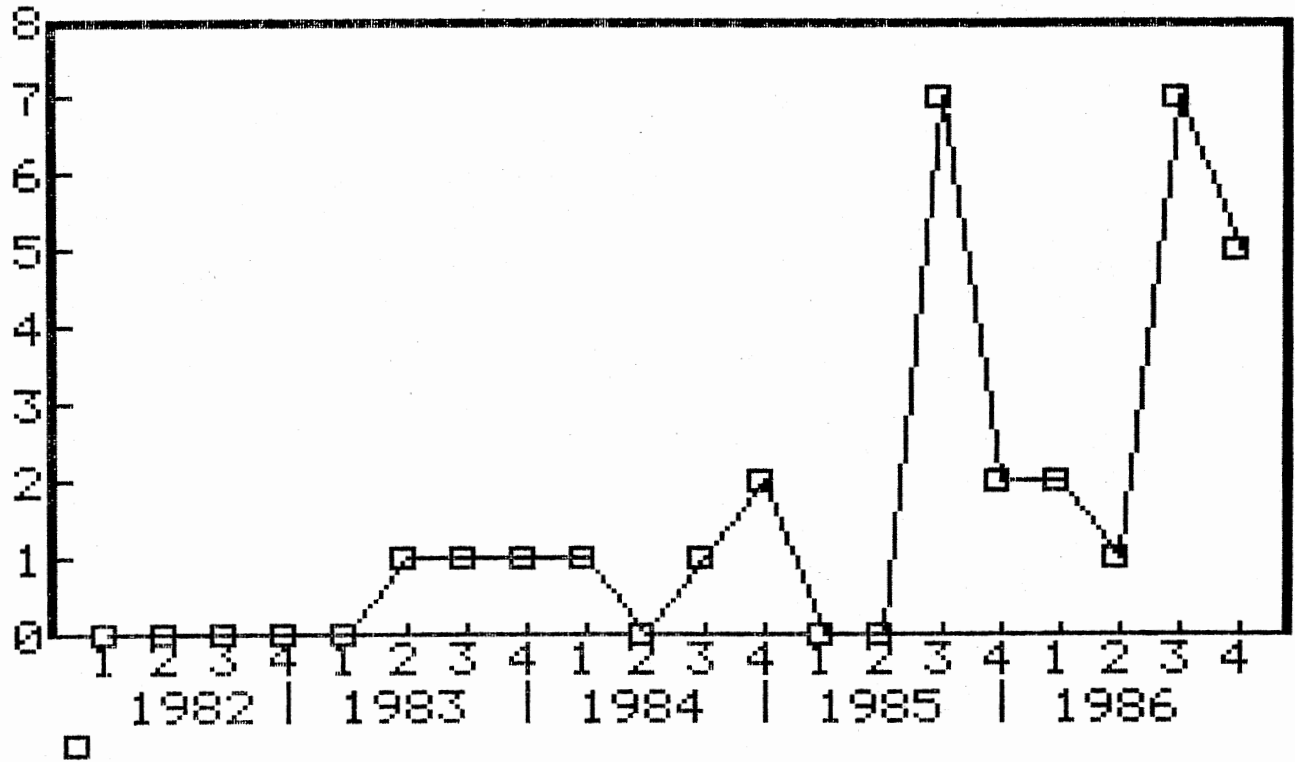


Figure 1. Number of AIDS Stories in New York Times in Pretest Sample

OF AIDS STORIES/PRETEST

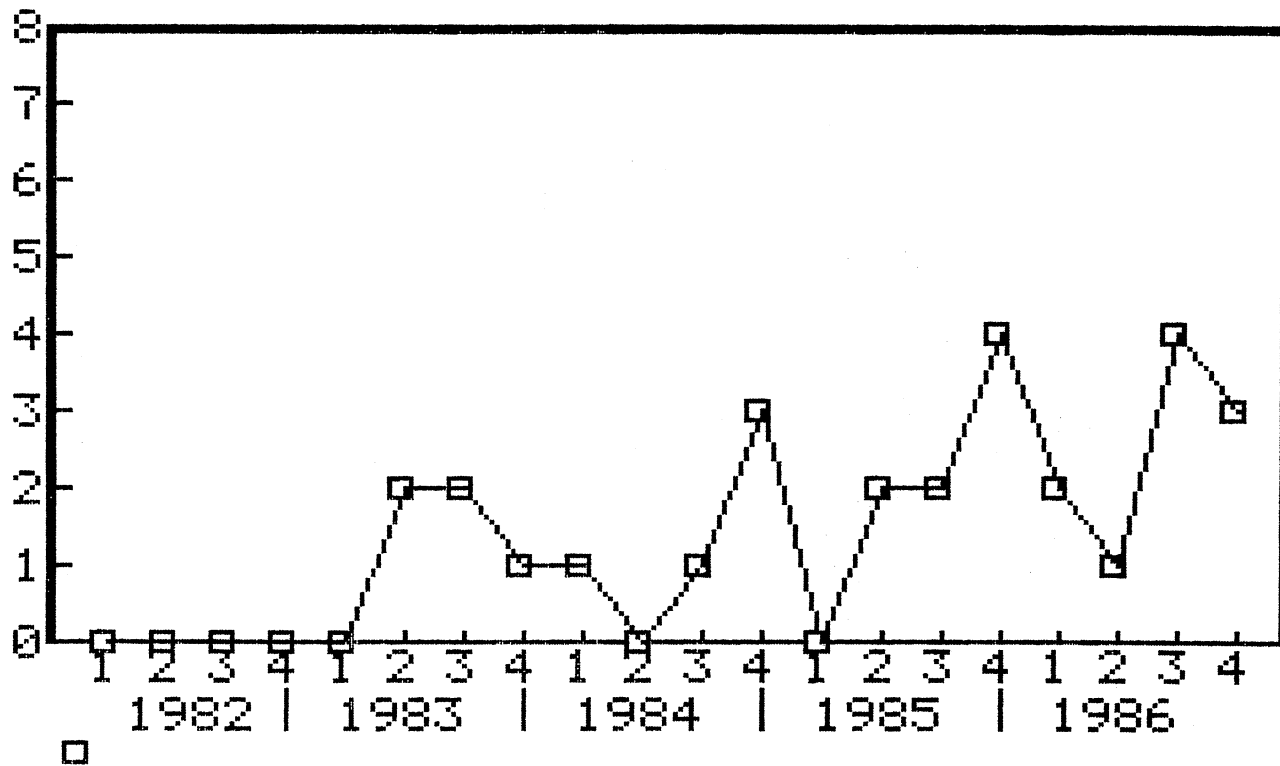


Figure 2. Number of AIDS Stories in Washington Post in Pretest Sample

OF AIDS STORIES/PRETEST

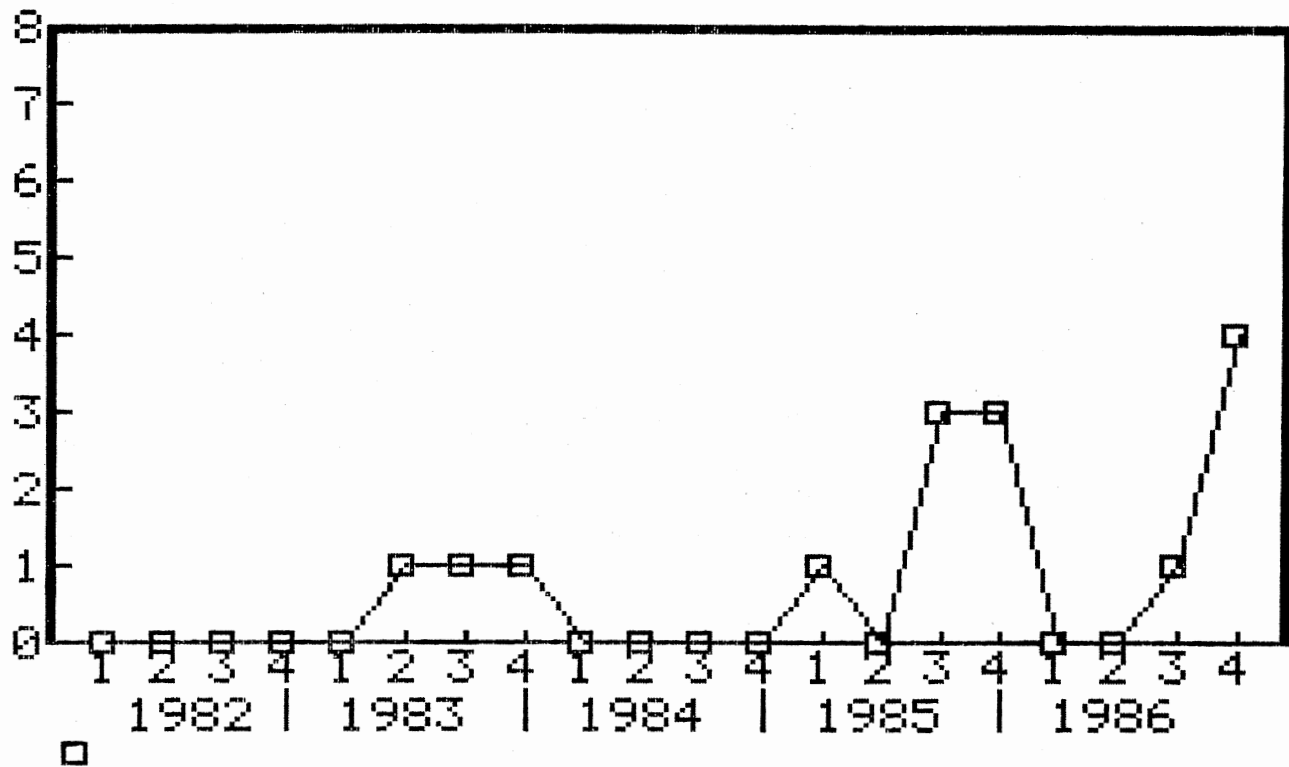


Figure 3. Number of AIDS Stories in Daily Oklahoman in Pretest Sample

END NOTES

¹ Bernard Berelson, Content Analysis In Communication Research (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1971), p. 174.

