

# Framing of AIDS in Africa

## *Press-state relations, HIV/AIDS news, and journalistic advocacy in four sub-Saharan Anglophone newspapers*

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Paul D'Angelo, John C. Pollock, Kristen Kiernicki, and Donna Shaw  
Communication Studies Department  
Kendall Hall 235  
The College of New Jersey  
Ewing, NJ 08628  
[dangelo@tcnj.edu](mailto:dangelo@tcnj.edu)

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**ABSTRACT.** This study offers the first systematic analysis of the impact of press-state relations, or media systems, on the HIV/AIDS news agenda in African news coverage. The premise is that media systems play a determining role in the degree to which journalists can independently advocate for social change when covering HIV/AIDS. Drawing on comparative research, four sub-Saharan countries were categorized into two media systems: Contained Democratic (South Africa, Nigeria) and Repressive Autocratic (Zimbabwe, Kenya). A sample of HIV/AIDS stories ( $n = 393$ ) published from 2002–2007 in each country's leading Anglophone newspaper was content analyzed. Across all coverage, the topic of social costs was framed more for the responsibility borne by nongovernmental agents than governmental agents. In Contained Democratic media systems, however, story emphasis shifted toward government agents taking responsibility for addressing the social costs of HIV/AIDS. Prevention campaigns were framed more as progress than decline across all newspapers; however, campaigns were reported as being more efficacious in Contained Democratic systems than in Repressive Autocratic systems. No impact of media system on framing of medical developments was found. Results show the value of comparative analysis in understanding the agenda-setting process: with greater emphasis on positive efficacy and government initiative, the news agenda in Contained Democratic media systems can facilitate stronger positive societal-level responses than the news agenda in Repressive Autocratic media systems.

**Key words:** Africa, Anglophone newspapers, HIV/AIDS, agenda-setting, comparative research, news agenda, news framing, media system

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Since 1981, when the U.S. Centers for Disease Control first diagnosed what it later named Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome,<sup>1</sup> research within the nexus of health, mass media, and public policy has understood that preventing and curing AIDS depends on the degree to which policymakers, issue advocates, and members of the public communicate with one another. In conceiving of mass media as the fulcrum of these interactions, researchers in the U.S. quickly embraced the agenda-setting

approach.<sup>2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12</sup> From an empirical standpoint, this research has examined how frequently HIV/AIDS is covered in news and other media formats, thus inquiring into the agenda-building process as well as the transfer of issue salience from media agendas to the agendas of the public, issue advocates, and policymakers. From a normative standpoint, this research has assessed whether media agendas promote effective societal-level responses, typically conceived in terms of individuals, issue advocates and policymakers who are galvanized by a media agenda to address the

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medical, social, and political ramifications of the disease.

Media research on coverage of HIV/AIDS in other regions of the world has articulated similar empirical goals and normative concerns,<sup>13,14,15,16</sup> particularly work on sub-Saharan Africa, where the disease spread more rapidly than anywhere else.<sup>17</sup> Studies of Western media coverage of AIDS in sub-Saharan countries<sup>18,19,20,21</sup> and on AIDS coverage in African media<sup>22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31</sup> have identified textual elements of HIV/AIDS media agendas, examined agenda-setting effects, and assessed whether media agendas help or hinder effective societal-level responses to the disease.

In arguing that researchers need more comprehensive agenda-setting models to examine HIV/AIDS, Swain observed that, “There has been little analysis of newswork constraints and linkages between framing and agenda-setting in AIDS coverage research,” adding, research is needed on “media texts in different cultures [and] how news media in less-developed countries cover the disease” (p. 261).<sup>32</sup> Heeding such calls, this study tested a novel theoretical model of agenda-setting with a content analysis of HIV/AIDS coverage published during the 2000s in the leading Anglophone newspapers in four sub-Saharan countries: *The Daily Nation* (Kenya), *The Herald* (Zimbabwe), *This Day* (Nigeria), and *The Star* (South Africa).

Operationally, our design is based on a main principle of second-level agenda-setting. This principle holds that an issue—i.e., a topical *object* for which a policy decision must be made<sup>33,34</sup>—is debated by politicians and advocates and covered in the media with a range of discursive *attributes*, beginning with descriptive subtopics and ideally culminating in a frame that makes a compelling argument for or against a particular policy approach.<sup>35,36,37</sup> Recognizing the pivotal role of media coverage in the agenda-setting process, we examined news stories in the four Anglophone newspapers for subtopics and frames commonly found in compelling arguments about HIV/AIDS generally and in the African context in particular. Specifically, we examined how three subtopics—social costs, prevention campaigns, and medical developments—were framed in terms of *efficacy* (progress or decline vis-à-vis social costs, medical developments, and prevention campaigns) and *responsibility* (who is or should be taking responsibility,

government or non-governmental social agents, for addressing HIV/AIDS vis-à-vis social costs, medical developments, and prevention campaigns).

This study’s novel theoretical framework merges a second-level agenda-setting approach with a system-level comparative approach. A system-level approach is designed to show how macro-level features of a country’s political and media institutions interact with meso-level newsroom norms to shape how journalists cover an issue or event.<sup>38,39,40</sup> Although several studies have already examined news coverage of AIDS topics and frames cross-nationally,<sup>16,20,21,41,42,43,44</sup> none that we have found have employed a system-level approach.

The premise of this study is that a system-level comparison of an HIV/AIDS news agenda across different national news contexts can gainfully employ an agenda-setting approach to explain how observed patterns of topics and frames promote or stifle effective individual- and social-level responses to the disease. To design research that can investigate this premise, researchers have to theorize in advance the macro-level institutional features and meso-level organizational environments that interact with one another to influence news production.<sup>40</sup> For our macro-level definitions, we adapted Hallin and Mancini’s typology of media systems for Western media to African nations.<sup>45</sup> The timeframe for analysis (2002–2007) meant that media systems were identified in the aftermath of democratic reforms that swept through most sub-Saharan countries in the 1990s.<sup>46,47,48,49,50,51,52</sup> We argue that these reforms coalesced into three variations of Polarized Pluralism, a media system that on balance constrains news organizations from exercising editorial autonomy in gathering and reporting the news.<sup>45</sup> Two of those variations are at the center of this study: what we call a Contained Democratic system in Nigeria and South Africa and, following Nisbet and Moehler,<sup>53</sup> a Repressive Autocratic system in Kenya and Zimbabwe.

Although Hallin and Mancini refrained from concluding that media systems can predict patterns of news coverage, researchers have used their typology to understand how media systems interact with the meso-level news production environment to shape news framing of politics.<sup>54,55,56,57</sup> Because there is no comparable research on HIV/AIDS, we drew on that research, theorizing that press-state relations in sub-Saharan countries not only interact with, but also

shape a news culture in which AIDS is reported with a sense of independent advocacy mixed with objectivity and balance.<sup>30,49,58,59</sup>

The goal of this study is to examine the role media systems play in inhibiting (or comparatively, in allowing) journalists in four sub-Saharan countries to frame HIV/AIDS topics in a way that independently advocates for collective action and social change. Accordingly, our empirical analysis is based on specific conjectures about what journalistic advocacy looks like in HIV/AIDS coverage. Namely, an HIV/AIDS news agenda in a newspaper situated in a Contained Democratic media system, compared to a similar HIV/AIDS media agenda in a Repressive Autocratic system, will (a) more strongly emphasize the government's policy initiatives in the lives of individuals (re: social costs), in prevention campaigns, and in medical developments, and (b) give stronger cues about how life is getting better for individuals (re: social costs), how prevention campaigns are working, and how medical developments are making a positive difference. In other words, this study tests the proposition that independent advocacy is expressed in a news agenda that frames HIV/AIDS topics in terms of positive efficacy and government initiative.

### **HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa in the 2000s**

This study does not take Swain's call to investigate media texts "in less-developed countries" (p. 261)<sup>32</sup> as a particular summons to investigate African news media. As noted, many studies have already examined coverage, in African media and in media elsewhere, of the AIDS pandemic within African countries. However, nowhere else in the world do we need a better macro-level understanding of an HIV/AIDS news agenda than in countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Consider the circumstances during the decade of the 2000s, the time period of this study. By the end of 2008, out of an estimated 33.4 million adults and children worldwide diagnosed with the HIV virus or with AIDS symptoms, fully two-thirds, or approximately 22.4 million, lived in this region.<sup>60</sup> Annually, in absolute numbers, many more people are infected in sub-Saharan Africa than anywhere else: 1.9 million adults and children became infected in 2008, as compared with 280,000 adults and

children in southeast Asia, the region with the second highest incidence of cases.<sup>61</sup>

HIV/AIDS prevalence, the percentage of people in a country's population diagnosed with the HIV virus or who have AIDS symptoms, varied considerably among the 48 countries of the sub-Sahara during the 2000s. For example, whereas about one in five adults in Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland in the southern sub-Sahara were infected with HIV/AIDS, adult prevalence tended to be in the low single digits in western countries such as Nigeria and Senegal.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, the epidemic accelerated across the entire region because progress in slowing the spread of HIV/AIDS in one country was outrun by deaths elsewhere.<sup>62</sup> At 5.2 percent, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS cases across the sub-Saharan region was inordinately high—only the Caribbean region reached even 1 percent.<sup>61</sup> High prevalence has had devastating consequences: Home to just 10 percent of the world's population, sub-Saharan countries were plagued by 70 percent of AIDS-related deaths worldwide in 2008 (1.4 out of 2 million). Because most AIDS deaths occur in the adult population, by 2009, the decades-long epidemic in the sub-Sahara region had orphaned over 14 million children.<sup>63</sup>

### **Political functions of an HIV/AIDS news agenda**

Figure 1 presents a model illustrating the agenda-setting process on which our comparative analysis is based. This model is not intended to replace existing agenda-setting models. Rather, it is designed to expand their purview to account for the active political roles a news agenda plays in public affairs and for the constraints that press-state relations could place upon these roles. Although it is tailored to our effort to investigate an HIV/AIDS news agenda, the model can be applied to a comparative analysis of other issues as well.

