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# **Constructing HIV/AIDS in Chinese Newspapers**

## **A Frame Analysis**

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A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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## STATEMENT OF CANDIDATE

I hereby certify that the work in this thesis entitled “Constructing HIV/AIDS in Chinese Newspapers: A Frame Analysis” has not been submitted for a higher degree to any university or institution other than Macquarie University.

I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research that has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself have been appropriately acknowledged.

In addition, I certify that all of the sources of information and literature used have been indicated in the thesis.

Ethics Approval for this research was granted on 29 January 2009. Reference Number: HE27FEB2009-D06271

Xiaoguang Zhu

1 July 2012

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# DEDICATION

To my Father  
For His Love, Inspiration and Encouragement

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## ABSTRACT

China, which has the second largest HIV/AIDS population in Asia, has become a focal point for the global prevention of the AIDS epidemic. As in other countries of the world, newspapers play an important role in the framing of epidemics and in the shaping of public opinion. Hence, it is crucial to examine the ways in which HIV/AIDS is represented in Chinese newspapers and the implications of those representations for the ways that members of the public view HIV/AIDS and people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). This thesis, in an attempt to examine the framing of the discourse surrounding HIV/AIDS constructed by Chinese national, provincial and metropolitan newspapers, aims at identifying the dominant frames, discourses and influencing factors that prevail in the coverage of HIV/AIDS. To achieve this research goal, a theoretical framework has been constructed, drawing upon the framing of 981 news stories about HIV/AIDS selected from six national, provincial and metropolitan newspapers. Particular focus is upon newspapers published in Yunnan and Henan (China's two most severely infected provinces) between 1 November to 31 December each year between 2000 and 2008; in addition, 30 transcripts of interviews conducted with journalists and editors involved in the reportage of HIV/AIDS were analysed by adopting qualitative content analysis. The research results reveal (1) that the dominant frames in the six newspapers were prevention/education, medical/scientific, political and socio-economic/cultural and a broad miscellany of other frames. Policy/legal, global cooperation/assistance and human rights/ethics frames were of significant order; (2) that journalists from the CCP party organs and their affiliated metropolitan newspapers tended to adopt politics-oriented and event-oriented framing, while journalists from journalistic professionalism-pursuing and market-driven newspapers were more likely to employ socio-economic/cultural framing; (3) that the dominant public discourse surrounding HIV/AIDS remains morality-centred; and, that stigma, prejudice and discrimination persist towards PLWHAs; and, (4) that the values and norms of media organisations, the values of journalists, routinisation, marketisation and the media environment were factors that influenced the coverage of HIV/AIDS in Chinese newspapers.

This research extends previous studies, considered limited in focus, of newspaper content, by analyzing the views of journalists; in addition, the research is an empirical study based on first-hand material. The results will provide the Chinese government and state-controlled media with useful information that will allow a reframing of HIV/AIDS that may eliminate stigma and discrimination towards PLWHAs and that is more humanistic and non-exclusionary.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AIDS</i>	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CAPP	General Administration of Press and Publications
CAS	Chinese Academy of Sciences
GBRFT	General Bureau of Radio, Film, and Television
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CDC	Center for Disease Control and Prevention
CHAMP	China HIV/AIDS Media Partnership
CPD	Central Propaganda Department: A GBC Initiative
KABP	Knowledge, Attitudes, Behavior and Practices
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China
MII	Ministry of Information Industries
MOC	Ministry of Culture
MOH	Ministry of Health
MPS	Ministry of Public Security
MPT	Ministry of Post and Telecommunications
MRFT	Ministry of Radio, Film, and Television
PLWHA	People Living With HIV/AIDS
PRC	People's Republic of China
SCAWCO	State Council AIDS Working Committee Office
SCNPC	Standing Committee of the National People's Congress
SPPA	State Press and Publication Administration
STD	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
TICC	Tsinghua International Centre for Communication Studies
UNTG	UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in China
YPCG	Yunnan Publishing Co. Group
YSTPH	Yunnan Science and Technology Publishing House



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## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODS .....	27
TABLE 4.1 OVERVIEW OF INTERVIEWS.....	114
TABLE 5.1 THE QUANTITY OF NEWS COVERAGE RELATED TO HIV/AIDS ISSUES IN THE SIX NEWSPAPERS (NOV.1 - DEC. 31, 2000 - 2008).....	124

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# LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1.1 ANNUAL REPORTED HIV POSITIVE AND AIDS CASES IN CHINA (1985 - 2009) .....	3
FIGURE 1.2 GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF ESTIMATED 740,000 PLWHA IN CHINA IN 2009 .....	3
FIGURE 1.3 GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF CUMULATIVE REPORTED HIV POSITIVE IN CHINA (AT THE END OF 2009) .....	5
FIGURE 1.4 GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF CUMULATIVE REPORTED AIDS CASES IN CHINA (AT THE END OF 2009) .....	5
FIGURE 1.5 INTEGRATED THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	25
FIGURE 3.1 A PROCESS MODEL OF FRAMING RESEARCH .....	88
FIGURE 4.1 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH QUESTIONS, PROPOSITIONS AND METHODS .....	104
FIGURE 4.2 PERCENTAGE OF INTERVIEWEES FROM DIFFERENT PRESS .....	114
FIGURE 5.1 CHANGES IN THE VOLUME OF HIV/AIDS COVERAGE IN THE SIX NEWSPAPERS (NOV. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2000 TO 2008) .....	124
FIGURE 5.2 VOLUME OF HIV/AIDS COVERAGE BY <i>THE PEOPLE'S DAILY</i> (NOV. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2000 TO 2008) .....	126
FIGURE 5.3 TYPES OF HIV/AIDS COVERAGE BY <i>THE PEOPLE'S DAILY</i> (NOV. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2000 TO 2008) .....	126
FIGURE 5.4 VOLUME OF HIV/AIDS COVERAGE BY <i>THE SOUTHERN WEEKLY</i> (NOV. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2000 TO 2008) .....	127
FIGURE 5.5 TYPES OF HIV/AIDS COVERAGE BY <i>THE SOUTHERN WEEKLY</i> (NOV. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2000 TO 2008) .....	128
FIGURE 5.6: VOLUME OF HIV/AIDS COVERAGE BY THE <i>HENAN DAILY</i> (NOV. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2000 TO 2008) .....	128
FIGURE 5.7 TYPES OF HIV/AIDS COVERAGE BY THE <i>HENAN DAILY</i> (NOV. 1 TO 31 DEC., 2000 TO 2008) .....	129
FIGURE 5.8 VOLUME OF HIV/AIDS COVERAGE BY THE <i>YUNNAN DAILY</i> (NOV. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2000 TO 2008) .....	130
FIGURE 5.9 TYPES OF HIV/AIDS COVERAGE BY THE <i>YUNNAN DAILY</i> (NOV. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2000 TO 2008) .....	130
FIGURE 5.10 VOLUME OF HIV/AIDS COVERAGE BY THE <i>DAHE DAILY</i> (NOV. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2000 TO 2008) .....	131
FIGURE 5.11 TYPES OF HIV/AIDS COVERAGE BY THE <i>DAHE DAILY</i> (NOV. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2000 TO 2008) .....	132
FIGURE 5.12 VOLUME OF HIV/AIDS COVERAGE BY <i>THE SPRING CITY EVENING</i> (NOV. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2000 TO 2008) .....	132
FIGURE 5.13 TYPES OF HIV/AIDS COVERAGE BY <i>THE SPRING CITY EVENING</i> (NOV. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2000 TO 2008) .....	133
FIGURE 5.14 DOMINANT NEWS SOURCES/NEWS MAKERS: <i>THE PEOPLE'S DAILY</i> .....	134
FIGURE 5.15 DOMINANT NEWS SOURCES/NEWS MAKERS: <i>THE SOUTHERN WEEKLY</i> .....	135
FIGURE 5.16 DOMINANT NEWS SOURCES/NEWS MAKERS: <i>HENAN DAILY</i> .....	136
FIGURE 5.17 DOMINANT NEWS SOURCES/NEWS MAKERS: <i>YUNNAN DAILY</i> .....	137
FIGURE 5.18 DOMINANT NEWS SOURCES/NEWS MAKERS: <i>DAHE DAILY</i> .....	138
FIGURE 5.19 DOMINANT NEWS SOURCES/NEWS MAKERS: <i>THE SPRING CITY EVENING</i> .....	139
FIGURE 5.20 DOMINANT NEWS SOURCES/NEWS MAKERS OF HIV/AIDS IN THE SIX NEWSPAPERS .....	141
FIGURE 5.21 DOMINANT FRAMES: <i>THE PEOPLE'S DAILY</i> .....	141
FIGURE 5.22 DOMINANT FRAMES: <i>THE SOUTHERN WEEKLY</i> .....	143
FIGURE 5.23 DOMINANT FRAMES: <i>HENAN DAILY</i> .....	144
FIGURE 5.24 DOMINANT FRAMES: <i>YUNNAN DAILY</i> .....	145
FIGURE 5.25 DOMINANT FRAMES: <i>DAHE DAILY</i> .....	146
FIGURE 5.26 DOMINANT FRAMES: <i>THE SPRING CITY EVENING</i> .....	147
FIGURE 5.27 DOMINANT FRAMES IN THE SIX NEWSPAPERS ON THE WHOLE .....	148
FIGURE 7.1 RESEARCH QUESTION 1: PROPOSITION AND METHODS .....	209
FIGURE 7.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 2: PROPOSITION AND METHODS .....	210
FIGURE 7.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 3: PROPOSITIONS AND METHODS .....	214
FIGURE 7.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 4: PROPOSITION AND METHODS .....	218
FIGURE 7.5 RESEARCH QUESTION 5: PROPOSITIONS AND METHODS .....	220

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

STATEMENT OF CANDIDATE .....	I
DEDICATION .....	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	V
ABSTRACT .....	VII
ABBREVIATIONS .....	IX
LIST OF TABLES .....	XI
LIST OF FIGURES .....	XIII
CHAPTER 1 .....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION .....	1
1.1.1 Overview of China's HIV/AIDS Epidemic .....	2
1.1.1.1 The HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Yunnan Province .....	6
1.1.1.2 The HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Henan Province .....	7
1.1.2 The Chinese Government's Policy Response to HIV/AIDS .....	8
1.1.2.1 The Yunnan Provincial Government's Policy Response to HIV/AIDS .....	11
1.1.2.2 Henan Provincial Government's Policy Response to HIV/AIDS .....	12
1.1.3 The Chinese Mass Media's Role in the Prevention of HIV/AIDS .....	14
1.1.4 Academic and Social Justification .....	17
1.2 PROPOSED PLAN OF RESEARCH .....	18
1.2.1 Statement of Purpose .....	18
1.2.2 Research Questions and Propositions .....	19
1.2.3 Literature to Be Reviewed .....	20
1.2.4 Research Methods .....	25
1.2.5 Outline of Chapters .....	27
1.3 SUMMARY .....	29
CHAPTER 2 .....	31
CONSTRUCTION OF THE PRESS .....	31
2.1 INTRODUCTION .....	31
2.2 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY .....	32
2.2.1 Brief Review of the Theory of the Social Construction of Reality .....	32
2.2.2 Constructing Media Reality .....	33
2.2.3 Media Content and Reality .....	34
2.2.3.1 Journalists as Professionals .....	35
2.2.3.2 Journalistic Routines .....	36
2.2.3.3 Organisation in Newsmaking .....	37
2.2.3.4 Newsmaking under Extra-media Constraints .....	39
2.2.3.5 Ideology and Newsmaking .....	41
2.3 POLITICAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE PRESS .....	42
2.3.1 Siebert, Peterson and Schramm's Four Dominant Media Ideologies .....	43
2.3.2 Altschull's Three Alternative Press Theories and Models .....	45

2.3.3	<i>Hallin and Mancini's Four Models of Media and Politics</i> .....	47
2.3.4	<i>Other Alternative Models of Media and Politics</i> .....	49
2.4	CHINESE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PRESS IN THE MAOIST ERA.....	51
2.4.1	<i>Party Journalism Ideological Doctrines and the Model of Mass Propaganda and Persuasion</i> .....	51
2.4.2	<i>Journalism as a Form of Political Communication</i> .....	53
2.5	CHINESE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PRESS IN THE.....	55
	POST MAO ERA .....	55
2.5.1	<i>Media Reform in China</i> .....	55
2.5.1.1	Media Reform in the late 1970s and 1980s.....	55
2.5.1.2	Media Reform in the 1990s.....	58
2.5.1.3	Media Reform Since 2003 .....	61
2.5.2	<i>Media Commercialisation with Chinese Characteristics: Party Logic versus Market Logic</i> .....	63
2.5.3	<i>Chinese Newspapers for the Market</i> .....	65
2.6	SUMMARY .....	69
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	.....	<b>71</b>
<b>HIV/AIDS IN THE CHINESE PRESS - FROM AGENDA-SETTING TO FRAMING</b>	.....	<b>71</b>
3.1	INTRODUCTION.....	71
3.2	BASIC MEDIA EFFECTS PARADIGM.....	72
3.2.1	<i>The "Powerful Media" Paradigm</i> .....	72
3.2.2	<i>The "Minimal Effects" or "Limited Effects" Paradigm</i> .....	73
3.2.3	<i>The Uses and Gratifications Paradigm</i> .....	75
3.3	THEORY OF AGENDA-SETTING .....	77
3.3.1	<i>Basic Concept of Agenda-Setting</i> .....	77
3.3.2	<i>HIV/AIDS Agenda-Setting in the Chinese Press</i> .....	81
3.4	THE FRAMING OF HIV/AIDS STORIES .....	86
3.4.1	<i>Basic Concepts of Frames and Media Framing</i> .....	86
3.4.2	<i>News Framing of HIV/AIDS</i> .....	91
3.4.3	<i>Framing Public Discourse of HIV/AIDS</i> .....	94
3.5	SUMMARY .....	97
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	.....	<b>99</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	.....	<b>99</b>
4.1	INTRODUCTION.....	99
4.2	DISCUSSION OF METHODOLOGICAL CONTEXT .....	100
4.3	RATIONALE FOR THE SELECTION OF A PARTICULAR METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH .....	102
4.3.1	<i>The Pertinence of Research Questions and Instruments</i> .....	102
4.3.2	<i>Textual Analysis</i> .....	104
4.3.3	<i>Semi-structured In-depth Interviews</i> .....	105
4.4	OPERATIONALISATION OF METHODS .....	106
4.4.1	<i>Research Sites</i> .....	106
4.4.2	<i>Research Samples and Data Sources</i> .....	107
4.4.2.1	Selection of Newspaper Samples .....	107
4.4.2.2	Selection of Informants.....	110
4.4.3	<i>Procedures</i> .....	111
4.4.3.1	Data Collection.....	111
4.4.3.1.1	Newspapers Data Collection.....	111
4.4.3.1.2	Conducting Semi-Structured In-Depth Interviews .....	111
4.4.3.2	Data analysis .....	115
4.4.3.2.1	Newspapers Textual Analysis.....	116
4.4.3.2.2	In-depth Interview Data Analysis.....	117
4.5	ISSUE OF CREDIBILITY OF THE RESEARCH .....	118
4.6	SUMMARY .....	120
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	.....	<b>123</b>
<b>DOMINANT HIV/AIDS FRAMES AND DISCOURSE</b>	.....	<b>123</b>