² Berelson, p. 183.

³ Berelson, p. 174.

⁴ Fred N. Kerlinger, Foundations of Behavioral Research, 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1986), pp. 117, 119.

⁵ Berelson, p. 13.

⁶ Justus Buchler, Philosophical Writings of Peirce (New York: Dover Press, 1955), p. 18, as cited in Kerlinger, p. 6.

⁷ Kerlinger, p. 36.

⁸ U. S., Public Health Service, Latest Facts About AIDS: Gay and Bisexual Men and AIDS, pamphlet, 1986.

⁹ Kerlinger, p. 20.

¹⁰ This third hypothesis was constructed for the following reasons: Oklahoma and Oklahoma City (where the Daily Oklahoman is published) were perceived by the author to have less visible gay communities than New York City and Washington, D.C. Because gay groups were less visible in Oklahoma, the author surmised they would be less visible in the local media. Also, the Oklahoman was perceived to be editorially more conservative than the Times or the Post. The author surmised that the Oklahoman would be less likely to publish news about homosexuals.

¹¹ Berelson, p. 174; Guido H. Stempel, III, "Sample Size for Classifying Subject Matter in Dailies," Journalism Quarterly, 29 (1952), 334.

¹² Incidentally, some of the results gleaned from the pretest were very similar to the results found in the present study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Background

The results of this study came from a content analysis of articles selected from three U.S. newspapers, the New York Times, Washington Post, and Daily Oklahoman, and three U.S. newsmagazines, Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report. The newspaper issues chosen were randomly stratified over a two-year period from July 1985 through June 1987. All issues of the newsmagazines over the same two-year period were analyzed.

The coder looked for two dependent variables in the publications: a mention of an individual with the disease AIDS or the virus that causes the disease, and an explicit mention of a statistical reference to the risk groups that comprise most recorded cases of the disease -- homosexual men and intravenous drug users.¹

One of the purposes of this report was to contribute to an understanding of how the national print media were reporting on the AIDS epidemic in the two-year sample period. A piece of the picture of print media AIDS coverage is presented in this chapter; that is, a description of the dependent variables found in the AIDS articles in the

newspapers and newsmagazines is outlined. But first, statements directly concerned with the study's hypotheses are addressed.

Hypotheses Tested

The results or findings were intended to support or refute the hypotheses constructed.

Hypothesis 1. Analysis supported this hypothesis. The amount of coverage in the New York Times, Washington Post, Daily Oklahoman, Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report of homosexual men with AIDS or the virus was lower than the incidence of the disease as reported by government health organizations.

Hypothesis 2. Analysis also supported this hypothesis. Statistics confirming that most cases of the disease are in homosexual men and intravenous drug users were largely absent from the New York Times, Washington Post, Daily Oklahoman, Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report.

Hypothesis 3. Analysis did not support the hypothesis that less coverage was being given to homosexual men in the Daily Oklahoman.

Description Of Sample

The following descriptions of the sample include a

description of the newspaper and newsmagazine sample, a description of the newspaper content, a discussion and comparison of the newspapers, a description of the newsmagazine content, a discussion and comparison of the newsmagazines, and a discussion and comparison of the newsmagazines and the newspapers. All relevant statistical tests are included.

Three issues of each newspaper were randomly selected from every month of the two-year sample period. The newspaper issues selected for each month and the number of articles found are represented in Table I, p. 47, Table II, p. 48, and Table III, p. 49.

All issues of Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report over the two-year sample period were included in the study. The number of AIDS articles found in the newsmagazines over the two-year sample period are represented in Table IV, p. 50, Table V, p. 51, Table VI, p. 52.

TABLE I
 NUMBER OF ARTICLES RANDOMLY SELECTED
 FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES DURING
 THE SAMPLE PERIOD

Issues In Sample Period	Number of AIDS Stories Found in Each Month	Issues In Sample Period	Number of AIDS Stories Found in Each Month
July 1985 3-22-26	3	July 1986 11-21-26	1
Aug. 1985 9-10-25	5	Aug. 1986 5-21-26	3
Sep. 1985 8-13-25	9	Sep. 1986 19-20-24	4
Oct. 1985 6-7-15	6	Oct. 1986 13-15-30	5
Nov. 1985 2-7-20	3	Nov. 1986 18-23-25	3
Dec. 1985 24-28-31	3	Dec. 1986 19-20-24	1
Jan. 1986 20-23-31	2	Jan. 1987 6-8-20	4
Feb. 1986 16-17-20	3	Feb. 1987 4-18-27	5
Mar. 1986 16-27-29	3	Mar. 1987 3-12-23	6
Apr. 1986 22-23-26	2	Apr. 1987 1-20-22	7
May 1986 5-15-21	1	May 1987 8-17-20	10
June 1986 4-8-29	<u>5</u>	June 1987 2-7-20	<u>13</u>
TOTALS 12 MONTHS -	45	TOTALS 12 MONTHS -	62
TOTAL STORIES FOR 24 MONTHS -		107	

TABLE II
 NUMBER OF ARTICLES RANDOMLY SELECTED
 FROM THE WASHINGTON POST DURING
 THE SAMPLE PERIOD

Issues In Sample Period	Number of AIDS Stories Found in Each Month	Issues In Sample Period	Number of AIDS Stories Found in Each Month
July 1985 3-22-26	2	July 1986 11-21-26	2
Aug. 1985 9-10-25	3	Aug. 1986 5-21-26	7
Sep. 1985 8-13-25	4	Sep. 1986 19-20-24	6
Oct. 1985 6-7-15	1	Oct. 1986 13-15-30	2
Nov. 1985 2-7-20	2	Nov. 1986 18-23-25	2
Dec. 1985 24-28-31	3	Dec. 1986 19-20-24	0
Jan. 1986 20-23-31	2	Jan. 1987 6-8-20	4
Feb. 1986 16-17-20	1	Feb. 1987 4-18-27	3
Mar. 1986 16-27-29	3	Mar. 1987 3-12-23	3
Apr. 1986 22-23-26	2	Apr. 1987 1-20-22	2
May 1986 5-15-21	0	May 1987 8-17-20	7
June 1986 4-8-29	<u>1</u>	June 1987 2-7-20	<u>15</u>
TOTALS 12 MONTHS -	24	12 MONTHS -	53
TOTAL STORIES FOR 24 MONTHS -		77	

TABLE III
 NUMBER OF ARTICLES RANDOMLY SELECTED
 FROM THE DAILY OKLAHOMAN DURING
 THE SAMPLE PERIOD

Issues In Sample Period	Number of AIDS Stories Found in Each Month	Issues In Sample Period	Number of AIDS Stories Found in Each Month
July 1985 3-22-26	3	July 1986 11-21-26	0
Aug. 1985 9-10-25	3	Aug. 1986 5-21-26	4
Sep. 1985 8-13-25	2	Sep. 1986 19-20-24	1
Oct. 1985 6-7-15	2	Oct. 1986 13-15-30	1
Nov. 1985 2-7-20	2	Nov. 1986 18-23-25	0
Dec. 1985 24-28-31	1	Dec. 1986 19-20-24	0
Jan. 1986 20-23-31	1	Jan. 1987 6-8-20	3
Feb. 1986 16-17-20	2	Feb. 1987 4-18-27	2
Mar. 1986 16-27-29	4	Mar. 1987 3-12-23	6
Apr. 1986 22-23-26	2	Apr. 1987 1-20-22	5
May 1986 5-15-21	2	May 1987 8-17-20	2
June 1986 4-8-29	<u>1</u>	June 1987 2-7-20	<u>5</u>
TOTALS	12 MONTHS - 25		12 MONTHS - 29
TOTAL STORIES FOR 24 MONTHS	- 54		