A news agenda is defined as a set of stories through which news organizations transmit, amplify, and frame the agendas of advocates, policymakers, and public opinion. So defined, a news agenda clarifies the traditional function of a media agenda to be a conduit of views that advocate for particular problem definitions and support or oppose policy proposals. As McCombs reminds us, "Agenda-setting theory in its

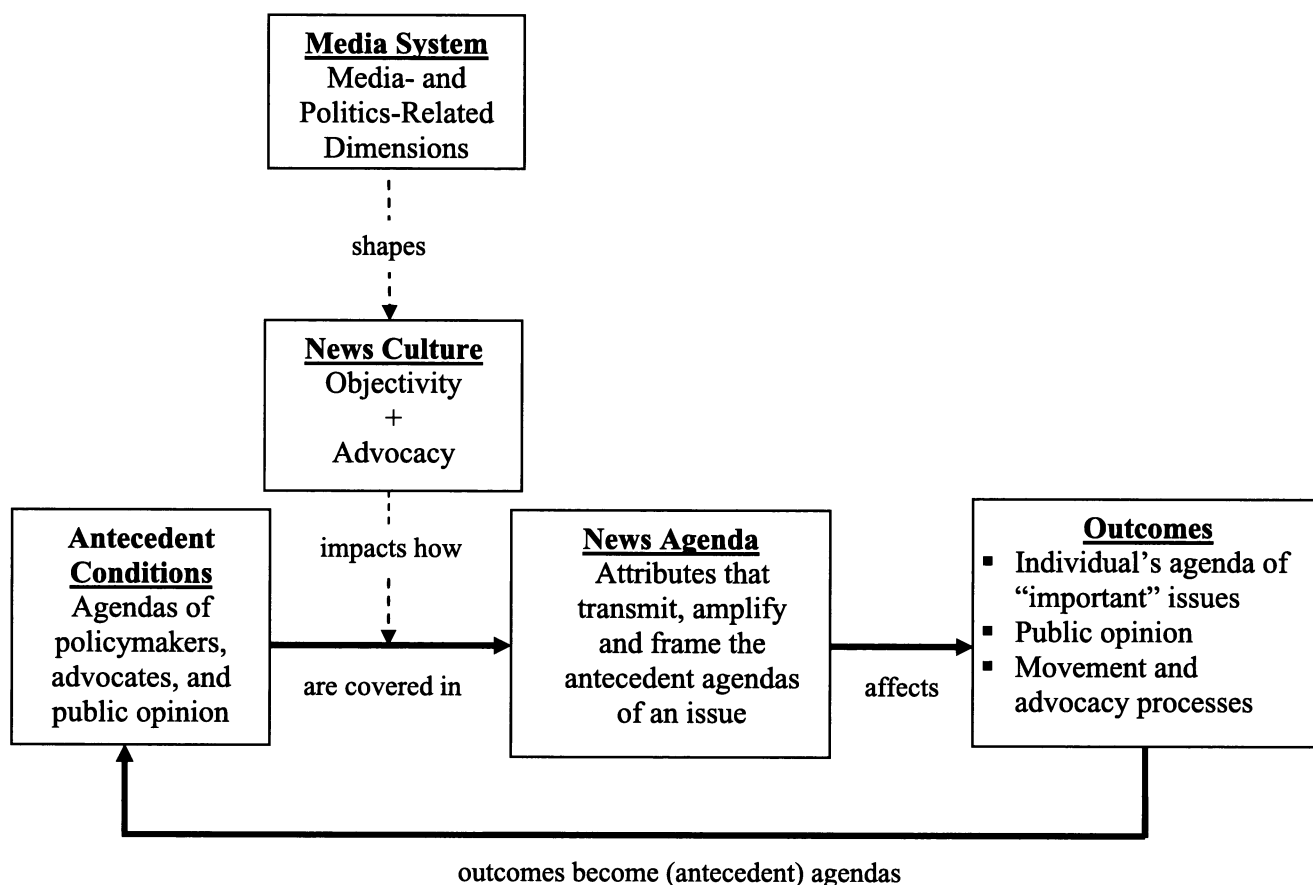


Figure 1. The agenda-setting process of public issues in comparative perspective.

fundamental form is about the transfer of salience among agendas” (p. 143).<sup>64</sup> Our model underscores the point that a news agenda plays a pivotal role in the transfer of issue salience; indeed, journalism plays an active political role in public affairs more broadly, constructing an issue by dint of publicity, amplification, and issue framing. In this broader picture, agenda-setting research “seeks to offer one explanation of how social change occurs in modern society” (p. 69).<sup>65</sup> In our view, therefore, an agenda-setting model needs to account for the political nature of news agendas, for only in such a framework does it make sense to suggest that media systems can impact a news agenda through news culture.

Transmitting the agendas of sources—the first political function of a news agenda—means that news stories communicate the views of other people, for “the sources a newsman talks to largely shapes what he reports” (p. 2).<sup>66</sup> Sources’ agendas are a subset of the

extramedia influences, along with advertiser pressures, cultural stereotypes, and governmental controls, that determine what gets into the news.<sup>67</sup> Hence, as Figure 1 shows, source agendas are considered to be antecedent to a news agenda.

By transmitting source agendas, a news agenda plays an active role in affecting outcomes on the individual level (see Figure 1). For example, observers have long held that the basic agenda-setting effect—when frequent coverage of a topic heightens its importance in the minds of people who hear and read the news<sup>37</sup>—has been crucial in slowing the pace of the AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan countries.<sup>24,28,42,68</sup> In fact, from the time the U.S. medical community first diagnosed AIDS, research has recognized the importance of this agenda-setting effect, regardless of geographical setting.<sup>9,10,12,13,15,69,70,71</sup> This literature holds that topics such as medical advances, disease statistics, economic trends, prevention campaigns,

social costs, and lifestyle issues should be given regular and frequent coverage in order to raise the public's awareness about behavioral risks associated with exposure to HIV and to educate people about social and political dimensions of the disease.

In the broader picture, the transmission function of an HIV/AIDS news agenda helps to shape policy decisions. Following McCombs,<sup>64</sup> who characterized the relationship between news coverage and policy as “extremely circular” over time (p. 102), Figure 1 depicts a recursive relationship between a news agenda and the erstwhile antecedent condition of a policy agenda. (Note that the Dearing and Rogers model<sup>4</sup> [p. 5] depicts this relationship as linear.) Pratt and colleagues affirmed the importance of the transmission role to shape policy, stating that steady AIDS coverage “improve[s] the flow of health information, increase[s] public awareness of diseases, and help[s] set the public health agenda for policy makers” (p. 890).<sup>42</sup> Similarly, in an overview of 20 years of AIDS news coverage, Brodie and colleagues held that, “Media coverage of the HIV/AIDS epidemic has, at times, helped shape the policy agenda, while also reflecting current policy discussions, debates and important events” (p. A1).<sup>72</sup>

Transmitting issue agendas is the basis for the news media's amplification and framing functions. Amplifying source agendas can occur even when an agenda is highly visible in the media. For example, coverage of a prevention campaign transmitted through controlled mass media (e.g., on billboards, radio, or television) serves to heighten public awareness about medical or social aspects of the disease, over and above exposure to the mediated campaign itself.<sup>73</sup> Mainly, however, the amplification function operates when news organizations exercise editorial autonomy by keeping some aspect of HIV/AIDS alive in the news. Accordingly, amplification is evident when journalists follow-up on previous stories, pegging ongoing or past events to the real-world agenda of HIV/AIDS that exists below the din of current events. For example, when news covers the ramifications of a policy about care for the sick and dying, or how employers continue to deal with depleted work forces, or how well subsidies for antiretroviral drugs are working, the agendas of advocates and policymakers are potentially amplified.

The value of the amplification role can be glimpsed in cases where AIDS coverage has lapsed. In surveying controlled-media prevention campaigns in the East and

Southern regions of the sub-Saharan in the late 1990s, Kiai<sup>24</sup> noted that poor media planning diminished the news value of these campaigns, thereby lessening the chance they would be covered in news. Similarly, in the early stages of the AIDS crisis, researchers in the U.S.<sup>3,70,74,75</sup> and in Africa<sup>68,76</sup> lamented sporadic coverage of AIDS. Alluding to the benefits of news amplification, they argued that journalists could have easily picked up cues from the real world agenda and kept a steady spotlight on AIDS. In the U.S. context, Dearing and Rogers<sup>3</sup> argued that enough people had died of AIDS—from 1981 to 1985, half of the 10,000 people diagnosed with the disease had died—to warrant coverage of scientific and medical sources eager to disseminate findings about the disease's cause and mode of transmission. Later, Rogers and Schefner-Rogers<sup>11</sup> noted that positive outcomes occurred when the news media's transmission and amplification functions had finally synchronized into a steady stream of coverage:

The agenda-setting process for the issue of AIDS led, after a four-year lag, to increased federal funding for prevention programs. Continuous news stories about the disease and the epidemic helped to demystify AIDS for the U.S. public, and gradually to convince them, and policymakers, that the AIDS issue was of high priority (p. 413).

Framing the agendas of advocates, policymakers, and public opinion is the third political function of an HIV/AIDS news agenda. This function works in two ways that tend to blend in practice: Journalists selectively transmit the frames of sources and they contextualize the agendas of sources. Nelkin connected these dual framing functions to an agenda-setting model, stating, “The media, in effect, make problems such as AIDS visible and define a ‘frame’ or context within which related events can be interpreted and understood...by simply publicizing an issue, media reports can set the policy agenda and significantly influence political decisions” (p. 303).<sup>7</sup> On the one hand, therefore, news circulates the frames in source agendas by simply publicizing an issue. By selectively transmitting these frames, journalists set parameters for which aspects of an agenda—e.g., the prevention goals of a government-supported AIDS campaign—will steer particular outcomes. On the other hand, as

Schudson has noted, journalists “add something to every story they run”; a journalist “has the professional obligation to frame the message” (pp. 19–20).<sup>77</sup> Thus, outcomes can also be shaped when news stories contextualize source frames.