<b>IN CHINESE NEWSPAPERS .....</b>	<b>123</b>
5.1 INTRODUCTION .....	123
5.2 OVERVIEW OF NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF HIV/AIDS-RELATED ISSUES IN THE SIX NEWSPAPERS .....	124
5.2.1 <i>The People's Daily</i> .....	125
5.2.2 <i>The Southern Weekly</i> .....	127
5.2.3 <i>Henan Daily</i> .....	128
5.2.4 <i>Yunnan Daily</i> .....	129
5.2.5 <i>Dahe Daily</i> .....	131
5.2.6 <i>The Spring City Evening</i> .....	132
5.3 DOMINANT HIV/AIDS SOURCES/NEWS MAKERS: CONTRIBUTORS TO THE HIV/AIDS COVERAGE BY THE SIX NEWSPAPERS .....	133
5.3.1 <i>Dominant News Sources/News Makers: The People's Daily (2000-2008)</i> .....	134
5.3.2 <i>Dominant News Sources/News Makers: The Southern Weekly (2000-2008)</i> .....	135
5.3.3 <i>Dominant News Sources/News Makers: Henan Daily (2000-2008)</i> .....	136
5.3.4 <i>Dominant News Sources/News Makers: Yunnan Daily (2000-2008)</i> .....	137
5.3.5 <i>Dominant News Sources/News Makers: Dahe Daily (2000-2008)</i> .....	138
5.3.6 <i>Dominant News Sources/News Makers: The Spring City Evening (2000-2008)</i> .....	139
5.3.7 <i>Dominant News Sources/News Makers in the Six Newspapers: A Summary</i> .....	140
5.4 DOMINANT HIV/AIDS FRAMES IN THE SIX NEWSPAPERS .....	141
5.4.1 <i>Dominant HIV/AIDS Frames: The People's Daily (2000-2008)</i> .....	141
5.4.2 <i>Dominant HIV/AIDS Frames: The Southern Weekly (2000-2008)</i> .....	143
5.4.3 <i>Dominant HIV/AIDS Frames: Henan Daily (2000-2008)</i> .....	144
5.4.4 <i>Dominant HIV/AIDS Frames: Yunnan Daily (2000-2008)</i> .....	145
5.4.5 <i>Dominant HIV/AIDS Frames: Dahe Daily (2000-2008)</i> .....	146
5.4.6 <i>Dominant HIV/AIDS Frames: The Spring City Evening (2000-2008)</i> .....	147
5.4.7 <i>Dominant HIV/AIDS Frames in the Six Newspapers: A Summary</i> .....	148
5.5 METAPHORS AND TERMINOLOGY RELATED TO HIV/AIDS AND PLWHAS .....	150
5.5.1 <i>Metaphors Used to Describe the Nature of HIV/AIDS</i> .....	150
5.5.2 <i>Military Metaphors</i> .....	151
5.5.3 <i>Terms Used to Label PLWHAs</i> .....	154
5.5.4 <i>Terms and Metaphors Used to Frame Risk Groups</i> .....	155
5.6 THE ATTRIBUTION OF CAUSATION .....	156
5.7 THE ATTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY .....	158
5.8 SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS .....	162
5.9 SUMMARY .....	165
<b>CHAPTER 6.....</b>	<b>169</b>
<b>INVESTIGATION OF THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE HIV/AIDS REALITY: .....</b>	<b>169</b>
<b>INTERVIEWS WITH JOURNALISTS.....</b>	<b>169</b>
6.1 INTRODUCTION .....	169
6.2 ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTION 1: JOURNALISTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS HIV/AIDS AND PLWHAS .....	170
6.2.1 <i>Framing HIV/AIDS</i> .....	170
6.2.2 <i>Framing PLWHAs</i> .....	175
6.3 ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTION 2: JOURNALISTIC FRAMES ADOPTED IN THE COVERAGE .....	177
6.4 ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTION 3: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE JOURNALISTS' COVERAGE OF HIV/AIDS .....	184
6.4.1 <i>Internal Factors</i> .....	184
6.4.2 <i>External Factors</i> .....	193
6.5 ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTION 4: THE IMPACT OF HIV/AIDS COVERAGE ON POLICY MAKING .....	197
6.6 ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTION 5: JOURNALISTS' VIEWS ON IMPROVEMENT IN AND ALTERNATIVES FOR FUTURE COVERAGE OF HIV/AIDS .....	201
6.7 SUMMARY .....	205
<b>CHAPTER 7 .....</b>	<b>207</b>

<b>DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>207</b>
7.1 INTRODUCTION.....	207
7.2 REVISITING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND PROPOSITIONS .....	207
7.2.1 <i>Research Question 1 corresponding to proposition 5</i> .....	209
7.2.2 <i>Research Question 2 corresponding to proposition 4</i> .....	210
7.2.3 <i>Research Question 3 corresponding to propositions 2 and 1</i> .....	214
7.2.4 <i>Research Question 4 corresponding to proposition 3</i> .....	218
7.2.5 <i>Research Question 5 corresponding to propositions 1, 2 and 5</i> .....	220
7.3 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS.....	221
7.4 SIGNIFICANCE, LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS.....	224
7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS .....	225
7.5.1 <i>Macroscopic Level: from Biomedical Prevention to Social Prevention</i> .....	227
7.5.2 <i>Microscopic Level: From Message to Voice</i> .....	229
7.5.3 <i>Further Strengthening of the Role of Media in HIV/AIDS Prevention</i> .....	231
7.6 CONCLUSION.....	232
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>235</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1 MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY FINAL ETHICS REVIEW APPROVAL LETTER .....</b>	<b>259</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2 INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM .....</b>	<b>261</b>
<b>IN CHINESE.....</b>	<b>261</b>
<b>APPENDIX 3 INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM .....</b>	<b>263</b>
<b>IN ENGLISH .....</b>	<b>263</b>
<b>APPENDIX 4 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .....</b>	<b>265</b>

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background and Justification

At the dawn of the third millennium, China is on the verge of a catastrophe that could result in unimaginable human suffering, economic loss and social devastation. Indeed, we are now witnessing the unfolding of an HIV/AIDS epidemic of proportions beyond belief, an epidemic that calls for an urgent and proper, but currently yet unanswered quintessential response.

The UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in China (UNTG, 2002)

In June 2002, the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in China released its annual assessment report, entitled *China's Titanic Peril*, which estimated that there were in excess of one million HIV infections in China in 2001 (UNTG, 2002)<sup>1</sup>. The report implied that if the Chinese government does not adopt a proactive stance and take practical and effective measures to respond to the challenges and threats which come from HIV/AIDS, China will become submerged in a sea of HIV/AIDS at the dawn of the next millennium, and experience the same fate suffered by passengers on the Titanic. This prediction shocked the country, indeed the whole world. In a joint assessment report with the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS (2003), China's Ministry of Health absolutely denied this estimation and provided an updated

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<sup>1</sup> The UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in China was established in 1996 in order to integrate the UN system into national HIV/AIDS programs. The group includes the Chinese Government, International NGOs and National NGOs.

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estimation of 840,000 people living with HIV/AIDS in China. This report, which to a great extent aroused considerable concern over HIV/AIDS in all walks of life in China, prompted the Chinese government to take further action against the disease. Since then, the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS has become one of the most important issues that the Chinese government has had to confront in the interests of economic development and social stability. However, the huge task of prevention and control of HIV/AIDS cannot be accomplished without the participation of the whole of society. Mass media play an important role in the framing of epidemics and the shaping of public opinion. Hence, it is crucial to examine the ways in which HIV/AIDS is represented in mass media and the implications of those representations for the ways in which members of the public view HIV/AIDS and people living with HIV/AIDS.

### **1.1.1 Overview of China's HIV/AIDS Epidemic**

China reported its first HIV/AIDS case in 1985. Since then, HIV/AIDS has spread rapidly throughout the country. By 1998, HIV infection had been reported in all 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities. China is at a critical moment of a generalised HIV/AIDS epidemic as the disease spreads from relatively localised high-risk groups to the mainstream population (Jin, 2005; MOH & UNTG, 2003). According to the latest government statistics released by the Chinese Ministry of Health, by the end of 2009 China was expected to have approximately 740,000 people living with HIV including 105,000 AIDS patients (MOH, 2009). The number of HIV infections continues to rise (see Figure 1.1), with the number of new infections in 2009 totaling 48,000. China's HIV epidemic remains one of low prevalence overall; but, there are pockets of high infection within specific geographical areas (see Figure 1.2) and social groups. Yunnan and Henan (see Figure 1.3 and Figure 1.4) provinces were among the first affected by HIV and remain the most seriously affected provinces (SCAWCO & UNTG, 2007). Sexual transmission has become the major means of spread of the HIV virus in China, accounting for 60 per cent of infections (*The People's Daily*, 2 December 2009 ).

Figure 1.1 Annual reported HIV positive and AIDS cases in China (1985 - 2009)

Source: 2009 Estimated for the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in China (MOH, UNAIDS and WHO, 2010)

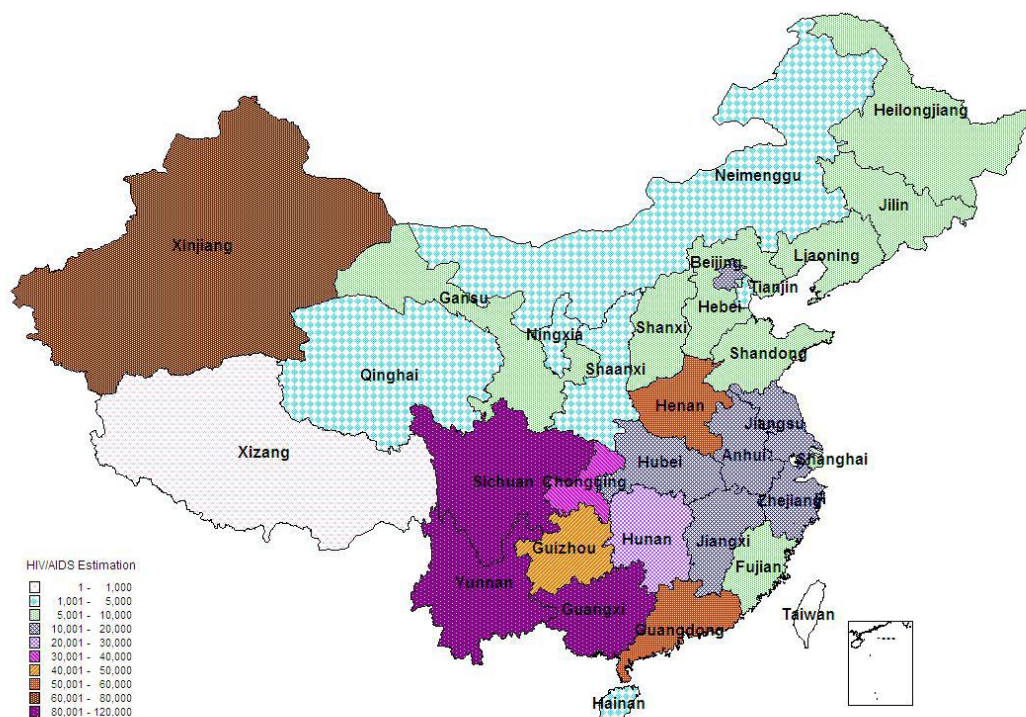
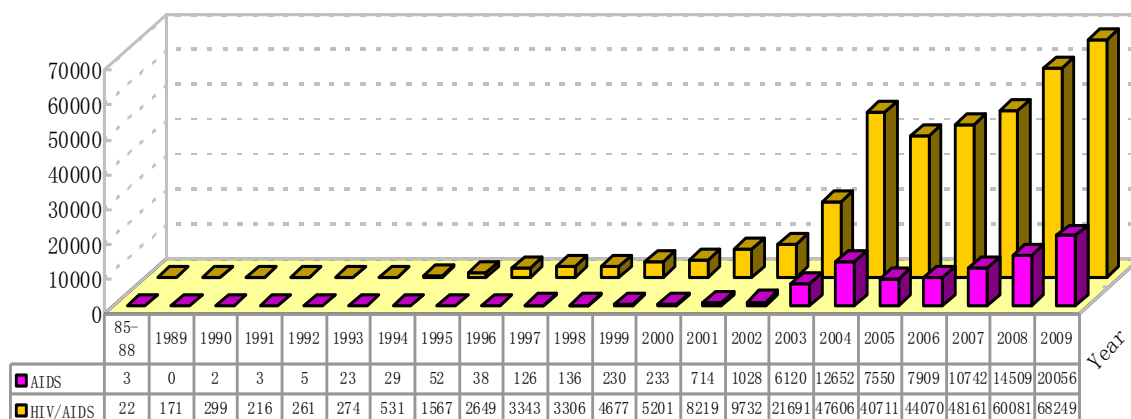


Figure 1.2 Geographical distribution of estimated 740,000 PLWHA in China in 2009

Source: 2009 Estimates for the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in China (MOH, UNAIDS China, & WHO, 2010)

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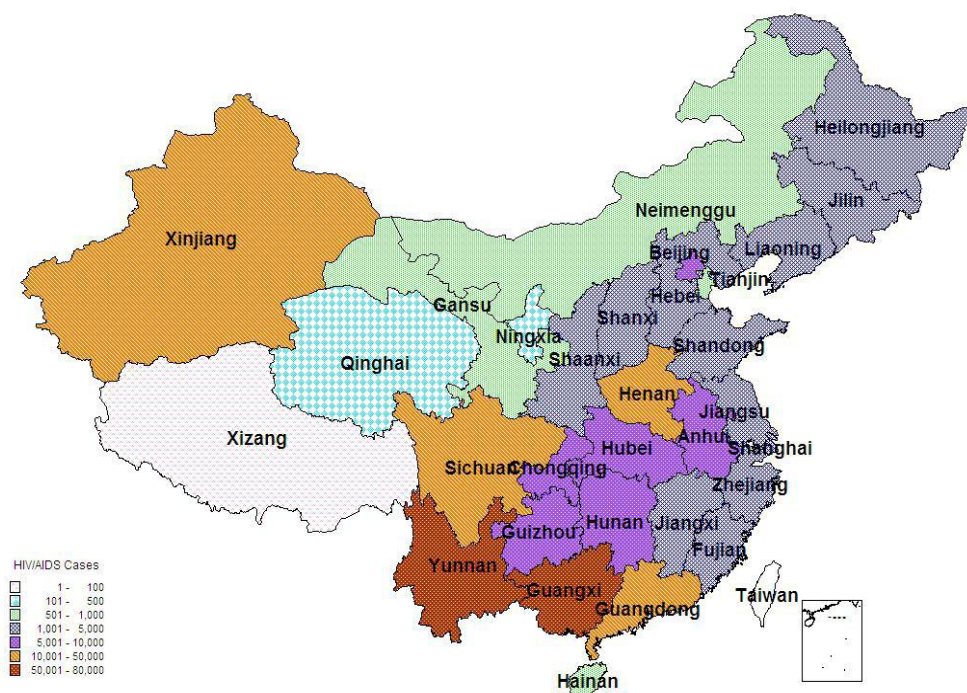


Figure 1.3 Geographic distribution of cumulative reported HIV positive in China (at the end of 2009)

Source: 2009 Estimates for the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in China (MOH, et al., 2010)

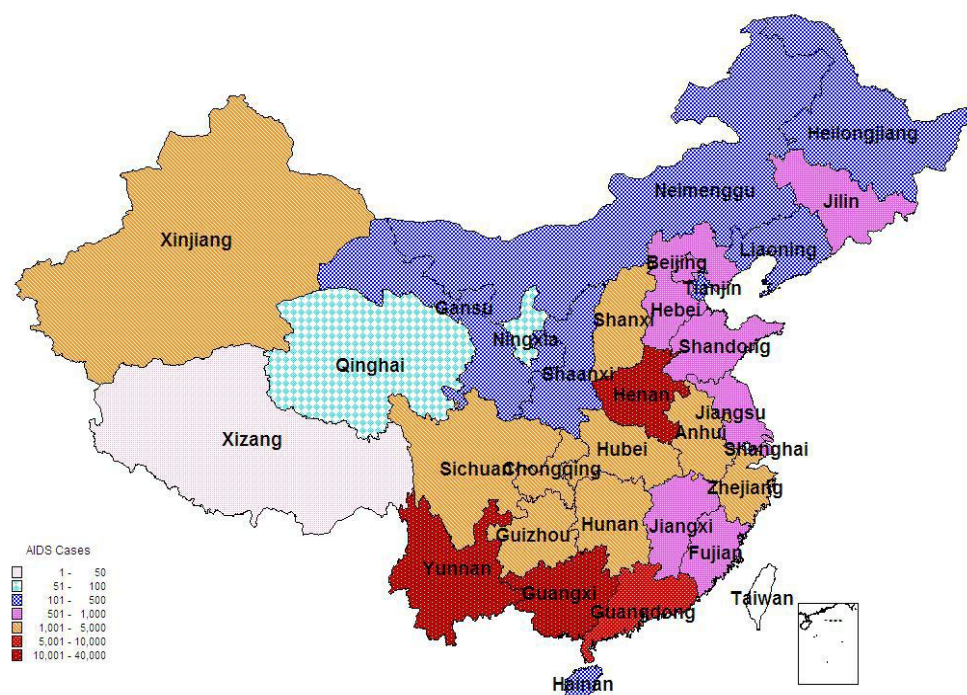


Figure 1.4 Geographic distribution of cumulative reported AIDS cases in China (at the end of 2009)

Source: 2009 Estimates for the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in China (MOH, et al., 2010)

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It is generally recognised by experts that China's HIV/AIDS epidemic can be periodised into three distinct phases (MOH & UNTG, 2003).

The first phase, the Entry Phase of HIV/AIDS, occurred between 1985 and 1988. That period saw only a small number of AIDS cases reported in China's coastal cities: those infected were mainly foreigners, Chinese people who had traveled overseas, and some haemophiliac patients infected with HIV through imported blood products (Jin, 2005). The second phase, the Spreading Phase of HIV/AIDS, which occurred between 1989 and 1994, was marked by the identification of HIV infection in 146 intravenous drug users (IDUs) in Southwest Yunnan in October 1989 (Jin, 2005). The third phase, the Expansion Phase, spans the period from 1995 to the present. In late 1994, HIV transmission spread beyond Yunnan province. The number of HIV infections not only increased quickly among IDUs in Yunnan, but also spread steadily from Yunnan into neighboring provinces, e.g., Xinjiang, Guangxi and Sichuan. Moreover, a considerable number of cases were reported among commercial plasma donors from various regions, especially Henan province. The epidemic continues to spread widely and the national figures for HIV infection have grown rapidly. Since 2005, the epidemic has been spreading from "high-risk" groups to the general population (MOH, UNAIDS, & WHO, 2006).

