

**MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE AIDS ISSUE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO
PUBLIC AWARENESS AND GOVERNMENT POLICY**

By

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ABSTRACT

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) has become a prevalent issue in the United States. The research reported here examined the AIDS issue in print media, national Gallup polls, and government expenditures. Overall, the number of AIDS-related articles, public awareness of AIDS and government spending was found to increase steadily between the years 1983 and 1987. A relationship between the print media and public awareness was found to be positively, but not significantly correlated. The relationship between print media and government spending was found to be positively and significantly correlated. The findings of this study suggested that the public initially became aware of AIDS through media use and that there is a significant relationship between print media and government expenditures. The key limiting factor was the difficulty in accessing the direction that the relationships took in influencing each area of focus.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The nature of U.S. society requires information processing, since people are constantly being inundated with news and information from the mass media. Newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and various other forms of media are continually providing information to their mass audiences. It would be almost impossible for any individual to obtain important societal information without relying on mass media. "Our knowledge comes primarily from the mass media. For the most part, we know only those aspects of national politics considered newsworthy enough from transmission through the mass media" (Shaw & McCombs, 1977, p. 7). Thus, mass media possess potential power to influence their audiences.

The amount of newsworthy information is limitless. The media organizations act as gatekeepers, gathering as much information as possible and narrowing it down to the most significant items. Only these items are passed on to the general public via television, radio, newspapers, and maga-

zines. In media organizations there are designated individuals who act as these filtering agents or gatekeepers.

Gatekeepers in media organizations are those individuals who decide what will be covered in the news. Managing editors are gatekeepers at newspapers and magazines. At television and radio stations news directors are usually found to perform gatekeeping tasks. These individuals select newstories that will appeal to the greatest number of people. When information is received, gatekeepers determine which information is most significant or newsworthy for the general public. "Gatekeepers, although obviously constrained by the media in which they work, make news decisions somewhat unconsciously, although based upon their experience and intuitions and professional norms regarding what is news" (Qualter, 1985, p. 160). Information is passed to the public from these sources who have predetermined its newsworthiness. If information is not deemed newsworthy by these gatekeepers, it will not be passed on to the public. Therefore, public is dependent upon the decisions of gatekeepers in the media, because individuals are unable to obtain most important information on their own.

What gatekeepers find important or newsworthy may not be the same as what some members of the general public may deem important or newsworthy. But it would be impossible to disseminate stories about all available news events through the mass media to the public. The public must therefore rely on the judgments of media gatekeepers and the decisions they make about what information is most newsworthy. Gatekeeping thus controls quantity and assures news quality.

When information is provided to the public through the media, the media signal the importance of that information. "Although people have an impressive ability to disregard communications in which they are not interested, the mass media exercise a powerful influence in determining the degree of attention they give to subjects in which they are interested" (Davidson, 1982, p. 198). These signals increase the likelihood that any item or issue placed on the media agenda will become important to the general public.

When an item or issue is deemed worthy of reporting, it becomes part of the media agenda. Agendas are lists, plans or outlines to be considered or done. In the media, the agenda is what newstories should be covered. When the pub-

lic becomes aware of the issue or item, it may become part of the public agenda. Thus, by examining the items in the news, it is possible to determine what items are likely to become part of the public agenda. Furthermore, because the U.S. government is structured to be representative of its constituents' views and opinions, by analyzing public opinion or the public concerns for specific issues in the news, researchers can determine what issues are likely to be addressed by government officials; this becomes the policy agenda.

By analyzing print media coverage of AIDS, this study sought to find how this issue had been presented to the public. The transfer of awareness and concern about AIDS from media to public to policy agenda was examined. Specifically it explores: (a) the amount of newspaper coverage of AIDS, (b) public awareness of the issue, and (c) how government policy is related to the public reaction. Thus, the present study sought to answer the following research questions:

1.1 Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between public opinion of the AIDS issue and the amount and type of media coverage of the AIDS?

2. What is the relationship between government expenditures and public reaction to the media coverage of AIDS?

3. What is the relationship between the amount of media coverage of AIDS, public awareness of the AIDS issue and legislative expenditures on AIDS research between 1983 and 1987?

1.2 Theoretical Rationale

The agenda-setting perspective rests in the early work of Walter Lippmann (1922) who suggested that mass communication helps to shape the "pictures in our heads." The media provide information to their audience. The format used to disseminate the news signals the importance of stories. Headlines, page placement, and story order tell the public what stories are most significant. Stories assigned larger headlines and front page placement are perceived as providing more important information. Thus, the media become influential in aiding the formation of public opinion by confirming importance of stories given prominent positions. Although Lippmann's work began in the 1920s, little attention was paid to his ideas until the 1960s.

Lippmann's ideas reemerged during the 1960s in a variety of studies, which sought to show that media agenda can be transferred to individuals' personal agendas. Politicians and political issues that the media signal as important become important to the public. Since the public has virtually no other means for obtaining political information, the media become a dominant source of information.

Lang and Lang (1968) studied the impact of the media on shaping political images for the public. They found that the mass media could be considered an instrumental influence on their audiences regarding political candidates and parties.

The mass media structure issues and personalities, they do this gradually and over a period of time, and thus this impact seems less spectacular than the shift or crystallization of a particular vote decision. We cannot help but believe that, indirectly, by creating a political climate, a sense of urgency, an image of parties and candidates, etc., they do influence votes (Lang & Lang, 1968, p. 19).

For example, when politicians are in the midst of campaigning, the media cover only certain aspects of the campaign. By emphasizing those issues on which politicians focus, the media signal the importance of those issues to the public. If the media were to omit coverage of certain

issues those issues could not become part of the public agenda.

Cohen (1963) found that simply by placing selected information in the news, the media were influencing public opinion, and thereby establishing the most important issues of our everyday lives.

This impact of the mass media -the ability to effect cognitive change among individuals, to structure their thinking- has been labeled the agenda-setting function of mass communication. Here may lie the most important effect of mass communication its ability to mentally order and organize our world for us. In short, the mass media may not be successful in telling us what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about (Cohen 1963, p. 120).

The media provide the public with a certain amount of information. The information they provide is considered significant because it is in the news. Stories that do not make the news are usually left unknown to the public unless the public has some direct personal experience related to the story. Therefore, issues and stories in the news are those that individuals in society have access to and find important to think about. Those stories not in the news go unknown and do not become issues for the public. In this way, the media provide the public with information to think about.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) developed and provided the initial application of agenda-setting theory. They hypothesized, "While the mass media may have little influence on the direction or intensity of attitudes, it is hypothesized that the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issues" (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 177). After the study conducted by McCombs and Shaw in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, was complete, the researchers found a significant correlation between media coverage of political issues and what voters considered to be important issues.

Additional studies have reaffirmed agenda-setting effects. Funkhouser (1973) found a positive correlation between issues of the 1960s reported in news magazines and voters' perceptions of their most significant concerns. Mullins (1973) found a high correlation between young voters' opinions on what were important issues and the media content emphasizing those same issues.

Agenda-setting is also relevant to social issues. For example, Cook et al. (1983) investigated fraud and abuse in home health care, which had become a concern in the Chicago metropolitan area, to determine if this issue was affecting the public and policy agendas.

The results of their study demonstrated that agenda-setting occurred with social issues in society. The media reported this issue, the public became aware and expressed concern, and eventually policies were formulated in order to regulate home health care facilities. This study provides a basis for investigating other social concerns.

If issues such as home health care fraud and abuse can become important issues on the media agenda, and subsequently on the public and policy agendas, then it seems plausible that other social issues can follow the same pattern. The agenda-setting approach is useful in considering the link between media coverage of social issues and public awareness. As revealed in Cook's study, a social issue was found to flow from the media to public to policy agenda. Other social issues may be considered in the same manner. Applying agenda-setting in the domain of social issues is a way of testing the scope of agenda-setting theory.

The present study on agenda-setting combines media coverage, public awareness and policy in an attempt to discover the impact that each has on the other. When certain items from the media agenda become a concern of the public, this information is acknowledged by political leaders who repre-

sent the public's needs. "Public desires are not perfectly satisfied, but the political system eventually produces acceptable policies most of the time. And it should be emphasized that a majority of policy outcomes are in accordance with public preferences in most categories" (Monroe, 1979, p. 17). The media dictate the information that the public thinks and talks about, and government officials follow through to represent the public's expressed concerns.

1.3 Statement of Purpose

This study analyzes the pervasive social concern, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), in terms of media, public and policy agendas. This topic has been a salient issue in the news media since 1983. Since this disease is fatal, contagious and is transmitted through sexual activities and blood transfusions, it has the potential of infecting a large portion of the population.

AIDS has been reported from every part of the world. The largest number of cases, 48,139, have been reported in the United States, where the disease was first recognized in 1981. In 41 other countries in the Americas, a total of 7,215 cases have been reported. In the Americas, Europe and Australia, most AIDS cases occur among young, 20-49 year old homosexual or bisexual men and intravenous drug users. However, the estimate of the proportion of cases of AIDS acquired through heterosexual contact has increased from 1% to approximately 4% (World Health Organization, 1988).