Although there is a consensus that the topic AIDS should be consistently covered in the media, the promise of the framing function to heighten public awareness and positively shape policymaking is often confounded by frames journalists circulate and add to HIV/AIDS coverage. Along these lines, researchers have detected gendered, homophobic, moralistic, and militaristic news framing in HIV/AIDS coverage.<sup>2,15,18,19,26,59,69,78</sup> Conceivably, these frames undermine positive outcomes associated with transmitting and amplifying agendas. For example, in a study of HIV/AIDS coverage published from 1985 to 2000 in the *Daily Dispatch*, a South African newspaper, Connelly and Macleod found that when journalists framed medical interventions and prevention campaigns in militaristic terms, certain social groups, particularly women, were depicted as being responsible for spreading AIDS.<sup>79</sup> They concluded that this frame perpetuated a social stereotype that exonerated men and stigmatized poor black women. “Media can hinder and hurt the AIDS effort [in Africa] by spreading misinformation and myth,” Gibson observed (p. 352).<sup>68</sup>

Forecasting our interest in the role that media systems play in the agenda-setting process of HIV/AIDS, internal and external conditions have been found to constrain the power of news frames to shape outcomes and agendas. For example, describing the difficulties journalists faced during the emerging AIDS crisis in the U.S., Nelkin stated, “The constraints of newswork converge with the complexity of technical information about risk events to leave most journalists vulnerable to their sources of information” (p. 296).<sup>7</sup> In this scenario, the level of editorial autonomy associated with contextualizing HIV/AIDS agendas became attenuated as journalists tried to objectively transmit information about complicated medical details. Moreover, Nelkin observed that social factors, such as stereotypes that news coverage helps to create, “converge with the constraints of journalism and the pressure from advocates to influence the style and content of news” (p. 296).<sup>7</sup> These constraints were undoubtedly part of the picture in 1980s-era coverage in African news media as well. For example, observers

noted how a “moral panic” perspective, created in part when press coverage amplified source agendas, became a habitual frame of reference in AIDS coverage in African news media.<sup>27,80,81</sup>

In addition to practical and cultural constraints, press-state relations shape how news covers and frames AIDS. Along these lines, Gibson<sup>68</sup> summarized conditions in sub-Saharan Africa during the 1980s and 1990s:

[T]he media in Africa are not just a mirror, but a ‘searchlight,’ and where the searchlight is shining can be affected by groups with special interests in an issue, by pseudoevents created to get attention, and by certain habits and rituals of journalists. For much of Africa, the hand on the on-off switch is government. Whether overtly or covertly, openly or subtly, the strong hand of government intervention is there (p. 355).

Throughout the history of research on AIDS coverage, observers have rarely exonerated news organizations from spurring negative social outcomes *just because* journalists work under professional and political constraints when they frame the HIV/AIDS pandemic in news coverage.<sup>15,26,70,75,82</sup> In acknowledging that HIV/AIDS news framing is shaped by these conditions, we set the stage for a system-level comparative analysis of AIDS coverage in African news media.

### **Defining and observing an HIV/AIDS news agenda**

Media researchers began to analyze HIV/AIDS coverage in the mid-1980s, shortly before framing was formally incorporated into agenda-setting theory as a second level. In close to three decades of work and analysis, the HIV/AIDS news agenda has been operationalized in various ways. Researchers have not come to a consensus about which discursive units are unequivocally topics and which are unequivocally frames. Therefore, to clarify the attributes of the HIV/AIDS news agenda that we will examine comparatively in African newspapers, this section takes an introspective look at the literature and discusses three basic types of content analysis designs employed in HIV/AIDS research.

The first design examines the object of HIV/AIDS solely in terms of specific topics, without reference to frames. For example, in two investigations of national Zimbabwean newspapers over a 5-year period, Pitts and Jackson<sup>28,29</sup> observed seven topics in AIDS coverage, including prevention campaigns, policy and economics, transmission, and education/awareness. These topics were also observed in research on African news coverage by Kasoma,<sup>22,23</sup> Linda,<sup>25</sup> and Visser and colleagues.<sup>31</sup> In the U.S. setting, Krishnan and colleagues<sup>83</sup> cited the Pitts and Jackson studies as a source of topics, such as education/awareness and policy/economics. However, in other cases, Krishnan and colleagues seemed to derive rather than duplicate topics from Pitts and Jackson; for example, they divided their “transmission” variable into “treatment and modalities” and “definitions and nomenclature.”

The progenitor of many AIDS topics is the seminal study by Rogers and colleagues.<sup>10</sup> In an investigation of U.S. news media, they observed 13 topics, including children with AIDS, epidemic, poll results, biomedical issues, prevention campaigns, discrimination, and government policy. Notably, all of these topics were used in the two cross-national studies by Traquina.<sup>21,44</sup>

From the discussion so far, “prevention campaigns” emerges as a topic that is commonly found in an HIV/AIDS news agenda—no doubt, prevention campaigns are themselves frequently found at the center of compelling arguments about HIV/AIDS. Hence, this topic is observed in our study. Our second topic, social costs, is a composite of the topics “education” (re: lack of it) and “economics” (re: lack of employment) from Pitts and Jackson’s work. “Social costs” also contains the attribute of discrimination, as observed in the Rogers et al. study. Finally, our third topic, “medical developments,” bears resemblance to Rogers and colleague’s “biomedical issues” topic, which was also observed in the longitudinal content analysis by Brodie and colleagues.<sup>72</sup> “Medical developments” also incorporated two of Kasoma’s<sup>22,23</sup> topics, called “AIDS tests” and “cure and vaccine.”

In the second content analysis design, AIDS-related topics and themes are observed as being embedded within frames. This design comes closest to the view in second-level agenda-setting research that a frame is a macro-level bundling device for micro-level attributes.<sup>36</sup> For example, in a study of African medical journals and magazines published during the 1980s,

Pratt, Ha, and Pratt<sup>42</sup> grouped observations of “disease transmission,” “prevalence,” and “AIDS symptoms” into a category called “factual information frames.” Similarly, in a study of Western coverage of HIV/AIDS in African countries, Straughan<sup>19</sup> suggested that the topics of disease transmission, prevalence, and symptoms were embedded within the metaphor “AIDS as pandemic.”

The third design examines frames, themes, and topics, but treats each one as an analytically distinct unit of discourse. Several HIV/AIDS content analyses have used this approach.<sup>18,26,79,84</sup> For example, Meintjes and Bray<sup>26</sup> examined South African newspapers for themes about children with AIDS. An agenda-setting model undergirded their analysis: “Of primary concern. . . is the possibility that the South African news media plays an influential role in creating or maintaining a general understanding of the way HIV/AIDS affects children, which in turn may contribute to the nation’s response in terms of social policy and resource distribution” (p. 148). Results showed that particular themes, such as “innocent victim” and “social threat,” contextualized topics including African families and orphans.

The second and third designs raise some interesting issues about the theoretical purview of frames as compared to other analytical units such as topics, themes, and metaphors. For example, Meintjes and Bray<sup>26</sup> imply that frames and themes share common theoretical ground, as does de Souza,<sup>14</sup> who studied English-language daily newspapers in India and found various themes located within frames about the severity, causes, and risk factors of AIDS (e.g., “It’s a War!” was a theme of the “severity of problem” frame). Yet both of these studies also distinguish between these discourse units in the course of reporting results. Consistent with this view, we postulate that frames and themes are analytically distinct textual units; specifically, a theme is a topic that pervades a discourse unit, not a contextualizing frame per se. We are aware that this postulation bucks some important theorizing in the framing literature. For example, Pan and Kosicki<sup>85</sup> maintained that a theme has a structuring function; thus, in their view, a theme is tantamount to a frame. Countering this view, we argue that a difference between frames and themes can be gleaned from journalistic practice; namely, journalists construct

reality by framing issues more so than by selecting story themes.

The third design is challenging to execute. Compared to the other two designs, however, it has the advantage of enabling coders to observe patterns in which topics (thematic or not) are framed within stories, allowing that single stories can have more than one topic and more than one frame. In our view, this design allows researchers the most freedom to observe the active process through which journalists contextualize AIDS-related topics. As a variation of the second-level agenda-setting approach, this design poses that macro-attributes (frames) bundle together micro-attributes (subtopics) but does not require that subtopics be categorized under or embedded within particular frames.

This study employs the third design. Efficacy is an affective frame in the second-level agenda-setting approach.<sup>35</sup> Here, second-level agenda-setting dovetails with a strand of framing research that focuses on valence (e.g., pro-con, gain-loss, favorable-unfavorable),<sup>86</sup> particularly in messages, not necessarily news stories, that encode decisions or outcomes regarding health.<sup>87,88</sup> Journalists tend to pay close attention to sources who frame topics in terms of valence, for valence imparts emotional qualities to issue frames and assists journalists in dramatizing events.<sup>89,90</sup> Efficacy is therefore a valuable framing tool for sources who may wish to sharpen an argument with a claim of progress or decline. It is also a powerful way for journalists to dramatize an event with an overarching assessment of whether circumstances are getting better or worse.

Responsibility is also deeply rooted in the framing literature. It is a cognitive frame in second-level agenda setting.<sup>35</sup> Our study shifted the emphasis from “who is to blame,” a common frame in coverage of public issues,<sup>91,92,93</sup> to “who is or should be doing something about” HIV/AIDS. Certainly, “blame” has been a prevalent feature of AIDS discourse since the disease was first reported in the media. In a useful summary of this notion, Meintjes and Bray stated, “Researchers argue that through the practices of ‘othering,’ accompanied by blame, discourses of AIDS reporting produce, and importantly reproduce, hegemonic stereotypes, power relations and notions of deviance” (p. 150).<sup>26</sup> However, our decision to shift the emphasis from blame to initiative is predicated on the notion that, deep into its issue cycle, AIDS is now discussed

and debated in terms of solutions and remedies as much as, or more than, in terms of causes of the disease.

Having conceptually defined an HIV/AIDS news agenda, and having discussed how these news agendas are observed, we ask the following research questions:

*RQ1a:* How frequently and prominently is each HIV/AIDS story topic—social costs, prevention campaigns, and medical developments—covered across our sample of Anglophone African newspapers?

*RQ1b:* Do leading newspapers in different media systems differ in how frequently and prominently they cover HIV/AIDS-related topics?

*RQ2:* Across our sample of news coverage, are there patterns of story topics and news frames?

### Comparing an HIV/AIDS news agenda in sub-Saharan countries

As noted, several studies have already conducted cross-national analysis of HIV/AIDS news agendas; however, this study is the first to use an approach that, in Gurevitch and Blumler’s<sup>40</sup> words, “aims to find out how key characteristics of diverse political-media systems differently shape political communication processes within them” (p. 328). A workable system-based comparative analysis needs to specify the interactions between elements of macro-level institutions and the meso-level working environment, or news culture, in which journalists cover issues and events.<sup>38,39,40</sup> For theoretical guidance, our model in Figure 1 draws on Esser’s approach,<sup>94</sup> which distinguishes between a *news culture* focusing on observed message features of news from a *journalistic culture*, which focuses on institutional arrangements that shape those message features. This conceptual framework posits that a news culture exists on the meso-level as a semi-structural variable that bridges the macro-level of systems to the micro-level of messages. Strömbäck and Luengo offered a concise model of this full process (see p. 554).<sup>57</sup> In their model, news culture is located in “different circumstances of news production,” which is positioned between “models of media and politics” and “structural biases”—the latter being message patterns, primarily frames, in news coverage. In placing a news culture in a semi-structural position (i.e., the vertical boxes in Figure 1), our model aims to take into account



institutional arrangements—the media systems—that play a determining role in shaping message patterns within the HIV/AIDS news agenda.

