Media ownership and news framing: an analysis of HIV/AIDS coverage by Ugandan press

James Kiwanuka-Tondo, Kelly F Albada* and Fay Cobb Payton

North Carolina State University, Department of Communication, 201 Winston Hall, Box 8104, Raleigh, North Carolina 27607, United States

*Corresponding author, e-mail: kalbada@ncsu.edu

Applying framing theory, the present research analyzes trends in Ugandan news coverage and the prominent issue frames for HIV/AIDS-related stories. In order to determine the influence of other factors, such as media ownership and journalist origin, nearly 800 articles, from 2000 to 2004, were gathered from the major private newspaper and government-owned newspaper in Uganda. After systematic sampling, 365 articles constitute the sample. The results indicate that print news coverage of HIV and AIDS followed a non-linear trajectory, declining from 2000–2002 and then increasing from 2003–2004. Curative medicine emerged as the most prominent issue frame. Higher-risk behaviour was the least prominent issue frame overall. The ‘solutions’ issue frame nearly doubled in prominence from 2000–2004, while the HIV-prevention frame decreased from 2000–2002 and then rebounded from 2003–2004. Concerning HIV-related topics, the private newspaper included more features, printed lengthier articles, incorporated a greater variety of news frames, and published more articles by foreign journalists than the government-owned newspaper. The private newspaper employed the ‘HIV-prevention,’ ‘action,’ and ‘victims’ frames more often than the government-owned newspaper. Journalists at the government-owned newspaper adopted a ‘solutions’ frame more often than their private-press counterparts. Though foreign journalists were more likely than local journalists to employ the HIV-prevention frame, additional tests revealed that the news organisation for which the journalists worked contributed to issue framing to a greater extent than did either a local or foreign reporting origin. Local (Ugandan) journalists working for the two news organisations differed in their tendencies to apply the HIV-prevention, action, victims, and tragedy frames in news stories on HIV and AIDS, with journalists at the private newspaper using these frames more often than did journalists at the government-owned newspaper.

Keywords: Africa, content analysis, framing theory, health behaviour, journalism, literature review, longitudinal research, newspapers

Introduction

Uganda has more than 500 000 people living with HIV; since the first case was diagnosed in 1982, an estimated 900 000 Ugandans have died from the disease (UNAIDS, 2009). Nevertheless, Uganda represents an interesting case study in the response to HIV and AIDS, as the country successfully reduced the prevalence of HIV from about 18% in the 1990s to 6.7% in 2005 (Ministry of Health & ORC Macro, 2006). Credited, in part, for the country’s achievement is the government’s response to the HIV epidemic. After the civil war ended in 1986, President Museveni implemented a national HIV-prevention campaign, which introduced the ‘abstain, be faithful and use condoms’ (‘ABC’) model. The population’s awareness and concern with HIV and AIDS is high, with 90% of Ugandans identifying HIV and AIDS as a major problem in their country (Uganda AIDS Commission, Measure Evaluation & Ministry of Health, 2003). There have also been observed increases in condom use among males and among females who reported having multiple partners. Though the rate of new infections has lessened, the impact of the HIV epidemic remains and has been felt hardest by certain populations (e.g. women, children) and regions (e.g. Gulu district, urban areas).

While government or NGO reports provide one perspective on the disease, media coverage is likely a powerful shaper of public opinion (Swain, 2005). Brodie, Hamel, Brady, Kates & Altman (2003) contend that media coverage reveals how prominent the issue is on the policy and cultural agenda of the nation and how overall attention to the HIV epidemic has changed over time, both in terms of quantity and content of the coverage. Analysing Ugandan news coverage may reveal how the topic of HIV and AIDS has been presented to the public over time. Moreover, news coverage may provide a context in which to understand the fluctuating prevalence of HIV, and the evolution of the response and attendant concerns. Anema, Freifield, Druyts, Montaner, Hogg & Brownstein (2010) reported a strong correlation between country-specific news coverage of HIV and AIDS and actual HIV prevalence. Gaining these understandings within Uganda, a relative success story, may provide useful information for health communicators, journalists, and health advocates as they develop and
implement their responses to the epidemic. Furthermore, an analysis of news coverage in Uganda may serve as a model for longitudinal studies of other African media.

Despite the benefits of examining news coverage, one must keep in mind that the characteristics of news organisations and reporters differ among African nations and vary within a single country. Past research has supported the influence of these factors on the frequency of coverage and the ways in which an issue is presented (Panos Institute, 2005). Who owns the news organisation, what journalistic practices occur within this organisation, and from what country of origin the journalist hails may impact the way in which information is presented and what information is presented. Media scholars have conceptualised these varying presentations as ‘frames’ within framing theory. The purpose of the current research was to compare the news frames for HIV and AIDS coverage by the government and the private press in Uganda. We suggest that the story told about the HIV epidemic in Uganda depends, in part, on news organisation ownership and journalists’ country of origin.

Literature review

To provide background for the study, a review of framing theory, news organisation factors that influence reporting, and some of the news frames for HIV and AIDS in the United States and Africa follows.

Framing theory and media ownership

According to Scheufele & Tewksbury (2007), ‘framing’ is based on the assumption that how an issue is characterised in news reports influences how the issue is understood by audiences. As a macro construct, framing refers to the manner of presentation that media organisations use to present information. As a micro construct, framing describes how people use the information and presentation modes when forming impressions. A frame, in other words, is a “central organizing idea...for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 3). The process of framing, according to Entman (1993, p. 52), involves selecting some aspects of a text and making them salient in order to “promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.”