TABLE IV
 NUMBER OF ARTICLES FOUND
 IN TIME MAGAZINE DURING
 THE SAMPLE PERIOD

Issues In Sample Period	Number of AIDS Stories Found in Each Month	Issues In Sample Period	Number of AIDS Stories Found in Each Month
July 1985	0	July 1986	3
Aug. 1985	4	Aug. 1986	3
Sep. 1985	6	Sep. 1986	4
Oct. 1985	2	Oct. 1986	0
Nov. 1985	2	Nov. 1986	9
Dec. 1985	1	Dec. 1986	4
Jan. 1986	1	Jan. 1987	0
Feb. 1986	1	Feb. 1987	9
Mar. 1986	1	Mar. 1987	6
Apr. 1986	1	Apr. 1987	5
May 1986	2	May 1987	3
June 1986	<u>1</u>	June 1987	<u>8</u>
TOTALS 12 MONTHS	- 22	12 MONTHS	- 54
TOTAL STORIES FOR 24 MONTHS - 76			

TABLE V
 NUMBER OF ARTICLES FOUND IN
NEWSWEEK MAGAZINE DURING
 THE SAMPLE PERIOD

Issues In Sample Period	Number of AIDS Stories Found in Each Month	Issues In Sample Period	Number of AIDS Stories Found in Each Month
July 1985	3	July 1986	5
Aug. 1985	8	Aug. 1986	4
Sep. 1985	8	Sep. 1986	4
Oct. 1985	4	Oct. 1986	2
Nov. 1985	5	Nov. 1986	8
Dec. 1985	3	Dec. 1986	2
Jan. 1986	3	Jan. 1987	3
Feb. 1986	2	Feb. 1987	11
Mar. 1986	3	Mar. 1987	8
Apr. 1986	3	Apr. 1987	6
May 1986	1	May 1987	5
June 1986	<u>5</u>	June 1987	<u>10</u>
TOTALS	12 MONTHS - 48		12 MONTHS - 68
TOTAL STORIES FOR 24 MONTHS - 116			

TABLE VI
 NUMBER OF ARTICLES FOUND IN U.S.
NEWS & WORLD REPORT MAGAZINE
 DURING THE SAMPLE PERIOD

Issues In Sample Period	Number of AIDS Stories Found in Each Month	Issues In Sample Period	Number of AIDS Stories Found in Each Month
July 1985	0	July 1986	5
Aug. 1985	4	Aug. 1986	1
Sep. 1985	7	Sep. 1986	5
Oct. 1985	4	Oct. 1986	2
Nov. 1985	6	Nov. 1986	4
Dec. 1985	2	Dec. 1986	7
Jan. 1986	2	Jan. 1987	6
Feb. 1986	4	Feb. 1987	16
Mar. 1986	2	Mar. 1987	8
Apr. 1986	2	Apr. 1987	6
May 1986	1	May 1987	5
June 1986	<u>5</u>	June 1987	<u>8</u>
TOTALS 12 MONTHS	- 39	12 MONTHS	- 62
TOTAL STORIES FOR 24 MONTHS - 101			

Description of Newspaper Content. A total of 216 issues from the three newspapers was examined. A little more than 60 percent of the issues contained at least one story about AIDS for a total of 239 AIDS stories analyzed for this study. Of these, 71 stories, or 30 percent of the total stories in the sample, contained a reference to an individual with the disease or virus. The total number of references found in these stories was 117 (Table VII, p. 54).

TABLE VII
 NUMBER OF AIDS STORIES AND REFERENCES
 FOUND IN THE NEWSPAPER SAMPLE

	ALL	N.Y.T.	W.P.	D.O.
Circulation	---	963,365	735,998	241,608
Avg. Issue size	---	113 pp.	97 pp.	33 pp.
# of Issues in Sample	216	72	72	72
# of Issues w/Stories	132	51	42	39
# of AIDS Stories in Sample	239	107	77	55
# of Stories w/Reference	71	34	26	11
# of References in Sample	117	55	49	13

* Newspaper circulation numbers are from The 1986 IMS Directory of Publications (Fort Washington, Pennsylvania: IMS Press, 1986)

Slightly more than half of the people with AIDS or the virus referred to in the newspapers were not placed in any of the government risk groups (Table VIII, p. 57). However, the number of references that were not identified for risk group was not significantly greater than the slightly smaller number of references that were identified for risk group; that is, there was no significant difference at the .05 level of confidence.

Table IX, p. 58, also lists references in the three papers to individuals with the disease or virus. But, unlike Table VIII, Table IX only includes references that were identified for risk group by the reporter. Table IX more clearly shows the risk groups given the most coverage by the three newspapers.

Using the chi square test for more than two categories, the observed frequencies were significant at the .001 level of confidence for the "ALL" column in Table IX. This level of significance means the observed frequencies could have occurred by chance less than 1 time in a 1000. Similarly, the observed risk group frequencies for the New York Times and Washington Post were significant at the .01 level, meaning the observed AIDS risk group coverage by these two papers could have occurred by chance less than 1 in 100 times. The observed risk group coverage of the Daily Oklahoman was not statistically significant. The observed Oklahoman coverage could have been due to chance.

Chi square also does not support the contention that

any one of these newspapers covered AIDS risk groups differently than the newspaper sample as a whole. There was no significant difference at the .05 level in the observed risk group frequencies.

Using statistical analysis, more information can be extracted from the risk group frequencies shown in Table IX. For instance, were the three newspapers more likely to cover risk groups other than the homosexual risk group? The answer is yes. In the three newspapers, the number of people with AIDS who were not in the homosexual risk group was significantly greater than the number of people with AIDS in the homosexual risk group. The observed frequencies in this case were significant at the .001 level. Even though homosexual men account for 72 percent of all the people who have the disease, only 23 percent of the individuals with the disease in the three papers were in this risk group. Furthermore, when the risk group of a person with AIDS was mentioned, that person was more than three times as likely to be from a government risk group other than homosexual or intravenous drug user. For comparison, Table IX also reproduces government statistics on the national incidence of the disease in different risk groups.

TABLE VIII
 FREQUENCY OF REFERENCES WITH AND WITHOUT
 RISK GROUP MENTIONED IN EACH
 NEWSPAPER, IN PERCENT

	ALL	N.Y.T.	W.P.	D.O.
No Mention	51%	58%	49%	31%
Homosexuals	11%	11%	8%	23%
I.V. Drug Users	3%	0%	8%	0%
Heterosexuals	2%	0%	0%	13%
Other	6%	5%	8%	0%
Blood Receivers	4%	4%	4%	8%
Hemophiliacs	9%	9%	6%	15%
Infants	11%	13%	16%	8%
TOTALS	100%	100%	99%	98%
# of References	117	55	49	13

TABLE IX
 FREQUENCY OF REFERENCES WITH RISK GROUP
 MENTIONED FOR EACH NEWSPAPER,
 IN PERCENT

	ALL	N.Y.T.	W.P.	D.O.
Homosexuals	23%	26%	16%	33%
I.V. Drug Users	7%	0%	16%	0%
Heterosexuals	4%	0%	0%	22%
Other	12%	13%	16%	0%
Blood Receivers	9%	9%	8%	11%
Hemophiliacs	18%	22%	12%	22%
Infants	28%	30%	32%	11%
TOTALS	101%	100%	100%	99%
# of References	57	23	25	9

ACTUAL INCIDENCE OF THE DISEASE
 IN DIFFERENT RISK GROUPS

Homosexuals	72%
I.V. Drug Users	16%
Heterosexuals	4%
Other	3%
Blood Receivers	2%
Hemophiliacs	1%
Infants	1%

* Actual incidence of AIDS in risk groups taken from Oklahoma, Department of Health, Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome Monthly Surveillance Report (AIDS Cases Reported to the Centers for Disease Control), by Dan Cameron, Oklahoma City, 30 November 1987.

Each of the 239 AIDS stories found in the newspaper sample was also coded for a second dependent variable. The coder looked for an explicit statistical reference to the two risk groups that comprise almost 90 percent of the total AIDS case load: homosexual men and intravenous drug users. In 183 of the newspaper stories, or 77 percent of the sample, a statistical reference was absent (Table X, p. 60). The number of AIDS stories without a statistical reference was significantly greater than the number of AIDS stories with a statistical reference. The numbers were significant at the .001 level of confidence. They would occur by chance less than 1 in a 1000 times.

The position (first or last half of the story) of the second dependent variable in the AIDS story was also coded. There was no statistical significance in the position of the second dependent variable at the .05 level of confidence. Likewise, none of the three newspapers showed any relationship in the placement of the second dependent variable.

TABLE X

NUMBER OF STATISTICAL REFERENCES IN NEWSPAPERS TO THE
TWO HIGHEST RISK GROUPS: HOMOSEXUAL MEN
AND INTRAVENOUS DRUG USERS

	ALL	N.Y.T.	W.P.	D.O.
No Reference	183	68	68	47
Reference				
First Half	35	26	5	4
Last Half	21	13	4	4
# of Stories	239	107	77	55

Comparison of Newspapers. The New York Times published significantly more AIDS stories than the Washington Post or the Daily Oklahoman (Table VII, p. 54). There was no significant difference in the number of stories published by the Post and the Oklahoman at the .05 level of confidence.