To conceptualize and identify media systems in sub-Saharan African nations, this study adapts the framework of Hallin and Mancini's<sup>45</sup> model of media systems in Western democracies. It also draws from Nisbet and Moehler's<sup>53</sup> quantitative analysis of political communication systems in sub-Saharan African countries. Whereas Hallin and Mancini distinguished three media systems for Western democracies (Liberal, Polarized Pluralist, Democratic Corporatist), Nisbet and Moehler identified five "political communication systems" for sub-Saharan African nations. To identify the press-state relationships within our four sub-Saharan countries, this study integrates these frameworks.

Thus, this section has two goals—to review Hallin and Mancini's typology to identify variations of Polarized Pluralism that dovetail with Nisbet and Moehler's observations; and to link these media systems to a conception of an advocacy news culture that manifests in particular patterns of news frames.

### *Identifying media systems in sub-Saharan countries*

Hallin and Mancini<sup>45</sup> delineate media systems in terms of both media-related characteristics and political system characteristics. The first media-related characteristic, *open media markets vs. state control* of mass communication industries, encompasses level of commercialism, level of news readership and language barriers to readership, and conventions that distinguish sensationalist news from "quality" news. The second media-related characteristic is the degree of linkage between the news media and political parties, or *political parallelism*. "In cultures where political parallelism is strong," Hallin and Mancini observe, "the culture and discursive style of journalism is closely related to that of politics" (p. 29).<sup>45</sup> This characteristic differentiates *external pluralism* from *internal pluralism*. External pluralism compels the news media to differentially transmit the points of view of different groups in a society. Conversely, internal pluralism describes the condition in which "media organizations both avoid institutional ties to political groups and attempt to maintain neutrality and 'balance' in their content" (p. 29).<sup>45</sup>

The third media-related characteristic is the degree of journalistic *professionalism*. Closely related to political parallelism, this characteristic shows up in the degree of *press autonomy*. A high level of press autonomy is demonstrated by a marked *public service orientation* and low levels of political *instrumentalization* (i.e., control of media by outside actors). The fourth media-related characteristic, called the *role of the state*, bridges the political system characteristics. "The state plays a significant role in shaping the media system in any society," summarized Hallin and Mancini (p. 41).<sup>45</sup>

Media-related characteristics interact with political institutions and processes. Political system characteristics include *majoritarian vs. consensus democracy*. In majoritarian politics, a small number of political parties represent large segments of the electorate with many policies. A journalistic norm of objectivity usually accompanies this type of government, according to Hallin and Mancini (see p. 51).<sup>45</sup> Alternatively, consensus politics features power-sharing among various political parties, spurring external pluralism in news. Another political system characteristic ranges from *individual pluralism*, the notion that political representation is structured in terms of individuals and numerous special interests, to *organized pluralism*, the notion that political representation is organized in terms of organized social groups that "play a central role in mediating their members' relations with the wider society" (p. 53).<sup>45</sup> Finally, *rational-legal authority* deals with the political system's tolerance of bureaucracies independent of political parties, particularly the mass media.

According to Hallin and Mancini, the three media systems are ideal types; nonetheless, each one is shaped by historical conditions and circumstances. Thus, they contend that "considerable variation exists among countries grouped together under a single system" (p. 11).<sup>45</sup> Nisbet and Moehler<sup>53</sup> corroborate this point quantitatively. Using the Freedom House Organization rating system,<sup>95</sup> they identified five political communication systems in sub-Saharan nations, ranging from an Open Democratic system (e.g., South Africa) to a Closed Autocratic system (e.g., Sudan). Countries grouped within each system exhibited differences in scores for each rating, including "civil and political liberties" and "political competition." Returning to Hallin and Mancini's point—that differences in media

systems stem from historical circumstances—we feel that it is important to contextualize Nisbet and Moehler’s analysis with a brief look at historical circumstances of press-state relations in sub-Saharan countries during the colonial and postcolonial periods.

Beginning with the colonial period, the form of journalism unique to Africa before colonialism—community-based, participatory, and associational—was altered but not eradicated by the main colonial powers, England and France.<sup>46,47,50,51,52</sup> These regimes differed in their approach to news and civil society. The British favored a vibrant and free press in Anglophone West Africa and the French discouraged this development in their colonies. Yet in both cases, according to Shaw, the press “played a quite proactive watchdog role that proved quite instrumental in the struggle for independence” (p. 496).<sup>50</sup> Still, in the immediate and late postcolonial periods up to and during the so-called democratization decade of the 1990s, governments were generally intolerant of media autonomy. As Gibson pointed out, “Most African governments maintain[ed] relatively close, often repressive, relationships to the media” (p. 353).<sup>68</sup> In practical terms, journalists working within emerging configurations of state-run and privately-owned commercial media remained enmeshed within development needs of the State,<sup>96</sup> even though in many instances news organizations adopted a confrontational stance toward the government<sup>48,52</sup> Thus, for the most part, African journalists strived—but struggled—to disassociate from a regime’s ideological stances in order to serve the public’s information needs with a combination of independent, objective reporting (a news norm derived from Western models) and associational, community-building models.<sup>30,68,97,98,99</sup> In all, as Berger noted, the news media “did not emerge as free floating autonomous social actors” (p. 37)<sup>46</sup> during the late postcolonial period of democratization.

Against this historical backdrop, different media systems in sub-Saharan countries coalesced in the early 2000s as variations of Polarized Pluralism, the media system found in most Mediterranean countries (see Figure 2). Media-related characteristics of this model include: state controls on broadcasting and mixed ownership of print media; high instrumentalism, whereby news media are used by political parties and other organizations to “intervene in the world of politics” (p. 37),<sup>45</sup> particularly in volatile situations of

quick regime change; high political parallelism marked by external pluralism and commentary oriented journalism that tends to serve social groups and the State with instrumentalized advocacy; and, weaker professionalism (compared to the other two media systems), whereby news organizations lack a tradition of forming their own ethical codes and professional norms. These media-related characteristics are typically immersed in political systems that blend majoritarian and consensus politics, abide organized pluralism, and generally show low tolerance for press autonomy.

How can these characteristics of Polarized Pluralism be used to differentiate media systems within sub-Saharan countries? Because the same type of media system across two or more countries can have different configurations of media-related and political characteristics (see Hadland<sup>100</sup> for a discussion of South Africa), it is reasonable to expect that liberalization played out differently among sub-Saharan African countries during the “democratization decade.” As Nisbet and Moehler stated, “Just as the range of political regimes evolved and diversified during the 1990s and early 2000s, the degree of press freedom and forms of control across states within the region varies widely” (p. 13).<sup>53</sup> Figure 2 groups South African and Nigeria into a Contained Democratic media system. The term “contained,” discussed shortly, bundles two of Nisbet and Moehler’s classifications, namely, an Open Democratic system in South Africa and a Liberalized Democratic system in Nigeria. Figure 2 groups Kenya and Zimbabwe into a Repressive Autocratic media system, a term we adopted from Nisbet and Moehler’s classification of these countries.

As different as the governments in Kenya and Zimbabwe were throughout the 2000s—Kenya, a representative democratic republic, held open elections in 2002 that most observers saw as being fair; Zimbabwe, considered a semi-presidential republic, had elections in the 2000s that were widely viewed as undemocratic<sup>101,102</sup>—neither media system embraced rational-legal authority to the extent that the news media could be considered genuinely independent of party influence. Working in this environment, journalists will find it difficult to perform the public service that pushes governments to serve the populace via the force of objective, balanced news that covers conflicting views of issues. Thus, the Repressed Autocratic media system of Kenya and Zimbabwe shapes a news

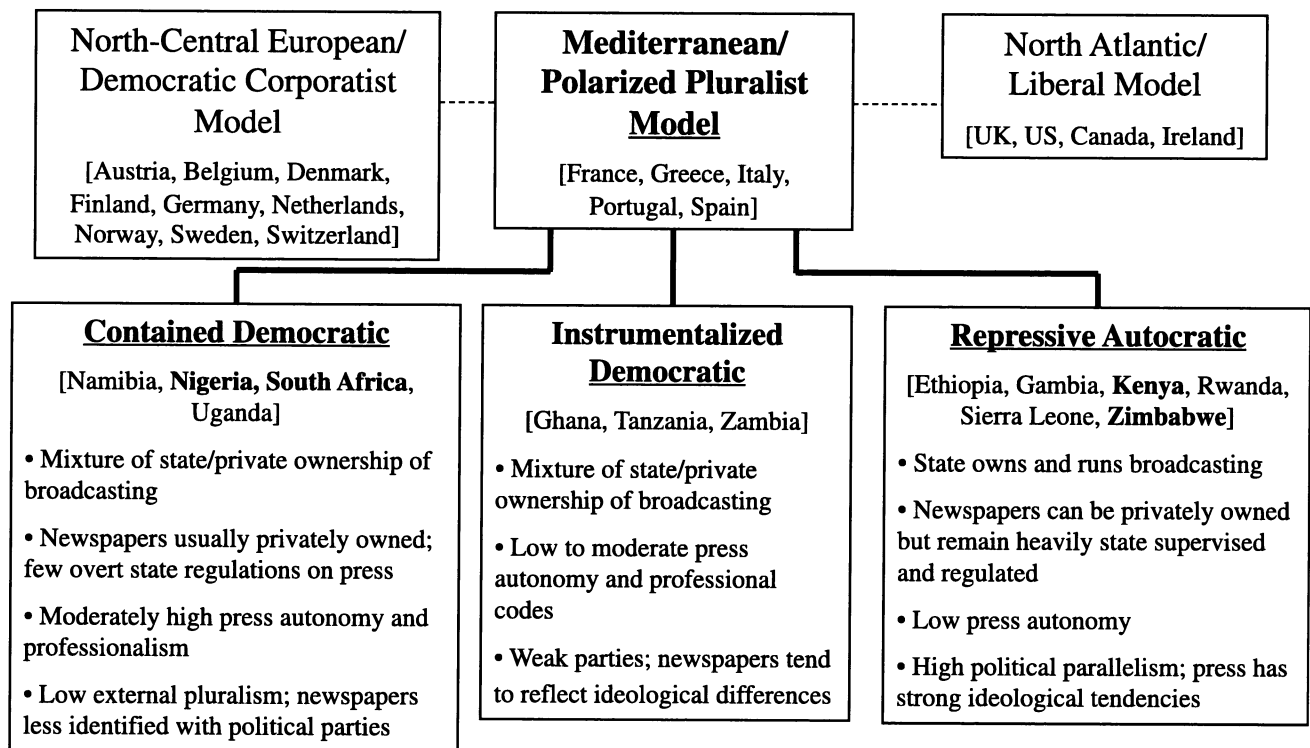


Figure 2. Media systems of sub-Saharan African countries.