To fully understand the framing process, one must differentiate frame-building from frame-setting (De Vreese, 2005). While the latter focuses on the interplay between media frames and audience understanding, the former addresses the factors that influence the structural qualities of news frames. Factors internal and external to journalism have been identified in past research.

In terms of internal journalistic practices, Iyengar (1991) argued that the tendency of new stories about social issues to contain an episodic frame (focusing on events rather than the broader social context) reflects journalistic conventions, norms, and news values. He proposed that this simplification of social issues results in a topical, disorganised, and isolated understanding of the issue. In their study of news stories from three countries, Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) noted similarities in use of a conflict frame but differences on the inclusion of the individual journalist’s interpretations of the issue. This difference, they surmised, may point to varying cultural perceptions regarding the role of the journalist.

A factor that is external to the journalist but internal to the news organisations is media ownership. Media ownership may influence news values, target audiences, and journalistic practices — all identified as concomitant factors with news production (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991; McCombs, Lucig & Wanta, 1995). Particularly in Africa, media ownership is an influence on news frames due to variations in press freedom and government-press relations, the presence of foreign news organisations, and cultural differences among and within countries. The Panos Institute (2005) noted that the frequency of HIV/AIDS news coverage, the sources relied upon, the use of statistics, and the tone of the news stories vary across southern African countries and they attributed these differences, in part, to their media environments. They argued that media ownership and government regulation of the press must be addressed if further progress in the reduction of the HIV epidemic is to be made. The case studies — Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Zambia — in the Panos report revealed some interesting issues for further exploration. For instance, in countries where the government has tight control over the press, HIV/AIDS-related stories were relatively rare, and when they did occur, journalists relied heavily on official sources (e.g. data from the Ministry of Health). The press in countries with more liberalised press structures covered HIV/AIDS issues more frequently and included more diverse sources in their stories. Yet, the authors argued, commercial and profit-oriented approaches hampered communication efforts, as editors pushed for ‘newsworthy’ events. The Panos Institute (2005, p. 5) concluded that the power of the media in the response to HIV and AIDS is being under-utilised: “HIV/AIDS is still predominantly reported in a retro/reactive way, as a one-dimensional health issue and on the basis of solely governmental sources of information, rather than, for example, the ‘real life’ voices of those who are most vulnerable to or affected by the epidemic.”

In a commentary on media coverage and the HIV epidemic in South Africa, Jacobs & Johnson (2007) echoed the concerns of the Panos Institute. They contended that mainstream media has covered HIV and AIDS with a lack of urgency, failing to examine the epidemic’s impact, the reasons behind stigma and denial, and the views of people living with HIV. Reporters seldom provided a context or interrogated economic policies, comprehensive HIV treatment and prevention programmes, or public health-care rights and their relationship to large-scale societal responses to the epidemic. The authors point to several factors that may account for these South African journalistic practices, including the ownership and target market of the largest news organisations, the relationship between government and a major advocacy group, the lack of dedicated and trained health reporters, the declining interest in HIV/AIDS-related stories by news organisations, racial divisions in newsrooms, and news values that prioritise celebrities, scandal, conflict, and controversy over the everyday, marginally, and economically disempowered.

Though the Panos Institute (2005) study and the Jacobs & Johnson (2007) essay strongly suggest the influence of
media ownership on news frames for HIV/AIDS coverage, their case study methods did not enable the direct effects of media ownership to be assessed. By comparing across media environments on the country level, particular variables could not be controlled nor measured for their relative contribution to news frames. Hence, our study tests the relationship proposed by the Panos study by isolating media ownership as a variable and by studying its effects on news reporting within a single country and media environment. Based on differences in media ownership, we expected the framing of HIV/AIDS coverage by the government-owned and private presses in Uganda to differ.

**News coverage of HIV and AIDS**  
Past research on news coverage of HIV and AIDS has identified trends in the frequency of coverage and dominant frames within news stories. A study of the news coverage of HIV in the United States from 1981–2002 by the Kaiser Family Foundation (Brodie et al., 2003) reported a decline in the number of stories on HIV and AIDs, a greater focus on ‘newsworthy’ events, and a shift towards the global situation, specifically Asia and Africa. Between 2000 and 2002, 40% of the stories on HIV and AIDS in US newspapers reported on emerging stories of HIV and AIDS in Africa. Though the shift in US news reporting from that of a domestic crisis to an African epidemic is documented, it is notable that the countries with the highest HIV-prevalence statistics did not necessarily receive greater coverage (Swain, 2005).

According the Kaiser Family Foundation report, total US print and broadcast media coverage of HIV and AIDS increased during the early 1980s, peaked in 1987, and declined steadily through to 2001. While this decline in coverage seemed to mirror a decline in new HIV cases in the United States, it began about six years before the decline in cases, and continued even as the cumulative number of cases in the United States rose above 500 000. Minor peaks in coverage after 1987 coincided with major developments in the epidemic. Though some researchers suggested the decline in coverage reflected ‘AIDS fatigue’ by the media (Dearing, 1998; Brodie et al., 2003), others advanced that journalists were searching for newsworthy events, breakthroughs, debates, and public figures (Moeller, 2000). Preferences for episodic and conflict frames were driving journalistic practices.

The analysis of the content themes within the US news stories revealed interesting trends (Brodie et al., 2003). HIV prevention and protection was a highly reported topic, with 13% of all stories over the 20-year period focusing on this theme. Research surrounding HIV treatments and vaccines also remained steady, at about 10% of the stories over the years. Major declines in coverage occurred for the topics of HIV transmission (from 17% to 3%), social issues (15% to 4%), and HIV testing (7% to 2%). Major increases in coverage were revealed for the topics of government funding (from 7% to 18%) and philanthropic fundraising (3% to 10%), while small increases were shown for political issues (5% to 8%) and HIV treatments (3% to 6%). The coverage of public figures, such as celebrities, peaked in the 1990s at 9%. Overall, the stories became longer but focused less on HIV/AIDS education.