There was also no significant difference in the number of references published in the Times and Post at the .05 level. However, at the same level of confidence, both of these papers included a significantly higher number of references than the Oklahoman.

While the Times had a greater number of stories than the other two papers, it was not likely to mention the reference group of a person with AIDS any more than the Post or the Oklahoman. While 58 percent of the references in the Times did not reveal the risk group of the individual, the percent of references with unreported risk groups may not be that large or even constitute a majority of references. And while only 31 percent of the references in the Oklahoman sample were not placed in risk groups, the actual percentage might be larger or smaller. Statistically, none of the papers was any more likely not to mention the risk group than to mention the risk group.

Using two-way chi square classification, no relationship was shown between newspaper type and risk group frequency at the .05 level of confidence. Also, there was no significant relationship between newspaper type and coverage of non-homosexual and homosexual risk groups. None

of the papers was more likely than any other to use references to non-homosexual risk groups.

Description of Newsmagazine Content. A total of 312 issues from the three newsmagazines was examined. A little more than 56 percent of the issues contained at least one story about AIDS for a total of 295 AIDS stories analyzed for this study. Of these, 111 stories, or 38 percent of the total stories in the sample, contained a reference to an individual with the disease or virus. The total number of references found in these stories was 315 (Table XI, p. 63).

TABLE XI
 NUMBER OF AIDS STORIES AND REFERENCES
 FOUND IN THE NEWSMAGAZINE SAMPLE

	ALL	Time	Newsweek	US News
Circulation	---	4,696,320	3,059,410	2,070,672
Avg. Issue size	---	86 pp.	84 pp.	74 pp.
# of Issues in Sample	310	104	104	102
# of Issues w/Stories	175	50	65	60
# of AIDS Stories in Sample	295	76	116	103
# of Stories w/Reference	111	32	52	27
# of References in Sample	315	82	150	83

* Newsmagazine circulation numbers are from The 1986 IMS Directory of Publications (Fort Washington, Pennsylvania: IMS Press, 1986)

** The number of issues for U.S. News & World Report is less than the other two newsmagazines because it publishes a year-end issue that is a combination of the last issue of December and the first issue of January.

Well in excess of one-half of the people with AIDS or the virus referred to in the newsmagazines were not placed in any of the government risk groups (Table XII, p. 66). The number of references that were not identified for risk group was significantly greater at the .001 level of confidence.

Table XIII, p. 67, also lists references in the three magazines to individuals with the disease or virus. But, unlike Table XII, Table XIII only includes references that were identified for risk group by the story's reporter. Table XIII more clearly shows the risk groups given the most coverage by the three newsmagazines.

Using the chi square test for more than two categories, the observed frequencies were significant at the .001 level of confidence for the "ALL" column in Table XIII. This level of significance means the observed frequencies could have occurred by chance less than 1 time in a 1000. Similarly, the observed risk group frequencies for each of the three magazines were significant at the .001 level of confidence.

Were the three newsmagazines more likely to cover risk groups other than the homosexual risk group? As a whole they were. In the three newsmagazines, the number of people with AIDS who were not in the homosexual risk group was significantly greater than the number of people with AIDS in the homosexual risk group. The observed frequencies in this case were significant at the .001 level. Even though homosexual men account for 72 percent of all the people who

have the disease, only 28 percent of the individuals with the disease in the three magazines were male homosexuals. However, as shown in Table XIII, Newsweek was much more likely to cover homosexuals with AIDS, while the other two magazines gave more coverage to heterosexuals and hemophiliacs.

TABLE XII
 FREQUENCY OF REFERENCES WITH AND WITHOUT
 RISK GROUP MENTIONED IN EACH
 NEWSMAGAZINE, IN PERCENT

	ALL	Time	Newsweek	US News
No Mention	64%	67%	68%	55%
Homosexuals	10%	9%	13%	6%
I.V. Drug Users	1%	0%	3%	0%
Heterosexuals	10%	10%	4%	20%
Other	3%	1%	3%	4%
Blood Receivers	5%	5%	4%	6%
Hemophiliacs	4%	6%	2%	6%
Infants	3%	2%	4%	2%
TOTALS	100%	100%	101%	99%
# of References	315	82	150	83

TABLE XIII
 FREQUENCY OF REFERENCES WITH RISK GROUP
 MENTIONED FOR EACH NEWSMAGAZINE,
 IN PERCENT

	ALL	Time	Newsweek	US News
Homosexuals	28%	26%	40%	14%
I.V. Drug Users	4%	0%	8%	0%
Heterosexuals	28%	30%	13%	46%
Other	7%	4%	8%	8%
Blood Receivers	13%	15%	13%	14%
Hemophiliacs	12%	19%	6%	14%
Infants	9%	7%	13%	5%
TOTALS	101%	101%	101%	101%
# of References	112	27	48	37

ACTUAL INCIDENCE OF THE DISEASE
 IN DIFFERENT RISK GROUPS

Homosexuals	72%
I.V. Drug Users	16%
Heterosexuals	4%
Other	3%
Blood Receivers	2%
Hemophiliacs	1%
Infants	1%

* Actual incidence of AIDS in risk groups taken from Oklahoma, Department of Health, Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome Monthly Surveillance Report (AIDS Cases Reported to the Centers for Disease Control), by Dan Cameron, Oklahoma City, 30 November 1987.

Each of the 295 AIDS stories found in the newsmagazine sample was also coded for a second dependent variable. The coder looked for an explicit statistical reference to the two risk groups that comprise almost 90 percent of the total AIDS case load: homosexual men and intravenous drug users. In 257 of the stories, or 87 percent of the sample, a statistical reference was absent (Table XIV, p. 69). The number of AIDS stories without a statistical reference was significantly greater than the number of AIDS stories with a statistical reference at the .001 level of confidence.

The position of the second dependent variable in the AIDS story, first or last half of the story, was also coded. The magazines were much more likely to put a statistical reference in the first half of the story. Significance in this instance exceeded the .001 level of confidence.

TABLE XIV
 NUMBER OF STATISTICAL REFERENCES IN NEWSMAGAZINES
 TO THE TWO HIGHEST RISK GROUPS: HOMOSEXUAL
 MEN AND INTRAVENOUS DRUG USERS

	ALL	Time	Newsweek	US News
No Reference	257	59	105	93
Reference				
First Half	31	13	9	9
Last Half	7	4	2	1
# of Stories	295	76	116	103

Comparison of Newsmagazines. Newsweek published significantly more AIDS stories than Time or U.S. News & World Report (Table XI, p. 63). There was no significant difference in the number of stories published by Time and U.S. News at the .05 level of confidence.

Newsweek also published significantly more references to a person with AIDS or the virus than either of the other two magazines. There was no significant difference in the number of references published by Time and U.S. News.

Unlike the newspapers, both Newsweek and Time were much less likely to mention an individual's risk group. Of 150 references, Newsweek mentioned an individual's risk group 48 times. While Time mentioned 82 people with AIDS in the sample period, only 27 of those individuals were identified for risk group. The numbers were significant for both magazines above the .01 level of confidence. However, U.S. News & World Report's mention or non-mention of an individual's risk group was not significant.

Even though references in the magazines overall were more likely to refer to individuals outside the homosexual risk group, this was not the case for each newsmagazine. Newsweek, with 40 percent of its references to homosexual men with AIDS, was no more likely to mention a non-homosexual risk group; that is, they mentioned homosexual men with AIDS as often as non-homosexual men with AIDS. However, Time's references were decidedly non-homosexual in composition. The risk group frequencies found in Time were significant at the .001 level of

confidence. U.S. News was also much more likely to cover non-homosexual AIDS victims.

On the second dependent variable, the three magazines were likely not to publish a statistical reference at all. When a statistical reference was included in a story, Time and Newsweek showed no preference in placing the reference in the first half or last half of a story. However, a significantly greater number of the references found in U.S. News were placed in the first half of an AIDS article.

Comparison of Newspapers with Newsmagazines. Because of the differing nature of these two media types, some comparisons of their coverage were not possible. For instance, no relationship can be shown between the number of AIDS stories published by newspapers and newsmagazines because one medium is published daily and the other weekly. For the same reason, no comparisons of the number of references to an individual with AIDS can be made. However, the frequencies of the first and second dependent variable do lend themselves to comparisons of the newsmagazines and newspapers.

As a group, the newspapers and newsmagazines were likely not to mention the risk group of an individual with AIDS. Of 432 references, these media only identified an AIDS victim's risk group 169 times. Although neither medium was likely to mention an individual's risk group, newspapers identified individuals for risk group more often than newsmagazines.