culture that compels news organizations to mold coverage to official viewpoints. Attesting to high instrumentalization and political parallelism within these countries, Nisbet and Moehler stated, “Media organizations within [this] media system are most likely to be co-opted by governing elites to help maintain political stability” (p. 17).<sup>53</sup>

Alternatively, as dissimilar as the governments of Nigeria and South Africa were throughout the 2000s—since the end of apartheid in 1994, South Africa has become a parliamentary republic; since emerging from 33 years of military rule in 1999, Nigeria has become a Federal Republic modeled after the United States, with executive power exercised by its president yet also having features of the United Kingdom’s system of parliamentary government—the presence of majoritarianism in both countries tended to temper political parallelism and instrumentalism, foster internal pluralism, and allow newsrooms to develop distinct professional norms. In practice, news media situated within these countries emerged from democratization being relatively freer to develop the sort of public service

orientation that, via editorial neutrality and balanced coverage, fosters public debate about issues. Moreover, this media system—a Contained Democratic system—opens the news culture to a style of reporting that blends objective and balanced coverage with a stronger and more independent sense of advocacy.

Along these lines, Krüger argued that the AIDS pandemic “represents a relatively new challenge to established principles” (p. 127).<sup>49</sup> Assaying AIDS journalism in southern Africa during the early 2000s, he argued that journalists need to stretch the basic principles of seeking truth, acting independently, and minimizing harm by incorporating ethical principles into newswork. In part, ethical journalism involves steering clear of certain storylines—e.g., wild claims about a cure—that interfere with good reporting. On a broader scale, ethical reporting encompasses an advocacy role, and may be indexed on a scale ranging from “strong” to “weak,” according to Stein’s<sup>30</sup> research on South African journalists in the early 2000s. Whereas weak advocacy informs the public through neutral reporting of all sides of HIV/AIDS topics, strong

advocacy “involves more than educating the public regarding appropriate individual behavior and includes the promotion of social change and collective action” (p. 75).<sup>30</sup> In the African context, strong advocacy involves putting pressure on a government to create policies that “facilitate a socio-economic environment conducive to behaviour change and to managing the impact of AIDS over the long term” (p. 75). In our view, strong advocacy is possible when news framing stresses government initiative and positive efficacy.

A Contained Democratic media system has more potential to facilitate a news culture of advocacy—certainly in its “weak” form and in the best of circumstances in its “strong” form—than the Repressed Autocratic media system. This is a relative difference, however, for an advocacy role in a sub-Saharan news culture exists within an overarching political climate that combines organized pluralism (on the political system side of Hallin and Mancini’s typology) and external pluralism (on the media institutions side). This situation gives rise to our use of the term “contained” for this media system. For example, consider that after apartheid in South Africa and military rule in Nigeria, elections in both of these countries have consistently resulted in strong governing parties (e.g., the African National Congress in South Africa), with only weak credible challenge from other parties. Thus, in the variation of Polarized Pluralism we call Contained Democratic, organized pluralism constrains the news media in Nigeria and South Africa from galvanizing policymakers via a combination of public service and advocacy, even as, compared to a Repressive Autocratic media system, journalists have an orientation of public service and advocacy that stems from more highly developed professional norms and practices.<sup>103</sup>

### *Impact of African media systems on the framing of HIV/AIDS*

What story level differences in HIV/AIDS coverage can we expect to find from news organizations situated within these different media systems? And, how do unique aspects of the Contained Democratic media system and the Repressive Autocratic media system both abet and hinder the advocacy role in the news cultures that produce an HIV/AIDS news agenda? Because there are no system-level comparative analyses of HIV/AIDS coverage to use as a benchmark to

answer these questions, we turn to comparative work in political communication for guidance.

Comparative political communication research has examined a range of message outcomes that, theoretically, ensue from the interaction of macro- and meso-level processes (see Esser and Strömbäck<sup>38</sup> for a useful review). One line of research focuses on news framing in election settings, postulating that generic frames that are congruent with an object of analysis (e.g., the “strategy” frame in campaign news<sup>104</sup>) express structural biases rather than partisan biases. According to Strömbäck and Dimitrova,<sup>55</sup> structural biases emerge from proactive contextualizing on the part of journalists. Observing a structural bias is therefore tantamount to peering into the news culture of storytelling conventions.<sup>105</sup> Strömbäck and Luengo maintained that the expression of structural biases is sensitive to systemic conditions: “. . .if the circumstances of news production result in structural biases, *and* these can be expected to manifest themselves in framing of politics, *then* the framing of politics should be different in different countries belonging to different models of media and politics” (p. 554).<sup>57</sup> Accordingly, media systems have been found to impact the extent to which journalists employ generic news frames in election campaign stories. For example, Strömbäck and Dimitrova<sup>55</sup> found that strategy framing was more common in U.S. newspapers (a Liberal media system) than in Swedish newspapers (a Democratic Corporatist media system).

Based on this robust line of comparative research work in political communication, we theorize that different media systems (Contained Democratic and Repressive Autocratic) derived from a common media system (Polarized Pluralism) should produce variation in how HIV/AIDS topics are framed. The reason stems from the bridging function performed by news culture: in a Contained Democratic media system, more so than in a Repressed Autocratic media system, the role of advocacy is blended into professional norms of objectivity and balance. Thus, we theorize that a news culture that is enabled to perform at least moderate level of advocacy will manifest news frames that push for a society wide, positive response to HIV/AIDS. On the micro-level of news stories, we expect this “push” for social change to be manifested in subtle ways. As noted, the political function of a news framing agenda is complicated by the fact that news stories circulate

the issue frames of sources *and* add an interpretive contextual layer on top of those frames. Thus, it is challenging to isolate journalistic framing completely apart from source framing. To address this challenge, we selected two news frames, efficacy and responsibility, already identified in the literature as devices journalists employ when covering policy issues. These two frames are easily conceived as congruent with the social problem of AIDS in African nations.

Taking the efficacy frame first, notions of progress and decline offer journalists the opportunity to sum up the viewpoints of issue proponents and even create a climate of opinion about AIDS. As noted earlier, this news frame stems both from source cues and from a professional news norm in which dramatic presentation complements objective reporting. In our view, when journalists emphasize progress rather than decline regarding prevention programs, medical developments, and social costs, an advocacy agenda is at work. At first glance, this point is a counterintuitive. One justification for it lies in the finding that, on the individual level, gain frames have been shown to reinforce health-affirming or promoting behaviors.<sup>88,106</sup> To be sure, this is hardly a uniform finding across the health communication literature; furthermore, this finding is conditioned by numerous factors and circumstances.<sup>87,107</sup> Still, we maintain that a perceived tally of successes vis-à-vis prevention programs, social costs, and medical developments is the kind of message that, over the long haul, helps—even goads—individuals, advocates, and policymakers to continue addressing myriad aspects of the disease.

Moving on to the responsibility frame, journalists can express advocacy by portraying governments rather individuals or communities as taking initiative to address AIDS. Our rationale for this position stems from the widely held conception that governments must take the lead in dealing with AIDS in African nations. For example, former UN secretary general Kofi Anan famously remarked that more people died of AIDS in Africa in 1999 than in all of the wars on the continent. “AIDS is a major crisis for the continent,” he said, adding, “governments have got to do something.”<sup>108</sup> Because a host of structural risk factors (e.g., poverty, corruption, and war) contribute to the inordinately high incidence of HIV/AIDS across sub-Saharan countries, the political will of national governments is paramount in engendering effective

responses.<sup>109,110</sup> Thus, building partnerships with NGOs and private companies to implement prevention campaigns; dealing with depleted work forces in agriculture, service, and industry; caring for AIDS orphans; combating religious taboos against speaking about AIDS or debunking superstitions that attribute it to humans’ moral lapses; helping households care for sick and dying members; keeping educational institutions open and staffed as teachers become sick and die; negotiating with multinational drug companies for affordable rates on much-needed antiretroviral drugs—these concerns have beckoned the attention of administration officials and legislatures in countries across the region since the mid-1980s, when Western scientists confirmed that AIDS was widespread in sub-Saharan Africa.

Admittedly, news framing can evince advocacy when individuals and communities (or social agents) are portrayed as taking initiative to address AIDS. This is because observers have long argued that community level efforts are vital in dealing with AIDS.<sup>71,111</sup> For example, in multi-year evaluation of an HIV project in South Africa, Campbell<sup>112</sup> posited that,

There is now widespread agreement that a key step in addressing the epidemic is to get local people collectively to take ownership of the problem, engaging in collective action to increase the likelihood that people will act in health-enhancing ways, and to mobilize for the creation of community contexts that enable improved sexual health (p. 3).

Similarly, Epstein<sup>69</sup> argued that while mass media and governments both play a vital role in combating AIDS, ultimately the cure is “invisible”:

I came to understand that when it comes to saving lives, intangible things—the solidarity of ordinary people facing up to shared calamity; the anger of activists, especially women; and new scientific ideas—can be just as important as medicine and technology (p. 113).

Even though journalistic advocacy can take different forms vis-à-vis responsibility framing, government action was, and still is, of paramount importance in African nations. This point is illustrated by two contrasting examples. On one hand, in the mid-1980s Senegal was called “a beacon of hope”<sup>113</sup> for a government-funded national blood screening program

and other prevention campaigns that kept the adult prevalence rate to one percent, where it remained well into the 2000s.<sup>114</sup> On the other hand, after becoming President of South Africa in 1999, Thabo Mbeki believed and acted upon fringe ideas in medical science which claimed that HIV was not the cause of AIDS and that anti-retroviral drugs would not help people who were sick.<sup>115,116</sup> As Shah noted, “The current and future generations are paying for this with their lives.”<sup>117</sup>

In sum, there are compelling theoretical reasons to think that news frames in a Contained Democratic media system, more so than in a Repressive Autocratic media system, will shape a news culture that is able to advocate for social change via two framing patterns: (1) governments are taking the initiative to deal with HIV/AIDS, and (2) circumstances are getting better overall with regard to prevention programs, medical developments, and social costs. However, because there are no benchmarks in the literature to support firm predictions, we ask the following research question:

RQ3: Does topic framing in the media agendas of our four Anglophone newspapers change after accounting for the country's media system?