The authors suggest that declining news coverage of HIV and AIDS may be related to the public’s decreasing identification of the disease as a major health problem. Less than 20% of the US population in 2002 named the disease as a major health problem, and though higher than the US percentage, only 33% of the world’s population identified HIV and AIDS as a as a critical health issue.

Though the Kaiser report provides a foundation for our project on Ugandan news coverage and has delineated several prominent frames for HIV/AIDS reporting in the new millennium, content analysis of African news articles provides insight into the cultural agenda within Africa, as well as supplements the trends identified in the US news coverage. In fact, Swain (2005) challenged media scholars to increase research on the media’s coverage of HIV and AIDS and its consequences, pointing to the need to explore global dimensions of HIV/AIDS coverage (e.g. international news flow, media texts in different cultures, and media coverage in less-developed countries). Few studies have investigated the coverage of HIV and AIDS by the African press (Basil & Brown, 1994). Of those studies, many were conducted more than 10 years ago and summarised the coverage within a single year, leading to a fragmented and disconnected understanding of the social issue. Still, the studies illuminate some potential frames and variables for consideration in the current project. Their results are summarised below.

Pitts & Jackson (1993) completed a multiple-year study of press coverage of HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe between 1987 and 1991. They found a large variation in the extent of coverage, though they generally noted an increase in the number of stories in the printed news over that time period, lagging a few years behind the peak of news coverage in the United States. While most of the news cuttings sampled were major articles (76%), public opinion pieces increased from nine in 1987 to 36 in 1989, yet declined again in 1991. Content, they argued, tended to reflect Western ideology relative to curative approaches to the disease, rather than reflect a preventive care and grassroots framework to address local needs (Pitts & Jackson, 1993).

Though the researchers developed and applied different coding schemes, certain news frames are apparent throughout five single-country, one-year studies. Studies on news coverage in Kenya, Namibia, Zambia and Uganda commonly reported an emphasis on HIV prevalence, prevention and cures (see Kasoma, 2000; Mchombu, 2000; Nassanga, 2000; Odhiambo, 2000). Both the Namibia and Uganda studies revealed HIV/AIDS awareness as an advocated solution frame to the HIV-prevalence-problem frame, while the social and economic costs of the disease frame was unique to news coverage in Kenya and Namibia. An analysis of South African news coverage revealed that less than 1% of print and electronic media focused on HIV and AIDS stories, and when the topic did appear, treatment and prevention were again the most common frames (Media Tenor, 2004). Three of the five studies found that most stories were written by local journalists (see Kasoma, 2000; Nassanga, 2000; Odhiambo, 2000), but no other news organisation characteristics were coded or reported. Obijiofor’s (2010) analysis of press coverage in Nigeria over a six-month period found a very low level of HIV/AIDS
reporting (only 34 articles in three newspapers) and a heavy reliance on official sources. Much like the reporting in the United States and Europe, episodic reporting emerged. However, unlike these regions, the language of fear and panic and a use of exaggerated and sometimes unverified statistics predominated. Obiifo (2010) did not code extensively for HIV/AIDS issue frames given the small number of stories that were produced.

Based on single-year studies, it is difficult to project what the overall reporting trends in Uganda will look like in the new millennium; however, if Uganda follows the trends of the United States and South Africa, we expected to find that reporting levels on HIV and AIDS decreased between 2000 and 2004.

Based on the studies of news coverage described above, one may conclude that the ‘HIV/AIDS story’ in Africa differs from the story told in the United States in that homosexuality and race are typically excluded frames in the region, and that the peaks and dips in news coverage lag behind the US trends. The predominant frames in Africa have included the social and economic impact of HIV and AIDS, HIV prevalence and disease education, including awareness, prevention and cures. Though other researchers have coded for type of story (i.e. news, features) and journalist origin, no single study has systematically integrated characteristics of the stories, journalist origin, media ownership, and issue frames. In addition, the one-year snapshot provided by many of the studies reviewed limits our ability to determine trends in news coverage over time and to juxtapose the news coverage trends with HIV prevalence. Moreover, these studies were conducted in African countries with different press environments, cultural attitudes about HIV/AIDS and prevention approaches. Therefore, our aim is to extend Nassanga’s (2000) content analysis of Ugandan press coverage by looking at issue frames over time and by directly comparing the reporting tendencies of the private and government-owned press. Specifically, the following hypotheses guided this investigation.

Based on a decline in HIV/AIDS reporting during the early 2000s in the United States and on declining HIV prevalence in Uganda during this time, we predict:

Hypothesis 1: The frequency of press coverage of HIV and AIDS will differ largely due to the influence of organisational stakeholders on the presentation of the news. In other words, the government-owned newspaper is more likely to serve as the mouthpiece for the Ugandan government and carry its particular HIV-prevention messages.

The private-owned newspaper, which operates outside of Uganda and is owned by foreign investors, may reflect a global message (for instance, search for a cure) and focus on public policy. However, journalist origin may be a greater influence on the news frames than is media ownership. If the majority of the private-press journalists are locally based, it is likely that the reporting frames will be similar.


Hypothesis 3b: The curative-medicine frame will have been a more frequently utilised frame by the private press than by the government press over the study timeframe.

Hypothesis 3c: Local (Ugandan) journalists will have employed HIV/AIDS-issue frames similarly over time, regardless of the newspaper for which they were working.