It is clear that in order to inform the general public about the dangers of AIDS, accurate mediated information is imperative. Since most individuals in our society engage in sexual activities, or at some point in their lives may need a blood transfusion, AIDS has come to the attention of both the media and the public. Moreover, the government has been pressured by several individual and group constituents to increase funding for AIDS research, education, and testing.

This study is important because it will add to the list of studies that have applied agenda-setting to discover whether or not relationships occur between media, public and policy agendas. It differs from other studies in that it considers fully the transfer from media agenda to public to policy agendas. It will also add to the understanding that mass mediated news can become a social concern of the public, and that these concerns can transfer to the policy agenda.

Chapter II comprises a literature review of related agenda-setting studies; Chapter III contains the operationalization of variables. The results of this study are presented in Chapter IV and the interpretation of these results is covered in Chapter V.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Agenda-setting theory and research has attempted to investigate and explain the changes in society in regard to media effects. Two main research traditions have emerged, agenda-setting and agenda-building. Agenda-setting is viewed as a process through which the mass media help establish important issues for the public. This view has been adopted primarily by mass communication scholars. Agenda-building is viewed as a process through which the political agenda is influenced in part by the media and public agendas. This focus has mainly been a concern of political scientists.

The following literature review is based on studies using both agenda-setting and agenda-building perspectives. By presenting both perspectives, this review has attempted to cover all aspects of the entire agenda-setting function including media, public and policy agendas.

The media agenda section presents research which shows what items have been found to influence the way in which the media agenda is set. The public agenda section discusses research done demonstrating the ways in which public opinion have been influenced. Studies revealing how the public agenda has exerted influence on policy have also been presented. The last section discusses policy agenda research. Studies reviewing how the policy agenda has been influenced are provided. Other studies indicating policy agenda influences are also discussed.

2.1 The Media Agenda

To begin to understand the media agenda and its function, it is important to look at how the media's agenda is set. Rogers and Dearing (1987) summarized four main factors that influence the media agenda-setting process. "(1) the structure of a society, (2) gatekeepers and certain particular influential mass media, (3) real-world indicators of the importance of an agenda item, and (4) spectacular news events that act as powerful symbols to affect the media agenda" (Rogers & Dearing, 1987, p. 6). The following section discusses these four factors of the media agenda-setting process.

Several researchers have found that the structure of society influences the media's agenda. Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948) found that big business had powerful influence over the media's agenda. "Big business finances the production and distribution of mass media. And, all intent aside, he who pays the piper generally calls the tune" (Lazarsfeld & Merton as cited in Schramm, 1975, p. 503).

Another aspect of society which researchers have found to have a great influence on the media's agenda is the political system. The political system relies upon the media to provide information for the masses. The media, in turn, rely on the government for judicial protection. Hence, there is "cooperation based on mutuality of central dependencies" (Ball-Rokeach, 1985, p. 491-492). Big business and the political system both are large structures that organize our society. If the media's goal is to provide information to its audience, it is not unusual that these two aspects of society provide a powerful influence on the media's agenda.

Gatekeeping and certain particular mass media have also been examined as influential elements of the media agenda. The gatekeeping process was so labelled by Kurt Lewin in the

1940s. Gatekeeping, as a process that is inevitable in all forms of media, provides the audience with what is considered the most important news. "Gatekeepers, although obviously constrained by the media in which they work, make news decisions somewhat unconsciously, although based upon their experiences, intuitions and professional norms regarding what is news (Qualter, 1985, p. 160). Since Lewin created the concept of gatekeeping, more research has been done to further delineate the process. Miller found certain media to be more influential in the agenda-setting process.

The New York Times is generally considered to be particularly important in setting the daily news agenda for the other mass media in the U.S. The wire services are often especially important agenda-setters for national political news, The Washington Post for domestic news, Rolling Stone for anti-establishment news topics (Miller, 1978, p. 16-17).

Many newspapers across the U.S. depend upon these three sources to help them establish their own agendas. This results in a situation in which a nationwide population receives similar information about issues. Thus, the media sets an agenda that has the potential of affecting all individuals using the same sources of information.

Real-world indicators also help set the media's agenda. Events such as Gandhi's assassination in 1984, the Chernobyl accident in 1986, and the Three Mile Island disaster in 1979, are all items that received media attention. These occurrences made the evening news agendas on all three national networks. Since these items affected a large number of people around the world, the media paid particular attention to them and ranked them as top priority in their news reports. This ranking put these occurrences on the media's agenda.

Spectacular news events, the final major factor in setting the media's agenda, are events that have the potential to change public perception. For example, in the struggle for custody of Baby M, surrogate mothers became a media agenda item. The public, upon watching the trial proceedings in this case, became more aware of and perhaps changed their perceptions about surrogate mothers. This spectacular news event became part of the media's agenda and in the same process had the potential to change or alter public perception.

AIDS is a current example of a spectacular news event. Although the AIDS virus has been in the U.S. since 1979, it

had not become part of the public's agenda until the media covered actor Rock Hudson's death on their agenda. With this occurrence, the public's perception of the severity or prevalence of AIDS has changed. Before the media put this event on their agenda, it appeared that the public did not view AIDS as a compelling and universal issue. It was known mainly as an intravenous drug users' or homosexuals' disease.

2.2 The Public Agenda

After Hudson's death, AIDS became a more salient issue to the public. For the first time, the public was able to relate the AIDS disease to the death of a well-known individual. The media by focusing on Hudson's death and relating it to AIDS virus, reinforced the salience of the issue on the public's agenda. When AIDS became a heterosexual concern, media gatekeepers considered this newsworthy information. AIDS was now viewed as a potential threat to a larger portion of the population. Thus, AIDS was placed as a top priority news story.

The public agenda, sometimes referred to as public opinion, is the second area of research focus. Most of this research has been conducted using public opinion polls to measure the political awareness of the public.

McCombs and Shaw conducted a poll during the 1968 presidential campaign in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, to determine the voters' public agenda. Among the questions they asked was, "What are you most concerned about these days? That is, regardless of what politicians say, what are the two or three main things that you think the government should concentrate on doing something about?" (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 182). The five most frequent campaign issues that came out of this question were used to determine the public agenda. They then measured the media's agenda through a content analysis of a variety of media.

A rank-order correlation was computed between (a) the relative importance of the campaign issues as indicated by the mass media content, and (b) the priority of campaign issues that were aggregated from 100 undecided voters' responses, McCombs and Shaw (1972). The correlation showed that the media agenda and the public agenda were almost identical. This indicated the potential of the media to influence the public agenda.

They concluded: "the evidence in this study that voters tend to share the media's composite definition of what is important strongly suggests an agenda-setting function of

the mass media" (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 186). This finding by McCombs and Shaw was relevant to further research using the agenda-setting theory because it was the first study that showed a positive relationship between the public and media agendas.

A study done by Stone (1975) brought out another consideration in the agenda-setting process. For the first time, time-frame was looked at as a possible variable in the theory. Stone looked at Time and Newsweek's agendas. He analyzed public opinion surveys held six months prior to and three months following the fieldwork. "Using Pearson correlations between each month's media-agenda and the public agenda the author tested the strength of the relationship in the context of differing effects spans (although he did not refer to them as such)." (Stone 1975, as cited in Eyal et al., 1981, p. 214).

The findings of this study indicated a high correlation between the media agenda and the public agenda as time increased. "The results led the author to the conclusion that a four month 'optimal effect span', extending from two to six months prior to the public agenda measure, constituted the parameter for the agenda-setting effect" (Stone,

1975, as cited in Eyal et al., 1981 p. 217). This study is important because it demonstrates that the public is not always immediately affected by the media. Time is an element which needs to be considered, since over time higher correlations between the public and media agendas are found.

Winter (1979) conducted a study of one issue in terms of salience among the public. He looked at the front page of The New York Times and content analyzed the amount of space and time given to civil rights issues on the newspaper's agenda. He then surveyed subjects to measure what items they had placed on their personal agendas. The researcher correlated the two agendas to study their relationship. Winter found that procedurally his study was revealing however, other considerations needed to be taken into account.

While this effort is revealing and important in terms of time-series analysis and individual examination of issues, it nonetheless used aggregated media content data and does not take into account antecedent and intervening variables such as media use patterns, demographic data and other contingent conditions (Winter 1979, as cited in Eyal, et al., 1981 p. 215).

This study is important to agenda setting because it shows a strong effect at an aggregate level. It also indicated that a reduced time-frame can be important to the

salience of civil rights issues. Winter focused on one variable rather than several at once, something that many researchers have failed to do.