## Method

Political officials in African countries tend to view newspaper coverage, more so than broadcast coverage, as a sounding board for how, and how often, their agendas are transmitted to the public.<sup>21,23,28,29,76</sup> Thus it is reasonable to think that the four newspapers examined in this study—*This Day* (Nigeria), *The Herald* (Zimbabwe), *The Star* (South Africa) and *The Daily Nation* (Kenya)—are channels through which a range of sources feel they can transmit compelling arguments about HIV/AIDS to the public. The Appendix describes each newspaper in its media system setting.

Table 1 situates each newspaper in relation to its national media system and HIV/AIDS prevalence over the six-year study period (2002–2007). According to the World Association of Newspapers,<sup>118</sup> each of the four English-language newspapers examined in this study had the highest circulation of any non-tabloid daily newspaper in their respective country during the 2002–2007 time period. At the end of 2012, each

newspaper was still published under the same ownership. Circulation figures remained roughly the same for each newspaper, with the exception of the *The Star* (which dipped in circulation but still had a sizeable pass-along readership of approximately 680,000 readers per issue.)

## Sample

A sample of stories about HIV/AIDS published in each newspaper from January 1, 2002 to December 31, 2007 was drawn using a three-step procedure. In the first step, all articles about HIV/AIDS published during the sampling period were located in each newspaper. Consistent with other HIV/AIDS content analyses, we employed a broad search term (“HIV or AIDS”) to retrieve texts. A keyword search using this term was conducted of the AllAfrica database (allAfrica.com) in order to retrieve articles for *This Day* (Nigeria), *The Herald* (Zimbabwe), and *The Daily Nation* (Kenya). The same search string was used on *The Star* website, which allowed free online access to the newspaper's archives. The year 2002 was the first in which all four papers were made available online. Thus, the practical concerns of text retrieval coincided with the theoretical concerns of identifying media systems during the early 2000s.

The second step involved confirming that stories contained enough discourse on HIV/AIDS. To do this, all retrieved stories were subjected to a hand-sort based on salience rules. Keywords had to have either position salience, being located in a proposition in the headline, drop-line or subheadline, lede paragraph, or the three paragraphs following the lede; or, proportion salience, being located in a proposition (e.g., source quote, journalist's paraphrase or transition) in least one-quarter of the story's paragraphs. An HIV/AIDS keyword that had both position salience and proportion salience obviously qualified the story for inclusion in the population of texts. Krippendorff<sup>119</sup> has pointed out that sampling units in a content analysis are “unequally informative” (p. 114) and that recording or context units are typically the ones that “count.” Along these lines, we aimed to find stories with enough HIV/AIDS content to bolster the validity of our results on (a) how frequently each story topic was covered within each newspaper (RQ1a and 1b), (b) how topics were framed in each newspaper's agenda (RQ2), and (c) the impact of media systems on these news agendas (RQ3).

**Table 1.** Newspaper classification by HIV/AIDS prevalence and media system.

	HIV/AIDS Prevalence	
	Low	High
Repressive autocratic media system	Kenya [ <i>The Daily Nation</i> ] ( <i>N</i> = 584) ( <i>n</i> = 118) Stories/year = 97 Prevalence = 7.3%	Zimbabwe [ <i>The Herald</i> ] ( <i>N</i> = 286) ( <i>n</i> = 56) Stories/year = 47.6 Prevalence 19.9%
Contained democratic media system	Nigeria [ <i>This Day</i> ] ( <i>N</i> = 610) ( <i>n</i> = 119) Stories/year = 101.6 Prevalence = 4.3%	South Africa [ <i>The Star</i> ] ( <i>N</i> = 508) ( <i>n</i> = 100) Stories/year = 84.6 Prevalence = 19.8%

Note. Prevalence percentage reflects the average of reported HIV/AIDS story prevalence for the years 2002 and 2007, the start and ending period of this study. Source: UNAIDS, 2004 *Global Report on AIDS Epidemic* and UNAIDS, 2008 *Global Report on AIDS Epidemic*.

Previous work on HIV/AIDS<sup>21,23</sup> and other diseases and epidemics<sup>93,120</sup> has investigated editorials and letters-to-the-editor along with hard news stories. In this study, editorials were kept in the sample because these commentaries share with hard news an ethos that blends factual reporting and advocacy. However, letters-to-the-editor were omitted in this study because these texts do not report on issues or events.

A total of 2,067 articles were retrieved before the hand sort. Table 1 shows that, after the hand-sort, 1,988 articles constituted the population of news stories.

In the third step of our sampling plan, a random sample from the population of HIV/AIDS stories was drawn. Research on sampling designs for daily newspapers generally finds that randomly drawn, constructed-week samples are the best way to represent population parameters (see Riffe, Lacy, and Fico<sup>121</sup> for a summary). However, Lacy and colleagues<sup>122</sup> found that, for longitudinal research, constructed weeks are most efficient when the variables being measured do not have large variances. Because we have little knowledge of the population parameters for these topics and frames in African newspapers during our time period of interest, the decision was made to use a simple random sample. We did not stratify the sample by year, as some studies of HIV/AIDS media agendas have done,<sup>31</sup> because we were interested in patterns of story topic framing rather than changes in the main topic of AIDS or a particular topic over time. For each newspaper, 20 percent of the stories were randomly sampled, producing a total of 393 stories in the sample. Table 1 shows the sample size for each newspaper.

### Measures and reliability

*Story topics.* To aid the two coders who observed the three story topics, a list of keywords within sets of propositions was devised during the pre-testing stage. Propositions were divided into journalistic speech acts (e.g., paraphrase, summary, description) and source speech acts (e.g., claims, denials, assertions, rebuttals). The topic of “social costs” was operationalized with propositional statements about (a) how families care for a sick/dying member, (b) how employers handle a workforce in flux, or (c) how individuals deal with social stigma. “Prevention campaigns” was operationalized in statements about (a) education programs designed to prevent the transmission of the HIV virus or care for those with AIDS, and (b) financial costs of, and media strategies for, formally recognized or informally organized campaigns designed to stop the spread of HIV or care for individuals diagnosed with AIDS. Finally, the topic “medical developments” was operationalized in statements about scientific discoveries, drug research and implementation (e.g., antiretroviral drugs), AIDS epidemiology and symptoms, and medical practices. For this variable, coders were trained to define “developments” in neutral terms, that is, “changes” rather than “improvements.”

The two coders analyzed the stories for date, length, and format (e.g., hard news, editorial, soft news, and analysis story). Next, the three topics (social costs, prevention campaigns, and medical developments) were measured for their presence—and, if present, their degree of salience—in each story. The coding scheme was as follows: 2 = primary focus—topic is in the headline or lede and/or in the following three paragraphs (L+3); 1 = secondary focus—topic is not the primary focus (i.e., not in the lede or in the three paragraphs after the lede) but is mentioned below the

L(ede)+3 in at least 25 percent of the story's paragraphs; and 0 = topic not present. As discussed, the three story topics observed in this study are regularly found in content analyses of HIV/AIDS media agendas. However, few studies observe these topics (or frames, in some of the literature) on the basis of degree of salience within stories. Following research that uses ordinal-level measures of topics and frames to examine news coverage of health policy issues,<sup>123,124</sup> each story was coded for up to two primary topics and two secondary topics. Acceptable agreement (chance-corrected, Scott's *pi*) was reached for each topic: .73 for prevention campaigns, .77 for medical developments and .83 for social costs. After differences in reliability were resolved, the remaining stories were divided up between the coders.

*News frames.* Pretests revealed that agreement was facilitated when the two coders read a news story and first observed a topic. After identifying the story topic(s), coders re-read the story to identify frames that contextualized these topics. Pretests also aided in the development of rules for observing keywords and propositional statements for each frame. A responsibility frame contextualizes the object HIV/AIDS and a story topic(s) in terms of particular actors who are taking action or initiative to deal with HIV/AIDS, or who are calling for another party to take action to deal with HIV/AIDS. The coders first looked for parts of story discourse that identified particular actors, including their direct speech acts or journalistic coverage (e.g., paraphrase) of their speech acts. If the actor was a political party or legislative body, and the party or body was covered in terms of taking action or showing initiative, then a "government action" attribute was coded as present. Likewise, if the actor was a UN agency, an NGO, or a national or community group, and the group was covered as taking action or showing initiative, then a "society action" attribute was coded as present. Coders determined whether (a) domestic government actors or (b) non-governmental actors (or society agents) were portrayed as taking responsibility for dealing with HIV/AIDS vis-à-vis prevention campaign, social costs, or medical developments, (c) there was a balance of the two framing devices (i.e., both agents worked together), or (d) neither framing device was present.

For the efficacy frame, a "progress" attribute was present when a story dealt with promising or effective remedies being considered or implemented with regard to any one of the three topics. Alternatively, a "decline"

attribute was present when a story dealt with ineffective remedies or lack of remedial action. In addition to these two framing devices, coders determined whether both framing devices were present in the same story or if neither one was present. Intercoder reliability was acceptable, .82 for responsibility and .73 for efficacy using Scott's *pi*.

## Results

Demographically, hard news dominated the format for each newspaper's coverage (333 stories out of 393, 84.7 percent). Crosstabs revealed no significant difference for story format (hard news vs. editorials) among the newspapers ( $\chi^2 = 5$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = .167$ , ns), showing that each newspaper employed a roughly equal mix of story formats for their HIV/AIDS media agenda.

Research question 1a asked how frequently and prominently each story topic was covered across the four newspapers combined. Table 2 shows that "social costs" was covered more frequently and more prominently than the other two topics. Specifically, 55.5 percent of the stories in our sample contain that topic in either a primary or secondary position in the story.