#### 1.1.1.1 The HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Yunnan Province

When examining the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Yunnan province, Yunnan's particular geographical position cannot be overlooked. Located in South-Western China, Yunnan is a poor and backward hinterland province of China located adjacent to the "Golden Triangle", the most famous and largest drug production region in Asia. Yunnan shares an international border in excess of 4,060 kms with Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam. There are 15 ethnic minorities living along the borders, all of whom are in close contact with the same ethnic minorities of the border countries. These groups' frequent cross-border activities have resulted in heroin flowing into Yunnan from neighboring Laos, Myanmar and Viet Nam, their drug usage triggering the spread of the HIV virus. Yunnan experienced China's first HIV outbreak in 1989. At that time, HIV infection was predominantly detected among intravenous drug

users (IDUs) along the Myanmar-Yunnan border. Since 1995, the infection has spread along truck routes to most parts of Yunnan and the rest of China. For this reason, Yunnan is considered the birthplace of China's HIV/AIDS epidemic. To date, the incidence has been widespread throughout all of Yunnan's 16 prefectures and its 129 counties and districts. By the end of October 2010, HIV-positive cases in Yunnan numbered over 82000 in total; among them were approximately 20,000 AIDS patients (*China Daily*, 2010). Yunnan ranked first in terms of cumulative data on HIV infected provinces and second in terms of the number of AIDS patients in China. HIV infection has not only been detected among ethnic minorities, but has also been found among the majority Han population. Moreover, HIV infection has shifted from mainly "high-risks" groups, such as intravenous drug users (IDUs) and sex workers to general population.

#### 1.1.1.2 The HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Henan Province

Henan province, located in Eastern Central China, is China's most populous agricultural province, with an official population of over 90 million (Henan Provincial Statistical Bureau, 2006). The vast majority of its people are bucolic, uneducated, poor farmers. Although Henan is the largest inland province and the 5<sup>th</sup> largest provincial economy in China, its per capita GDP is low compared to other eastern and central provinces. Henan is considered to be one of the backward provinces of China (China.org.cn, 2006).

Realising the potential for great economic benefits from the plasma industry after the Central Government banned the importation of blood in the late 1980s (Asia Catalyst, 2007; Kellogg, 2003), and in order to make full use of the population resources, the Henan Provincial Department of Health set up commercial blood collection stations and actively encouraged the development of a "blood economy" in the province (Anagnost, 2006; Asia Catalyst, 2007; Chen, 2010b). As a result, many blood collection stations were established in the early 1990s among which were 230 "legal" (official) and innumerable "illegal" blood collection stations (Gao, 2008 ). These stations were largely run by government officials, their relatives and friends, or those who had good connections with government officials (Kellogg, 2003). Many cash-strapped farmers were enticed to sell their plasma for 50 Chinese Yuan (US\$6) or their

blood for 200 Chinese Yuan (US\$25) per donation (*Asia Catalyst*, 2007; Wang, 2007). They could use the money to buy agricultural equipment and food for their hungry children; as well, they could pay their children's school fees. Selling blood became a steady source of income for some farmers; indeed, for some it became their primary means of support (Kellogg, 2003). However, in order to maximise their profits, the so-called "bloodheads" (brokers) who ran the blood collection stations completely neglected the blood donors' health. There was no screening of blood donors for HIV, no testing of the blood collected, and needles were reused on different donors. The most fatal practice was the risky procedure they employed to collect the blood plasma. When separating out the plasma, the "bloodheads" mixed the blood of several donors of the same blood group and spun it in a centrifuge. After separating the plasma from the whole blood, the remainder was re-injected back into the blood donors (*Asia Catalyst*, 2007; Dong, 2004; Kellogg, 2003). Moreover, there was no screening for HIV or testing of blood before the hospitals transfused the blood into the patients (Dong, 2004). Consequently, these unsafe, devastating practices led to the rapid spread of HIV infection among the blood donors and patients alike. Henan confirmed the outbreak of HIV in the mid-1990s (*Asia Catalyst*, 2007; Kellogg, 2003). The infection spread rapidly from HIV donors to their families, then to others through sexual contact and childbirth (Kellogg, 2003). By the end of 2010, the reported number of HIV-positive cases in Henan was 49,335, ranking third of the total cumulative number. Among them were 27,786 AIDS patients, ranking first in the total number of AIDS patients (Xinhuanet, 2011).

### **1.1.2 The Chinese Government's Policy Response to HIV/AIDS**

The Chinese government's HIV/AIDS policy, which has evolved in tandem with the unfolding of the epidemic over the last two decades, can be broadly divided into three phases.

#### **(1) HIV/AIDS policy responses at the entry phase of the epidemic (1985-1988):**

Resistance characterised the policy response during this phase (Jiang, 2006; Wang, 2007; Wei, 2004; Z. Wu, Sullivan, Wang, Rotheram-Borus, & Detels, 2007). At the outset, due to the initial HIV/AIDS cases being detected among foreigners, Chinese nationals who had traveled

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overseas or people infected by imported blood products, HIV/AIDS was initially considered to be a ‘foreign threat’, the result of the influence of decadent western ideas and the ‘evil’ western lifestyle (TICC, 2005; J. Zhao, 2006). The Chinese government’s policy focused on national border control in an attempt to restrict the entry of the HIV virus. The government introduced a series of legal provisions including banning the importation of blood products (MOH, 1986) and prohibiting foreigners with HIV/AIDS from entering the country, in a bid to prevent further transmission of sexually transmitted diseases (STD) (MPS & MFA, 1986).

(2) HIV/AIDS policy response to the spreading phase of the epidemic (1989-1993):

Internal prevention policy against social deviance was the main characteristic of the policies employed during this phase (J. Zhao, 2006). The end of the 1980s saw a change in the HIV/AIDS epidemic in China. Chinese nationals who were HIV-positive were detected among intravenous drug users in the Yunnan province and some cities along the coasts. As 70% of HIV/AIDS cases were located among intravenous drug users, prostitutes and those who contracted AIDS through sexual contact, the Chinese government came to the conclusion that HIV/AIDS was a consequence of western decadence and dissolute life styles and considered it a disease confined to social deviants (J. Zhao, 2006). Consequently, the Chinese government adjusted its HIV/AIDS policy from resisting HIV/AIDS at the gates to restraining the internal spread of HIV/AIDS. The government duly issued a series of decisions, notices and measures that prohibited the use of narcotic drugs (SCNPC, 1990). It also cracked down on - and introduced supervision of - prostitution (SCNPC, 1991) and imposed compulsory tests and treatment on prostitutes and their clients (MOH, 1991).

(3) HIV/AIDS policy response at the expansion phase of HIV/AIDS: (1994 to the present):

Strengthening the prevention mechanism and reinforcing its implementation was the centerpiece of the Chinese government’s policy during this phase (MOH, et al., 2006; MOH & UNTG, 2003). From 1995 on, the number of HIV/AIDS infection cases increased dramatically in China. HIV/AIDS was no longer confined to intravenous drug users or “high-risk” groups. Mother-to-child transmission and an outbreak among the commercial

plasma donors were also reported (Jin, 2005). Realising the increasing seriousness of the situation, the Chinese government intensified its efforts to arrest the epidemic. A national coordination mechanism - the State Council Coordination Mechanism on AIDS/STD - was set up at the State Council level in 1996. In 2001, after a prolonged period of silence, the Chinese government signed the “Declaration of Commitment on HIV and AIDS (Global Crises, Global Action)” and promised to take part in action against HIV/AIDS, both nationally and internationally, at a special session of the UN General Assembly on HIV/AIDS (MOH & UNTG, 2003). Over the following years, the government issued a series of new policies and laws which emphasised more pragmatic measures for HIV/AIDS prevention and care (MOH, et al., 2006; SCAWCO & UNTG, 2004). These policies and laws had more specific targets in their sights including stopping HIV transmission through blood supplies by 2002, controlling the spread of HIV among intravenous drug users, capping China's HIV infections at less than 1.5 million by the year 2010 (MOH, 1995; MOH & UNTG, 2003), providing free antiretroviral drugs to impoverished rural and urban AIDS patients, free voluntary HIV counseling and testing, free prevention of mother-to-child transmission, and free schooling for AIDS orphans and care for AIDS patients and their families. All of the above required the launching of several harm reduction projects (SCAWCO & UNTG, 2004).

In effect, the Chinese government’s overall policy response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic could be summarised as moving from resistance to severe striking and punishment to effective policy implementation. However, it seems that the Chinese government’s policy response to HIV/AIDS mainly focused on biomedical prevention (D. Li, 2008a), an approach that medicalises the prevention and emphasises the individuals’ behaviour and responsibility for changing their health behaviour patterns and protecting themselves from HIV/AIDS infection (Henderson, Worth, Aggleton, & Kippax, 2009, p. 124; Kippax, 2010). As a result, the health messages focused on risks associated with personal behaviour rather than on the social, cultural and political factors that shape and produce risk (Kippax, 2010). The successful experiences of some countries (i.e., Uganda, Thailand, Australia, Senegal and Brazil) proved that the social prevention approach, which highlights the social structure and social processes, and emphasises the importance of the involvement of civil society and the public voice has been and continues to be effective (Kippax, 2010; PANOS, 2003).

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### 1.1.2.1 The Yunnan Provincial Government's Policy Response to HIV/AIDS

The Yunnan provincial government's policy response, to a great extent, was influenced by the central government's policy for HIV/AIDS due to the hierarchical organisational structure of the Chinese government.

In the initial phase of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, in order to prevent HIV/AIDS diffusion, the Yunnan provincial government established its provincial AIDS Prevention and Control Group in 1990 and released several circulars dealing with the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS, including providing HIV testing in blood collection stations and promoting educational messages publicly (YPCG & YSTPH, 2006). However, due to the absence of political commitment at the national level, the Yunnan provincial government, similar to other provincial governments in China, opted not to implement effective measures for HIV/AIDS prevention and control, resorting instead to secrecy. While on the one hand, the officials of provincial governments were not authorised to reveal details of the epidemic, on the other, the officials were unwilling to disclose them because HIV/AIDS was considered a sensitive problem. They feared that if they revealed details of the epidemic, their political careers would be jeopardised and that potential investors would opt to go elsewhere (Y. Huang, 2005). Hence, when the deputy governor of Yunnan province publicly acknowledged the seriousness of the situation in the province in 1995, the mayor of the provincial capital city counter-claimed that there were no cases of HIV/AIDS in the city and that the infection was a foreigner's problem only. As a result of the denial and inaction, HIV/AIDS was gradually transmitted from intravenous drug users in the restricted board areas of the province to the general population of the inner cities of the provinces, then to the other provinces of China (Y. Huang, 2005).

After 2002, in line with the increasing political commitment of the Chinese central government, HIV/AIDS prevention and control in Yunnan underwent marked change. Compared to other provinces which had been severely hit by HIV/AIDS, Yunnan government officials were now more responsive to the problems, showing strong support for the implementation of and advocacy for the central government's policies on HIV/AIDS. Accordingly, the provincial government introduced a series of measures to combat the epidemic.

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First, Yunnan provincial government strengthened its organisations and institutions related to HIV/AIDS prevention (Yunnan Provincial AIDS Prevention and Control Bureau, 2007). The Yunnan Provincial Working Committee for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control was formed with the Provincial Governor as Chairman in January 2005. This showed that the provincial government had put HIV/AIDS on its provincial governmental agenda and introduced HIV/AIDS prevention into its strategies of economic and social development. As well, the provincial government included HIV/AIDS prevention into its official evaluation system, thus ensuring that policies and measures essential to HIV/AIDS prevention would be effectively carried out (*Yunnan Daily*, 30 November 2007).

Second, apart from implementing the Chinese central government's policies and regulations for HIV/AIDS prevention, Yunnan provincial government issued some local policies, laws and regulations, among which "Responsive Measures to HIV/AIDS Prevention in Yunnan Province" came into effect on 3 March 2004 (Yunnan Provincial Government, 20 January 2004). This represented an important breakthrough in China in terms of providing legal support for the effective intervention of harm reduction programs (i.e., condom promotion, methadone maintenance and needle-exchange programs). It legalised clean-needle exchange programs and methadone therapy, required all hotel and entertainment establishments to make condoms available to their patrons, and protected the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS.

Third, due to the severity of the HIV/AIDS problem and the relatively open attitude of the government officials in Yunnan, the province attracted considerable attention and support both nationally and internationally. Yunnan was one of the earliest provinces to introduce and implement international projects (e.g., harm reduction and condom promotion programs, and community-based and educational interventions) in China. According to H. Li and Wang (2006), international exchange and cooperation were important strategies of Yunnan's provincial HIV/AIDS response (H. Li & Wang, 2006).

#### 1.1.2.2 Henan Provincial Government's Policy Response to HIV/AIDS

From the outset, denial and concealment characterised the Henan provincial government's response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Chen, 2010b; A. He, 2000).



Ever since 1994, HIV/AIDS infection among blood donors had been detected by medical worker Wang Shuping in Zhoukou, Henan province. Wang reported her discovery immediately to the Henan provincial government, but her report was discounted (K. Zhang, 2004) despite the fact that a sample sent to Beijing for testing confirmed her discovery. But, the news shocked the Central government. After becoming aware of the serious problem associated with blood collection in Henan, the Central government ordered the Henan provincial government to ban all illegal commercial blood collection and close all its blood collection stations. However, the Henan provincial government decided not to take action, and fired Wang Shuping. The director of the Henan Provincial Health Department emphatically argued: “There is no HIV/AIDS in Henan Province” (Chen, 2010a; A. He, 2000). It was not until 1996 that all of the blood collection stations were closed. This denial and inaction on the part of the provincial government resulted in approximately 300,000 infections by 1996 (K. Zhang, 2004).

By 1999, due to the high incidence of the disease, a number of ostensibly inexplicable deaths had occurred in Henan. Some local media started to expose the seriousness of the epidemic; but, instead of taking measures to curb the spread of the infection, the Henan provincial government continued to conceal the truth and suppress news coverage by the province’s media (Chen, 2010a). Officials feared that exposure of the HIV/AIDS epidemic would harm their political careers and prospects and inhibit potential overseas investment. In addition, they feared that they would have to take the responsibility for their malpractice, because the provincial health department had been involved in the corrupt blood trade (Chen, 2010b; K. Zhang, 2004).

It was not until January 2000 that Henan’s “blood scandal” was first exposed in *The West China Metropolitan Newspaper* (《华西都市报》), a newspaper based in Chengdu, Southwestern China. Before long, many media, including *The Southern Weekly*, *The Southern Metropolis Daily* and *The China Youth Daily*, commenced coverage of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Henan province (Chen, 2010a). The serious nature of the epidemic in Henan gradually emerged as a result of massive coverage by media.

After the exposure of Henan’s HIV/AIDS epidemic, the Central government and the Ministry of Health became determined to solve the problem. In December 2003, China’s vice Premier

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Wu Yi, who was also acting health minister, went to Henan to investigate the epidemic. Under pressure from the Central government, the Henan provincial government identified 38 HIV/AIDS high-incidence villages and began to take a series of measures to contain the spread of the infection (K. Zhang, 2004). These measures included providing free treatment to HIV/AIDS villagers, helping children orphaned by the disease and guaranteeing them a normal life, medical care and schooling, and establishing educational programs. In order to implement these measures, the Henan provincial government sent a total of 114 provincial government officials and medical experts to villages throughout the province on one-year assignments to help improve HIV/AIDS control and treatment in the most seriously affected villages (C. Liu, 2005).

The tireless efforts of the Henan provincial government saw commercial blood sales in the province subjected to control, and achievements made in the relief work for those affected by HIV/AIDS, although public discussion of the disease was still discouraged by the local government. The Henan provincial government adopted a prudent policy as far as publicising their HIV/AIDS prevention work was concerned. A provincial government document propagated the slogan “Saying less and doing more, and only doing and not saying is proper in the AIDS prevention work” (General Office of Henan Provincial Government, 2004). It seems that the “blood scandal” had become Henan’s nemesis. No one wanted to hear or speak about it, a policy of obfuscation that persists even today.

### **1.1.3 The Chinese Mass Media’s Role in the Prevention of HIV/AIDS**

Over the past two decades, Chinese mass media have played a significant role in promoting public awareness and influencing the public and policy makers to respond to HIV/AIDS.