Based on a limited number of studies that have incorporated news-story characteristics, we advance the following research questions: 1) What are the most common story characteristics associated with HIV/AIDS-related articles in the two Ugandan newspapers, from 2000 to 2004? 2) How do these story characteristics differ between The Monitor and The New Vision?

Method

Sample

Following Nassanga (2000), two major newspapers were selected for the content analysis. Of the four government-owned newspapers in Uganda, The New Vision is the only English-language daily and it has the highest circulation (about 38 000 copies). The New Vision was established in 1986 and reaches about 304 000 readers daily (see <www.nationmedia.com/about_us.html>). According to the chief editor, The New Vision is sold throughout 112 urban centres in the country; it is distributed to rural areas through subscription to schools, NGOs, government administrative units, district headquarters, police stations and hospitals; and, it is also distributed through 400 agents who provide it to newspaper vendors countrywide.

A private newspaper was then selected for analysis. The private newspapers in Uganda are typically in local languages, are published at different intervals, and may be associated with particular religious or political groups. The Monitor is the only English daily and is the leading independent national newspaper in Uganda, selling about 25 000 copies (see <www.monitor.co.ug> and <www.nationmedia.com/about_us.html>). The Monitor was established in 1992 by the Nation Media Group, which is based in Nairobi, Kenya, and is part of the Aga Khan International group of companies based in India; it was launched as a daily in June 2005. According to the chief editor, it reaches an average of 254 034 readers daily; likewise, it is sold throughout all 112 urban centres in the country and distributed to rural areas through subscription to schools, NGOs, government administrative units, district headquarters, police stations and hospitals. The newspaper has 12 distributors who disseminate it to 400 agents and subsequently to newspaper vendors countrywide.

To collect HIV/AIDS-related stories from The New Vision and The Monitor, the first author visited the chief editors of
both newspapers and requested to photocopy all relevant articles between 2000 and 2004. Relevant articles were determined by 50% or more of the article having a focus on HIV/AIDS and/or the presence of ‘HIV’ or ‘AIDS’ in the headline. Since the only other content analysis of HIV/AIDS news coverage in Uganda used articles from 1997 and 1998, this study extends the analysis into the early 2000s, allowing for a comparison of frames over a greater number of years. The year 2004 was selected as the end point for this study since archived articles for later years were not available at the time of data collection. To date, articles from Ugandan newspapers are not archived online; therefore, all data had to be gathered and hand-copied in person. Each newspaper assigned a librarian to assist with the data collection.

The researcher identified 496 HIV/AIDS-related stories in The New Vision and 291 in The Monitor. According to the methods of Keyton (2006), the suggested sample sizes for these populations (assuming a 95% confidence interval [CI] and 5% sampling error) are 196 and 169, respectively. Hence, we applied a systematic sampling approach for each newspaper’s sample. First, we divided 496 by 196 and 291 by 169 to get a Kth number of two for both The New Vision and The Monitor. Second, we compiled sampling frames for both newspapers. Third, we used the random-numbers table in Keyton (2006) to select a sample from each newspaper. We over-sampled to get a sample size of 196 articles from The New Vision and 169 articles from The Monitor, for a total sample size of 365 articles.

Coding procedure

Coders

Both of the coders for the data were undergraduate students, blind to the aims of the study and hired by the researchers. The first coder read and analysed all 365 articles; the second coder analysed 10% of the articles. Both coders were trained in the unitizing method and categorising scheme. They were provided with oral and written definitions of categories, as well as with a spreadsheet template. The data were then coded independently. When all coding was complete, the coefficient of reliability was computed for the categories, along with Scott’s pi using the formula suggested by Keyton (2006).

Unitizing

The unit of analysis was the individual story. The story was read in its entirety for the presence of an issue frame. If more than one frame was suggested, each frame was coded as being present. However, a frame was not constituted by a singular or minor mention of a ‘statistic’ or ‘treatment’; for instance, instead, a more substantial portion of the news story had to focus on the statistics or treatments for those frames to be selected. ‘Substantial portion’ was determined by considering the number of sentences or column inches; the presence of the frame in the headline; and the presence of the frame in a table, graph or photo.

Categorising

Fourteen categories were selected for coding. The first four categories involved story characteristics: publication year (Scott’s pi = 1.00); story type (feature, news story, commentary/editorial) (Scott’s pi = 0.82); journalist origin (Uganda, Africa, foreign) (Scott’s pi = 0.97); and story length (in column inches) (Scott’s pi = 0.85). The issue frames that were coded were derived from past research (i.e. Kasoma, 2000; Mchombu, 2000; Nassanga, 2000; Odhiambo, 2000; Brodie et al., 2003): a) curative medicine; b) HIV prevention; c) solutions; d) actions against HIV or AIDS; e) tragedy; f) higher-risk behaviour; g) HIV infection rates and AIDS deaths; and, h) victims and orphans. These frames were identified as present in a story by applying Entman’s (1993, p. 52) approach; that is: “The presence or absence of keywords, stock phrases, stereotypical images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments.” Tankard’s (2001) 11 framing mechanisms were also considered. Of particular use were headlines, subheads, photos and photo captions, leads, source selection, quote selection, and concluding statements.