Research question 1b asked if the four newspapers differed in how frequently and prominently they covered the three focal topics. Table 3 answers this question by looking at all newspapers combined. Rank-order correlations (Spearman's *rho*) indicated that when one topic was primary (i.e., the story's main topic), the other two topics tended to be secondary or not present. Frequency counts corroborate this finding (Table 3). Furthermore, for each topic, crosstabs indicated no significant differences in the pattern of topic emphasis for each individual newspaper. (For social costs,  $\chi^2 = 6.61$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p = .358$ , ns.; for prevention campaigns,  $\chi^2 = 10.298$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p = .113$ , ns.; for medical developments,  $\chi^2 = 11.12$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p = .09$ , ns). In all, two patterns of topic attributes emerged from the data: newspaper stories tended to focus on a single main topic, and *which* topic it was remained roughly consistent across the stories of each newspaper over the six years of coverage we examined.

Results for RQ1a and RQ1b are interesting in light of the prevalence of AIDS in each country. Referring to Table 1, 60 percent of the population of stories (1,194 out of 1,988) were published in newspapers located in



**Table 2.** Frequency and prominence of story topics (all newspapers combined).

	<i>Social costs</i>	<i>Prevention campaigns</i>	<i>Medical developments</i>
Secondary prominence	101 (25.7%)	111 (28.2%)	76 (19.3%)
Primary prominence	116 (29.8%)	95 (24.2%)	76 (19.6%)
Stories w/topic <sup>a</sup>	217	206	132
Stories w/topic (%)	(55.5%)	(52.4%)	(38.9%)

<sup>a</sup> *n* = 393

Kenya and Nigeria, where HIV/AIDS prevalence is comparatively low. Table 1 also shows that each newspaper located in a lower prevalence country averaged more HIV/AIDS stories per year than each newspaper located in a higher prevalence country. Thus, results of RQ1a and RQ1b suggest that, while the amount of HIV/AIDS coverage may change in light of real-world conditions, coverage of attributes is relatively uniform across newspapers, regardless of the incidence of AIDS in a newspaper's home country.

Log-linear analysis was used to answer RQ2 (Are there patterns of story topic and news frames for all newspapers combined?) and RQ3 (Do patterns in which topics are framed in media agendas change in light of a country's media system?). Log-linear analysis is a statistical technique that examines the relationships between a series of categorical variables.<sup>125</sup> An extension of two-way contingency analysis, log-linear analysis examines the conditional relationship between more than two discrete, categorical variables by taking the natural logarithm of the cell frequencies within the contingency table.<sup>126</sup> The variables in a log-linear analysis are all treated as response variables; hence, distinctions between independent and dependent variables are made only in the theoretical framework.<sup>127</sup>

Log-linear models require at least five times the number of cases as cells in a given analysis (e.g., 8 cells  $\times$  5 = 40 cases with 8 in each analysis).<sup>126</sup> The sample size of 393 stories satisfied this requirement.

In our analyses, media system was treated as an antecedent variable. Hence, this variable was entered last, after frame and topic, and each analysis followed a 2 (media system: Contained Democratic, Repressive Autocratic)  $\times$  2 frame (decline/progress, government/social)  $\times$  2 (topic: present, absent) design. Six log-linear models were run: one for each of the three topics, and

**Table 3.** Overlap of each story topic (all newspapers combined).

	<i>Social costs</i>	<i>Prevention campaigns</i>	<i>Medical developments</i>
Social costs			
Topic overlap (number of stories)		110	62
Topic overlap (%)		(29%)	(15.7%)
Rank-order correlation		-.180**	-.313**
Overlap (main topic)		0 stories	3 stories
Prevention campaigns			
Topic overlap (number of stories)			65
Topic overlap (%)			(16.5%)
Rank-order correlation			-.247**
Overlap (main topic)			4 stories

\*\**p* < .01

then two analyses for each frame individually. Given that topic-level coverage is patterned for all newspapers combined (cf. results for RQ1b), we decided to enter each topic as present or absent rather than retain the three levels of prominence. Moreover, for each analysis, only stories with a clear-cut frame were entered. Our rationale for this approach is that we are not looking at how each topic is framed per se; rather, we are looking at how the object HIV/AIDS is framed in story environments in which journalists can cover the object with more than one topic attribute and employ more than one news frame.

Frequencies showed that 341 stories (86.8 percent of 393 stories) contained a clear-cut responsibility frame (244 = society; 97 = government) and 360 stories (91.6 percent of 393 stories) contained a clear-cut efficacy frame (237 = progress; 123 = decline). Table 4 shows that a sizable majority of these stories contained both frames. However, crosstabs revealed no significant association between these frames, indicating that, across all newspapers and for news frames only, no discernable patterns emerged. Note that the picture was slightly different when the news frames within each newspaper were considered separately. Crosstabs showed no significant difference for efficacy framing ( $\chi^2 = 4.64$ , *df* = 3, *p* = .20, ns); however, for responsibility framing, *The Star* had significantly more society agent frames than Nigeria's *This Day* ( $\chi^2 = 7.94$ , *df* = 3, *p* = .047).

The impact of a media system on a media agenda can be observed when a topic-frame pattern shows up in one media system as compared to the other; a topic-

**Table 4.** Responsibility frame by efficacy frame.

	Efficacy frame		
	Progress	Decline	Total
Responsibility frame			
Governmental actors			
Count	66	24	90
% within Efficacy frame	29.3%	27.3%	28.8%
% of Total	21.1%	7.7%	28.8%
Society actors			
Count	159	64	223
% within Efficacy frame	70.7%	72.7%	71.2%
% of Total	50.8%	20.4%	71.2%
Total			
Count	225	88	313
% within Efficacy frame	100%	100%	100%
% of Total	71.9%	28.1%	100%

Note. Counts are only for stories with a clear-cut frame,  $\chi^2 = .131$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .717$ , ns.

frame pattern is significantly changed by one media system as compared to the other; or, a topic-frame pattern is significantly enhanced by one media system as compared to the other. For the topic “medical developments,” log-linear analysis revealed neither a significant difference in topic framing nor a significant difference in topic framing by media system. This finding does not mean that stories containing medical developments were devoid of a news frame; rather, it means that one of the attributes of each frame (e.g., progress or decline; government or societal responsibility) was not significantly more likely to be present in the story when medical developments was the main or secondary topic. However, for “social costs” and “prevention campaigns,” comparative analysis showed that media system exerted influence in two of the four models.

Taking “social costs” first, results for RQ2 showed that, for all stories combined, when this topic was present (primary or secondary) the social agent frame (i.e., one of the *responsibility* news frames) was present more often than the government agent frame. (Note that because stories can have multiple topics in our

**Table 5.** Model statistics (social costs × responsibility frame × media system).

Source	df	Likelihood ratio $\chi^2$ change	Probability
R × S	1	9.534	.009
A × S × M	1	4.961	.026

Note. R = responsibility frame; S = social costs (present/absent); M = media system. Likelihood  $\chi^2$  ratio = 6.934,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = .226$ . Parameter estimates for saturated model not shown.

**Table 6.** Model statistics (prevention campaigns × efficacy frame × media system).

Source	df	Likelihood ratio $\chi^2$ change	Probability
E × P	1	31.193	.000
E × P × M	1	3.072	.06

Note. E = efficacy frame; P = prevention campaigns (present/absent); M = media system. Likelihood  $\chi^2$  ratio = 5.507,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = .138$ . Parameter estimates for saturated model not shown.

design, the correct phraseology is, “a story with topic ‘x’ tended to contain frame ‘y.’”) The hierarchical procedure yielded a model with a significant three-way interaction (RQ3): stories in newspapers located in countries with a Contained Democratic media system emphasized government responsibility more than stories located in newspapers located in countries with a Repressive Autocratic media system. Table 5 presents these findings.

Staying with the topic of social costs, results showed that, for all stories combined, when this topic was present (primary or secondary) the decline frame was present more often than the progress frame. However, no three-way interaction was found for media systems. While a clear pattern emerged for efficacy framing of social costs, there is no clear evidence that media system affected this pattern.

For the topic “prevention campaigns,” results showed that, for all stories combined, when this topic was present (primary or secondary) the progress frame (i.e., one of the *efficacy* news frames) was present more often than the decline frame (RQ2). The hierarchical procedure yielded a model with a near-significant three-way interaction (RQ3). In this model, stories in newspapers located in countries with a Contained Democratic media system emphasized progress more than stories located in newspapers located in countries with a Repressive Autocratic media system. Table 6 presents these findings. Staying with the topic *prevention campaigns*, results showed that for all stories combined, when this topic was present (primary or secondary), there was neither a significant difference in topic framing nor a significant impact of media system on topic framing.

## Discussion

This is the first study to examine the impact of media systems on an HIV/AIDS news agenda. We analyzed

representative news coverage over a five-year span in four sub-Saharan countries. These countries are located in the region of the world where a macro-level perspective on the communication environment of HIV/AIDS is most needed. Although the impact of media systems was significant or nearly significant in two of the six combinations of topic and frames, we feel this provides enough evidence to conclude that variations in media systems matter. Press-state relations play a determining role in shaping news cultures, the organizational environment in which journalists cover AIDS and potentially advocate for social change.

No significant differences in news framing were found in stories that contained a “medical developments” topic; furthermore, no relationship between news framing and media systems for this topic was found. On one hand, this finding corroborates a conception that this is a neutral topic. For example, Pratt, Ha, and Pratt<sup>42</sup> asserted that the subtopics that add up to this attribute (e.g., definitions and nomenclature, symptoms of the disease) constitute a factual information frame. On the other hand, this finding is surprising, given the range of subtopics encompassed by “medical developments,” many of which are the object of compelling arguments sources make about AIDS. For example, during the 2000s, the efficacy of antiretroviral drug therapy was a topic of sustained interest in the African context.<sup>128,129</sup> This anomaly points to a potential limitation in our data: in attempting to identify subtopics that comprised each main topic, and in attempting to differentiate main topics based upon these subtopics, this study’s final set of topics could have been operationalized too generally. Based on our review of the literature, we suspect that this is not the case. Our findings suggest that “medical developments” most likely served as secondary information in a story about another topic. Of the three topics investigated in this study, this one was least likely to be a main story topic. Being enmeshed with other topics likely prevented it from exhibiting a strong framing pattern.

The picture is different for the other two topics. In two of four cases, a significant or near-significant impact of media system on news framing was found. Analysis of the topic “social costs” topic indicated that social agents were mainly framed as taking the initiative to deal with HIV/AIDS. This pattern was altered in light of media systems: governments were

given more visibility in dealing with AIDS in newspaper coverage situated in Contained Democratic media systems as compared to newspaper coverage situated in Repressed Autocratic media systems. Because this topic-frame pattern was significantly different in one media system as compared to the other, there is evidence that media systems impacted the news agenda.