Another variable found to influence the public agenda is interpersonal communication. "Social processes other than mass communication also affect the public's judgment of an issue or person as important. For one thing, people talk to one another about social issues, and these conversations may play an important part in their judgments" (Wright, 1986, p. 155). Interpersonal interaction can account for part of the reason why media and public agendas do not always correlate precisely. It is important to note the influence of human interaction on public agendas, but research in this area has not been fully developed and hypotheses have yet to be supported. Wright does make a valid point about the possible influence of interpersonal interaction on the public agenda.

Rogers and Dearing point out another item which influences the public agendas. "For some topics, an individual's personal experience may influence that individual's opinion, and perhaps the opinions of others in the individual's personal network" (Rogers & Dearing, 1987, p. 45). The idea

here is that individuals may experience certain events or view certain issues in a different way than the media interpret or convey them.

For example, an individual may be a member of a union that is having problems within its company and is planning to strike. The media may present to its audience only the views of the executives within the company and not the views of the union strikers. In this way an individual who is a member of the striking union may perceive the media's representation of the issue as false or invalid. This incident allows for the individual's personal experience to form a more influential personal opinion. Thus, the individual's public or personal agenda will not be the same as that of other individuals viewing the media's representation of the same issue. The credibility of the media in this event also becomes an issue. Individuals who see issues differently from the media through their own experiences are less likely to perceive the media as a credible source of information.

A person's experience may also differ from the media's point of view when he or she receives conflicting information from salient others. For example, an individual may know his/her area congressperson personally and see the sup-

port that he or she is being given by the local community. On the televised news this same person may see the anchor-person reporting that the same congressperson is disliked by the local community. Such conflicting information will usually not affect an individual's public agenda or perception.

People also have their own opinions on what is and is not newsworthy. If an individual perceives something in the news as not newsworthy he or she probably will not regard it highly enough to place it on his or her own public agenda. Although these ideas are relevant to the topic and important to note, again, research has not been conducted to confirm such findings dealing with change in personal perception. The public agenda concept is a fertile ground for further study by communication scholars. Personal perception change and how it occurs, however, is beyond the scope of the present study.

Time required by the media to make an item salient enough for the public agenda is another issue concerning the public agenda-setting process. Salwen (1986) did a content analysis of three Michigan newspapers. For 33 weeks he looked at environmental issues such as quality of water, disposal of wastes, and noise pollution. He measured the public agenda by telephone interviews that he conducted in

three waves. The first wave came at nine weeks into the survey, the next at 26 weeks into the survey, and the final wave at the end of the 33-week period.

Salwen recorded a total of 707 environmental issues and plotted them as they rose and fell on the media's and public's agendas. The first effects of the media agenda on the public agenda were noticed after seven weeks of media coverage. The highest correlation of media and public agendas occurred ten weeks into the study, and thereafter the correlation declined over time. Salwen noted, "By simply keeping an issue 'alive' by reporting about it for some duration, the media may transmit to the public more than just information, but also a subtle message concerning the legitimacy of such an issue." (Salwen, 1986, p. 157). This shows that it is a gradual influence that the media have on the public's agenda. As the media prioritize from higher to lower numbers of stories, so does the public prioritize higher and lower attention to the issue being reported. This finding is similar to that of Stone (1975), indicating that the amount of time needs to be considered when testing agenda-setting.

Rogers and Dearing point out the importance of recognizing whether or not an event is "(1) of major importance or not, and (2) of rapid onset versus a gradual, slowly-developing topic" (Rogers & Dearing, 1987, p. 48). Quick-onset events will reach the top of the media's agenda and stay there for some time. The public usually finds out about this news item through the media because it generally doesn't have other channels through which to receive such information. So it is expected that the media will quickly place these events on the public's agenda. Rogers and Dearing discuss a slow-onset news event that the media created:

In the case of the Ethiopian drought, a film report of a refugee camp Korem by Mohamed Amin was shown by the BBC and then by NBC in October, 1984. Immediately, other U.S. mass media began to feature this disaster as a major news issue, and rather quickly the public considered the Ethiopian drought as a priority item on the public agenda (Rogers & Dearing, 1987, p. 56).

Although this drought had been occurring for years before the media reported it, they were instrumental in articulating it as an issue and consequently placing it on the public's agenda.

The process of taking a media event, and following it to the public agenda, is just one of the three phases of the agenda-setting process. From the public's agenda many

issues manifest themselves on the policy agenda, which is the third and final agenda to be discussed in this chapter.

2.3 The Policy Agenda

The policy agenda is the one agenda that places responses to salient issues into action. In other words, the policy agenda is utilized by government officials to determine what policies should be considered by the legislature. Moreover, the policy agenda is influenced by the public agenda, at least in the United States, because of the democratic nature of our society. Studies which have been done in this area show how policy agenda is affected by the public agenda.

One of the most studied areas in policy agenda-setting theory is that of foreign policy. Although many researchers have tried to find convincing evidence that public opinion is a major influence in this area, Cohen (1983) found "our knowledge is partial, unsystematic, disconnected and discontinuous. We are left with the unsatisfactory conclusion that public opinion is important in the policy-making process, although we cannot say with confidence how, why or when" (Cohen, 1983, p. 47).

Another scholar in the same area, Monroe (1979), conducted a study that compared national survey results with foreign policy positions. In this study he found that foreign policy was consistent with public opinion. However, as Cohen (1983) points out, these types of studies cannot be easily confirmed.

Other studies have indicated that some issues have required months of media coverage before they were found on the public agenda. For example, Lang and Lang (1983) found:

Watergate was an issue that required months of news coverage before it got on to the public agenda. Then, finally, Watergate became an agenda issue for action by U.S. government officials. In this particular case of policy agenda-setting, public agenda-setting by the mass media led to government action, and to policy-formation (Lang & Lang, 1981, p. 462).

This indicates that there may be long-range consequences other than forming the public agenda that the mass media impose. Rogers and Dearing (1987) suggest that a major point to be recognized from the Lang and Lang study is that "the mass media were only one element, along with government and the public, involved in a process through which the elements reciprocally influenced each other" (Rogers & Dearing, 1987, p. 55). This shows that the policy

agenda-setting notion is sometimes more than just a one-way occurrence. Two-way interaction is involved, and perhaps a very important element in the entire agenda-setting process.

It is apparent that the research done on policy agenda-setting has not been thoroughly focused enough to yield substantiated evidence that the public agenda actually is a major influence on the policy agenda. Many other variables have crept into researchers' well thought-out designs and caused many more questions to develop. A study done by Walker (1979), however, is one on which attention to policy agenda-setting studies should focus.

Walker (1979) investigated a legislation enactment by the U.S. Senate on automobile safety in 1966. To do this he looked at the policy agenda-setting process. His study was designed to plot the number of deaths per million miles driven and annual number of column inches on traffic safety in The New York Times for a 20 year period prior to and including 1966 when the Senate passed an automobile safety law.

Walker found that The New York Times' coverage of auto safety increased greatly in 1966, and continued to increase thereafter. He concluded: "The newspaper was reacting to events, not stimulating the controversy or providing leadership" (Walker, 1979, p. 51). Walker failed, however, in this study to report whether or not public opinion was affected or affected the policy agenda. Looking at the public agenda throughout the same time period to see whether or not auto-safety was a salient issue, would have enriched the analysis and perhaps helped confirm the process of public agenda influencing policy agenda.

Cook et al. (1983), examined how this agenda-setting process follows through from media to public agenda to policy agenda. Cook et al. considered one issue, fraud and abuse in home health care. He investigated this through a pre-post interview. His sample contained Chicago citizens in a field experimental design who were instructed to view a television news program about the health care issue, in place of another television program. The results of their experiment showed that the television broadcast on the home health care issue set the public agenda. Also, after interviewing city and state officials about the home health care issue after the broadcast, Cook et al. found that the news program also influenced the policymakers' agenda.

The results of this study help support the process of agenda-setting as it relates to public and policy agendas. Through this one study, one can see how an item can start as a real-world indicator, reach the media agenda, which then goes to the public agenda, and in this case eventually finds itself set on the policy agenda. Unfortunately there have not been any more studies done to show this entire agenda-setting process. As a theory, agenda-setting needs to be tested much as Cook et al. (1983) did with home health care.

Throughout this literature review I have shown the various ways in which agenda-setting studies can be conducted. Although not all of these studies follow through the entire process of agenda-setting, parts of these studies are relevant and do relate to the study that I will propose in the next chapter.

It is important to reemphasize here that empirical agenda-setting research is relatively new, and therefore few studies have been conducted based on this theory. Also, the studies that have been done do not always follow through the complete agenda-setting process. With these two points in mind, it is important to look at agenda-setting again, taking some of the ideas found in previous studies, but also

adding more variables that will help enrich the research already done in this area.

Three agendas have been reviewed in this chapter: the media agenda, the public agenda and the policy agenda. All of these agendas are important to the agenda-setting process. The present study will look at these three agendas in the coverage of AIDS since its discovery in the U.S. in 1982.