The first frame — ‘curative medicine’ — was defined by words used to emphasise medical treatment, such as medicine, therapy, treatment or vaccination (Scott’s pi = 0.97), as opposed to the frame ‘prevention,’ which was used to emphasise preventive efforts at a national or local or community level, such as HIV/AIDS education, campaigns or prevention (Scott’s pi = 0.85). The frame ‘solution’ was defined by words that emphasised behaviour change at an individual level, such as abstinence, condom use, reducing the number of sexual partners, or the ‘ABC’ model (Scott’s pi = 1.00), while the frame ‘action’ was defined by words that emphasised the ‘fight,’ ‘war,’ or action against the HIV epidemic (Scott’s pi = 1.00). The frame ‘HIV/AIDS tragedy’ was defined by the adjectives used to describe the HIV epidemic, such as calamity, disaster, tragedy and catastrophe (Scott’s pi = 0.97), while the ‘higher-risk–behaviours’ frame included words that described individual behaviours that contribute to the spread of HIV, such as sex work and unprotected sex (Scott’s pi = 1.00). The frame ‘rates’ was defined as an emphasis on percentages, ratios, or other statistics that characterise the prominence of the disease in the population (e.g. HIV incidence and prevalence, number of AIDS deaths) (Scott’s pi = 0.76).

Results

Frequency of HIV/AIDS news coverage

The results of the descriptive analyses show a decline in HIV/AIDS news articles from 2000 to 2002, followed by an increase in articles in 2003 and 2004 (see Figure 1). Therefore, hypothesis 1 was only partially supported. The news coverage did not reflect the trend in HIV prevalence among Ugandan adults, as this steadily declined, from 7.3% to 6.4%, between 2000 and 2004 (see Figure 2).

Frequency of news frames

The crosstab analysis produced a significant chi-square test for the prevalence of issue frames across all years ($\chi^2 = 491.37; p \leq 0.05$) (see Figure 3 for frequencies). Overall, curative medicine received the most coverage, followed by HIV-related rates, solutions, and prevention. The victims,
Ugandan adults (aged 15–49) living with HIV/AIDS; HIV prevalence is based on estimates of the number of sampled articles (n = 365) in a given year with a focus on HIV or AIDS; HIV prevalence is based on estimates of the number of Ugandan adults (aged 15–49) living with HIV.

The results of t-tests indicated that four of the eight HIV/AIDS-issues frames were variably represented in the two newspapers (see Table 2). The HIV-prevention, action, and victims frames appeared more often in The Monitor than in The New Vision, while the solutions frame was slightly more common in The New Vision than in The Monitor. The remaining issue frames — curative medicine, rates, tragedy, and higher-risk behaviours — were represented similarly in the two newspapers. While media ownership appeared to produce differences in HIV/AIDS story frames, the comparisons did not emerge in the directions or for the frames proposed in hypotheses 3a and 3b.

Looking across both news sources, the majority of HIV/AIDS-related articles (n = 205; 56.2%) were written by local (Ugandan) reporters (as indicated by the bylines). The next major group were African reporters from elsewhere (n = 105; 28.8%), while foreign reporters penned fewer articles (n = 55; 15.1%). When comparing the news sources, a significant difference emerged for journalist origin (F = 9.52; df = 1, 363; p ≤ 0.05) (see Table 4 for frequencies). Well over half the news stories in The New Vision were written by Ugandan journalists, while the majority of news stories in The Monitor were written by journalists in other African countries or in countries outside of Africa. The bylines suggested that most of these outside stories came from wire services.

To examine the relative contribution of journalist origin and media ownership on the utilisation of HIV/AIDS-issue frames, the dataset was split into three groups based on journalist origin (that is: local, African, foreign). Next, t-tests were conducted to compare the two news organisations on the issue frames. The tests for foreign journalists revealed a significant difference between the news organisations on the use of the HIV-prevention frame (t = 2.15; df = 30.5; p ≤ 0.05), with foreign journalists from The Monitor (mean [M] = 0.15; standard deviation [SD] = 0.55) employing this frame more often than foreign journalists with The New Vision (M = 0.37; SD = 0.95), while African journalists from the two organisations were comparable in their reporting using the other issue frames. The news organisation for which they worked influenced the African journalists’ utilisation of the solutions frame (t = −2.24; df = 47; p ≤ 0.05) and the higher-risk-behaviours frame (t = 2.13; df = 58; p ≤ 0.05). African journalists working for The New Vision (M = 2.33; SD = 5.40) were more likely to write stories containing a solutions frame than the African journalists working for The Monitor (M = 0.37; SD = 0.95), while African journalists with The Monitor (M = 0.15; SD = 0.55) addressed higher-risk

One-way analysis of variance (using the year as the independent variable and the issue frame as the dependent variable) produced significant differences for three frames. Least significant difference post-hoc comparisons were conducted to examine the location of the differences. The prevention frame varied significantly over time (F = 2.95; df = 4, 360; p ≤ 0.05). Indicating a non-linear reporting trend, the frame appeared more often in 2003 than during 2000 to 2002 and in 2004. No other differences emerged. The solutions frame showed a significant increase over time (F = 9.60; df = 4, 360; p ≤ 0.05). Though solutions were part of the newspapers’ discussion in 2000, the issue frame doubled in prominence by 2004. Representation of the frame from 2000 to 2003 did not differ significantly. Alternatively, the prevalence issue frame appeared at a significantly higher frequency in 2000 (F = 3.22; df = 4, 360; p ≤ 0.05), but its presence did not differ appreciably from 2001 to 2004. No significant differences emerged for the remaining frames over time (see Table 1). Hence, hypothesis 2b failed to receive support. While a few frames for HIV/AIDS news changed over time, the changes did not occur in the predicted direction or ways.

The remaining issue frames — curative medicine, rates, tragedy, and higher-risk behaviours — were represented similarly in the two newspapers. While media ownership appeared to produce differences in HIV/AIDS story frames, the comparisons did not emerge in the directions or for the frames proposed in hypotheses 3a and 3b.