Overall, these media were significantly more likely to cover non-homosexual AIDS victims (Table XV, p. 73). Of 169 people with AIDS identified for risk group, 44 were homosexual. The newspapers and newsmagazines showed no significant difference among themselves in this tendency to avoid homosexual AIDS victims. The frequencies shown were significant at the .001 level.

As was the case with each media type and each individual publication, these media rarely included an explicit statistical reference to the risk groups that comprise most AIDS cases in the U.S. -- homosexual men and I.V. drug users.

TABLE XV
 FREQUENCY OF REFERENCES WITH RISK GROUP MENTIONED
 IN THE PRINT MEDIA SAMPLE, IN PERCENT

	Government Statistics	Print Media	Maga- zines	News- papers
Homosexuals	72%	26%	28%	23%
I.V. Drug Users	16%	5%	4%	7%
Heterosexuals	4%	20%	28%	4%
Other	3%	9%	7%	12%
Blood Receivers	2%	12%	13%	9%
Hemophiliacs	1%	14%	12%	18%
Infants	1%	15%	9%	28%
TOTALS	99%	101%	101%	101%
# of References	---	169	112	57

* Actual incidence of AIDS in risk groups taken from Oklahoma, Department of Health, Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome Monthly Surveillance Report (AIDS Cases Reported to the Centers for Disease Control), by Dan Cameron, Oklahoma City, 30 November 1987.

END NOTES

¹ Oklahoma, Department of Health, Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome Monthly Surveillance Report (AIDS Cases Reported to the Centers for Disease Control), by Dan Cameron, Oklahoma City, 30 November 1987, p. 1.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study was designed to document print media coverage of people with Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome or the AIDS virus that causes the fatal disease. The study also intended to evaluate the print media picture of AIDS victims in light of government health statistics.

According to the United States government's disease monitoring agency, the Centers for Disease Control, more than 30,000 people with AIDS have died since 1981. The number of people with AIDS is expected to more than quadruple within the next four years. Additionally, 1 to 1.5 million people carry the AIDS virus that causes the disease. Like the number of people who are expected to contract the disease in the near future, the number of virus carriers is also expected to rise dramatically. Government health experts have called on the mass media to take part in a massive education campaign to help control the spread of AIDS.

This study was a content analysis of three newspapers, the New York Times, Washington Post, and Daily Oklahoman, and three national newsmagazines, Time, Newsweek, and

U.S. News & World Report. The publications were examined for the amount of coverage they gave to the risk groups associated with AIDS. They were also examined for the inclusion of an explicit mention of the risk groups that now bear approximately 90 percent of the United States AIDS caseload: homosexual men and intravenous drug users. Data were taken from a two-year period between the summer of 1985 and the summer of 1987.

Conclusions

The print media in this study presented a picture of AIDS victims quite different from that found in government health statistics. While government statistics reveal that homosexual men comprise 72 percent of the disease's victims, the print media in this study were more likely to focus on other risk groups. In fact, the data from this study established that an individual with AIDS reported in the print media was three times as likely to be from a risk group other than the homosexual risk group.

The New York Times had the most extensive AIDS coverage of the three newspapers examined. Possibly, this coverage was the result of a much larger number of AIDS cases in New York City. As of November 30, 1987, 11,400 people in New York City had been diagnosed with the disease.¹ New York City health officials expect more than 40,000 cases of AIDS by 1991.² By comparison, about 700 people have been diagnosed with AIDS in Washington, D.C.,³ and about

200 in all of Oklahoma.⁴

Newsweek had the most AIDS coverage of the three newsmagazines involved. Newsweek was also the only publication in the study that did not give significantly more coverage to risk groups other than the homosexual risk group.

But overall, the data suggest that when these newspapers and magazines reported on people with AIDS, they were virtually ignoring the group that has been most affected by the disease: homosexual men. The readers of these print media were not seeing an accurate, proportional representation of the people whom AIDS has dealt its most severe blow. Rather, the public was most often seeing people with AIDS who were not reported as being in any risk group. Print media consumers were also seeing individuals with AIDS, like infants and hemophiliacs, who belong in risk groups that account for only a small minority of AIDS cases. For a more descriptive look at the risk group coverage of these media, pie charts are included in Appendix B, p. 94.

On one hand, government AIDS statistics report that almost three-quarters of AIDS victims are homosexual men. On the other hand, a large percentage of print media AIDS coverage focuses on individuals who are not homosexual men.

Lazarsfeld and Merton theorized that the most effective communication occurs when there are no competing messages. Considering the results of this study, Lazarsfeld and Merton might remark that the AIDS message delivered to the public by the print media and the government is somewhat less than

most effective. The two pictures of the epidemic conflict, and in that environment, misunderstandings thrive.⁵

Granted, the image of a small baby or young student dying of AIDS is a compelling news story to both reporter and reader. But this aspect of the AIDS epidemic should not dominate media AIDS coverage to the extent it warps the public's picture of the disease and the risk groups most affected.

To rectify this image, the media could easily have reported available government statistics about the groups that comprise a large majority of the AIDS cases. But seldom was an explicit statistical reference made about the large numbers (or high percentage of total AIDS case load) of homosexual men and intravenous drug users who have this disease.

In science and medical reporting, people can be led to erroneous decisions when they are given distorted or inaccurate information.⁶ Erroneous decisions also occur when important information is left out of a news story.⁷ This analysis of AIDS coverage indicates the national print media were not including information that could have put the disease in better perspective. In an October 1985 story in the New York Times, Jane Rosenthal, director of the New York City Health Department's AIDS Hot Line worried aloud about the kind of message people were getting about AIDS:

People don't seem to be absorbing the details that might reassure them, but instead are picking up on details that might terrify them. We don't want to minimize the threat of AIDS, but many just

don't seem to be getting the message that most people are not at risk.

Most of the Hot Line's calls had come from heterosexuals.⁸ However, through March 1987, homosexual men accounted for almost 69 percent of AIDS cases in New York City.⁹

A prominent feature of the AIDS coverage presented in these newspapers and newsmagazines was the high percentage of references to people with AIDS who were given no risk group. Might these references be misinterpreted by the general public as being unexplained infections of the AIDS virus?

The press' coverage of AIDS, from 1983 to 1985, was criticized for its reluctance to discuss homosexuality.¹⁰ This study provided evidence that the press was still uncomfortable with the predominant group affected by this disease from 1985 to 1987. Considering the large number of people with AIDS who are gay, it is likely that many of the people with AIDS reported in the newspapers and newsmagazines were also gay. They just were not being reported as such.

It is also possible these newspapers were contributing to an effort to discard the notion that AIDS is only a gay disease.¹¹ By eliminating most references to homosexuality, reporters may have thought their story would generate broader concern. If this was their goal, it can be considered very successful. In a recent poll, two-thirds of respondents said AIDS was America's greatest health problem.¹² But is this concern being generated by a growing knowledge of the possible danger this disease

presents? Or is this concern the product of an anxious public uncertain of the pervasiveness of the disease?

There are undoubtedly many views on AIDS. People interpret media information selectively depending on their own predispositions, the influence of peers, and the credibility of sources.¹³ However, the press does help establish an overall theme that gives meaning to public events. With AIDS, what theme was the press advancing? Were readers being exposed to the idea of a huge AIDS case load spanning many diverse risk groups? Or were readers being exposed to the idea of a huge AIDS case load that continues to be largely limited to homosexual men and I.V. drug users? If the press is to be responsible, it must provide an accurate and full presentation of events to widen the base of public knowledge.¹⁴

There is likely to be much public policy written before AIDS is controlled. If the public is unsure of the facts surrounding AIDS, a climate of fear can develop.¹⁵ Ambiguity breeds contempt. A recent study concluded that negative reactions to victims of AIDS were based in large part on a fear of unknown aspects of the disease.¹⁶

A frightened public could easily jeopardize the freedom of groups already closely connected with the AIDS epidemic. Some employers have threatened to screen job applicants for the disease. Some local government officials have suggested that police and paramedics may not be required to give emergency help to suspected AIDS victims. While some officials have suggested the forced hospitalization of

people with AIDS, a few hospitals have refused to admit any AIDS patients.¹⁷

The media must learn how to provoke a sense of public urgency about serious health concerns. But at the same time, the media must provide comprehensive and unbiased information to keep that urgency from dissolving into anxiety and then panic.

Recommendations for Further Research

A considerable amount of research is needed on the media's response to the AIDS epidemic. This study examined only three newspapers and three newsmagazines. The newspapers may be atypical of press coverage in other cities. A study using a larger variety of newspapers might yield different results. Researchers studying local newspapers should pay special attention to the local case load of people with AIDS. As suggested by this study, the New York Times coverage was probably influenced by the disproportionate number of AIDS cases in that city. Newspaper coverage in some other cities may be similarly influenced.

Television and radio coverage of the AIDS epidemic is largely untouched by research. Like other AIDS/media research, the broadcast media's role in forming the public's perception of AIDS is in need of study.