It is well known worldwide that to date, the only vaccine available is a social vaccine. Education and awareness is the only preventive tool available (Singh, 2006). The main function of mass media is to convey information, provide education to the public and mould public opinion. Thus, mass media, through the dissemination of information, can play a critical role in halting and reversing the further spread of HIV/AIDS. Chinese mass media

have made a great contribution to educating the public and promoting public awareness of this disease. Since HIV/AIDS entered China in 1985, Chinese mass media have continually paid attention to and reported on HIV/AIDS-related issues. The amount of coverage by media of said issues has increased every year concomitant with the expansion of the epidemic and has undoubtedly influenced the public's response to the crisis (Bu & Liu, 2004; Li Li et al., 2009; TICC, 2005). Functions performed by Chinese mass media include bringing news of HIV/AIDS to the attention of the public and policy-makers, disseminating knowledge of prevention programs among the public, and providing information about policies and about treatment for those who live with HIV/AIDS. Unarguably, Chinese media have become one of the importance sources of HIV/AIDS information for the public (Bu & Liu, 2004; Li Li, et al., 2009; TICC, 2005). A survey conducted in 2005 revealed that approximately 50% of the public identified media as primary sources of information about HIV/AIDS. Approximately 70% acknowledged that their attitudes towards HIV/AIDS and PLWHAs had changed after their exposure to media coverage (TICC, 2005). The latest survey associated with Knowledge, Attitudes, Behavior and Practices (KABP) conducted in six Chinese cities in 2008 also confirmed that mass media are the main sources of public knowledge of HIV/AIDS. This survey found that TV (79.2%), newspapers (53.5%) and the Internet (34.1%) were among the five leading HIV/AIDS information sources (CHAMP, 2008). Increasingly, extensive campaigns such as the Worker's Red Ribbon Campaigns, "Face-to-Face," Youth Red Ribbon Campaign and Public Service Announcement (PSA) campaigns, which aimed to raise public awareness of HIV/AIDS, promote safe sex and reduce stigma and discrimination towards PLWHAs, are being launched by national and local media (China.org.cn, 2009; MOH, et al., 2006; Xinhuanet, 6 June 2007). These media campaigns, which utilise a wide variety of communication channels, e.g., television, radio, print and the Internet, have greatly improved the general awareness of HIV/AIDS; in addition, they have increased public understanding of effective prevention strategies and safe behaviour, and encouraged more tolerant attitudes toward PLWHAs among the Chinese population. According to a study carried out in Anhui Province by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in 2004, the public gained more knowledge about HIV/AIDS, and are less afraid of contact with PLWHAs, as a result of the education campaigns conducted post-2003 (Wang, 2005). Furthermore, a survey titled "Chinese People's Sexual Behaviours and Sexual Relations: Development in 2000-2006", published on 2 June 2007 by the Institute of Research on Sexuality and Gender, Renmin University, China, indicated that condom use has increased among the Chinese population.

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Twenty per cent of informants usually use condoms during sexual intercourse with their partners, while 80% use condoms when having sex with non-partners. Condom use has gradually become one of the key measures taken by Chinese to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS infection (Zeng, 2007). A study of the link between exposure to mass media and changes in people's attitudes and behaviour found that exposure to mass media sources significantly influenced the acquisition of HIV/AIDS knowledge and lessened the stigmatisation of PLWHAs (Li Li, et al., 2009).

Chinese mass media not only have the power to raise public awareness, but also, to some extent, have the power to influence policy makers to respond to HIV/AIDS and to motivate them to ensure that HIV/AIDS issues are included on the government agenda.

With China's opening to the outside world and media reform, Chinese media now have more freedom to cover news which the public need to access and with which public are concerned (Hawkey, 2005). The media on occasion take risks to expose sensitive issues such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In 1996, *The Southern Weekly* (《南方周末》) ran a front-page story about HIV/AIDS in China, the first comprehensive exposure of the epidemic by the Chinese press. The reportage aroused the public's attention regarding circumstances surrounding HIV/AIDS. In 2000, coverage of the massive numbers of infections caused by the sale of blood plasma in Henan Province appeared in *The West China Metropolitan Newspaper*. This report triggered further in-depth coverage by national and international media, coverage that disturbed the public and impelled the government to change its HIV/AIDS policy (W. Zhang, 19 January 2008).

In short, Chinese media have played a very important role in promoting public awareness of HIV/AIDS, reducing the stigma and discrimination directed towards PLWHAs and in shaping public opinion through their identification of accidental sources of infection and their advocating for and influencing of governmental agenda-setting. Media have become an indispensable part of the prevention of HIV/AIDS in China.

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### 1.1.4 Academic and Social Justification

It is commonly understood worldwide that HIV/AIDS is not simply a concern of scientists, doctors and medical researchers: it has important social dimensions which include individual and media responses to HIV/AIDS. Today, Chinese media are playing a significant role in the prevention of HIV/AIDS by providing information, disseminating knowledge of HIV/AIDS among the public, and reducing the stigma and discrimination directed towards PLWHAs. According to previous studies (Bu & Liu, 2004; Li Li, et al., 2009) and surveys (CHAMP, 2008), mass media are still considered key sources of HIV/AIDS information for the public, although the development of communication technologies, e.g., the Internet, has provided an alternative source of HIV/AIDS information for the young generation.

However, despite the proactive efforts and contributions that media have made to the prevention of HIV/AIDS, this infection has become one of the most stigmatised diseases in China. Given that mass media play an important role in the framing of epidemics and shaping public opinion, it is crucial to examine the ways in which HIV/AIDS is represented in Chinese media and the implications of those representations for how members of the public view HIV/AIDS and PLWHAs. It is also important to understand the factors that influence the message making and the alternatives that may maximise the effects of media on the prevention of HIV/AIDS in China. These are very important issues that are worthwhile thinking about and investigating because of their significance from social perspectives.

As far as the significance of academic perspectives is concerned, although there has been some research undertaken into media representation of HIV/AIDS in China, to date, research has mainly focused upon content analysis of media coverage. My research goes further than previous studies by analysing the views of journalists, in an attempt to determine the obstacles and constraints that affect and inhibit media representation. Moreover, my research is an empirical study based on first-hand material. The results will provide the Chinese government and state-controlled media with useful information that will allow a reframing of HIV/AIDS that may eliminate stigma and discrimination towards PLWHAs and that is more humanistic and non-exclusionary. In addition, my research is also an effort to contribute to the understanding of the social reality of HIV/AIDS in China. It will, to some extent, throw light on the understanding of media and social change in China.

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## 1.2 Proposed Plan of Research

### 1.2.1 Statement of Purpose

As a “Disease of Society” (Gatter, 1995), HIV/AIDS “is constructed as a set of social, economic, and political discourses” (Cullen, 1998, p. 1554) in which media play an important role in framing and socially constructing the disease (de Souza, 2007).

Given the media have been the most important source of HIV/AIDS knowledge and information for the public to date, they can help to define the nature of HIV/AIDS as a social issue, influence public understanding of the disease and shape public belief. The media can also impact upon public perceptions of the disease and risk, and influence how the public think about those who are affected by the disease and how they should respond to the disease. Therefore, it is crucial (a) to study the ways in which mass media cover HIV/AIDS issues, the major discourse surrounding HIV/AIDS in Chinese mass media and influencing factors; and, (b) to uncover the nature of the social reality of HIV/AIDS in China as perceived and interpreted by news professionals.

To these ends, this research (1) examines the dominant frames and discourses that Chinese journalists at the national, provincial and city levels employ when reporting HIV/AIDS issues; (2) explores the ways in which Chinese journalists at the national, provincial and city levels make sense of the HIV/AIDS problem; (3) investigates the internal and external factors that influence the framing of HIV/AIDS by Chinese journalists at the national, provincial and city levels; and, (4) looks for alternative forms of framing that would encourage members of the public to see that HIV/AIDS issues require solutions, and, to this end, offer a broader range of alternative policies.

Ideally, the author hopes that the results of this research will provide Chinese policy makers and media practitioners with useful information for developing appropriate communication strategies and preventive programs, and make the maximum use of mass media in the prevention of HIV/AIDS in China.

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## 1.2.2 Research Questions and Propositions

For the purposes of the research, five core research questions will be posed and answered in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 of this thesis. The five core research questions are as follows:

- (1) How do Chinese journalists at the national, provincial and city levels consider HIV/AIDS issues?
- (2) How is HIV/AIDS framed in Chinese newspapers? What is the dominant discourse surrounding HIV/AIDS in Chinese national, provincial and metropolitan newspapers? And how does this discourse relate to the ways in which the issue is framed by different journalists at different levels of the Chinese administrative system?
- (3) What factors influence the ways in which different levels of journalists frame the HIV/AIDS issue?
- (4) How does journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS affect public policy? Are there positive and negative consequences associated with the development of public policy?
- (5) How can HIV/AIDS be reframed to evoke a different way of thinking, one that embraces a broader range of alternative policies? What forms would new ways of framing HIV/AIDS take?

In an attempt to answer the first core question the research will investigate the individual attitudes of journalists and editors towards HIV/AIDS and PLWHAs using in-depth interviews.

The second core question comprises five sub-questions that need to be answered:

- i. What are the dominant HIV/AIDS frames utilised by the six newspapers selected for the study?
- ii. Do these dominant frames differ across the six newspapers?
- iii. How are HIV/AIDS stories represented in the six newspapers?
- iv. Do these representations differ across the six newspapers?
- v. What are the implications of these frames and discourses for the readers?

With regard to the third core question, the research will examine the internal and external factors of media organisations that affect the coverage of HIV/AIDS and representation of HIV/AIDS in the six newspapers.

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As regards the fourth core question, the research will investigate the impact of journalistic framing on the policy-makers and policy making regarding the HIV/AIDS issue in China.

Finally, the fifth core question concerns the improvement of HIV/AIDS communication, which is viewed as the most valuable part of this study. Based on the research findings, I will suggest alternative framing of HIV/AIDS and any improvements in communication strategies I deem necessary (and possible) in the interests of maximising the effectiveness of mass media vis-a-vis the prevention of HIV/AIDS in China. Thus, my research will be undertaken with a view to seeking solutions.

In the course of the project, the following five propositions corresponding to the five core questions will be examined.

- (1) National and provincial policy framing of HIV/AIDS influences the journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS;
- (2) Internal and external factors of media organisations influence the journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS;
- (3) Journalistic framing, to a certain extent, influences public policy making;
- (4) There is a greater space for public deviation at the level of the national journalists regarding national HIV/AIDS policy framing than at the level of local journalists;
- (5) Private framing by journalists influences the journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS.

### **1.2.3 Literature to Be Reviewed**

In order to examine the construction of HIV/AIDS in Chinese newspapers, relevant theories and perspectives associated with theories of influence on mass media content and the relationship between media and society, and theories regarding media influence will be systematically reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis respectively. Chapter 2 mainly focuses upon theories of influences on mass media content and the relationships between media and society.



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Berger and Luckmann (1967) argue that the reality that we consider is socially constructed; we experience reality – or, in other words – we acquire knowledge through communicative interaction with others. Thus, reality, according to Berger & Luckmann (1967) is organised and intersubjective, a product of actions of human beings (Barnett, 1995). Media content, the product of media professionals, is the outcome of the interaction and negotiations of journalists with various agents and sources; in other words, various forces (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Tuchman, 1978). The process of production of media content involves selection and judgments of personal value and bias (Schudson, 2003). In effect, what media create is “selective reality” (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 60).

Previous studies (Herbert J. Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) indicate that a multitude of forces shape, restrain and constrain media content, i.e., the reality that media create. These forces or constraints, which are rooted in internal and external media organisations, include the influence of media workers’ attitudes, the ways in which media organisations and their media workers function, other social institutions and forces (e.g., economic and cultural forces and audience), and the ideology/ies of those in power in a given society (Gans 1979 and Gitlin 1980, cited in Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, pp. 6-7). Media content is affected and shaped by these forces at different levels (Reese, 2001).

Among the above forces, the types of political, socio-economic and cultural systems in which media are embedded directly influence media content. Several scholars (Altschull, 1984; D. C. Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956) have researched the relationship between media function and various types of societies and developed different models of media and politics, e.g., Siebert, Peterson & Schramm’s (1956) four dominant media paradigms (*Four theories of press*), Altschull’s (1984) three alternative press models and Hallin & Mancini’s (2004) four models of media and politics. However, each of these normative theories or models has evinced flaws in one way or another. They are either Western-centred and utilise oversimplified classification (Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2009; Gunaratne, 2005; Winfield, Mizuno, & Beaudoin, 2000; Yin, 2008), for example, Siebert, Peterson & Schramm’s *Four theories of press*, or are limited to Western European and North American democracies (see Hallin and Mancini’s models) (C. Sparks, 2010; Voltmer, 2008)). In addition, although some have developed theories or models based upon Marxist ideology (see Siebert, Peterson & Schramm’s Soviet-totalitarian theory,

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Altschull's Marxist/communitarian model and Hallin & Mancini's Post-Communist Media Model), the focus of these models limits media practices in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe rather than the Marxist press in general and journalism in particular countries (C. Huang, 2003 ). So, such models are not suitable for analysing the relationships that obtain between the media and political systems of a given country like China, for example, over the last three decades, has undergone transition of both its political and media systems (C. Huang, 2003 ).

Chinese media have undergone dramatic change since the 1990s. In tandem with marketisation, China's news media have been transformed from rigorous Maoist Era "mouthpieces" and propaganda tools into a multi-structured media industry with multi-functions (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998), – a combination of organisations that Zhou He (2000) refers to as "Party Publicity Inc" – and shifted from "totalizing" media control to almost total domination (W. Sun, 2010). Far from achieving editorial independence, Chinese media are pulled in different directions by forces generated by both politics and market forces (Z. He, 2000; C. Huang, 2003 ). Media in China today have to serve and contend with two masters: the Party and the public (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). The transformation of media has greatly impacted upon the production of media content in China.

In Chapter 2, I review theories relevant to influences on mass media content and the relationships between media and society. This gives rise to the question of what influence media content has on audiences, a question that needs to be examined to enable answering of the research questions. Some relevant theories of media influence will be conceptualised in Chapter 3.

In earlier times, 'effects' research was at the heart of mass communication research. Over the past several decades, numerous researchers have attempted to prove that media messages have powerful, direct impacts on audiences. The assumption of these studies is that media have "significant effects" (McQuail, 2000); that is, media messages have the power to impact on audiences' thought and behaviour directly and immediately like symbolic "bullets" (Livingstone, 1996). Audiences are considered as passive receivers of information and vulnerable to outside influences; however, this assumption is not supported by the accumulative evidence (Lowery & DeFleur, 1995). Some studies (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955;

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Klapper, 1960; Paul Felix Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948) suggest that media's affect on audiences is limited and minimal. Others (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973; McQuail, Blumler, & Brown, 1972) found that audiences are active receivers of media messages because they use media to satisfy certain of their needs.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) developed a new paradigm/agenda-setting theory in the 1970s (Kitzinger, 2004). According to their study, media professionals play an important role in shaping political reality through their selection and displaying of news. Audiences "learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue" from news stories (Maxwell E. McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 176). The media's ranking to an issue impacts upon the degree of importance attached to the same issue by the public and policymakers (McQuail, 2000). Issues highlighted by media capture the attention of both the public and policymakers, influence their beliefs about and affect policymakers' consideration of the issue (James W. Dearing & Rogers, 1996). Thus, media have the power to tell their publics what to think about (Maxwell E. McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

Agenda-setting is a process in which issues compete to gain the attention of media professionals, the public and policy makers. An issue must climb the media agenda ladder before it can gain the attention of public and policymakers. The HIV/AIDS issue is no exception. Although China's first indigenous HIV/AIDS cases were detected in 1989, it was only in 1996 that *The People's Daily*, China's most important official newspaper, published its front-page story about HIV/AIDS. Since then, HIV/AIDS issues have gradually gained some prominence on Chinese media agenda. The years 2000 and 2003 saw HIV/AIDS issues peak on Chinese media agendas: two "trigger events" accounted for this. One was the outbreak of massive infection among previous blood plasma donors in Henan Province: the other was the 2003 SARS outbreak. Apart from these two "trigger events", the annual World AIDS Day also helped to propel the HIV/AIDS issue onto Chinese media agendas and draw the attention of policy makers.

HIV/AIDS captured the attention of the Chinese mass media; but, what was the nature of their coverage? What angles did the journalists use in their coverage of the disease? How did they present HIV/AIDS in their news stories? Framing theory will help to answer these questions, which are the main concern of this research.