Results for stories containing the topic “prevention campaigns” showed that neither government nor non-government agents stand out as taking the initiative to deal with AIDS. However, for all stories in our sample, news manifested a structural bias that prevention campaigns were working. That pattern was altered in light of media systems: compared to coverage in Repressive Autocratic media systems, prevention campaigns were framed as being more efficacious in Contained Democratic media systems. Because this topic-frame pattern was (nearly) significantly enhanced by one media system as compared to the other, there is evidence that media systems impacted the news agenda.

### *Implications and limitations*

Most content analyses of HIV/AIDS make real-world inferences about individuals, organizations, and institutions. Making these kinds of inferences is in fact at the core of doing content analysis.<sup>119</sup> Along these lines, content analysts typically infer which content attributes in HIV/AIDS news will be better at shaping individuals’ issue priorities in ways that keep people informed and equipped to act safely, and galvanizing policy and advocacy agendas that make a positive difference in the lives of individuals and throughout a society as a whole. In terms of the agenda-setting model on which this study is based (Figure 1), a content analysis presumes inferences about outcomes; in turn, these outcomes become conditions and realities covered in news stories. As Clarke observed, “The media reflexively show us ourselves and societies’ images; they create, and in turn are created by, societies” (p. 105).<sup>2</sup> For example, Pitts and Jackson<sup>29</sup> interpreted as an ominous sign the finding that the topic “counseling and care” (part of “social costs” in this study) was less frequently covered in Zimbabwean newspapers than “cures and vaccines” (part of “medical developments” in this study). This inference was based on a conjecture that coverage of care and counseling was more likely to

have a greater positive effect on individuals than medical coverage.

In this light, what motivated us to perform this content analysis was the notion that the rich literature on HIV/AIDS is full of loose ends when it comes to interpreting what findings mean in the real world. A general implication of this study, therefore, is that comparative research provides a clearer indication of how an HIV/AIDS news agenda helps or hinders societal-level responses to the disease. That is, HIV/AIDS research will advance when researchers complement real-world inferences based on topic-only designs with macro-level perspectives drawn from comparative research on the framing function of a news agenda. Along those lines, we identify two specific implications of this study.

First, it has already been established that media agendas, though subject to numerous contingencies, such as type of medium (e.g., newspapers, television news) and time period (e.g., election, nonelection),<sup>130</sup> can shape policy agendas. Thus, the way that journalists frame the HIV/AIDS agendas of policymakers, advocates, and members of the public provides a sounding board for political elites and issue advocates. Since these actors are keen to communicate their views and frames through news media, it is reasonable to think they are also interested in monitoring the way their views and frames “play” in the media mix, or come across in news stories. What researchers interested in policy making in African nations need to better understand is how often policymakers attend to news frames that convey and contextualize their agendas, and how officials build and implement HIV/AIDS policies based on attentiveness to news coverage. In light of our findings, the news agenda from within a Contained Democratic media system—entailing heightened governmental responsibility and progress in fighting AIDS—would seem to galvanize policymakers to address HIV/AIDS more so than the news framing engendered by a Repressed Autocratic media system.

Second, comparative analyses of an HIV/AIDS news agenda provide a barometer of press professionalism and media autonomy within a society. In this vein, Gold and Falobi<sup>131</sup> found that journalists working in Nigeria and Kenya, two different media systems in our study, voiced similar concerns and frustrations about the practical and political condi-

tions in which they cover AIDS. One way to look at these findings is that, regardless of media system, journalists in African countries know that covering the myriad considerations surrounding HIV/AIDS requires articulating structural biases that privilege ethics over political exigency (e.g., governments *should* take initiative in addressing AIDS).<sup>30,132</sup> Thus, researchers need to connect what journalists already seem to know and feel about covering AIDS with their views of the political climate that enables (or restricts) how they are able to advocate for social change. Along these lines, we could use more boots-on-the-ground work on newsroom interactions and professional organizations that deal with HIV/AIDS and journalism.<sup>58</sup>

As with any empirical analysis of news, this study has several limitations. First, the nature of the design, in which topics are observed separately from frames, called for a level of granular coding that is difficult to conduct reliably. It took several rounds of training and pretesting to achieve acceptable levels of inter-coder reliability. Second, the simple random sample of stories for each newspaper ensured a representative sample over the entire period of study. However, other sampling methods should be employed with data collected from texts over a period of time (e.g., a constructed month or stratified samples). Third, because both of the significant or near-significant three-way interactions in the log-linear analyses hovered around the .05 probability level, we want to be cautious about stating the magnitude of the impact of media systems on the HIV/AIDS news agenda. However, beyond the limitations of the data, this study is at least as valuable for providing a theoretical roadmap for comparative research on HIV/AIDS news agendas as it is for demonstrating the impact of media systems on news agendas. Fourth, this study investigated two generic frames, leaving out other possible news frames that might matter to an advocacy news culture. We encourage future work to take up our call to identify these frames and justify their connections to journalistic advocacy.

Sub-Saharan Africa is home to the highest prevalence of AIDS in the world, and news organizations there play a pivotal role in shaping individual, social and political responses to the disease. In exploring the impact of media systems of four African countries on the HIV/AIDS news agenda, this study endeavored to

offer fresh insights into the all-important agenda-setting environment of HIV/AIDS.

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## Appendix

### *The Daily Nation (Kenya)*

In Kenya, *The Daily Nation* (circ. 205,000 in 2007) is privately owned by the National Media Group (NMG). Published in Nairobi, Kenya's capital and largest city (3.1 million), *The Daily Nation* is distributed almost entirely via newsstand sales, as subscriptions and home deliveries constitute just 4 percent of paid circulation. Kenya has "the most vibrant newspaper market in East Africa" (p. 503), according to the World Association of Newspapers, having at least four English-language daily newspapers and a few independent tabloid periodicals that "report on national politics and regularly criticize the government" (p. 503).<sup>118</sup> In 2007, two new newspapers, the *Nairobi Star* and the *Daily Metro*, entered the market; however, the addition of these papers barely dented the *The Daily Nation's* commanding 74 percent market share. Even though its newspapers appear to be fairly independent, Kenya's national broadcasting system is government owned, and this monopoly effectively "limits the ability of opposition leaders and other critics of government to communicate with the electorate" (p. 503).<sup>118</sup> Moreover, all of Kenya's newspapers are governed

by the Books and Papers Act. This law restricts publishing without registration and security bond, requiring, too, that each edition of each publication needs to be submitted to the registrar. As Kiai noted, “In Kenya, political interference has for long haunted the media” (p. 40).<sup>24</sup> These conditions indicate that *The Daily Nation* is situated within Kenya’s Repressive Autocratic system, a liberalized autocracy with a comparatively low level of press freedom.

### *The Herald* (Zimbabwe)

In Zimbabwe, *The Herald* (circ. 85,000 in 2007) is published in Harare, the country’s capital and most populous city (approx. 1.6 million in 2007). The newspaper is run by Zimbabwean Newspapers Pvt. Lt. (Zimpapers), the cover organization for the state’s Ministry for Information and Publicity, which owns and operates most of the print media in the country. According to the World Association of Newspapers, several independent daily and weekly newspapers are published throughout Zimbabwe; however, threats and pressure forced the two major independent weeklies to close in 2007 (p. 934).<sup>118</sup> In one instance, the government raided a distribution warehouse of an independent daily, *The Zimbabwean*, which in 2008 was published in the U.K., printed in South Africa and sold in Zimbabwe (p. 935).<sup>118</sup> In another case, the “independent” newspaper *Daily News* was closed in 2003, during a period of the government’s intolerance of diverse viewpoints.<sup>133</sup> The country’s declining economy in the first decade of the 2000s escalated the price of newspapers, making them difficult for many Zimbabweans to afford, even those who live in Harare. The constitution of Zimbabwe provides for freedom of speech and of the press, but legislation has effectively stifled press freedom in the interest of defense, public safety, and a host of other concerns (p. 936).<sup>118</sup> As in Kenya, the government in Zimbabwe controls all domestic radio stations; in addition, it controls the only domestically based television station. Thus, even more so than *The Daily Nation* in Kenya, *The Herald* is situated within Zimbabwe’s Repressive Autocratic media system.

### *This Day* (Nigeria)

In Nigeria, *This Day* (circ. 100,000 in 2007) is published in Lagos by the privately owned Leaders & Co., Ltd. The capital of Nigeria until it was replaced by the planned city of Abuja in 1991, Lagos is the country’s largest city (population = 8 million in 2008). Although *This Day* is similar to Kenya’s

*The Daily Nation* in that both are privately owned, and although as in Kenya the Nigerian government controls the electronic media, Nigerian journalists appear to have a greater level of professional autonomy than journalists in Kenya. According to the World Association of Newspapers,<sup>118</sup> the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights has been incorporated into Nigerian laws and tends to guarantee free speech, although in somewhat weak terms (p. 653). Moreover, Nigeria appears to have more professional press associations in which codes of practice are devised and held up as standards for self-regulation. Still, while Nigerian journalists are relatively unencumbered by direct control (which happens in Kenya with the Books and Papers Act), they are still hindered by indirect laws and regulations that tend to repress free speech (p. 654).<sup>118</sup> Therefore, from a system-level perspective, Nigerian journalists do not have the same level of freedoms as journalists in South Africa (see below). Yet given the freedoms they do enjoy, this elite newspaper is situated within a Contained Democratic media system.

### *The Star* (South Africa)

In South Africa, *The Star* (circ. 164,000 in 2007) is published in Johannesburg by the Independent Newspapers Group. During the time period of this study, *The Star* was surpassed in paid circulation by the *Daily Sun* (circ. 513,000); however, the latter is considered a tabloid that lacks a tradition of journalistic objectivity in reporting hard news of public affairs. South Africa’s has the freest media system of all the countries whose leading newspapers are included in this study. According to the World Association of Newspapers,<sup>118</sup> the country’s constitution and laws provide for freedom of speech and of the press, and the government generally respects these rights (p. 788). Broadcasting is independently run, and in the post-Apartheid period since the general election of 1994, print and broadcast journalism have developed self-regulatory bodies and codes of conduct (p. 788). Still, as Wasserman points out, “>From a number of clashes between media and politicians, it has become clear that not all actors in the political communication process share the same view on the extent of the freedom the media should enjoy in the new democracy, or how that freedom should be applied responsibly” (p. 241).<sup>98</sup> Given these conditions, *The Star* is situated in South Africa’s Contained Democratic media system.<sup>134</sup>