Figure 1: Total numbers of HIV/AIDS stories in the two Ugandan newspapers (The Monitor and The New Vision) by year

Figure 2: Comparison of news coverage and the trend in HIV prevalence; news coverage is measured by the percentage of sampled articles (n = 365) in a given year with a focus on HIV or AIDS; HIV prevalence is based on estimates of the number of Ugandan adults (aged 15–49) living with HIV.

tragedy, and higher-risk-behaviour frames were less frequently employed in the news stories. Hence, hypothesis 2a was not supported.
behaviour in their stories more often than their counterparts at The New Vision (M = 0). The curative-medicine and action frames evidenced similar patterns, with The Monitor journalists adopting these approaches more often than The New Vision journalists, yet failed to reach significance (p = 0.06). Significant differences emerged between the local (Ugandan) journalists at the two newspapers on four frames. The t-tests revealed that local journalists at The Monitor were more likely to employ the HIV-prevention (t = 4.60; df = 91.5; p ≤ 0.05), action (t = 2.45; df = 97; p ≤ 0.05), tragedy (t = 2.30; df = 110; p ≤ 0.05), and victims (t = 2.05; df = 90; p ≤ 0.05) frames than did the local journalists at The New Vision (see Table 4).

Since use of the HIV-prevention frame emerged as a difference between the foreign and Ugandan (local) journalists and for the two news organisations, a 3 (journalist origin) x 2 (news organisation) factorial analysis of variance was conducted to examine the potential interaction effect. A main effect was produced for news organisation (F = 24.29; df = 1, 365; p ≤ 0.05; eta = 0.06), with The Monitor containing more articles with a HIV-prevention frame than did The New Vision. Journalist origin failed to reach significance; however, an interaction effect emerged (F = 6.20; df = 2, 365; p < 0.05; eta = 0.03). Post-hoc comparisons revealed that local journalists (M = 2.03; SD = 2.64) at The Monitor were more likely to utilise the HIV-prevention frame than did all the other groups, with the exception of foreign journalists writing for The Monitor. In fact, The New Vision foreign journalists (M = 0.13; SD = 0.34) and local journalists (M = 0.60; SD = 0.97) were the least likely groups to employ this frame. The use of this frame by the African journalists at the two organisations differed only slightly. Thus, hypothesis 3c received little support. The news organisation for which the journalist works appears to exert a stronger influence on choice of reporting frames than does his or her local status.

Table 1: Prominence of the different HIV/AIDS-issue frames over time: numbers and percentages of news stories within a given year that contained the frame (n = 365 articles)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue frame</th>
<th>2000 n (%)</th>
<th>2001 n (%)</th>
<th>2002 n (%)</th>
<th>2003 n (%)</th>
<th>2004 n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prevention*</td>
<td>38 (43.2)</td>
<td>30 (37)</td>
<td>19 (33.9)</td>
<td>36 (54.5)</td>
<td>33 (44.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>36 (40.9)</td>
<td>33 (40.7)</td>
<td>21 (37.5)</td>
<td>34 (51.5)</td>
<td>33 (44.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims</td>
<td>21 (23.9)</td>
<td>14 (17.3)</td>
<td>11 (19.6)</td>
<td>14 (21.2)</td>
<td>10 (13.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solutions*</td>
<td>25 (28.4)</td>
<td>11 (13.6)</td>
<td>11 (19.6)</td>
<td>14 (21.2)</td>
<td>34 (45.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curative medicine</td>
<td>46 (52.3)</td>
<td>55 (68.9)</td>
<td>36 (64.3)</td>
<td>43 (69.7)</td>
<td>42 (62.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rates*</td>
<td>52 (49.1)</td>
<td>34 (43.2)</td>
<td>27 (48.2)</td>
<td>30 (45.5)</td>
<td>33 (44.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tragedy</td>
<td>17 (19.3)</td>
<td>14 (17.3)</td>
<td>7 (12.5)</td>
<td>10 (15.2)</td>
<td>16 (21.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher-risk behaviour</td>
<td>7 (8)</td>
<td>4 (4.9)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (1.5)</td>
<td>2 (3.8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Indicates a significant change over time.

Figure 3: Percentage of all news stories sampled from the Ugandan press (2000–2004) according to use of eight different HIV/AIDS-related issue frames.
Table 2: Comparison of the issue frames used in HIV/AIDS news coverage by the The Monitor (government-owned) and The New Vision (private-owned), Uganda, 2000–2004 (n = 365 articles)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue frame</th>
<th>The Monitor n (%)</th>
<th>The New Vision n (%)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>90 (53.3)</td>
<td>66 (33.7)</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>0.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>83 (49.1)</td>
<td>74 (37.8)</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>0.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims</td>
<td>38 (22.5)</td>
<td>32 (16.3)</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>0.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solutions</td>
<td>40 (23.7)</td>
<td>55 (28.1)</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>0.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curative medicine</td>
<td>83 (66.9)</td>
<td>74 (59.2)</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rates</td>
<td>87 (51.5)</td>
<td>90 (45.9)</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tragedy</td>
<td>34 (21.1)</td>
<td>30 (15.3)</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher-risk behaviour</td>
<td>8 (4.7)</td>
<td>6 (3.1)</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Indicates a significant difference