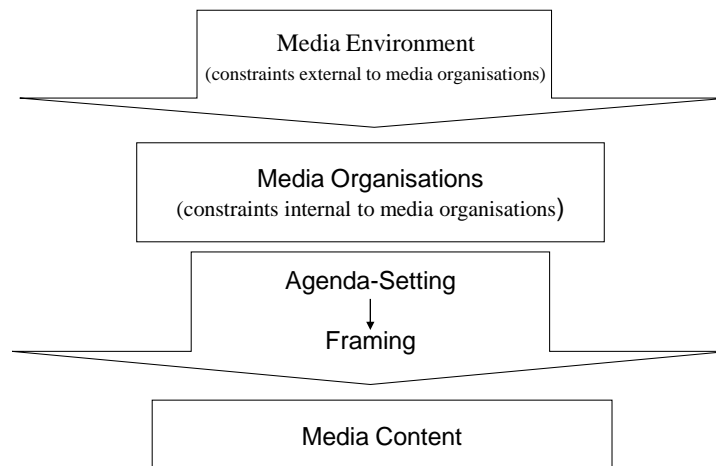
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Goffman (1974) defined frame as the “schemata of interpretation” which allows individuals to “locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms” (1974, p. 21). Framing provides “cognitive windows” through which stories are “seen” (Zhongdang Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 59). Media frames are regarded as “interpretative packages” at the core of which is “a central organizing idea, for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue” (William A. Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 3). Framing helps journalist to identify and organise information quickly and “to package it for efficient relay to their audiences” (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7). In the process of news framing, journalists highlight specific aspects of “perceived reality”. As a consequence, the “dominant meaning consists of the problem, [and] causal, evaluative, and treatment interpretations” can be suggested to audiences (Entman, 1993, p. 56).

Previous studies of AIDS framing indicate that victimisation, deviance, abnormality and blame are often attached to the representation of the disease including HIV/AIDS (Gilman, 1988). The “healthy us” and “diseased other” dichotomy was a common frame used by news media in the initial phase of the epidemic (Juanne N. Clarke, 1992; Gilman, 1988; Lupton, 1993) when AIDS was not viewed as a general public health problem, but rather as a problem of ‘others’. The rise in the rate of heterosexual infection saw the transformation of the framing of HIV/AIDS in news narratives. Normalisation and medicalisation of HIV/AIDS emerged as major news frames (Bardhan, 2001) and discourses pertinent to socio-economic, public policy and human rights found a place in the news media (Bardhan, 2001). But, as the epidemic evolved, the topic gradually became stale news. Its coverage became routine for journalists (Bardhan, 2001).

Figure 1.5 below summarises the theoretical framework.

Figure 1.5 Integrated Theoretical Framework



## 1.2.4 Research Methods

The study employs a qualitative approach, textual analyses and semi-structured in-depth interviews.

In an attempt to identify HIV/AIDS news frames and discourse, six newspapers at the national (*The People's Daily* and *The Southern Weekly*), provincial (the *Henan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily*) and city levels (the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*) published between 1 November and 31 December each year between 2000 to 2008, were selected for comprehensive analyses. Among these six newspapers, *The People's Daily* and *The Southern Weekly* are national newspapers, the *Henan Daily* and the *Dahe Daily* are published in Henan province, and the *Yunnan Daily* and *The Spring City Evening* are published in Yunnan province.

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The following criteria determined the selection of the six newspapers:

- 1) *The People's Daily*, which is the Party organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), is China's most authoritative and influential newspaper and represents the Chinese government's stance on HIV/AIDS.
- 2) *The Southern Weekly* is one of the most popular and independent newspapers in China. It was one of the first newspapers to report on HIV/AIDS issues and has continually shown its concern for the problem since the late 1990s.
- 3) The four local newspapers (the *Henan Daily*, the *Dahe Daily*, the *Yunnan Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*) were selected because they are published in two of the most HIV-infected provinces in China and are representative of the HIV/AIDS epidemics in terms of degree of severity and modes of transmission (i.e., commercial blood donation and intravenous drug use). The *Henan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily*, two provincial Party organs, represent respectively the stance of the Yunnan and Henan local governments on the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening* are metropolitan newspapers. They are the most influential and popular newspapers among local people in their respective provinces.

In the interests of ascertaining the factors or constraints that affect the coverage of HIV/AIDS in the press, semi-structured in-depth interviews with thirty journalists and editors from the six selected newspapers and other national media (e.g., *Xinhua News Agency*) were undertaken. Criteria for the recruitment of interviewees were based upon the recommendations of the Centre for International Communication Studies, School of Journalism and Communication, Tsinghua University, which has been organising annual training workshops for journalists reporting on HIV/AIDS issues nationwide, and also upon a scan of the news coverage of HIV/AIDS in the six newspapers.

Table 1.1 Research Questions and Methods <sup>2</sup>

Core Questions \ Methods	A	B
(1) How do Chinese journalists at the national, provincial and city levels consider the HIV/AIDS issue?		☆
(2) How is HIV/AIDS framed in Chinese newspapers? What is the dominant discourse surrounding HIV/AIDS in Chinese national, provincial and metropolitan newspapers? And, how is this discourse related to the ways in which the issue is framed by different journalists at different levels of the Chinese administrative system?	☆	☆
(3) What factors influence the ways in which different levels of journalists frame the HIV/AIDS issue?		☆
(4) How does journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS affect public policy? Are there positive and negative consequences for the development of public policies?	☆	☆
(5) How can HIV/AIDS be reframed to evoke a different way of thinking, one that embraces a broader range of alternative policies? What forms should new ways of framing HIV/AIDS take?		☆

## 1.2.5 Outline of Chapters

This thesis comprises seven chapters, including the current Introduction chapter.

**Chapter 2** reviews the literature relating to the construction of the press with particular focus upon the relevant theories concerning the influences on mass media content and the relationship between media and society. It commences with the concept of “social construction of reality”, and explores how media reality is socially constructed and the various factors that influence the production of media content. This is followed by the conceptualisation of normative theories and models that deal with the relationships between media function and types of societies, drawing upon Siebert, Peterson and Schramm’s four dominant media ideologies, Altschull’s alternative press models, Hallin and Mancini’s ideal models of media and politics and other alternative models. Finally, I explore the construction of the press in China’s political and social contexts and highlight mass media’s practices in the Maoist era. In addition, changes in the political construction of mass media in the Post-Maoist era are addressed.

<sup>2</sup> A refers to “Text Analysis” (6 Newspapers); B refers to “In-depth Interviews” (30 Interviewees)

**Chapter 3** reviews theories surrounding media influence. I start by summarising some basic effects paradigms that have evolved since the very beginning of mass media, then proceed to review the theory of agenda-setting, which in the main concerns mass media, public opinion and policy making functioning in ways that ensure society's comprehension. This chapter also explores the history of HIV/AIDS as a public issue in China through an agenda-setting lens. Finally, it conceptualises framing theories with focus on news framing of HIV/AIDS.

**Chapter 4** discusses the methodologies employed in this project and offers a detailed description of the selected methods, i.e., text analyses and semi-structured in-depth interviews. It also details the operation of the project including the selection of research sites, research sample and data sources, procedures, data collection and data analyses. Finally, the issue of the credibility of this project is discussed.

**Chapter 5** presents the research results obtained from the analyses of the six selected Chinese newspapers (*The People's Daily*, *The Southern Weekly*, the *Henan Daily*, the *Yunnan Daily*, the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*). My research findings from my analyses of 981 news stories related to HIV/AIDS coverage, published in the six newspapers from 1 November to 31 December each year between 2000 and 2008, reveal the following:

(1) The dominant frames employed by the six newspapers were prevention/education, the miscellany of frames dubbed 'other', and the medical/scientific, political and socioeconomic/cultural frames. Policy/legal, global cooperation/assistance and human rights/ethics frames were of significant order;

(2) The Party organs (*The People's Daily*, the *Henan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily*) and the metropolitan newspapers (the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*) that are affiliated to the Party organs tended to adopt the politics-oriented, prevention/education and event-oriented frames, while the more independent and journalistic professionalism-pursuing newspaper (*The Southern Weekly*) tended to use the socioeconomic/cultural frame, and was more inclined to associate the HIV/AIDS issue with social justice and equality;

(3) Perceived "deviant behavior" is blamed for causing the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and the practices of "deviant groups" are held responsible for the spread of AIDS;

(4) AIDS is presented as a 'special group's problem and a disease of the 'other'.

The findings support the thesis' conclusion that the dominant public discourse surrounding HIV/AIDS in China remains morality-centred; and, there is still evidence of stigma, prejudice and discrimination being directed towards people living with HIV and AIDS.



**Chapter 6** presents the research results from my analyses of transcripts of thirty interviews conducted with 30 journalists and editors involved in the reportage of HIV/AIDS from the six selected newspapers and other national media (e.g. *Xinhua News Agency*). My research findings reveal that the private framing by journalists from the three Party organs (*The People's Daily*, the *Hunan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily*), the two metropolitan newspapers (the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*), and the journalistic professionalism-pursuing newspaper (*The Southern Weekly*) was basically in accordance with the journalistic framing manifested in the six newspapers, details of which are presented in Chapter 5. My research findings also indicate that values and norms of media organisations, values of journalists, routinisation, marketisation, and the media environment were main factors inside and outside of the media organisations that influenced the journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS. Although this framing, to certain degree, has impulsed government policy making, the journalists agreed that some improvement and alternatives need to be considered in their future coverage of HIV/AIDS issue.

**Chapter 7**, the final chapter of this thesis, presents the discussion and conclusions; as well, it offers valuable recommendations for future reframing of HIV/AIDS by Chinese media. The chapter commences by revisiting the research questions and propositions of the thesis with an aim to demonstrate how the research questions and propositions have been addressed and the implications suggested. This is followed by a discussion of the significance and limitations of this project and suggestions vis-a-vis possibilities for further study. Alternative strategies that will allow China's media to make the fullest possible contribution to the crusade against HIV/AIDS in China are addressed.

## 1.3 Summary

China, which has the second largest HIV/AIDS population in Asia, has become a focus for global prevention of the epidemic. Mass media have played and continue to play an important role in the social construction of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in China. This research endeavours to provide a reference for Chinese government and Chinese media reframing of communication strategies by examining the ways in which HIV/AIDS is represented in

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Chinese newspapers, their implications, and the constraints that affect the framing of HIV/AIDS. This Introductory chapter provides the background of the study, and justifies its importance from both social and academic perspectives. It summarises the theoretical framework and outlines the research questions and propositions, research methods and the structure of the thesis. In chapter 2, the relevant literature associated with construction of the press, which deals with influences on mass media content and the relationships that obtain between media and society, will be reviewed.

## Chapter 2

# Construction of the Press

### 2.1 Introduction

The media are both a product and also a reflection of the history of their own society and have played a part in it. Despite the similarities of mass media institutions across societies, the media are by origin, practice and convention very much *national* institutions and respond to domestic political and social pressures and to the expectations of their audiences. They reflect, express and sometimes actively serve the 'nations interest', as determined by other, more powerful actors and institutions.

Denis McQuail (1994, p. 121)

McQuail's description of the relationship between media and society indicates that journalism does not transpire in a vacuum. As social constructions, media are embedded within a given national framework within which their performances are confined. Hence, "[m]ass media content - both news and entertainment - is shaped, pounded, constrained, [and] encouraged by a multitude of forces" (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. ix) in their own society, forces that undoubtedly influence media's construction of reality. This chapter, which examines the theories and perspectives associated with media performance and the relationship between media and society, comprises four primary sections. In the first section (section 2.2), the theory of media content will be addressed. Starting with the theory of the social construction of reality, it will focus upon exploring the various factors (i.e., media professionals or individual media workers, media routines, media organisations, political, economic and cultural environments in which media operate, and the influence of the societal-level

ideological perspective) that have shaped media content. In the second section (section 2.3), theories associated with the relationship between the press and society (e.g., four theories of the press and other alternative and newly updated theories and models) will be explored. The third and fourth sections (sections 2.4 and 2.5) will concentrate on the construction of the press in China. Section 2.4 conceptualises the Chinese Communist Party's ideology, its journalism doctrines and its influence on mass media practices during the Maoist Era: Section 2.5 focuses on the changes in the political construction of mass media in the Post-Maoist Era due to the transformation of China. Reviews of the relevant theories will provide the theoretical foundation for the study and answers to the research questions posed in later chapters.

## **2.2 Social Construction of Reality**

### **2.2.1 Brief Review of the Theory of the Social Construction of Reality**

When sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1967) coined the phrase “social construction of reality” and introduced it into general use, they were primarily concerned about what they called “the contents of the reality encountered in the natural attitude” (Tuchman, 1978, p. 195). In other words, the ways in which people experience their lived reality: “[The] everyday world as the paramount reality” (Tuchman, 1978, p. 195). They argue that what the public regards as “reality is socially constructed” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 13). The social construction of reality to which they refer is, in essence, the social construction of knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). In their treatise titled *The Social Construction of Reality*, they define “‘reality’ as a quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition (we cannot ‘wish them away’), and... ‘knowledge’ as the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 13). As well, they hold that “‘reality’ and ‘knowledge’ pertain to specific social contexts” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 15). That is,

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our realities are formed by our “social relativity” or in other words, societal cultures (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 15). “What we take to be experience of the world does not in itself dictate the terms by which the world is understood” (Kenneth J. Gergen, 2003, p. 15). Reality does not present itself objectively to us: we acquire knowledge through experience and communicative interaction with others. Reality is organised and intersubjective (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Kenneth J. Gergen, 1985). It is the outcome of an active, cooperative endeavour of persons in relationship, rather than compelled by the forces of nature (Kenneth J. Gergen, 1985, p. 267). Berger and Luckmann (1967), when emphasising the objectification of social meanings by institutions, argue that “social meanings, constituted in social interactions, are transformed into institutional and organizational rules and procedures that may be invoked as resources to justify actions” (cited in Tuchman, 1978, p. 195). Thus, meaning is not fixed and may be altered in line with the emerging situations in which the meaning applies (Tuchman, 1978), because communication is created, and understanding is negotiated (Kenneth J. Gergen, 1985). Language is an important element in the construction of meaning because it not only provides the tools (symbols) to negotiate meaning (Blumer, 1969), but also has “its primary reference to everyday life; it refers above all, to the reality” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 53). People act, based upon the symbolic meanings they encounter in a given situation (Blumer, 1969). Language, as part of these encounters, “constitutes both the most important content and the most important instrument of socialization” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 153).

The fundamental principle of social construction principles is that the reality is, either wholly or in part, a product of the actions of human beings (Barnett, 1995): it is constructed through our communicative interactions. This suggests that a more life-affirming reality may be created by minding our communicative behaviour and choosing our communicative acts (Galanes, 2009, p. 135).

## **2.2.2 Constructing Media Reality**

Media reality has long been regarded as “a world of smoke and mirrors, of sleight of mind” by media scholars (Chitty, 2000, p. 13). In the words of Chitty: “Patterns of smoke are

reflected instantaneously as conflagrations in a million media mirrors” (Op. Cit. p. 13). As a “sleight of mind”, media content is the product of working people – journalists (Schudson, 2003), “the product of cultural resources and active negotiations” (Tuchman, 1978, p. 5) in which journalists interact with various agents and “sources” - or what Shoemaker and Reese call a “multitude of forces” - during the process of production (Schudson, 2003; Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). This implies that the process of selecting involves not objective facts but subjective judgments of personal value and bias (Schudson, 2003). Because each source provides its own piece of social reality, no one single source can reveal the whole picture (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Thus, media content is a selective representation of the world rather than a mirror of reality (Schudson, 2003). It is a “selective reality”; so, what media transmit are beyond information (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 60).

Take news as an example, News is considered as a window on the world: its purpose is to tell people what they want to know, need to know and should know (Tuchman, 1978). In order to provide the information that people want, need, and should know, news media set the priority of the information and lead audiences to see the world through the eyes of the media (Fishman, 1980), in a way that shapes audience’s opinions regarding topics of which they may hitherto have had no knowledge (Tuchman, 1978). Hence, there is an important difference between “reality” and “social reality”, that is, there is a difference between what Lippmann called “the world outside” of actual events and our mediated knowledge of those events (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). As a result, our perceptions and understanding of the world are subject to the accuracy and completeness of sources that journalists use and the significant symbolic environment that mass media created. (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

### **2.2.3 Media Content and Reality**

Media content is defined as “the complete quantitative and qualitative range of verbal and visual information described by the mass media”, in other words, any information that appears in media outlets, whether in the form of news, entertainment or advertisement

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(Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 4). Those attributes of media content that can be measured or counted belong to the quantitative range of information; for example, the number of column inches that a story uses in a newspaper, or the number of times a particular issue appears in a newspaper or on radio or television within a given time period. Such measures imply the importance and priorities of a story or an issue, while those attributes of media content that indicate what the coverage was like, belong to the qualitative range of information. For example, messages that are available to the audience, the same story presented in different ways from different viewpoints, or an indicator of underlying forces from available messages. (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Gan (1979) and Gitlin (1980) categorise the varieties of factors or forces – both inside and outside media outlets - that affect media content as: media professionals (or individual media workers), media routines, media organisations, extra-media factors (e.g., economic and cultural environment), and societal-level ideological perspectives (cited in Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, pp. 6-7).