Chapter 3

METHOD

This chapter deals with the procedures used to measure media coverage of the AIDS issue. The first section explains the content analysis used to measure media coverage of the AIDS issue. The second section explains a secondary analysis of public awareness conducted on Gallup polls. The final section covers the measurement of government expenditures that reflect the policy agenda.

3.1 Content Analysis

In order to measure the media coverage of the AIDS issue, a content analysis of The New York Times and The Washington Post was conducted. The New York Times was selected because it is viewed as a media agenda setter, and it provides broad coverage of news items in its daily publication. The Washington Post was selected because it gives more domestic coverage of news items. Both newspapers provide information to a large circulation at an international and domestic level.

The content analysis was done on every tenth article published about AIDS in the Washington Post and The New York Times. A listing of all AIDS articles published about AIDS was located in the Washington Post and The New York Times Indices. The sample began with the first article published on the list in 1982 and systematically selected every tenth article listed thereafter. The articles were found on microfilm and copies of the articles were made from the films. Each individual article was a unit of analysis. The entire collection of articles comprised the sample. The sample spanned the years of 1982 to 1987.

A content analysis was conducted using a carefully designed recording instrument. Two researchers conducted the content analysis independent of each other. This was done in order to test the workability of the recording instrument and to see if the coders were consistent in their findings. A reliability analysis was done and the results of this analysis are included in the fourth chapter.

The recording instrument abstracted such variables as total number of articles published; means of AIDS contraction including homosexual and heterosexual activities, blood transfusions, and intravenous drug use; sexual preferences,

and general facts. This part of the recording instrument provided the type of information reported about the AIDS issue. This was important because it provided the frequencies of specific variables reported. These frequencies were compared with Gallup poll data on how aware the public was of these specific variables.

The recording instrument also abstracted mechanical details regarding each article. The article length, location in the newspaper, whether or not photographs or illustrations are published, the living area that each article pertains to, and whether or not statistics on AIDS victims and carriers are reported were analyzed. This provided more specific information about how much coverage this issue had been given by the media. From this, the researcher was able to pinpoint exactly how much and what type of coverage had been provided to the public. This was important in measuring the total amount of media coverage from 1982 to 1987. However, the frequency of articles published in each year was sufficient to demonstrate the amount of media coverage.

3.2 Public Agenda

Published information about Gallup Poll results was used to assess the public's awareness of the AIDS issue.

This analysis was done to test media effects on the public agenda. A compilation of surveys related to the issue was published in the article "The Polls--A Report," by Singer, Rogers and Corcoran, in Public Opinion Quarterly, (1987). The Gallup polls reported in the article were used because they surveyed the largest number of individuals. Also, these polls were conducted in more years than any other polling organization including 1983, 1985 and 1986. These polls have been published separately in The Gallup Opinion Indices, 1983, 1985 and 1986.

Gallup polls were selected because they are considered to provide the most representative sample of the general population. Other studies that have measured public awareness on social issues have found Gallup to be the best source for information. For example, Funkhouser (1973) measured public awareness of the issues of the sixties and found: "The Gallup poll provides perhaps a sharper discrimination among issues than in fact exists in reality, but it has the advantages of yielding clear discriminations and of having been asked consistently throughout the decade" (Funkhouser, 1973, p. 63).

These polls asked a variety of questions about the AIDS issue of at least 1000 respondents. To analyze public awareness this study looked at the answers given by these respondents concerning what they knew about the disease, how vulnerable they thought they were, what they thought the government should do, and what, if anything, they were doing to protect themselves from contracting the disease.

3.3 Policy agenda

The policy agenda was measured by examining the total amount of government expenditures provided for AIDS research, education, and testing. Previous studies measuring the policy agenda examined actual bills and laws that had been presented and passed in the legislature. Other policy agenda studies focused on political candidates' campaign issues. For this study I have operationalized the policy agenda as total amount of money allocated for AIDS research, testing and education from each state since actual laws about AIDS have yet to reach the federal level.

The expenditures include all funds spent statewide and totalled for a national amount. These data were listed in "Comparing State Only Expenditures for AIDS," by Rowe and Ryan, an article published in American Journal of Public

Health (1988). These expenditures were provided to demonstrate how the policy agenda had been affected through the course of the last several years.

3.4 Statistical Analyses

The statistical analyses in this study are reliability, frequencies, and Pearson correlations. First, reliability analysis was conducted on the data gathered from the content analysis. Krippendorff's (1980) computer program for agreement analysis of reliability data, version 4b, was used to test the reliability of the recording instrument. Two sets of data were produced and tested for reliability.

Parameters for reliability were as follows: alpha > .8, reliable; alpha between .6 and .8 acceptable, but results of such data were interpreted with caution. Only those variables with acceptable reliability were considered for further analysis.

Second, frequencies were calculated for reliable variables contained in the recording instrument. This was done to determine how frequently each variable occurred. The frequency with which each variable occurred demonstrated the amount of media coverage given to certain aspects of the AIDS issue.

Third, Pearson correlations were used to determine the relationship between media content and public awareness, public awareness and government expenditures, and total media coverage and government expenditures. These correlations answered the research questions. The results of the correlations are discussed in Chapter IV.

Finally, in all correlations among the three agendas, a lag time of one year was calculated. To account for time lag in the agenda-setting process, Pearson correlations between media coverage and lagged public awareness and lagged government expenditures were calculated.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

The following section presents the results of the statistical analyses. First, the results of the content analysis are presented to summarize the media agenda. Second, the links between media coverage and public agenda are presented. Third, the association between media coverage, public opinion, and government expenditures is summarized.

4.1 Content Analysis

A reliability analysis was conducted on two separate sets of the content analysis data. Each set was coded by two different coders using a pretested recording instrument. Variables with acceptable levels of reliability ($\alpha > .6$) were used in this analysis.

Overall the reliability of the collected data was found to be acceptable in some areas and unacceptable in others. Precisely 56% of all variables achieved acceptable reliability. The acceptable data included the following variables: total number of articles published, homosexual and hetero-

sexual activities, intravenous drug use, blood transfusions, general facts and various sexual preferences. The unacceptable data included such variables as race and ethnic groups, marital status, infants born infected, government officials supportive of funding AIDS research and discrimination against AIDS victims. These variables are not included in this study.

Table I summarizes the variables considered acceptable for and relevant to this study. The table lists the variable description and the variable agreement coefficient (alpha).

The content analysis revealed several variables that frequently occurred in the articles published about the AIDS issue. General facts reported about AIDS were provided in 229 of the 257 (89%) total articles published about AIDS. Contracting the disease through homosexual activities was mentioned in 135 of the 257 articles (53%), while only 34% articles mentioned heterosexual activities as possible ways of contracting the disease. Intravenous drug use was mentioned as a way to contract the disease in 106 articles (41%).