Table 3: Mean use of eight HIV/AIDS-issue frames in the articles by local (Ugandan) journalists (SD = standard deviation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue frame</th>
<th>Local journalists at The New Vision (private-owned) Mean SD</th>
<th>Local journalists at The Monitor (government-owned) Mean SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prevention*</td>
<td>2.03 (1.19)</td>
<td>2.64 (2.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action*</td>
<td>1.62 (1.59)</td>
<td>2.22 (2.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims*</td>
<td>0.53 (0.86)</td>
<td>1.36 (1.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solutions</td>
<td>1.27 (1.57)</td>
<td>3.93 (4.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curative medicine</td>
<td>4.71 (4.98)</td>
<td>7.90 (7.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rates</td>
<td>1.85 (1.74)</td>
<td>2.66 (2.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tragedy*</td>
<td>0.43 (0.96)</td>
<td>0.84 (0.90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher-risk behaviour</td>
<td>0.03 (0.49)</td>
<td>0.23 (0.37)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Indicates significance at p ≤ 0.05

The t-tests revealed significant differences for the use of feature stories by the two news organisations (t = 3.37; df = 363; p ≤ 0.05). The Monitor was more likely to include HIV-related feature stories than The New Vision. The newspapers had very similar percentages of commentaries on the topic (see Table 4).

The t-tests also produced significant differences between the two newspapers for story length (t = 10.13; df = 363; p ≤ 0.05). The Monitor’s mean story length was 30.3 inches (SD = 21.52), while The New Vision’s mean story length was 13.5 inches (SD = 6.86). The two newspapers did not differ significantly on the use of graphics for covering the topic (see Table 4).

Discussion

Though we anticipated that HIV/AIDS news coverage in Uganda would mirror the trends noted in studies in the United States (see Brodie et al., 2003) and South Africa (see Media Tenor, 2004), our results demonstrate a less linear trajectory. News coverage on the topic declined from 2000 to 2002 and then increased in 2003 and 2004. The hypothesis that journalistic coverage of the HIV epidemic increases with rising HIV prevalence was not borne out, as HIV prevalence in Uganda declined steadily over the data-collection period. In fact, the unexpected increase in press coverage occurred when HIV prevalence had declined to about 5% (Global HIV Prevention Working Group, 2003), preceding the increase in HIV prevalence in 2005 (Ministry of Health & ORC Macro, 2006). However, national HIV prevalence may not drive local reporting on the topic, as newspapers are likely to carry regional stories as well. The northern region of Uganda continued to experience higher HIV prevalence than the rest of the country due to warfare and the results of the war (Nanyonjo, 2004). News articles may have been carrying these on-the-ground stories, suggesting the increase in new cases of HIV before the large nationwide survey was completed. Nationwide HIV prevalence is determined through an ongoing government survey of surveillance sites. Due to the time it takes to compile such data, the prevalence of HIV could have been increasing for some months before the figures were published. It is also possible that reporting on HIV and AIDS in Uganda was following the episodic and conflict-oriented approaches seen in other news coverage analyses (e.g., Brodie et al., 2003). Unfortunately, the nature of our data does not allow for the testing of these types of frames since we focused on issue frames across time.

Comparing news sources

Another primary aim of our study was to investigate the influence of media ownership on trends in HIV/AIDS reporting and issue frames. The results indicate a significant difference in story type between The New Vision and The Monitor, such that the former included more news stories and the latter incorporated more features on HIV and AIDS. By using features, The Monitor had the ability to cover HIV-related stories in more detail than The New Vision. It is plausible that as a private press, The Monitor is not obliged to cover the utility of government programmes and the effectiveness of political leadership. Past research has noted the reliance of state-owned publications on official sources of information (Panos Institute, 2005). The importance of feature reporting is that journalists are allowed more potential to use a human-interest element to gain attention as well as more space to...
explain to readers why the story is newsworthy and what information is relevant. The feature story also provides an avenue for incorporating a broader range of sources, including people living with HIV. The incorporation of a larger number of issue frames in *The Monitor* articles is likely connected to these story characteristics. The lengthier feature format may allow the journalist to move from rates to cures to prevention, for instance; while, the briefer news story format, as was more commonly adopted by *The New Vision*, may constrain journalists’ treatment of the issue. These differences could reflect variations in news reporting values and practices between the private and public press, even when taking into account similar story types.

Curative medicine emerged as the clear frontrunner in terms of frequency of news frames. While Nassanga’s (2000) analysis of the Ugandan press found less than 3% of news articles in 1998 focused on cures, we noted that over half the articles included this frame by the year 2000, increasing to over 60% in subsequent years. Though less frequent than curative medicine, HIV prevention and HIV prevalence remained common frames, while the focus on solutions grew over the years. Since HIV/AIDS awareness in Uganda was quite high — over 90% among the general population — in the early 2000s (Uganda AIDS Commission et al., 2003), news coverage likely shifted to new drug discovery, treatment regimens, or hopes for a cure. Along this line, we propose that fatigue (by editors or audiences) may not apply to the issue of HIV and AIDS as a whole but to certain attributes of the issue. For instance, compassion fatigue (Moeller, 2000) describes the scenario within which people who are constantly facing stories of suffering, either in person or vicariously, become desensitised to these stories over time. If sensing this situation or experiencing it themselves, Ugandan editors and journalists may be more eager to tell the story related to a cure over relaying the all-too-known story of the ‘AIDS victims.’

The stories that included discussion of ‘victims’ fell to 14% in 2004, while stories with a solutions frame rose from one-quarter in 2000 to nearly one-half by 2004. By determining the news frames from 2000 to 2004, and their evolution away from the issue frames noted in Nassanga’s (2000) study, this study contributes to the historical context of HIV/AIDS news coverage in Uganda. Moreover, the results further support the contention that journalists must make important decisions about the selection of frames for issues, which has implications for the public’s understanding of those issues.