The above factors or forces, that shape media content as a hierarchy of influences (Reese, 2001), affect the construction of reality in media. This section conceptualises these factors or forces from micro to macro level; i.e., professionals (or individual media workers), routines, organisational, extra-media, and ideological. A combination of these forces affects and shapes media content simultaneously at different levels of strength (Reese, 2001).

### 2.2.3.1 Journalists as Professionals

The continued industrialisation of journalism has seen the structure of world journalism undergo change since the early decades of the twentieth century (Hampton, 2005). For some time, conceptions of journalists as “professionals” have fuelled controversy among communication scholars (Birkhead, 1986; Hampton, 2005; Hodges, 1986; May, 1986; Merrill, 1986). Irrespective of whether these scholars accepted it or not, Dennis and Merrill (1984, cited in Merrill, 1986) contend that journalism is already a profession “not because its practitioners say that they are professionals, but because it more than meets most of the criteria that, taken together, constitute a profession” (p. 60). It has the most important of

attributes that make a profession, such as the combinations of skills, autonomy, training and education, testing of competence, organisations, codes of conduct, licensing and service orientation (Moore, 1970, cited in Zelizer, 1993, p. 220). In the same way that doctors and lawyers work professionally, journalists too work professionally, manifesting certain predefined attributes of a “professional” community (Zelizer, 1993). But, due to their exposure to the same communities, education and popular culture, even the same media that socialise other community members into the dominant belief system, journalists seldom challenge mainstream viewpoints or information that overwhelms their audiences. Journalists take the establishment biases that predefine what is acceptable news and commentary for granted and submit them to no critical examination (Parenti, 1993). They seek reference in the images that have already been created and internalised when they report (Parenti, 1993), indicating that journalists’ work is determined by a shared frame of reference (Zelizer, 1993), and is subject to different kinds of limitations, communal boundaries and/or ethical frameworks (Eyal & Motti, 2005; Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Zelizer, 1993). In other words, it is the ways in which journalists’ professional roles, ethical orientations or professional education shape their jobs that determines what they think worthwhile reporting and how that should be represented (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

### 2.2.3.2 Journalistic Routines

“Men on the job do not perform tasks *de novo*. Patterns of action tend to reiterate past patterns. Repeated time after time, these actions become standard operating procedures. Like other organization men, reporters engaged in news-gathering follow established routines” (Sigal, 1973, p. 101). Shoemaker and Reese (1996) define these established routines as the “patterned, routinised, repeated practices and forms that media workers use to do their jobs” (p. 105). These established routines in media organisations have an important influence on both the structure of newsgathering and the shape of news content (Sigal, 1973).

Some scholars have examined several of these routines that journalists usually rely on in their work, for example, the typifications of news coverage, the strategies of sources of information, and “pack journalism”. Tuchman (1973) describes the classifications of events-as-news as typifications, which enable news work to be routinised so as to meet the requirements of the



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organisational structure within which news stories are constructed. Fishman (1980), who studied journalists' 'beats', claims that reporters must accommodate themselves to bureaucratically organised settings that make sources of activities and information available to reporters. Officials, in particular, become priority sources because they fulfill the prerequisites of authority, credibility, and availability (Van Ginneken, 1998). Less advantaged sources must adjust to media routines if they are to have any chance of getting into the news (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Shoemaker and Reese (1996) claim that journalists rely heavily upon other media as sources while writing stories, and describe the dependence as "routine reliance on other media" (p. 122). In the words of Parenti (1993), journalists often take their cues from other media. This phenomenon has been called "pack journalism" (p. 42), a process in which journalists cover the "same beats" (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Journalists learn these routines during apprenticeship, or, in other words, through socialisation within their particular communicator's surroundings (Darnton, 1975; Sigal, 1973). Over time, these routines are then reinforced in journalists' daily work, and accepted as "the way things are done" (Sigal, 1973, p. 101). Routinising news work not only makes outcomes more predictable, and helps journalists meet their organisational expectations (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996), but also makes news appear to journalists and the audience more automatically, professionally and credibly, "based on the decisions of experts who know what is important" (Eliasoph, 1988, p. 315). The consequence of routinising news work is simplistic and formulaic coverage of content (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

### 2.2.3.3 Organisation in Newsmaking

According to Sigal (1973): "The newsmaking enterprise is corporate" (p. 3). The final product is determined not only by journalistic routines in the newsroom, but also by the structure of the whole organisation. Journalists do not work only in line with journalistic routines. The most immediate environment within which a journalist functions (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) is within a context of shared values and intra-organisational structures. Both shared values and intra-organisational structures help to influence and shape the product (Sigal, 1973) by affecting the occupational culture and by determining the level of

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independence a media organisation has from the corporate entities that own it (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

A media organisation can be generally conceptualised as a “social, formal, usually economic entity” having definite boundaries, goals, bureaucratic structures, and a need to compete with other organisations for resources (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 144). As with other organisations, economic profit is the primary goal pursued by most media organisations as they strive to maximise their profit or achieve an optimal return on their investment. Other goals (e.g., producing a quality product, serving the public, and achieving professional recognition) are built into this overall objective (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). In order to achieve their organisational goals, media organisations use various constraints to control the behaviour of their members (Ryan, 1987). Constraints which may be imposed by media organisations include: (1) economic constraints; (2) formal hierarchy of authority, or a hierarchical structure through which its members can work together optimally; and, (3) Patterns of intra-organisational conflict along the lines of the division of labour; in other words, patterns of organisational control (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Sigal, 1973).

Economic constraints have an indirect influence on editorial decision-making (Sigal, 1973). They set up the parameters within which journalists must compete for scarce resources such as time and space (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Consequently, the flow of many unconventional ideals may be limited by gatekeepers due to the costs involved and the need to economise (Hendriks, 1995). Moreover, in the making of profit, media organisations must compete with each other for resources in two markets: the sale of news and the sale of advertising space (Sigal, 1973). Media organisations must try to provide messages that attract their target populations and are in accordance with their advertisements, so as to attract advertisers (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

In their efforts to maintain control, media organisations establish a formal hierarchy of authority and assign roles among their members to ensure the process of implementing and enforcing policies (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Sigal, 1973). Such control is exercised either through overt (i.e., printed rules) or covert policies (i.e., unwritten or hidden policies). Covert policies are usually evident in the “consistent orientation” of news and editorials toward issues and events revolving primarily around partisan, class, and racial

divisions (Breed, 1955, p. 327, cited in Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 171). And, although covert policies are equally as powerful as overt policies, they are less direct (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Most organisational unwritten policies are traditional and relatively fixed. Journalists learn these policies through their own experience and by observing the preference of the organisation when choosing news stories (Tunstall, 1971, cited in Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 170). A reporter can soon learn to self-censor subsequent news stories after an editor ‘kills off’ one of his stories, or strikes out parts from it (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Some veteran journalists “have remarkably finely tuned antennae for finding out the limits” to which they can go (Parenti, 1993, p. 42). Over time, journalists may consider self-censorship a matter of being “realistic” or “pragmatic”: “playing by the rules” (Parenti, 1993, p. 41) and conforming to expectations “becomes a matter of habit” (Parenti, 1993, p. 40). In time, journalists become used to those constraints, and no longer cross perceived ‘forbidden’ lines (Herbert J. Gans, 1979, p. 40). However, such constraints may limit journalists’ judgment, inhibit their reporting, and risk suppressing their creativity (Ryan, 1987).

#### 2.2.3.4 Newsmaking under Extra-media Constraints

Media content is influenced by a wide range of factors, which primarily originated from outside media organizations. These influences may come from government, advertisers, news sources, interest groups, even other media outlets and the market (Reese, 2001; Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Governments worldwide, without exception, exert control over mass media to various degrees using different methods. In countries where mass media are largely privately owned, media tend to be controlled by laws, regulations, licenses and taxes; whereas in countries where media are primarily government-owned, media are usually controlled through media financing (Janus, 1984; Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Governments tend to establish institutes or agencies that regulate both the ownership and content of media; that is, who can own a medium and what kinds of content will be permitted (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). In addition to deploying their formal laws and regulations, governments will on occasion use their power to pressure journalists, thereby influencing content (Herbert J.

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Gans, 2004). Pressure constitutes censorship: government censorship may come from national and local government levels, resulting in a “chilling effect” being created due to the pressure applied in the process (Klotzer, 2003). When under pressure, journalists may voluntarily change the news content, even omit a story, resorting to self-censorship due to the pressure generated from above (Herbert J. Gans, 2004).

Sources other than government officials and advertisers can also have an enormous influence on mass media content because they can affect the dissemination of information according to their own interests. “Journalists’ choice of which source to interview can color the stories they write” (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 219). And, although many actors can become sources of information about issues or events (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996), journalists may not consider them equally. Gans (2004) notes that, more often than not, the sources that journalists opt for tend to conform to the hierarchies of nation and society. Actors who have economic or political power are more likely to affect news reports than those who lack power. Powerful sources have the ability to determine news by turning “occurrences” into “events” (Molotch & Lester, 1974). But, powerful sources have another significant influence. For example, national leaders’ voices can be amplified when elite newspapers cover their speeches simultaneously (Danielian & Reese, 1989, cited in Lasorsa & Reese). Some research findings (Brown, BybeeT, Wearden, & Straughan, 1987; Sigal, 1973) show that most of the sources that journalists cite in their reports are government officials and other elites.

Interest groups are included in the sources upon which journalists rely. In order to communicate their stances on issues to the public, interest groups may make organised efforts to influence media content either by providing media organisation press guidelines or by designing and holding events and campaigns that call the media’s attention to issues that suit the groups’ interest (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

In addition, each news organisation, to a certain extent, functions as a source for others. Media tend to report the same story simultaneously: they look to each other for cues (Reese & Danielian, 1989). Some act as agenda setters: when they cover a story, others may follow in quick succession (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Reese and Danielian’s study of media coverage of cocaine in the United States shows that *The New York Times* set the agenda for other media covering the cocaine issue. *The New York Times* first reported this issue in early 1986; then, other newspapers picked up the story. Coverage by television networks followed shortly after (Reese & Danielian, 1989, cited in Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p.189).

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In addition, media content may be affected by the nature of the marketplace (e.g., the size of the market, its opportunities for profit, and the status quo of the economy), because most media run within a marketplace (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). For example, media that operate mainly in a commercial marketplace must compete with others for audience and advertiser attention (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). They have to alter their content to meet the needs of both of these consumers. However, many studies indicate that media content competition does not guarantee increased diversity within a market (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). The character or environment of the community within which a medium operates may also affect content. Put another way, a community's economic, cultural and social environment will influence both the character of the media established in that community and their success (Phillips, Boylan, & Yu, 1982).

In sum, media organisation is not the only power that shapes media content. The latter's content is also affected by the power of outside media organisations. A variety of social institutions, including the government, advertisers, influential news sources, interest groups - even other media organisations - combine to influence media content.

### 2.2.3.5 Ideology and Newsmaking

The influence of ideology on media content is a macro level influence. It concerns the connection of media symbolic content with larger social interests and the construction of meaning in the service of power. It is concerned with how the constraints that influence media content generate a coherent ideological result. For this reason, it is crucial to take into account media organisations' positions, policies, their recruitment of journalists and the attitudes and routines they follow. This is essential because in the larger social structure, they all work to support and "narrow the range of social discourse", serving to make media organisations agents of social control (Reese, 2001, p. 183). The term 'ideological' (see above) refers to "a symbolic mechanism that serves as a cohesive and integrating force in society" (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 221). Put another way, it is a system of values and beliefs that "governs the way we perceive our world and ourselves; it controls what we see as 'natural' or 'obvious'," it acts as "frames of reference through which each of us sees the world and to which all of us adjust our actions" (Becker, 1984, p. 69), and, "[it] serves in part to maintain prevailing relations of power" (Hackett & Uzelman, 2003, p. 333). Thus, the content or reality

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that media create is considered “the political work by which events are constituted by those who happen to currently hold power” (Molotch & Lester, 1974, p. 111). It reflects “not a world out there but the practices of those who have the power to determine the experiences of others” (Molotch & Lester, 1974, p. 111). “Ideology not only shapes news: it is extended, renewed and reproduced through media content” (Hackett & Uzelman, 2003, p. 333).

There are two main functions performed by media as agents of social control. The first is to create hegemony through producing a cohesive ideology, a set of values and norms that serves to reproduce and legitimate the social structure in the normal workings of media routines (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 237). The second is to maintain boundaries in a culture (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996); that is, to define what societal interests, views and values are acceptable to mainstream society, and which are deviant and beyond the bounds of acceptability (D. Hallin, 1986; Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Consequently, potentially threatening people, ideas, and events are more likely to be defined by media *within the frame of reference of the dominant ideology*: anything beyond the dominant ideology is altered to conform to the extant dominant ideology (Becker, 1984) while “the normal is reaffirmed by being presented routinely” (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 226).

In a word, media content is influenced by a variety of factors both inside and outside media organisations, factors or forces that shape media content as a hierarchy of influences (Reese, 2001), by extension affecting the construction of reality in media. Since media have the ability to “‘define situations’ and label groups and individuals as deviant” (Hall, 1989, p. 309), it is crucial to “investigate the ways in which meaning is constructed and conveyed by symbolic forms of various kinds ... to investigate the social contexts within which symbolic forms are employed and employed” (Thompson, 1990, p. 7, cited in Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 228). In the next section, the political construction of the press will be discussed.

## **2.3 Political Construction of the Press**

Mass media have diverse functions that are determined by the prevailing types of the political, economic, social and cultural systems, and the level of development of the society (Severin &

Tankard Jr., 1988). Media content, which determines media effects, is affected directly by political, socio-economic, and cultural forces. It is determined by media ownership and control (Severin & Tankard Jr., 1988). Somewhat inevitably, reporters and editors produce in the given system by which they have been shaped (Altschull, 1984). Several theories and observations reveal the relationship between media function and the types of the societies; that is, how mass media ought to or are expected to operate in different types of society. This section conceptualises Siebert, Peterson and Schramm's (1956) four dominant media ideologies, J. Herbert Altschull's (1984) alternative press models, Hallin and Mancini's (2004) models of media and politics, and other alternative models created by scholarship in the developing world.

### **2.3.1 Siebert, Peterson and Schramm's Four Dominant Media Ideologies**

Siebert, Peterson and Schramm's (1956) classification of press systems presented in their early work *Four Theories of the Press*, is one of the dominant paradigms that use the political dimension to analyse global media systems. According to this paradigm, global media systems can be distinguished by four categories: authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and Soviet-totalitarian. The difference between the media systems lies in the philosophical and political rationales upon which they are based (P. S. N. Lee, 1993).

According to this paradigm, authoritarian theory, which is based upon sixteenth and seventeenth century English history and philosophy, stipulates that absolute power should remain either in the hands of a monarch or in those of a few wise men in power. In this system, the individual's needs should submit to the needs of a higher order, e.g., the State or society. Media, under such a system, served "from the top down" and were controlled by the State: media could be privately owned with the approval of the State through licensing or legislation. But, all media should support and advance the policies of the government so that the government could achieve its aim. Criticism of the government was not allowed (Siebert, et al., 1956).

Libertarian theory, based on the principles of libertarian philosophy that deals with the relationship of man and nature and man and society, held that man is a rational being and

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should have the right to search for the truth. Media should thus be a device through which the public can express ideas and opinions, an instrument for checking on government rather than an instrument of government. The main function of media is to inform and to entertain. Under the libertarian system, media are independent of government and privately owned. The limitations of media lie only in laws that are designed to protect the rights of individuals such as the privacy law, the law of defamation, and the law against obscenity (Siebert, et al., 1956).

Social responsibility theory, a theory developed in the twentieth century in the United States, is a modified version of the Libertarian theory (Christians, et al., 2009), raises concern regarding the power and near monopoly of the media and insists that the press not only has the responsibility to invite debate in which all sides are fairly presented, but should also provide enough information for the public to make decisions regarding policies. Should the media fail to assume this responsibility, the government or some other agencies may intervene (Siebert, et al., 1956).

Soviet-totalitarian theory, which is based upon Marxist ideology, emphasises the value of “unity”; that is, “unity of the working class, unity of the Party, unity of choice amongst alternatives” (Siebert, et al., 1956, p. 107). Individuals need to become part of or are subsumed under collective goals. Under the Soviet totalitarian system, mass communication served as instruments of unity, as “collective agitator, propagandist, and organizer” (Siebert, et al., 1956, p. 124). The main function of the media was “to contribute to the advance of the working class and world Communism in the class struggle” (Siebert, et al., 1956, p. 122), and to the success and continuance of the Soviet system (Severin & Tankard Jr., 1988). And, while the Party took responsibility for the control of the media, the government controlled censorship. China, along with the former Yugoslavia, Portugal and Spain, was grouped into the Soviet bloc because the media in these countries were completely controlled (Siebert, et al., 1956). Soviet-totalitarian theory was considered an extension of authoritarian theory, the difference being that the former was State-owner/controlled rather than subject to private ownership (Siebert, et al., 1956).