This study presented a picture of AIDS being promoted by dominant national print media. Maybe the media feel they are providing AIDS coverage that makes some of its victims

seem more tragic. However, in the process of reporting the epidemic, the print media have also given the public a false image of the disease's incursion into various social groups. That image bolsters the idea of a rapidly expanding list of victims from mainstream American society. Seemingly, an endless list of tragic AIDS stories could come from any sector of American society. And the media could easily concentrate more on the groups most affected by the disease. But apparently, editors feel the public would rather not read many more stories about homosexuals. An editor does not want to give the public what the public doesn't want. Certainly, the editor is part of a business that's trying to make a profit. But if business decisions require the printing of more sensational news angles in the coverage of the AIDS epidemic, the media should at least provide clear and unambiguous statistics about the actual extent of the disease in various risk groups.

In the future, print reporters should concentrate on supplying the public with a full and comprehensive picture of the extent of AIDS instead of dramatic vignettes that all too often focus on low risk groups for the disease. Only by seeing accurate and inclusive reports can the public make a decision on how the disease should be handled.

END NOTES

¹ Personal telephone interview with Paul Van Souder, Executive Director of the People With AIDS Coalition, New York City, New York, 10 December 1987.

² City of New York, AIDS in New York City: Report to the Mayor, Inter Agency Task Force on AIDS, April 1987, cover memorandum.

³ Personal telephone interview with Jeff Levi, Executive Director of the National Gay Task Force, Washington, D.C., 10 December 1987.

⁴ Oklahoma, Department of Health, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome Monthly Surveillance Report (AIDS Cases Reported to the Centers for Disease Control), by Dan Cameron, Oklahoma City, 30 November 1987, p. 2.

⁵ Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton, "Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action," The Process and Effects of Mass Communication, eds. Wilbur Schramm and D. Roberts (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972) as cited in Rina Alcalay, "The Impact of Mass Communication Campaigns in the Health Field," Social Science and Medicine, 17 (1983), 92.

⁶ Warren Burkett, News Reporting: Science, Medicine, and High Technology (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State University Press, 1986), p. 67.

⁷ Burkett, p. 66.

⁸ Glen Collins, "AIDS Hot Line Is Busy in City," New York Times, 7 October 1985, p. B12.

⁹ City of New York, p. 7.

¹⁰ Edwin Diamond and Christopher M. Bellitto, "The Great Verbal Coverup: Prudish Editing Blurs the Facts on AIDS," Washington Journalism Review, March 1986, p. 39.

¹¹ "AIDS Alarms and False Alarms," New York Times, 4 February 1987, p. A26.

¹² "Majority See AIDS as Public Threat," Washington Post, 12 March 1987, p. A4.

¹³ Arthur Cohen, Attitude Change: Social Influences (New York: Basic Books, 1964) as cited in National Academy of Sciences, Institute of Medicine, Confronting AIDS: Directions for Public Health, Health Care, and Research (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1986), p. 250.

¹⁴ Jay W. Stein, Mass Media, Education, and a Better Society (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1979), pp. 32-33.

¹⁵ Herbert McClosky and Alida Brel, Dimensions of Tolerance (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1983) as cited in National Academy of Sciences, p. 255.

¹⁶ Rodney G. Triplet and David B. Sugarman, "Reactions to AIDS Victims: Ambiguity Breeds Contempt," Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, June 1987, p. 271.

¹⁷ Clara Germani, "Misunderstandings and Injustice Flow From Deep Public Anxiety," Christian Science Monitor, 1 October 1985, pp. 3, 7.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A Report On Designing an Effective AIDS Prevention Campaign Strategy for San Francisco: Results from the First Probability Sample of an Urban Gay Male Community. San Francisco: Research and Decisions Corporation, 1984.
- "AIDS Alarms and False Alarms." New York Times, 7 October 1987, p. A26.
- Albert, Edward. "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome: The Victim and the Press." Studies in Communications 3. Ed. Thelma McCormack. Greenwich, Connecticut: JAI Press Inc., 1986. Pp. 138-158.
- Alcalay, Rina. "The Impact of Mass Communication Campaigns in the Health Field." Social Science and Medicine, 17 (1983), 87-94.
- Bain, George. "Media Watch: Villains, and Victims of AIDS." Maclean's, 20 April 1987, p. 44.
- Berelson, Bernard. Content Analysis In Communication Research. New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1971.
- Berlo, David K. The Process of Communication: An Introduction to Theory and Practice. San Francisco: Rinehart Press, 1960.
- Black, David. The Plague Years: A Chronicle of AIDS, The Epidemic of Our Times. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985.
- Buchler, Justus. Philosophical Writings of Peirce. New York: Dover Press, 1955.
- Burkett, Warren. News Reporting: Science, Medicine, and High Technology. Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State University Press, 1986.
- Check, William. "Public Education on AIDS: Not Only the Media's Responsibility." Hastings Center Report (A Special Supplement), August 1985, pp. 27, 31.

- City of New York. AIDS in New York City: Report to the Mayor. Inter Agency Task Force on AIDS, April 1987.
- Collins, Glen. "AIDS Hot line Is Busy in City." New York Times, 7 October 1985, p. B12.
- Diamond, Edwin. "Celebrity AIDS." New York, 2 March 1987, pp. 16, 20.
- Diamond, Edwin and Christopher M. Bellitto. "The Great Verbal Coverup: Prudish Editing Blurs the Facts on AIDS." Washington Journalism Review, March 1986, pp. 39-42.
- Eckholm, Eric. "AIDS Test Drug Prolongs Lives In Some Cases: Wider Availability Set but Pill Is Not A Cure." New York Times, 20 September 1986, pp. A1, A7.
- Ettema, James S., James W. Brown and Russell V. Luepker. "Knowledge Gap Effects In a Health Information Campaign." Public Opinion Quarterly, 47 (1983), 516-527.
- Friedman, Sharon M., Sharon Dunwoody, and Carol L. Rogers, eds. Scientists and Journalists: Reporting Science as News. New York: The Free Press, 1986.
- Frutchey, Chuck. "Homophobia in AIDS Education: Counterproductive to Prevention." Focus, January 1988, p. 3.
- Germani, Clara. "Misunderstandings and Injustice Flow From Deep Public Anxiety." Christian Science Monitor, 1 October 1985, p. 1, 7.
- Greenberg, Rachel H., Vicki S. Freimuth and Elaine Bratic. "A Content Analytic Study of Daily Newspaper Coverage of Cancer." Communication Yearbook 3. Ed. Dan Nimmo. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1979. Pp. 645-654.
- Jones, Tricia S. "A Media Definition of Alcoholism." Communication Theory and Interpersonal Interaction: Selected Proceedings From the Fourth International Conference on Culture and Communication, Temple University, 1981. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1984.
- Kerlinger, Fred N. Foundations of Behavioral Research, 3rd ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1986.
- Kurland, Morton L., M.D. Coping With AIDS: Facts and Fears. New York: Rosen Publishing Group, 1987.

- Lazarsfeld, Paul and Robert K. Merton. "Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action." The Process and Effects of Mass Communication. Eds. Wilbur Schramm and D. Roberts. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972.
- "Majority See AIDS as Public Threat." Washington Post, 12 March 1987, p. A4.
- Martindale, Rob. "CDC Reports Dramatic Increase in AIDS Cases." Tulsa World, 5 November 1987, pp. A1, A4.
- McCombs, Maxwell, Donald Lewis Shaw and Davis Grey. Handbook of Reporting Methods. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976.
- Mirotznik, Jerrold and Bernadette M. Mosellie. "Genital Herpes and the Mass Media." Journal of Popular Culture, 20 (1986), 1-12.
- "Most Support Wide AIDS Testing, Gallup Reports." New York Times, 13 July 1987, p. B6.
- National Academy of Sciences. Institute of Medicine. Confronting AIDS: Directions for Public Health, Health Care, and Research. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1986.
- National Academy of Sciences. Institute of Medicine. Mobilizing Against AIDS: The Unfinished Story of a Virus. By Eve K. Nichols. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986.
- Oklahoma. Department of Health. Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome Monthly Surveillance Report (AIDS Cases Reported to the Centers for Disease Control). By Dan Cameron, Oklahoma City, 30 November 1987.
- "Pneumocystis Pneumonia - Los Angeles." Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 5 June 1981, pp. 2-3.
- Randolph, Eleanor. "AIDS Reporters' Challenge: To Educate, Not Panic, the Public." Washington Post, 5 June 1987, pp. D1-D2.
- Rappoport, Jon. "The AIDS Story Nobody Touches." Moving Up, December 1987, pp. 24-27.
- Rensberger, Boyce. "Immune Systems of Some May Inhibit AIDS." Washington Post, 12 December 1986, p. A4.