Given the same historical context, one may assume that there would be few differences between the two newspapers’ frames for reporting on HIV and AIDS. However, past scholarship on media ownership points to the potential influence of this variable on news coverage (McCormbs et al., 1995). The results support the latter argument, with *The Monitor* giving more prominence to the HIV prevention, action, and victims frames than did *The New Vision*, and *The New Vision* emphasising a solutions frame more often than *The Monitor*. The heavier emphasis on HIV prevention by the private press may be related to a general use of multiple frames and the incorporation of lengthier feature stories or it may reflect the values of the organisation. For instance, HIV prevention may be a global HIV/AIDS-issue frame — a story frame that is common regardless of region or country. On the other hand, it is possible that fewer articles in the government-owned press emphasised HIV prevention because the newspaper is only part of the government’s HIV-prevention campaign strategy. Brochures, posters, radio shows, television ads, billboards, and advocates may also convey HIV-prevention messages on behalf of the government. Finally, the government press contained more stories with a solutions frame, which suggests that solutions may be more localised messages, and that, to some extent, *The New Vision* is serving as a mouthpiece for government policies and strategies. Additional analysis that examines the nuances of these differing message frames is needed to fully understand the ways in which the issue of HIV and AIDS is being represented to the public.

In terms of journalist origin, a significant difference between the two newspapers emerged, such that more than half the stories in *The Monitor* were by journalists from outside Uganda, compared with a one-third of the articles in *The New Vision*. This is not surprising since *The Monitor* is owned by a foreign company, headquartered in India, with other newspapers in Kenya. Despite the differences in staffing, journalist origin had little effect on the issue frames for HIV/AIDS-related stories. Instead, the results indicate that variations on issue frames were more strongly tied to the news organisation (i.e. private- or government-owned) for which the journalist worked. For instance, both foreign and local journalists at *The Monitor* incorporated HIV-prevention frames more frequently than the foreign and local journalists at *The New Vision*. Local journalists at *The Monitor* reflected the multiple-frame orientation of their employer, as they utilised action, tragedy, and victims frames more often than their counterparts at *The New Vision*. These findings raise several questions about the influence of media ownership on the coverage of HIV and AIDS. Future analyses on media ownership could gather data from news editors and journalists regarding the selection of story type, inclusion of sources, and decision-making on story frames in order to determine if the differences reflect news values or differing constraints.

**Practical implications of the research**

Issue frames may serve as important indicators to local health educators and HIV/AIDS organisations. If there is reason to believe that the recent increase in new cases of HIV infection is partly a result of complacency or boredom with HIV-prevention messages, creative approaches may be warranted to keep these messages newsworthy in the eyes of journalists, editors and audiences. Similarly, the higher-risk-behaviours frame was rarely addressed by the two newspapers. Although this finding could indicate that the news media is no longer portraying those affected by HIV or AIDS as immoral nor using other negative stereotypes (Bardhan, 2001), research showing the continued stigmatisation of those affected by the disease does not support this presupposition. Instead, it is more likely that higher-risk sexual behaviour is rarely discussed in the news due to the cultural taboo placed on a public discussion of sex in general and extramarital sex in particular. Obijiofor (2010) argued that cultural norms are potentially strong
influences on press coverage of HIV and AIDS. The less frequent use of the victims and tragedy issue frames may indicate a de-personalisation of HIV/AIDS news coverage — one that favours news about policy and medicine over the struggles of those living with HIV. Local HIV/AIDS organisations should use such information to ascertain whether their message strategies need to be adjusted. Creating more opportunities for episodic reporting on HIV and AIDS or using celebrities to grab media attention or break through public discussion barriers may also help to broaden or focus the news coverage of HIV and AIDS. As Nassanga (2000) proposed, the media needs to go beyond information dissemination and the generation of awareness to become agents of behaviour change.

Study limitations
The present research is limited in several ways. First, there are only one government-owned and one private-owned English-language daily in Uganda. Since these are the two largest newspapers and published on the same cycle, a sampling plan was easier to establish and execute. Other government-owned and private-press newspapers are written in different regional languages, published at varying intervals, and are not archived systematically. Even so, including them in the current research would have increased the sample size, enabled greater comparison between media outlets, and provided varying degrees of ‘local’ adaptation to news coverage. However, the benefits may have been offset by barriers in data collection, coding and analysis. Still, it would be interesting to compare regional newspapers for the ways in which they cover HIV/AIDS-related topics. Second, by focusing on a single African nation, the news frames identified are intricately tied to that country’s culture, media environment, and history of HIV and AIDS. This approach enabled greater internal control and isolation of variables within the study at the expense of greater external validity. Third, the use of broad issue frames enabled comparison with other HIV/AIDS news coverage but obscured the nuances of the coverage. We could not, for instance, determine why news coverage in Uganda dipped and then increased in some years, nor could we verify that the reporting practices by the Ugandan press were mirroring the episodic and conflict approaches seen in other countries.

Conclusions
By comparing the government-owned and private press newspapers in Uganda, the present research makes a significant contribution to the literature on news coverage of HIV and AIDS by pointing to an overlooked factor in news coverage on this topic — media ownership — and reveals its contribution to issue framing. The study also provides comparative data on news frames for HIV and AIDS over time by extending work done in the late 1990s through to 2004, and thus provides a longitudinal look at the printed-news agenda, and, arguably, the public agenda for HIV and AIDS in Uganda. More work that examines the nuances of HIV/AIDS-issue frames, the ways in which media ownership shapes press reporting, and the influence of news coverage on local audience perceptions and behaviour is needed if scholars and health practitioners are to grasp and harness the media’s potential for supporting health behaviour change.

References