After the *Four Theories of the Press* was published, scholarly criticism targeted the flaws in its overall theoretical framework and its political and cultural bias (Christians, et al., 2009; Nerone, 1995; Winfield, et al., 2000; Yin, 2008). Nerone (1995), who edited *Last Rights: Revisiting Four Theories of the Press*, points out that *Four Theories of the Press*, a product of the Cold War era, was founded on a pro-capitalist bias, which saw “the world ... deeply divided between the capitalist West, the socialist East, and the underdeveloped South”



(Christians, et al., 2009, p. 4). The passage of time has seen great changes in the social and media systems in many countries across the world; for example, the fall of Soviet Union and the former communist countries in the Eastern bloc, the transformation of China's political and media systems, and the increasing independence of the global South (Christians, et al., 2009; Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). The authors of *Last Rights: Revisiting Four Theories of the Press* argued that Siebert, Peterson and Schramm's *Four Theories* focused only on the political control of the media by State power: it neglected other kinds of power and restraint on the media, such as monopoly media ownership and market forces (Yin, 2008). Moreover, some scholars (Christians, et al., 2009; Gunaratne, 2005; Winfield, et al., 2000; Yin, 2008) criticised the West-centrism of *Four Theories* and its oversimplified classification, arguing that *Four Theories* examined the press systems across the world from a Western perspective and "ignored the dynamic diversity inherent in complex dissipative social systems" (Gunaratne, 2005, p. 79), such as the cultures, philosophies, and traditions in which media dwelled (Winfield, et al., 2000). In essence, scholars called for thinking to move beyond the *Four Theories*. Hallin and Mancini (2004) stressed, "It is time to give it a decent burial and move on to the development of more sophisticated models based on real comparative analysis" (p. 10).

Several revisions of *Four Theories* have been proposed by some United States scholars (Altschull, 1984; Christians, et al., 2009; Hachten, 1981; Merrill, 1974; Picard, 1985), European scholars (D. C. Hallin & Mancini, 2004; McQuail, 1983, 1994, 2000, 2005), as well as scholars from the developing world (C. Huang, 2003 ; Yin, 2008; Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). In the next three sub-sections, several typologies will be contextualised.

### **2.3.2 Altschull's Three Alternative Press Theories and Models**

After criticising the irrelevance of *The Four Theories of the Press* to modern society in his book *Agents of Power* (1984), communications scholar, J. Herbert Altschull (1984, 1995) proposed three models for the press: the market model (or market national theory), the Marxist model (or communitarian nations theory), and the advancing model (or advance nations theory). The differences between these three models/theories may be found in the

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purpose of the journalism, articles of faith, and views on press freedom of the three models (Severin & Tankard Jr., 1988). Altschull argues (1984) that all media systems seek truth and try to be socially responsible. In the market model, the press should be above politics; that is, information should be presented impartially, without taking sides. In the Marxist and the advancing models, one of the purposes designated to the press was political; i.e., to educate in a political way. However, as Altschull stresses, no press is above politics (Altschull, 1984); although media under the three models seek to serve the people, they serve in different ways. In the market system, news media aim to support the system, and to serve as watchdogs by keeping an eye on the government. They are free of the control of government (Altschull, 1984). In the Marxism system, news media are meant to support socialist doctrine steadfastly: they serve as instruments of the government or Party and are used as collective organisers to mold public attitudes and alter behaviour (Altschull, 1984). Under the advancing model, news media serve as partners of the government and are considered a device for promoting beneficial social change and community peace (Altschull, 1984). Altschull also contends that no nation is publicly against the notion of free expression: nations simply observe different definitions (Altschull, 1984). The market system emphasises freedom of information and the independence of the press. The Marxism system emphasises the balance of individual responsibilities and collective rights, whereas advancing systems focus on the freedom of conscience for the journalist (Altschull, 1984).

Altschull's efforts to revise normative press theories beyond *Four Theories* have proven both valuable and rewarding. His most significant contribution lies in his identifying of beliefs about media systems as articles of faith that "are irrational, not arrived at by reason, often held with the passion shown by true believers" (Altschull, 1995, p. 427). He notes that the Marxist/communitarian model predominantly coincides with the collective belief system in which the press functions as an educator in service of the community. The market model, on the other hand, concords with the stipulation of the First Amendment, i.e., that an independent, objective press must protect people against power abuses. The advancing model adheres to an ideology based upon both the Marxist and market models, which emphasise harmony of both individualistic and collectivist needs (Ismail & Berkowitz, 2009). Notwithstanding, there are some flaws in Altschull's critical and dialectical approaches. For example, while he advances three models and "a good many exceptions" beyond the three movements in 1995, he fails to provide substantial case studies (Altschull, 1995, p. 419). In the case of China, for example, he neglects the changes attributable to the transition of both the political and media systems

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during 1990s, and simply sites China in a static, extant, normative press model (C. Huang, 2003 ). Moreover, Altschull's "Marxist/Communitarian" approach, like Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm's "Soviet-Totalitarian" model fails to provide a comprehensive understanding of the world's Marxist movement and the Marxist press in general, and journalism in particular countries like China, because his analysis mainly focuses upon the Marxist press, i.e., upon media practices in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. As a consequence, he pays little attention to media practices in other socialist States (C. Huang, 2003 ).

### **2.3.3 Hallin and Mancini's Four Models of Media and Politics**

Although Denis McQuail (1983, 1994, 2000, 2005) proposed the first European-based revision of the *Four Theories* in 1983, a major contribution to the replacement of the paradigm of the *Four Theories* must be attributed to Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini (Christians, et al., 2009). In 2004, after conducting a comprehensive comparative study of a number of European and North American countries' media systems, Hallin and Mancini (2004) identified three basic models or ideal types for the relationship between media systems and political systems: the Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist Model, the North/Central European or Democratic Corporatist Model and the North Atlantic or Liberal Model (D. C. Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

The Mediterranean/Polarized Pluralist Media Model is characterised by countries that democratised relatively late and have an elite-oriented press with relatively small circulation. This model dominates the Mediterranean countries of southern Europe (i.e., France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain). Media in these countries are integrated into party politics: the State exercises strong intervention in media and the countries' legal systems are relatively weak. Public broadcasting tends to follow national governments' and parliamentary systems. Journalism is less professional and there is limitation of autonomy (D. C. Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

The North/Central European or Democratic Corporatist Media Model is characterised by countries that have a long history of press freedom and freedom of newspaper industry, and a

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very high newspaper circulation. It is the dominant model in northern continental Europe and Scandinavia (e.g. Austria, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands and Switzerland) (D. C. Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Media in the above countries are considered an important part of the countries' social institutions. Strong commercial media coexist with political media, a relationship that relegates the State to playing a limited role. Although the market is governed by different political and cultural activities such as subsidies, there is competition among the print media in the market. And, there are common ethical standards for radio, television and newspapers, excepting self-regulating (Färdigh, 2010).

The North Atlantic/Liberal Media Model is employed by countries that have a long tradition of democracy and a relatively high newspaper circulation, albeit lower than countries using the Democratic Corporatist model. This model prevails in Britain and the USA, Canada and Ireland, wherein media are characterised by market mechanisms. Thus, journalistic autonomy is more likely to be limited by commercial pressures rather than by governments and political parties. Journalistic professionalism is relatively strong, and the State plays a limited role (D. C. Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

Between 2005 and 2009, Hallin and Mancini, together with several other researchers, conducted studies in the Post-Communist countries in Eastern European. Building upon the three ideal models, they proposed a fourth model: the Eastern European or Post-Communist Media Model (Dobek-Ostrowska, Glowacki, Jakubowicz, & Sukosd, 2010; Färdigh, 2010), a model dominant in the post-Communist countries in the Eastern bloc (e.g., Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia) (Färdigh, 2010). Similar to the countries using the Mediterranean/Polarized Pluralist Media Model, “the post-Communist countries are characterized by late democratization and incomplete, or for some countries, very little advanced modernization, combined with strong state control and [a] weak legal system” (Färdigh, 2010; Terzis, 2007). In these countries, politics greatly influence social systems, economics, the judicial system and the media system (Terzis, 2007). However, media in post-Communist countries have undergone major change since 1989. The transformation of their political systems saw these States lose their monopoly of the newspaper industry. Media were now driven by market forces (Terzis, 2007).

Generally regarded as “path-breaking work”, Hallin and Mancini's ideal models have replaced the *Four Theories of the Press* as the point of departure for comparative studies of

media and political systems (C. Sparks, 2010, p. 552). However, Hallin and Mancini's models are limited to established democracies, especially to Western Europe and North American: each model is associated with a particular geographical area. Newly-established non-western democracies such as India, Israel and Japan were excluded from their models (C. Sparks, 2010; Voltmer, 2008). Moreover, their fourth model, the Eastern European or Post-Communist Media Model, mainly focuses upon Post-Communists countries in Eastern Europe, such as Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. Even among these countries, there were significant variations in the relationship between politics and the media. It seems there is no fit-all approach to analyzing media systems across the world (Voltmer, 2008).

### **2.3.4 Other Alternative Models of Media and Politics**

The limitations of the ideal models proposed by Siebert, et al, Altschull, and Hallin and Mancini have inspired several scholars to propose their alternative models.

Swiss scholar Roger Blum (2005), for example, further developed Hallin and Mancini's model, proposing six more comprehensive media models: the Atlantic-Pacific "liberal model", the southern European "clientelism model", the northern European "public service model", the eastern European "shock model", the Arab-Asian "patriot model", and an Asian-Caribbean "command model" (Blum, 2005, cited in Jakubowicz, 2010). Blum integrated media and policy-centred elements into his models. Every dimension can follow either a liberal line, a regulated line, or a line in between (cited in Jakubowicz, 2010, p. 5). Although Blum included more countries in his models than Hallin and Mancini, he fails to demonstrate the ways in which he categorises particular countries and the steps that he took when developing the models (Dobek-Ostrowska, et al., 2010).

Scholars from the developing world criticised the Western models as Eurocentric, i.e., as entirely based upon European history, theory and practice and as emphasising the individualistic, democratic, egalitarian and liberal traditions of Western political theory (Mehra, 1989; Yin, 2008). Some claimed they were not applicable in societies that "value their consensual and communal traditions with their emphasis on duties and obligations to the

collective and social harmony” (Mehra, 1989, p. 3). Jiafei Yin (2008), for example, who proposed a two-dimensional model that reflects both “Western philosophical emphasis on the concept of freedom” and “a key Asian cultural emphasis on the concept of responsibility” (p. 47), contends that two reasons (i.e., Confucian moral influences and the socio-economic realities of Asia) account for the Asian emphasis on the concept of responsibility. Collectivist Confucian societies value the importance of the State and family whereas Individualist societies support the rights and freedom of the individual person; in the former, the survival and prosperity of the nation takes priority over civil liberties. Harmony overweighs competition (Dobek-Ostrowska, et al., 2010; Yin, 2008). Stressing the differences in the cultures and philosophies of the Western and Asian countries, Yin insists that Western press theories and systems have to be redefined. To this end, she provides four types of media systems: free and responsible, free and not responsible, responsible but not free, not free and not responsible (Yin, 2008). Yin introduces the dimension of press responsibility and cultural values that she considers important to both the West and the East into her media system typology. However, her models seem to fall into a professedly culture-specific typology of media systems evincing a special philosophy. Thus, they cannot be considered universally applicable typologies (Jakubowicz, 2010).

In conclusion, after a review of the different types of press systems provided by scholars from both the East and the West, it is clear that there is no one fits-all ideal typology of media systems that can be used to evaluate media around the world. As McQuail (1994) observes, “the media do not constitute any single ‘system’, with a single purpose or philosophy, but are composed of many separate, overlapping, often inconsistent elements, with appropriate differences of normative expectation and actual regulation” (p. 133). Even if a country adopts a certain type of media system, it can evince different meanings and implications when applied to different contexts because the specific cultural, political and historical development in a particular country will influence the pattern of the relationship between the media and politics (D. C. Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Moreover, media systems are not static: they are in a process of continual change (D. C. Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Therefore, it is important to consider the adequacy of a media and politics model and its feasibility when applying it to a particular context or country.

Take China, for example. Since the economic reform and the open-door policy, China’s socio-economic system has changed tremendously. It has undergone a socio-economic transformation that has led to serious social stratum structure and stratified differentiation (W. Sun, 2010). This socio-spatial stratification has both in a spatial and informational sense

profoundly changed social relationships, the allocation of social resources, and the way of social power control in China (Duan, 2006; W. Sun, 2010). It has manifested in Chinese media practice through its growing diversity of media structure, scalar contestation and conflict at the central, local and regional levels. This manifestation has occurred due to the restructuring of the hierarchical order, the uneven and unequal development of media and communication, and the inequality of media power among different social strata that has caused the marginalisation of disadvantaged groups by the Chinese media (C.-C. Lee, 1994; W. Sun, 2010). However, regardless of the socio-economic and political changes that have occurred in China over the last three decades, researchers in Western countries, when analysing Chinese media, still adopt the Soviet-style communist press systems and the Marxist/communitarian model (Chu, 1994; C. Huang, 2003 ; Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). In response, some Chinese scholars (C. Huang, 2003 ; W. Sun, 2010; Yuezhi Zhao, 1998) have called for the development of models that will adequately analyse the relationship between media and politics in the Chinese context. As Wanning Sun (2010) argues, “there is a genuine and urgent need to take stock and develop a conceptual framework, as well as a methodological focus, which would enable us to ‘spatialize problems and theories’ in Chinese media” (p. 538). The next two sections will contextualise the political construction of the Chinese press in both the Maoist and post-Mao eras.

## **2.4 Chinese Construction of the Press in the Maoist Era**

### **2.4.1 Party Journalism Ideological Doctrines and the Model of Mass Propaganda and Persuasion**

After seizing power in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) established its news media based on the Party’s journalism cadres.<sup>3</sup> Party journalism followed the concepts and structures to which it had adhered during the revolutionary war (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). And,

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<sup>3</sup> Virtually all press and broadcasting media in China are owned by the State and controlled by the Communist Party. Editors in editorial rooms and reporters who are responsible for reporting political and government issues are, almost without exception, party members and are referred to as ‘Party cadres’.

because the CCP was committed to the doctrines of Marxism-Leninism, it not only retained its monopoly on State power, but also its totalitarian ideology, i.e., "... the ideas and convictions that support the existence of the system" (Su, 1994, p. 75). The Party's journalism policy was shaped by notions of Marxist-Leninism and copied the Soviets model of journalism in every aspect in its formative years. Under this model, media were used as propaganda tools to spread the Communist ideology. The role of the Party press was one of Party collective propagandist, agitator, and organiser (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). Apart from adhering to the Marxist-Leninist ideology, Mao held a strong belief that 'ideology' worked as "an instrument for building a new society and carrying out political struggle"; and that "in order to seize power, a leader must mold public opinion" (Su, 1994, p. 77). Hence, the Chinese Communist Party has paid the utmost attention to molding and controlling this 'ideology' and has exercised strict control over the news media, setting its role and functions in line with the Party principle from the very beginning (Su, 1994; Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). The Party principle (党性原则), which is an essential principle of the Party's journalism, includes three basic components: (1) "that the news media must accept the Party's guiding ideology as its own; (2) that they must propagate the Party's programs, policies, and directives; and, (3) that they must accept the Party's leadership and [adhere] to the Party's organizational principles and press policies" (B. Tong & Cheng, 1993a, cited in Zhao, 1998, p. 19; 1993b).

As powerful ideological weapons, news media are considered to be the 'loyal servants of the State, the Party, but not of the people', tools of "imposing ideological hegemony on ... civil society" (C.-C. Lee, 1990, p. 5). As Zhao (1998) maintains, they are the mouthpiece of the party. In order to control and monitor news media, the Party set up a number of mechanisms of ideological control at "*five geographical government levels*: central, provincial, municipal, county and township", and in "*six systems or spheres (系统)*: military, political/legal, administrative, 'united front', mass organization, and propaganda" (Su, 1994, p. 79).<sup>4</sup> The CCP's Central Propaganda Department governs the different levels of propaganda departments of the CCP committee and thus controls all of China's media including its print and broadcast media (Su, 1994). As well, media content is tightly controlled and examined by the Party's Propaganda Department (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998).