TABLE 1
Variables contained in articles
published about AIDS

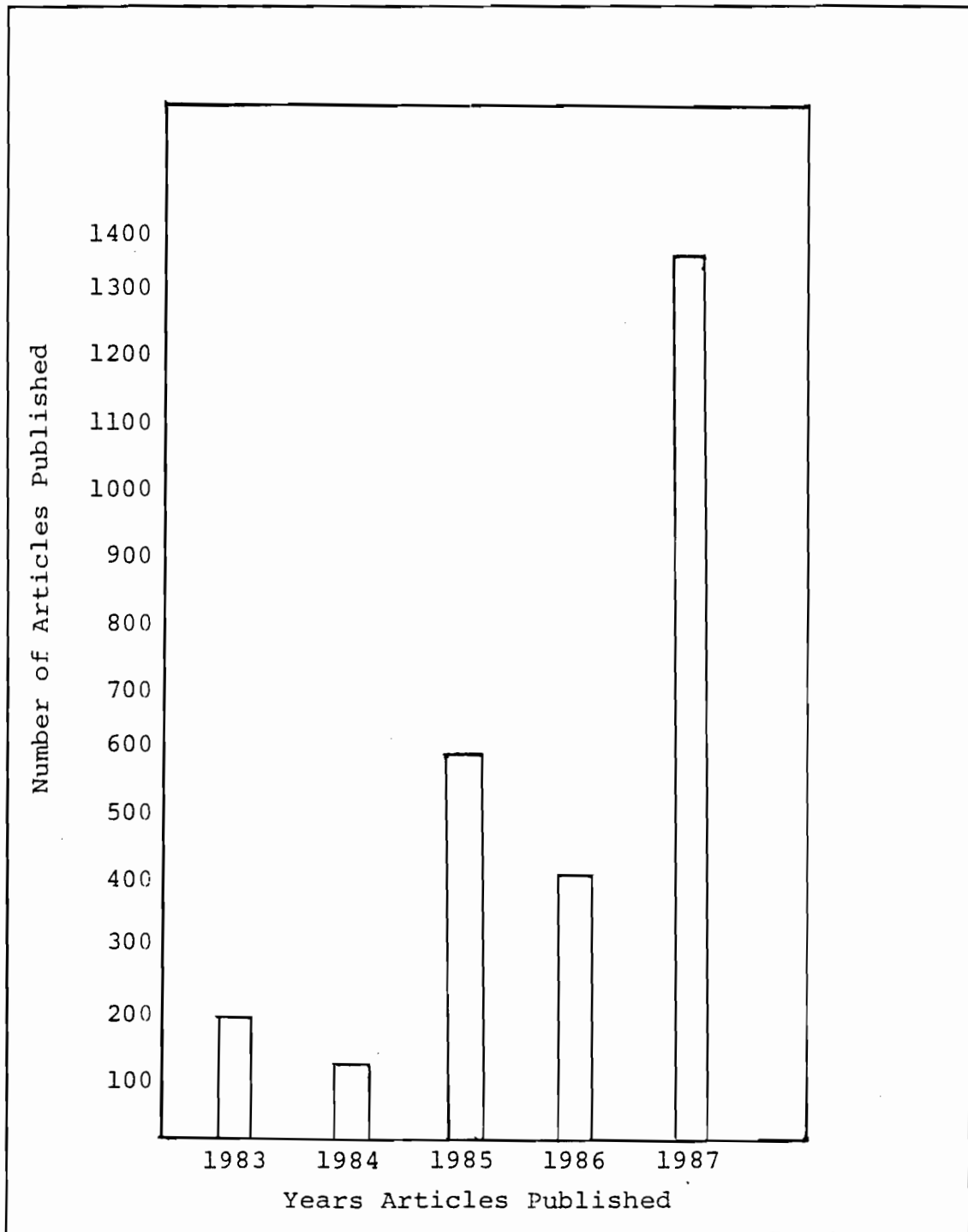
<u>Description</u>	<u>Alpha</u>
Total Number of Articles	1.00
Homosexual Activities	0.80
Heterosexual Activities	0.69
Intravenous Drug Use	0.77
Blood Transfusions	0.83
General Facts	0.68
Homosexual Males	0.80
Bisexual Males	0.72
Heterosexual Males	0.71
Heterosexual Females	0.88

Forty-two per cent of the articles contained information about blood transfusions being the means for contracting AIDS.

The frequency of articles mentioning sexual preferences was also calculated. Homosexual males were discussed in 53% of the sample. Bisexual males were mentioned in 77% of the articles, while heterosexual males appeared in 82% of the articles. Seventy-eight per cent of the articles reported heterosexual females. This shows that heterosexual and bisexual males were a more dominant image in both newspapers than homosexual males.

4.2 Media Coverage

One AIDS related article was published in December of 1982. This article was not calculated into the media agenda. The total amount of media coverage of the AIDS issue was found to rise and fall sporadically between the years of 1983 and 1987 as shown in Table II. In 1983, 120 articles were published about AIDS in The New York Times. The Washington Post published 70 articles in that same year, producing a combined total of 190 articles.



A decrease in amount of media coverage occurred in 1984 with the Times publishing only 70 articles. Fifty AIDS related articles were published in the Post, producing a total of 120 articles. By the end of 1985, 570 articles had been published in that year alone. The Times published 360 articles while the Post contributed 200 articles to the total amount. Another decrease occurred in 1986 with the Times reporting 230 articles, and the Post publishing 140 AIDS related articles resulting in a total of 370 articles. The largest increase took place in 1987, with 1320 articles published by the end of that year. The Times published 840 articles and the Post, 480 articles.

4.3 Public Awareness

Public awareness of the AIDS issue was operationalized as Gallup poll results from 1983, 1985 and 1986 (Singer, Rogers and Corcoran, 1987). Singer, Rogers and Corcoran (1987) reported that Gallup pollsters asked respondents if they had read or heard about a disease called AIDS in only 3 years: 1983, 1985, 1986. In 1983, 77% of the sample surveyed had read or heard about a disease known as AIDS. In 1985, that percentage increased to 97% of the sample surveyed acknowledging awareness of the AIDS disease. By 1986, 99% of all individuals polled had read or heard about AIDS.

Gallup asked other AIDS related questions such as: "Have you personally or have people that you know taken any of the following precautions to try to reduce the chances of contracting AIDS by avoiding certain places where homosexuals may be present?" "Have you avoided people they know or suspect as being homosexuals?" and "Would you refuse elective surgery that would require blood transfusions?"

Gallup polls also reported that when individuals were asked, "Are there any new public health problems which especially concern you?" AIDS was given as an answer. In 1983, 24% of the sample indicated concern about AIDS. That percentage rose in 1985 with 32% of the respondents indicating concern about AIDS. Data for 1986 were unavailable. These data were useful to this study because they provided information about the level of public concern about AIDS. They also demonstrate preventive measures being taken by the public to avoid contracting the disease.

The correlations for this study were performed on three different types of data. The total number of Post and Times articles published each year was correlated with the total number of people who answered "yes, they had read or heard about AIDS" in each year surveyed. This question was used

because it was the only question asked consistently in 1983, 1985 and 1986. The sample size was 1000 in each of the three years. In 1983 77% of the sample had heard of AIDS; in 1985, 97% had heard of it, and in 1986, 99% had heard of it. Converting the percentages back to actual number of respondents, the number of people who had heard of AIDS, correlated with the number of newspaper articles, were 770, 970 and 990 for 1983, 1985 and 1986 respectively. The total amount of statewide funds spent on AIDS research was also correlated with the number of articles and number of people who had heard of AIDS. Correlations were conducted on all possible pairs of each year separately. A lag time of one year was also used to determine if time had had an impact on the correlations.

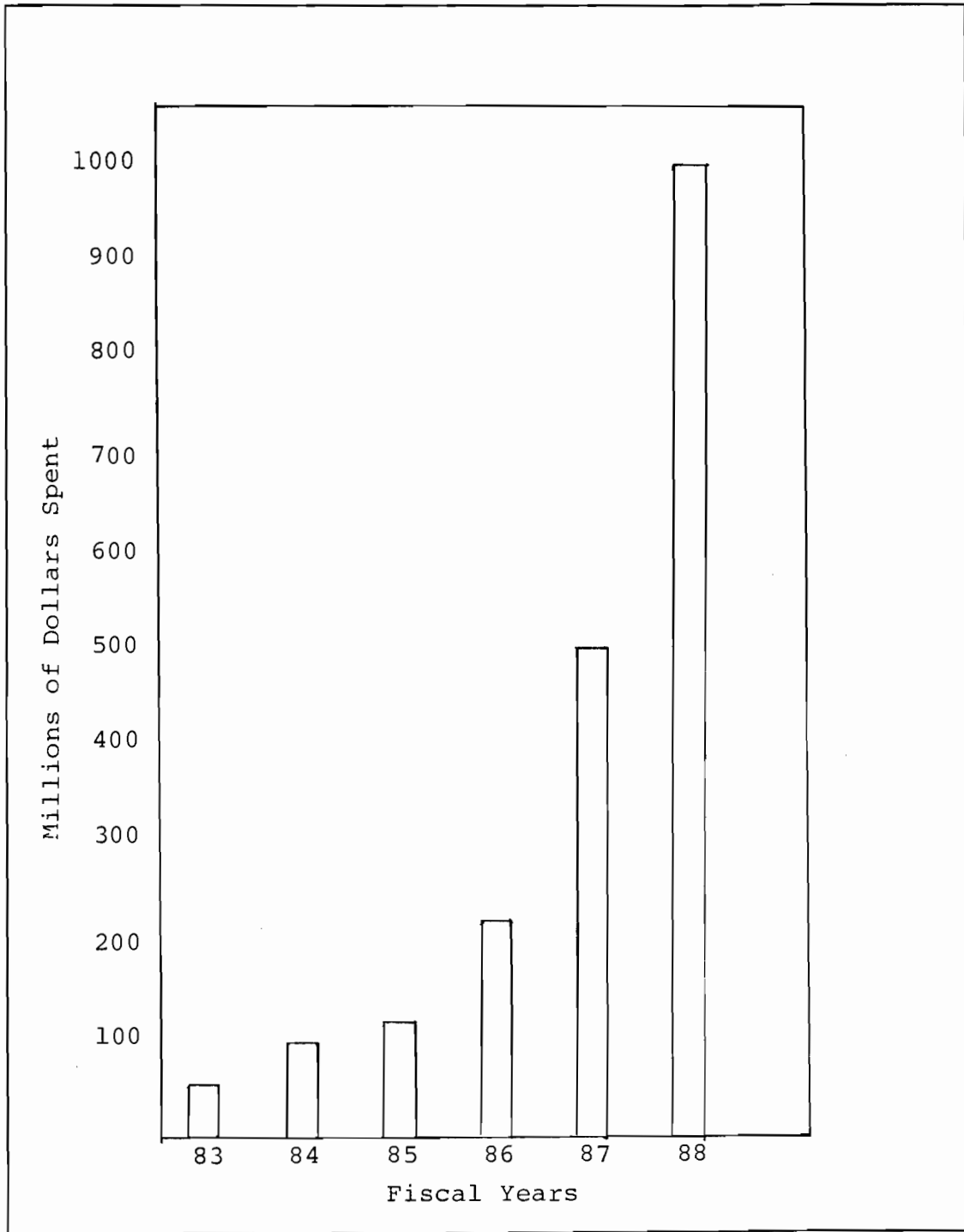
The relationship between media coverage and public awareness and concern was tested using Pearson correlations. Because of small sample size, none of the correlations was significant. These correlations, though, were all in the positive direction: media coverage and AIDS awareness ($r=.80, p=.20$), and coverage and concern about AIDS ($r=.27, p=.33$). Using a lag variable to take time into account yielded similar results: media coverage with lagged awareness, or the next year's level of awareness

($r=.73, p=.24$) and lagged concern, or the next year's level of concern ($r=.80, p=.10$).