- Rivers, William L., Wilbur Schramm and Clifford G. Christians. Responsibility in Mass Communications. 3rd ed. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1980.
- Russell, Cristine. "AIDS Stirs Public Concern But Not Panic, Survey Says." Washington Post, 26 September 1985, pp. A1, A8.
- Shilts, Randy. And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987.
- Silverman, Mervyn F. and Deborah B. Silverman. "AIDS and the Threat to Public Health." Hastings Center Report (A Special Supplement), August 1985, pp. 19-22.
- Stein, Jay W. Mass Media, Education, and a Better Society. Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1979.
- Stout, Hilary. "40% of Americans Fear They Will Contract AIDS, a Poll Indicates." New York Times, 29 November 1987, p. 26.
- "Survey Finds Wide AIDS Ignorance." New York Times, 30 January 1988, p. A6.
- Triplet, Rodney G. and David B. Sugarman. "Reactions to AIDS Ambiguity Breeds Contempt." Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, June 1987, pp. 265-274.
- Tyckoson, David A. AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Phoenix, Arizona: Oryx Press, 1986.
- Oregon. University of Oregon. Covering AIDS: A Handbook for Journalists. Eugene: School of Journalism, 1987.
- U. S. Public Health Service. Latest Facts About AIDS: Gay and Bisexual Men and AIDS. Pamphlet, 1986.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A
CODING SHEETS

STORY # _____ PG.# _____ SYNOPSIS _____

HIGH RISK GROUPS? _____ POSITION? _____

	NM	HETE	BL TR	HOMO	OT	INF	HEM	IV
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
	NM	HETE	BL TR	HOMO	OT	INF	HEM	IV
TOT								

KEY

- NM = NO MENTION
- HETE = HETEROSEXUAL
- BL TR = BLOOD TRANSFUSION
- HOMO = HOMOSEXUAL
- OT = OTHER
- INF = INFANT
- HEM = HEMOPHILIAC
- IV = INTRAVENOUS DRUG USER

APPENDIX B

PIE CHARTS

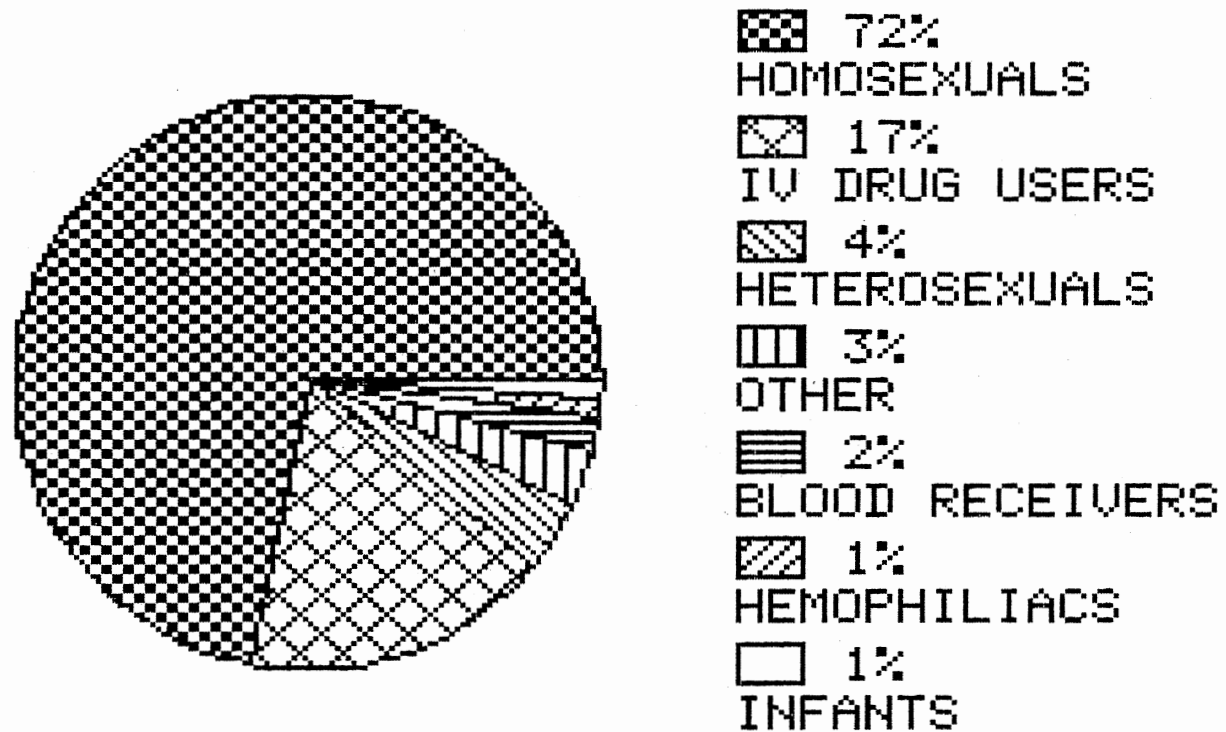


Figure 4. Frequency of AIDS Risk Groups Reported in U.S.