Because reporting of AIDS began in 1982, the sample size for this study was small ($N=5$), leading to low power for that year. However, the consistently positive direction of the correlations indicates support for the link between media coverage and public awareness of the AIDS issue.

4.4 Government Expenditures

The policy agenda was operationalized by examining the total amount of funds spent toward AIDS research, testing, and education. Government expenditures for AIDS research and health care increased steadily across the United States between 1983 and 1987 as shown in Table III. In fiscal 1983, \$28.7 million had been allotted toward research on AIDS and/or health care for AIDS victims. In 1984, a combined total of \$61.4 million had been allocated for AIDS-related expenditures.



In 1985, that number increased to \$108.6 million. By 1986, the funds spent nationwide totalled \$233.8 million. By the end of fiscal 1987, 494.0 million had been spent towards AIDS-related events.

To assess the relationship between media coverage, public awareness, and government expenditures, Pearson correlations were computed. In essence, this was the test of the full transfer of media agenda to public and policy agendas. The correlation between public awareness of AIDS and policy was ($\underline{r}=.82, \underline{p}=.20$). The relationship between media coverage and government expenditures was significant ($\underline{r}=.91, \underline{p}<.05$). When lagged, this correlation was ($\underline{r}=.98, \underline{p}<.01$). Once again, because of low power, few correlations were significant. All coefficients, though, were in the expected direction.

In summary, the content analysis in this study provided data about how much and what type of information was provided to the public about AIDS. An analysis of these data indicates that the amount of media coverage given to the AIDS issue was slow in the early development of the disease, but quickly increased in the later years of the time period analyzed. The type of information provided dealt mostly with facts, means of contraction and sexual preferences.

The secondary analysis of the Gallup polls revealed a high level of awareness of the AIDS disease when polling began in 1983. This level remained high in the following years, 1985 and 1986. The polls also revealed an increase in preventive measures taken by the public to avoid contracting the virus, as well as an increasing level of concern about the nature of the disease.

The policy agenda was reflected in the amount of federal funding allocated for AIDS research, education and testing. Allocations of these funds increased from 1983 through 1987.

Pearson correlations performed on all three agendas indicated unidirectional trends between the media, and public agendas and public and policy agendas. The most significant correlation was found between the media and policy agenda, indicating that the media coverage of AIDS has had an impact on the allocation of government funds.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

The present research has attempted to show the relationship between the media coverage of the AIDS issue, public awareness and policy. By applying agenda-setting theory to this social issue, this study analyzed the amount of media coverage given to AIDS, public awareness of the disease, and federal funding allocated for AIDS research, testing, and education.

The results of this study indicate that media coverage of the AIDS issue has increased since AIDS was discovered in the United States in 1979. The media did not begin to report information about AIDS until 1982. This study shows that once the media began to cover this issue, the amount of The New York Times and Washington Post space designated for AIDS-related articles increased. However, considering the time span, the AIDS issue was slow to rise on the media agenda until mid-1985. The total number of articles rose and fell sporadically between the years of 1983 and 1987.

Traditional agenda-setting studies have often found a steady increase in media exposure for the topic being examined. However, Dearing and Rogers (1988), when examining the AIDS issue found similar results in the rise of AIDS on the media agenda.

In the U.S., initial response to the AIDS epidemic was delayed. Not so many stories were published about the disease in the scientific media prior to mid-1985, so there was little about AIDS that medical and science writers in mass media organizations could refer to" (Dearing & Rogers, 1988).

The delay in media attention to the AIDS issue may have been due to lack of information or reluctance or even homophobia on the part of key mass media gatekeepers such as The New York Times' editors. AIDS was initially covered as a scientific mystery. Little was known about AIDS in the early stages of its development. The disease was difficult to classify and report, and poor understanding of its nature kept it from initially becoming a prime media story. Another possible consideration for the delay may be that the disease was first thought to only infect homosexual males. Since homosexual males comprise a small minority of the population, media gatekeepers may have deemed the issue unnewsworthy. Furthermore, Dearing and Rogers (1988) reported that:

A former editor at The New York Times was not convinced that stories on gays were appropriate for his newspaper. For several years into the

AIDS epidemic, the Times refused to use the word 'gay' except within quoted passages. Lawrence Altman, science writer for the Times was aware, in early 1981, of a disease in New York's gay community, and he was preparing to write a news story about it. But he was distracted by a more important story, the medical perspective on the Reagan assassination attempt (Dearing & Rogers, 1988, p. 10).

However, once AIDS received more exposure in mid-1985, the media have given it more and more emphasis.

The content analysis revealed several recurring AIDS related images. Facts were provided in the majority of the articles about AIDS. Fewer facts were found reported in earlier articles. More recent stories, however, supplied numerous details, including facts about means of contracting AIDS. Generally, AIDS-related stories presented scientific activities or provided features about AIDS carriers and victims. Information about government efforts to combat the AIDS disease began to occur in later years when more attention was given to the issue in the legislature.

The content analysis also revealed that when an individual was mentioned as having contracted AIDS or when high-risk groups were presented, homosexual activities and homosexuals were found to be most often reported. Intravenous drug users were reported less often in the articles.

Although this group was reported as high-risk, second only to homosexuals. Heterosexual activities and heterosexuals were found in still fewer of the articles. This group was ranked third overall among high risk groups reported.

The New York Times and the Washington Post coverage of the AIDS issue was to a certain extent indicative of the total amount of media attention focused on the AIDS issue. Since these newspapers are viewed as agenda-setters, they are considered to provide the agenda for most newspapers across the nation. Other media such as television, radio, and magazines, however, probably provided different types of information. For example, television is restricted by time, and generally provides quick short stories packed with fewer significant facts, whereas magazines have more space, and generally are able to draw out stories and provide illustrations and graphics to support their features. Thus, examining the Times' and Post's coverage of AIDS provided an idea of newspapers' agendas, but did not give a clear and encompassing idea of all media coverage.

Public awareness of the AIDS issue was found to be high throughout 1983-1987. Although not as many individuals had heard of AIDS in 1983 as in 1986, public awareness in 1983

was still high, considering the total amount of news coverage provided prior to the Gallup poll. Dearing and Rogers (1988) found similar results in their analysis of public awareness. "The U.S. public became aware of AIDS rapidly after the issue appeared in the media" (Dearing & Rogers, 1988). By mid-1985, when media coverage began increasing, the public's level of concern about AIDS also increased. According to Dearing and Rogers, "The U.S. public ranked the disease (AIDS) as the nation's most important health problem" (Dearing & Rogers, 1988). The concern was manifest throughout the public.

Becker and Joseph (1988) compiled a review of studies on AIDS and behavioral changes made to reduce the risk of contracting the disease. They included works analyzing homosexual and bisexual males' sexual behavior, intravenous drug users, and heterosexual males and females who were not drug users, including hemophiliacs and high school juniors and seniors. The authors found: "It is evident from the literature reviewed that changes in human behavior are occurring because of the threat of AIDS" (Becker & Joseph, 1988, p. 407).

It cannot be concluded that the amount of media coverage of AIDS is totally responsible for the increased awareness and concern of the public for the disease; information also diffuses through word-of-mouth. It is clear, however, that the level of concern increased in 1985 at the same time media coverage increased. The ranking of AIDS as the number one U.S. health problem, and behavioral changes among a variety of groups, indicates that knowledge of the disease has affected the public agenda. It is difficult to ascertain the amount of influence the media agenda had on the public agenda, however, given that the media are instrumental in providing the public with its knowledge, it may be surmised that the media had some influence on the public's agenda, concerning initial ignorance of AIDS.

Other influences on public awareness should be taken into account. Wright (1986) found that social interaction influences the judgments that individuals make about social issues. With a topic like AIDS it is probable that social conversations took place that aided in the public's awareness and level of concern about the disease. These conversations probably had some influence on the public agenda. Thus, the media cannot be solely credited with influencing the public agenda, since other social activities have been linked to influencing public awareness.

Another consideration is that many individuals have been acquainted with someone infected with AIDS, leading to greater public awareness. People who had direct contact with AIDS victims and carriers probably had a higher level of awareness about the disease than individuals who did not have such personal experience. This occurrence could also affect the level of awareness in terms of the public agenda.

The amount of The New York Times and Washington Post media coverage was substantially related to public awareness. Most of the public would not have known about AIDS if it had not been for initial media exposure of the issue. After its discovery in the U.S. in 1979, no media coverage had been given to AIDS until 1982. At the same time, public awareness had not been measured. By 1983, media coverage had begun and the measurement of public awareness had also commenced. Most individuals who had heard of the disease early in 1983 probably received their information from some type of media or word of mouth.

State government expenditures relating to AIDS research, education, and testing increased yearly between 1983 and 1987. Before 1983 state government funds had not been allocated to AIDS related activities. Dearing and Rogers observed: "Although AIDS was proclaimed by federal

health officials as 'the number one health problem' in 1983, funding levels belied that claim for several years. AIDS was on the federal policy agenda in name, but not in dollars" (Dearing & Rogers, 1988, p. 15).

The delay in allocating funds toward AIDS research may have been due to lack of complete knowledge and understanding of the potential for AIDS to reach epidemic proportions. It is evident that as public awareness of AIDS has risen so has the amount of federal funding. However, there is not enough evidence to support the claim that the public agenda influenced policy.

Although the correlation between the public awareness and government AIDS spending was not significant, it was substantial, supporting the link between the public and policy agendas. The government was found to be slow in reacting to the public's concern about AIDS. This study found, however, that once initial funds were allocated, the government supplied increased amounts of money each year. Dearing and Rogers report the same finding, noting: "Fundings have increased sharply in very recent years, with an annual doubling of federal dollars" (Dearing & Rogers, 1988, p. 27).

The relationship between The New York Times and the Washington Post coverage and government spending ($r=.98, p<.01$) was significant. As the amount of AIDS coverage in those two newspapers increased, so did the amount of government expenditures between 1983 and 1987. These data show a relationship between media coverage and government expenditures, thus supporting agenda-setting theory.

The results of this study support the third research question that there is a link between the media agenda, the public agenda and the policy agenda. Evidence indicates that the media provided the public with initial information about AIDS that led to an expressed level of concern manifested in behavioral changes. There was also a unidirectional increase in public awareness and policy implementation that indicates a consistent trend in the public and policy agendas.

From this finding, it is apparent that applying agenda-setting to a social issue is feasible. Cook et al. (1983) found similar results when they examined the issue of home health care fraud and abuse. This issue, once raised by the media, then reached the public and policy agendas, just as AIDS has. Thus, agenda-setting can be applied to politically oriented issues as well as social issues.

The New York Times and Washington Post coverage and state government spending were significantly related. This finding suggests possible avenues for future research. Questions of whether or not the media agenda has an influence on policy is an area in need of more thorough evaluation. Lazarsfeld and Berelson (1948) were two researchers who examined this relationship. They found that the media play only a minimal role in influencing public opinion. From their study, they concluded that political opinion leaders in society interact with others, and this influences public opinion. This study provided the basis for the concept of two-step flow. This hypothesis assumes that interaction, or word-of-mouth helps form public opinion. Thus, the media may be bypassing the general public, influencing political opinion leaders who allocate funds. Or perhaps the politicians function as primary media consumers and become opinion leaders among one another in deciding to allocate funds because they anticipate that the public will want action to prevent the spread of an incurable disease.

There were several limitations to this study. First, the content analysis could have been improved by measuring article length. This would have provided the actual amount of media coverage given to the AIDS issue in the newspapers

examined. Secondly, low power was found in in the assessment of public awareness due to the fact that Gallup polls were conducted to measure public awareness of the AIDS issue for only three years. This number should increase as AIDS surveys continue to be conducted. With more information in this area, future research can be improved. Finally, this study only examined the total statewide expenditures. The incorporation of all government expenditures allocated at state and federal levels would have provided this study with a more complete understanding of the policy agenda. By assessing all spending, a better indication of government action would have been demonstrated.

The issue of AIDS in terms of its nature could be considered obtrusive. That is, AIDS became an issue of concern for the public because it was transmitted sexually and through blood transfusions. These characteristics of the disease made AIDS a potential personal problem for many individuals in society, which further increased the spread of awareness and concern of the public. Other studies examining issues using agenda-setting analyzed issues that were unobtrusive. These studies were more successful in measuring public awareness because they were not life-and-death issues, nor were they issues of immediate personal concern.

The obtrusiveness of AIDS should be taken into consideration when examining the public agenda.

The methods employed in conducting this study worked well in several areas. The content analysis helped in locating and determining how much and what type of information had been given to the public about AIDS. This provided a general indication of the media agenda. Other forms of media could be examined in future studies in order to arrive at a more representative sample of media exposure.

The amount of yearly government expenditures used in AIDS research, education, and testing served as an effective reflection of the policy agenda. By using these data, this study was able to show how expenditures have increased yearly in the United States. More specific information about actual bills and laws could have been provided to show further examples of the policy agenda. However, bills and laws concerning AIDS have been confined to statewide legislation. Since this study dealt with news reporting and data samples that were nationally representative, statewide bills and laws were beyond the scope of this study.

Dearing and Rogers (1988) attempted to analyze the AIDS issue at a micro level, using San Francisco and Los Angeles as focal points. This appeared to work well for the researchers because: "A critical mass of awareness and concern about this issue at these local levels occurred before the AIDS issue attracted sustained national attention" (Dearing & Rogers, 1988, p. 18). This gave Dearing and Rogers more specific data to work with in applying agenda-setting theory. Future researchers may need to centralize their focus and evaluate the AIDS issue from a state or local level.

Gallup polls were chosen because they were the most accurate and representative samples of public awareness of the AIDS issue at the time. These yearly polls were taken only during three years within the time span, limiting the breadth of the analysis. However, since AIDS has been an issue for many years, it would be virtually impossible to measure the public's awareness of the disease retrospectively. Gallup polls thus provided the most valuable means of measuring public awareness.

The most significant finding from this study was the correlation between the media and policy agendas. There was

a statistically significant finding suggesting that the media may be influencing the policy agenda. If the media and policy agendas are related it is clear that future research can focus on this relationship. Most of the works in the past have focused on campaigns. For the most part, they have analyzed what the public knows about political issues, and what has been presented in the news about those same political issues. Future researchers may want to focus on what the media reported and what was found in the legislation.

This study did not show causal links between the media, public and policy agendas. Only relationships were found between the three agendas. The direction of these links could be explained in other terms. For example, the public agenda could have influenced the media agenda, and the policy agenda could have influenced the media agenda. Therefore, this study shows only a relationship between the agendas that correlates in a positive direction.

Although this study did not find a strong correlation between the media and the public agenda, it can be valued as having applied the agenda-setting perspective to a social issue. Future research is still needed in agenda-setting,

not only to test politically oriented issues, but to test social issues as well. This study attempted to trace a social issue in society using agenda-setting and found a need for more research in this area.

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Appendix A
RECORDING INSTRUMENT

Content Analysis of Newspaper Articles

Units of Analysis

Individual newspaper articles are the units of analysis. The sample was selected by taking every tenth article published about AIDS in The New York Times and The Washington Post between the years of 1982 and 1987. These articles make up the sample for this content analysis.

General Notes and Instructions:

This study is designed to identify the type of information that media articles have presented to the public about Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, (AIDS), victims and carriers.

In all the articles you will find themes and ideas about AIDS and the AIDS virus. There will be a number of human interest stories as well as stories dealing with medical and scientific advancements and governmental rulings and discussions.

These articles cover a variety of areas about AIDS and it is important to be able to recognize which area is being presented. When answering the questions be careful that you have selected the most correct answer possible. All questions will be given two to three options for answering. It is necessary to choose the response you feel is most correct

of the options given. After you have chosen your response it can be recorded on the answering sheet. Use one answer sheet for each article.

Recording Unit: The Newspaper Article

A "newspaper article" is the story published, in either newspaper, from beginning to end. Be sure to note which newspaper each article was published in by using, (NYT) for The New York Times and (WP) for The Washington Post.

Analyze each article on a separate coding form.

Start by reading each article carefully and jot down the main themes that the article is presenting. After this, look at the questionnaire and answer the questions according to what you have read in the article. You may refer to the article as often as necessary. If a question does not seem to apply fill in the code that states 'does not apply.'

1. In which newspaper is article published. (WP or NYT)

0= Washington Post

1= New York Times

2 thru 13. INDIVIDUAL Code all individuals in each article A 'victim' is an individual who has died from the disease. A 'carrier' is an individual with the disease but is still alive. A 'Supportive' individual is one who seems helpful to the cause of AIDS and research in the area. An 'Unsupportive' individual is one who does not want helpful measures to go toward AIDS and research in the area. 'Hemophiliac (adults)' are individuals 18 years or older. 'Hemophiliac (children)' are individuals 17 years and younger.