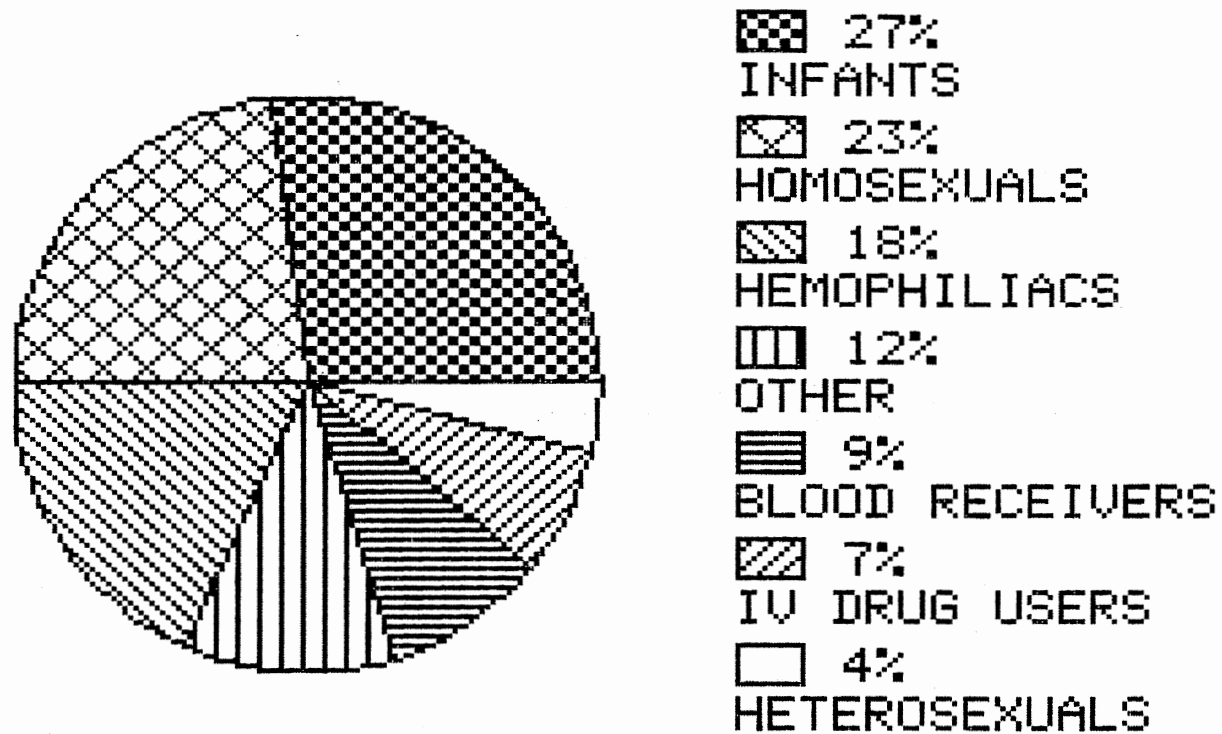


Figure 5. Frequency of AIDS Risk Groups Reported in Newspapers

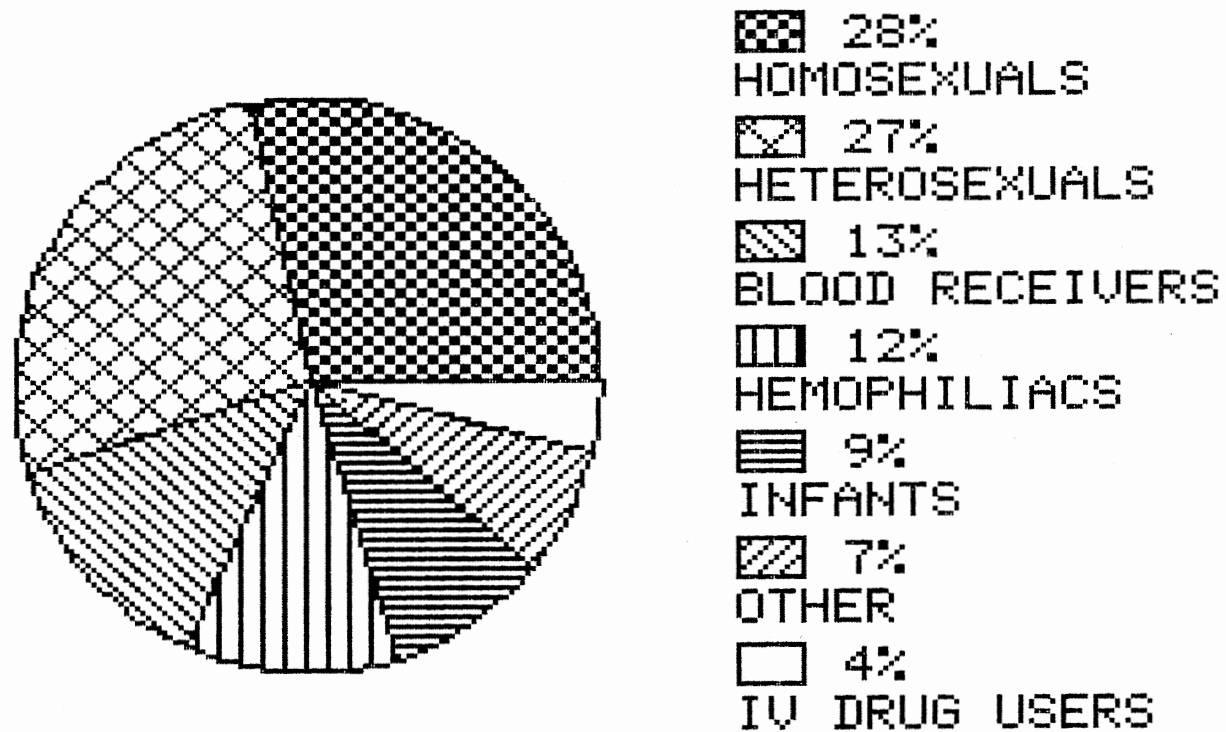


Figure 6. Frequency of AIDS Risk Groups Reported in Newsmagazines

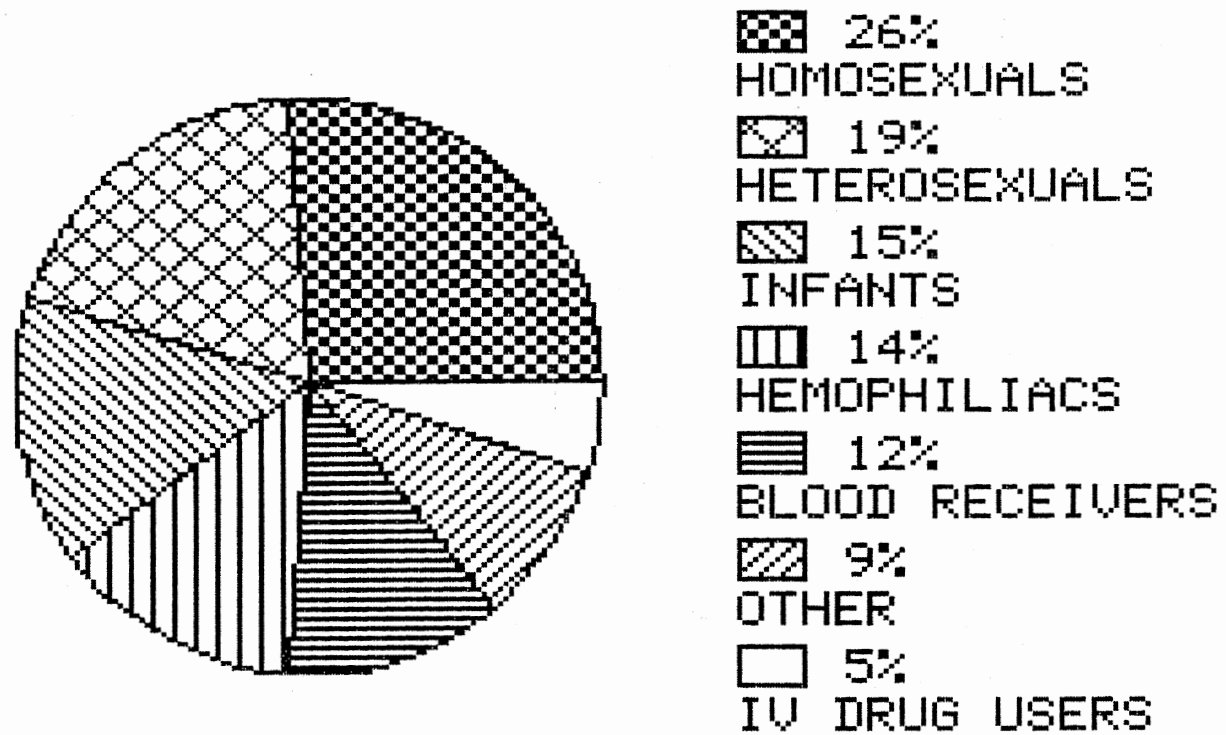


Figure 7. Frequency of AIDS Risk Groups Reported in Print Media

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONS TO THE EDITORS

Questions Asked of Newspaper Editors

1. IN YOUR NEWSPAPER, A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF REFERENCES TO A PERSON WITH AIDS OR THE VIRUS DID NOT MENTION THE PERSON'S RISK GROUP. WHEN A REPORTER WRITES A STORY THAT INCLUDES A REFERENCE TO A PERSON WITH AIDS, WHAT REASONS DETERMINE WHETHER A REPORTER OR EDITOR WILL INCLUDE THE PERSON'S RISK GROUP?

2. ARE THERE ANY ISSUES SPECIFIC TO GAYS THAT AFFECT THE REPORTING OF GAYS AS AIDS VICTIMS? FOR EXAMPLE, DO REPORTERS FIND GAYS WITH AIDS DIFFICULT TO LOCATE? DO A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF GAY PEOPLE ASK THAT THEIR SEXUAL PREFERENCE NOT BE REVEALED?

3. RELATIVE TO THE INCIDENCE OF THE DISEASE IN INFANTS, HEMOPHILIACS, AND INTRAVENOUS DRUG USERS, WHY MIGHT NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OVERREPRESENT OR UNDERREPRESENT THESE GROUPS?

4. IS THERE A CERTAIN PHILOSOPHY OF "WHAT IS NEWS?" AT YOUR NEWSPAPER THAT MIGHT HELP EXPLAIN THE WAY YOUR PAPER COVERS THE AIDS STORY? FOR EXAMPLE, ARE PEOPLE IN CERTAIN RISK GROUPS MORE NEWSWORTHY THAN PEOPLE IN OTHER RISK GROUPS?

5. IN THE FIRST FEW YEARS OF THE AIDS EPIDEMIC, CRITICS OF AIDS PRESS COVERAGE CLAIMED REPORTERS AND EDITORS WERE OVERLY DELICATE IN THEIR PRESENTATION OF SOME ISSUES INVOLVED WITH THE AIDS STORY (HOMOSEXUALITY, SEXUAL TRANSMISSION ROUTES, ETC.). IS THERE STILL ANY VALIDITY TO THIS CRITICISM?

6. MOST OF THE AIDS STORIES IN YOUR NEWSPAPER DID NOT EXPLICITLY STATE THAT MOST OF THE PEOPLE WITH THE DISEASE ARE GAY, OR GAY AND I.V. DRUG USERS. WHY WOULD A REPORTER OR EDITOR NOT INCLUDE SUCH A REFERENCE?

7. WOULD YOU SAY THERE IS AN EFFORT BY YOUR REPORTERS OR EDITORS TO CHANGE YOUR READERS' PERCEPTION OF AIDS AS A "GAY DISEASE." IF SO, WHY?

VITA

Alan G. Nyitray

Candidate for the Degree of
Master of Science

Thesis: A STUDY OF PRINT MEDIA COVERAGE OF AIDS VICTIMS
AND VIRUS CARRIERS COMPARED WITH GOVERNMENT
AIDS STATISTICS

Major Field: Mass Communications

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Frankfurt A/M, West Germany,
November 29, 1961, the son of Stephen and Eva
Nyitray.

Education: Graduated from Lawton High School, Lawton,
Oklahoma, in June 1978; attended Cameron
University, Lawton, Oklahoma, and Eastern State
College, Wilburton, Oklahoma; received Bachelor
of Science degree in Arts and Sciences from
Oklahoma State University in 1984; completed
requirements for Master of Science degree at
Oklahoma State University in July, 1988.

Professional Experience: Graduate Assistant,
Department of Journalism and Broadcasting,
Oklahoma State University, January, 1987, to May,
1988; Reporter, KOSU Radio, Stillwater, Oklahoma,
July, 1986, to August, 1987; Reporter and Anchor,
KELI Radio, Tulsa, Oklahoma, August, 1985, to
March, 1986; News Director, KWOX Radio, Woodward,
Oklahoma, January, 1985, to August, 1985;
Reporter and Anchor, KVRO Radio, Stillwater,
Oklahoma, January, 1984, to January, 1985.