0 = If individual does NOT appear

1 = If individual does appear

2. AIDS victims
3. AIDS carriers
4. Government Officials Supportive
5. Government Officials Unsupportive
6. Private Persons Supportive
7. Private Persons Unsupportive
8. Center of Disease Control (CDC)
9. American Red Cross
10. Hemophiliacs
11. Intravenous Drug users
12. Infants born to infected mothers
13. Medical scientists researchers

14 thru 19. SEXUAL PREFERENCE Code all of the following that appear in each article. If you are unable to tell what the sexual preference of the individual in the article is, simply fill in 'does not apply' for all sexualities listed.

0= sexual preference does NOT appear
1= sexual preference does appear

14. Heterosexual Male

15. Heterosexual Female

16. Homosexual Male

17. Homosexual Female

18. Bisexual Male

19. Bisexual Female

20. Is a SEXUAL PREFERENCE provided in article?

0= No, sexual preference is NOT provided
1= Yes, sexual preference is provided

21 thru 30. AGE GROUPS Code all of the following individuals that have AIDS and that appear in each of the articles. Do NOT code individuals who do not have AIDS. 'Infants' are individuals between 0 and 23 months. 'Children' are individuals 2 to 8 years old. 'Pre-adolescents' are 9 to 12 years old. 'Teenagers' are individuals 13 to 17 years old. 'Young Adults' are individuals 18 to 25 years old. 'Adults' are individuals 26 to 35 years old. 'Young Middle Age' are individuals 36-45 years old. 'Middle Age' are individuals 46 to 55 years old. 'Older Middle Age' are individuals 56-65. 'Elderly' are individuals 66 and up.

0= age group does NOT appear

1= age group does appear

21. Infants (0-23 months)
22. Children (2-8 years)
23. Pre-Adolescents (9-12 years)
24. Teenagers (13-17 years)
25. Young Adults (18-25 years)
26. Adults (26-35 years)
27. Young Middle Age (36-45 years)
28. Middle Age (46-55 years)
29. Older Middle Age (56-65 years)
30. Elderly (66 years and up)

31. Is an age given in the article?

- 0= No, age is NOT given
- 1= Yes, age is given

32. Is the individuals in the article male or female?

- 0= Male individual
- 1= Female individual
- 2= Not able to code
- 3= Both Male and Female

33 thru 45. MARITAL STATUS Code all of the following marital status' that appear in each of the articles

0= marital status does NOT appear

1= marital status appears

- 33. Single Male
- 34. Single Female
- 35. Married Male
- 36. Married Female
- 37. Divorced Male
- 38. Divorced Female
- 39. Widowed Male
- 40. Widowed Female
- 41. Separated Male
- 42. Separated Female
- 43. Male Lovers living together
- 44. Female Lovers living together
- 45. Male-Female Lovers living
together

46 thru 57. RACE-ETHNIC GROUP Code each of the race-ethnic groups that appear in each of the articles. If an individual is reported 'Black,' code the question as specified. If a person is 'Haitian,' code only Haitian and not Black. If the race or ethnic of the individual is not given then code 'does not appear' for all questions.

0= race-ethnic group does NOT appear

1= race-ethnic group does appear

- 46. White Males
- 47. White Females
- 48. Black Males
- 49. Black Females
- 50. Asian Males
- 51. Asian Females
- 52. Native American Males
- 53. Native American Females
- 54. Haitian Males
- 55. Haitian Females
- 56. Hispanic Males
- 57. Hispanic Females

58 thru 64. AIDS CONTRACTION Code the way AIDS HAS BEEN contracted by each individual in each of the articles

0=contraction does NOT appear

1=contraction does appear

58. Homosexual activities

59. Heterosexual activities

60. Intravenous drug using

61. Blood transfusions

62. Blood Donating

63. Scientific or medical accidents

64. Infants born to infected mothers

65 thru 76. AIDS TRANSMISSION Code the ways in which the articles state as POSSIBLE ways of catching AIDS.

0=transmission does NOT appear

1=transmission does appear

- 65. Casual Contact
- 66. Intimate sexual Contact
- 67. Blood transfusions
- 68. Sharing Intravenous Needles
- 69. Kissing
- 70. Using same Drinking glass
- 71. Being sneezed on
- 72. Sitting on Toilet seat
- 73. Shaking Hands
- 74. Work with AIDS carrier
- 75. Donating Blood
- 76. Food Handling by carrier

77 thru 90. RELATED THEMES Code all AIDS' related themes that appear in each of the articles. 'Reported' means when case numbers or statistics are given in the article. 'Action' is any activity that has taken place by an individual to help in the fight against AIDS. 'Discrimination' is when any negative action has been done to a victim or carrier of AIDS. 'Children' are individuals 17 or younger.

0= related theme does NOT appear in article

1= related theme appears

- 77. AIDS victims reported
- 78. AIDS carriers reported
- 79. AIDS carriers action
- 80. Governmental action
- 81. American Red Cross action
- 82. Blood Transfusions
- 83. Blood Donating
- 84. Medical-Scientific Findings
- 85. Private Person action
- 86. AIDS Facts reported
- 87. Health Care
- 88. Insurance
- 89. Discrimination
- 90. Litigates Cases-Legal Issues

91 thru 98. LEGISLATION Code all the areas that are in each article. 'Proposed policies' are ideas discussed and suggestions made about combatting AIDS. 'Committees' are those groups that have been formed in order to work on AIDS crisis. 'Laws' are any actions made mandatory by the government concerning AIDS.

0=Legislation does NOT appear in the article
1=Legislation does appear in the article

- 91. Proposed policies concerning AIDS
- 92. Specific Bills introduced
- 93. Committees formed to address AIDS
- 94. Committee meetings about AIDS
- 95. Government funding given
- 96. Government attempt to educate public
- 97. Government funding revoked
- 98. Laws enacted dealing with AIDS

99. thru 101. LEGISLATION LOCALE Code all areas that are in each article.

0=Legislation locale does NOT appear in article
1=Legislation locale does appear in article

- 99. Statewide legislation
- 100. National legislation
- 101. Other

102 thru 107. SAFE SEX MEASURE Code all the areas that are in each article 'Advancement' is anything done to promote safe sex measures

0= Safe sex measure does NOT appear in article
1= Safe sex measure does appear in article

- 102. Education in school
- 103. Education for general public
- 104. Government Funding
- 105. Advancement of safe sex measures
- 106. Condom promotion
- 107. Reduce number of partners

108 thru 112. CHILDREN IN SCHOOL Code all the areas that are in each article. 'Discrimination' is any negative action taken towards children with AIDS. 'Intervention' is any action taken to regulate children attending school. 'Concern' is any action shown about childrens' welfare in encounters with children with AIDS. These questions apply ONLY to articles that deal specifically with CHILDREN IN SCHOOL.

0= area does NOT appear in article
1= area does appear in article

- 108. Discrimination
- 109. Education about AIDS
- 110. Children with AIDS
- 111. Government Intervention
- 112. Public Concern

113 thru 124. PROPOSED POLICY: Code all items discussed as possible ideas for dealing with the AIDS crisis by the government.

0=proposal does NOT appear
1=proposal does appear

- 113. Laying Off AIDs carriers
- 114. Restrictive work places
- 115. Children in school (attending)
- 116. Public aware of child in school
- 117. Funding for treatment center
- 118. Quarantined areas for carriers
- 119. Restrictions on sexual activity
- 120. Military testing
- 121. Employer testing of employees
- 122. National policy to test employees
- 123. Insurance company test
- 124. Sex education regulated in school

The following questions focus upon the mechanics of each of the articles.

125. ARTICLE LENGTH Code each article according to the lengths designated below:

- 0 = One half columns or less
- 1 = Up to two (2) columns
- 2 = Over two (2) columns

126. Is there a photograph included in the article?

- 0 = No
- 1 = Yes

127. Is there an illustration included in the article?

- 0 = No
- 1 = Yes

128 thru 131. LOCATION

1 = Article can be found here
0 = Article can NOT be found here

128. Front Page

129. Front section, not on front page

130. Other sections' front page

131. Other sections, not on front
page

132 thru 136. LIVING AREA Code all living areas that
the article pertains to

1 = Location does appear
0 = Location does NOT appear

132. Local (to that articles city)

133. Suburban (around articles city)

134. National (Includes areas
outside of local area but still
within country)

135. Foreign (Includes areas
outside of the United States)

136. Doesn't apply

137. Are Statistics provided about AIDS victims who have died?

0 = No
1 = Yes

138. Are statistics provided about AIDS carriers who are still alive?

0 = No
1 = Yes

139. Are projected or estimated statistics of AIDS victims and carriers provided?

0 = No
1 = Yes