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<sup>4</sup> For further description of the Chinese Communist Party's mechanisms of ideological controls, see Shaozhi Su, 'Chinese Communist Ideological and Media Control,' in *China's Media, Media's China* (1994), edited by Chin-Chuan Lee, pp. 75-88.



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## 2.4.2 Journalism as a Form of Political Communication

“From the Masses, To the masses”, a slogan which is known as the mass line, has been the theory of the Chinese Communist Party’s leadership since its proposal by Mao Zedong. This is the theory upon which China’s entire political structure depends (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). Mao provided the classic formulation of this fundamental theory as follows:

In all the practical work of our Party, all correct leadership is necessarily “from the masses, to the masses”. This means: take the ideas of the masses (scattered and unsystematic ideas) and concentrate them (through study turn them into concentrated and systematic ideas), then go to the masses and propagate and explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own, hold fast to them and translate them into action, and test the correctness of these ideas in such action. Then, once again concentrate ideas from the masses and once again go to the masses so that the ideas are persevered in and carried through. And so on, over and over again in an endless spiral, with the ideas becoming more correct, more vital and richer each time. Such is the Marxist theory of knowledge. (Mao, 1967, p. 120, cited in Howard, 1988, p. 20)

From Mao’s original description, the mass line can obviously be divided into three components: (1) gathering the scattered and unsystematic ideas of the masses; (2) melding these ideas into correct and systematic ideas; and, (3) taking them back to the masses and propagating them broadly and persistently until they become the masses’ own ideas. As an integral part of the CCP, journalism is a form of political communication whereby the Party fulfills the mass line (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). Mao gave the following clear directive to the Party press: “The role and power of newspapers consists in their ability to bring the Party program, the Party line, the Party’s general and specific policies, its tasks and methods of work before the people in the quickest and most extensive way” (Mao, 1961-77, cited in Zhao 1998, pp. 25-26). Mao insisted: “Your job is to educate the people, to let them know their own interests, their own tasks and the Party’s general and specific policies” (Mao, 1972, cited in Zhao, 1998, pp. 26).

The CCP press became the means for top-down communication, the “mouthpiece” of the Party, a tool used by the Party to educate the masses and mobilise the public to support the Party’s fulfillment of its policies towards the socialist progress (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). At the same time, the Party press acted as the Party’s eyes and ears, as tools for gathering and

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communicating sensitive information from the masses to the central leadership. Briefly, the Chinese press play a role as “party-policy announcers, ideological instructors, intelligence collectors, and bureaucratic supervisors”, rather than as ‘an objective information source’ (Press Reference, 2010).

The functions of the Party press determine the news selection. News that is relevant to the central task of the Party and the government is considered worth reporting and usually finds a place on the front page. It is unarguably reported from the perspective of the Party; as a consequence, news in typical Party journalism mainly focuses on government policies, local adaptation of policies, and the achievements of all levels of government and individual role models (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). Even non-Party press in their coverage often summarise aspects of the Party and the government’s work, or achievements of production units and government departments (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). Criticism of any aspect of Party policy was totally disallowed in the Party press during the Maoist Era. Any media that expressed difference from Mao’s decrees was considered a “class enemy” (Su, 1994), just as any form of public criticism was regarded as opposing the Party committee (Gan, 1994).

In sum, during the Maoist era, the dominant framework for the Chinese media was mass propaganda and a ‘persuasion’ model. As a channel of communication between the top Party leadership and lower-level-Party cadres and the ordinary people, the Chinese news media during this time were tightly controlled and used as instruments of political indoctrination and mass mobilisation (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). In other words, they were used as propaganda tools of the Chinese Communist Party and served as a site of Mao’s class struggle among power elites (C.-C. Lee, 1994; Su, 1994).

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## **2.5 Chinese Construction of the Press in the Post Mao Era**

### **2.5.1 Media Reform in China**

After 1978, China's political and economic climate began to change. This period saw the government alter its way of controlling the mass media. (He, 2008)

China's economic and political reforms were initiated by paramount leader Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s after the death of Mao Zedong. Deng's economic and political reforms transformed the national priorities from class struggle and ideological campaigns to economic reforms and social construction (Hong & Cuthbert, 1991; Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). The traditional propaganda and persuasion model could no longer meet the needs of the new economic and political priorities. Clearly, media reform was imperative. From the late 1970s on, the landscape of China's mass media changed dramatically.

#### **2.5.1.1 Media Reform in the late 1970s and 1980s**

Deng Xiaoping's reform program started in mid-1978. when the advent of economic and political reform saw the Chinese government implement various new policies that not only redefined China's overall political agenda, but also affected China's media policies and practice (Howkins, 1982). Among these policies, the most prominent included: the open-door policy, decentralisation policy and the pluralism policy (Hong & Cuthbert, 1991).

The open-door policy brought nation-wide reform that fostered change and transformation of media policies and practice. With economic development now the priority of the Party and government, the focus of the media shifted from serving the class struggle to economic

development and social modernisation, albeit media were still regarded as instruments of the Party (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). The Western notion of “news values”, e.g., “importance, proximity, and timeliness”, and the role of audience began to receive great attention from Chinese journalism scholars and journalists (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). The volume of information increased greatly in the news media. At the same time, the range of the journalists’ reporting was extended. Human interest stories, disaster stories, crime news and investigative reports, for example, began to appear in news media; in addition, news that criticised the daily work of the authorities and the wrongdoing of officials was tolerated. Meanwhile, journalism education expanded rapidly: numbers of younger, well-educated personnel joined the Chinese journalism community (Polumbaum, 1990; Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). The media reform of the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, merely focused upon operational and technical levels. There were no changes in the Party’s fundamental concept of political communication and the role of the media (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998).

Media reform reached a new phase post the mid-1980s, a time that saw an emerging discourse on the democratisation of Chinese media communication. Around this time, the reform of media’s role and structure caught the attention of journalism scholars and journalists (Polumbaum, 1990; Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). Discussion of ideas such as diversity of media content, informational openness and editorial autonomy were tolerated, even encouraged by the Party leadership by the end of 1986 (Polumbaum, 1990). For example, Teng Teng, who was then deputy head of the Propaganda Department, expressed his agreement with more informative news in his “Speaks on Press Reform” published in *The People’s Daily*. “Newspapers should not carry stories without news values” (Teng Teng, 20 August 1986, cited in Polumbaum, 1990, p. 42).<sup>5</sup> Another signal of support came from Premier Zhao Ziyang in his report<sup>6</sup> on the work of the government to the 13th Party Congress. The three highlighted principles for news work in this report were: (1) that the press should exercise oversight of the work and conduct of public officials, expressed in the term “supervision by public opinion”; (2) that the press should inform the public of important events; and, (3) that it should reflect public debate on important issues (Zhao Ziyang, 25 October 1987, cited in Polumbaum, 1990, p. 42).

<sup>5</sup> Teng Teng, Deputy Director of Chinese Communist Party Propaganda Department, Speaks on Press Reform, *The People’s Daily*, 20 August 1986, p. 3

<sup>6</sup> Zhao Zhiyang, “Advanced along the Road of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics”. Report to 13<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, 25 October 1987. Zhao did not use the term “journalism reform” in this report. The first time he used it was in a commemorative message published in *Chinese Journalist*, 1988, vol. 1, p. 1

Party control over the media continued; but, it was relatively relaxed (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). During the 1980s, a number of new newspapers and journals appeared including *World Economic Herald*<sup>7</sup> (《世界经济导报》), *Shengzheng Youth Daily* (《深圳青年报》), *New Observer* magazine (《新观察》杂志), *Literary Monthly* (《文汇》月刊), *Treasury of Books* (《书林》), and *Study and Inquiry* (《学习与探索》). They were either independent newspapers and magazines or non-Party organs: all of them were famous for publishing open-minded articles with new, original and critical points of view (He, 2008). The volume of coverage of political unrest, accidents, sensitive issues such as inflation, profiteering, and other unexpected and unfavourable effects of the reforms considerably increased in both Party organs and non-Party organs (Polumbaum, 1990). For a time, the Chinese press became exceptionally active and open (He, 2008).

However, in late 1988, there was a change of Party stance concerning the news media. Due to the growing economic hardship caused by inflation and other social factors, the fostering of “stability and unity” took priority. In order to boost people’s confidence, news media were required to report positive stories of the reform and the openness. Criticism by the news media was no long encouraged (Polumbaum, 1990, p. 43). The notion of supervision by public opinion was no longer supported by the Party leaders (Polumbaum, 1990). The CCP, after criticising the pro-democracy movement as the influence of “bourgeois liberalization” and a western strategy of “peaceful evolution,” tightened its ideological and communication policies in the two years following 1989 (J. M. Chan, 1993, 25.2). After its crackdown on the democratic movement in June 1989, the Party tightened its control over the media, reifying the Party principle and the traditional role of the media as the “mouthpiece” and “eyes and ears” of the Party. Press freedom and supervision by public opinion virtually disappeared from discourse surrounding media reform (Hood, 1994; Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). Instead, from the 1990s on, the rhetoric of “stability” became the prevailing theme restated in CPC communications (J. Zhang & Cameron, 2004, p. 312). Furthermore, the administrative supervision of the press was tightened. A set of formal detailed regulations regarding registration, operation and content were promulgated by the State Press and Publications

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<sup>7</sup> *The World Economic Herald* (《世界经济导报》), an independent newspaper, was first published in June 1980 by the Institute of World Economy, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences as a result of Deng Xiaoping's economic-reform policies which allowed enterprises to start newspapers to promote the exchange of business information. It closed in September 1989 as a result of its chief editor Qin Benli's rejection of deleting the positive appraisals of the former General Party Secretary, Hu Yaobang in the paper published on 24 April 1989 as requested by the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee.

Administration (SPPA)<sup>8</sup> (Polumbaum, 1994). Restrictions on editors and journalists increased, and the preview system was reinforced (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). In retrospect, the 1980s are accepted widely by journalists as a rare, golden time for Chinese media (He, 2008, p. 12).

### 2.5.1.2 Media Reform in the 1990s

The year 1992 was the most important turning point for China's political and economic development.<sup>9</sup> The Party officially adopted Deng Xiaoping's proposal for more economic openness and the notion of developing a "socialist market economic" mooted at the Fourteenth National Party Congress in October 1992 (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). Deng's policy, which set a new pragmatic mode for China's development, saw China shift its planned economy to a market economy. As a result, the speed of commercialisation was accelerated in every aspect around the country; and, the media was no exception (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). In order to accelerate the development of the media so as to satisfy the increasing material and cultural demands of the people, a series of policy guidelines for reforming cultural institutions was issued by the Ministry of Culture in 1992. The policy of media commercialisation was officially validated at the 1992 National Working Conference on Press Management (J. M. Chan, 1993). The State adopted several measures to impel media to the market; for example, it gradually reduced its subsidies to the media year by year.<sup>10</sup> First, the local or non-Party newspapers that mainly carried information about commodity consumption and daily life were deprived of their subsidies, followed by the Party newspapers. By 1994, only the three organs of Central Committee of the CCP, *The People's Daily* (《人民日报》), *The Economic*

<sup>8</sup> The State Press and Publication Administration (SPPA) is a ministry-level agency responsible for regulating and distribution news, print and Internet publications in China. Set up in January 1987, with corresponding agencies at the provincial and municipal levels, it was renamed the General Administration of Press and Publication of the People's Republic of China (CAPP) in 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Deng Xiaoping conducted his inspection tour of South China in early 1992. His talks during this tour became the guidelines for the development of a socialist market economy in China.

<sup>10</sup> In the planned economic era, the Chinese media were completely subsidized by State finance. In 1978, the Ministry of Finance approved the implementation of a business management system at the Party organ—*The People's Daily* - and some other news media in Beijing. The business management system was generalised in media across the country in 1979. After 1988, multiple-industry operations were accepted by the State for the media industry. At the same time, the investment of the State in media transformed from totally subsidising to gradually decreasing the subsidies every year to finally financial independent. Since the mid-1990s, China's media have been responsible for their own profits and losses. Concomitant with rapid commercialisation, some media conglomerations appeared in China. A number of media groups, for example, *the People's Daily News Group*, *the Xinhua Newspaper Group*, and *the Nanfang Daily Group* were established one after the other.

*Daily* (《经济日报》) and *The Seeking Truth* periodical (《求是》杂志) still received financial support from the government (J. M. Chan, 1993). Since the early 2000s, almost all media in China have lost their regular subsidies from the State and are now responsible for their own profits and losses (G. Yu, 2005). The State encouraged media outlets to explore other sources of income. Since then, advertising has become the most important source of media revenue and the economic base of media commercialisation (J. M. Chan, 1993; Lynch, 1999; Yuezhi Zhao, 1998).

The media's move from politics-centred to economic-centred, along with media marketisation, has resulted in the nature of the Chinese news media's operations undergoing tremendous change. These changes could variously be detected in the decentralisation and diversification of the media structure, the growth of the media outlets, and the pluralisation of the media content (J. M. Chan, 1993; G. Wu, 2000; Yuezhi Zhao, 1998).

Since Chinese economic reform remolded the distribution "of power from the national centre to [the] peripheries... [of] the state framework" (G. Wu, 2000, p. 53), and triggered "economic and political localism or regionalism" (G. Wu, 2000, p. 47), the media structure has become deconcentrated and diversified. Provincial and lower-level governments have had a greater

opportunity to express their own opinions and are able to protect their local interests in their local media. As a result, there has been an abrupt increase in the number of local newspapers (G. Wu, 2000). In 1979, China had sixty-nine newspapers, most of which were published in Beijing and in the provincial capitals. There were few newspapers at the sub-provincial levels (i.e., the counties and townships). The 1980s saw a substantial increase in the numbers of newspapers at the sub-provincial levels. Every city government, even county government established its own newspaper/s. Moreover, newspapers published by social organisations, for example, the *Beijing Youth Daily* (《北京青年报》), and the *Chinese Women's Daily* (《中国妇女报》) became the major competitors of the Party organs (G. Wu, 2000). This change also occurred in the electronic media. Some cities in the east coast area of China first set up their own local television stations in the 1980s, and were then followed by other inner cities. By the late of 1970s, all of the television stations belonged to the central, provincial and (some) metropolitan governments. By the early 1990s, two-thirds of the national television stations belonged to the lower-level governments (G. Wu, 2000).

In addition to the increase in the number of newly-established newspapers, the existing newspapers generally expanded their pages to meet the advertiser's demands. In the past, all of China's newspapers comprised four pages only, except for *The People's Daily*, which had eight. But, by 1992, over half of the newspapers had extended to eight pages (J. M. Chan, 1993). *The People's Daily*, for example, increased its page numbers to 20 by 2009 (Mi & Xu, 13 July 2009). Meanwhile, publishing special weekend supplements that carried info-entertainment information became common practice among the daily newspapers (J. M. Chan, 1993; Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). Significant change in the nature of the Chinese news media's operations was also manifested in the content that media outlets offered. Since the mid-1980s, almost all of the Chinese media outlets have modified the content of their news carriers in order to attract large audiences and sell more advertising (Lynch, 1999), putting more emphasis on business information and infotainment and less effort into political issues (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). Furthermore, impetus for increasing revenues has also driven the media to become increasingly market-oriented. As Lynch (1999) notes, those who have buying power, to a certain extent, indirectly shape the media content.

In order to respond to the burgeoning fierce market competition, the Party organs established media groups; for example, the *People's Daily News Group* (《人民日报报业集团》), the *Xinhua Daily Press Group* (《新华报业集团》),<sup>11</sup> and the *Nanfang Daily Press Group* (《南方日报报业集团》),<sup>12</sup> and published a series of newspapers and magazines under their joint umbrella (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). The establishment of these press conglomerations allowed the Party to centralise its "mouthpieces", thus maintaining its ideological control (J. Zhang & Cameron, 2004, p. 313). Because the Party organs remained the core press representatives within the groups and continued to disseminate Party propaganda, through commercialisation, other affiliates could make money to support the core Party organs (G. Wu, 2000; Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). In Yuezhi Zhao's words, they "[serve] as the perfect media for the party to reach the rising urban consumer strata, thus reconstituting them as the new power base, while simultaneously functioning as 'cash cows' that cross-subsidize and sustain the traditional party organs" (Yuezhi Zhao, 2008, p. 81). "Party organs are no longer simple mouthpieces; they have become business conglomerates" (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998, p. 66).

<sup>11</sup> Renamed the *Xinhua Daily Media Group* (《新华报业传媒集团》) in October 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Renamed the *Nanfang Daily Media Group* (《南方报业传媒集团》) in July 2005.



However, commercialization did not necessarily mean the relinquishing of the Party's control of the media conglomerates. On the contrary, the conglomerates were required to adhere to the "four no change"—the Party's bottom line. "Whatever the changes, the [media's] nature as [P]arty and [the] people's mouthpieces must not be changed; the [P]arty's control of media must not be changed; the [P]arty's control of cadre must not be changed; and correct opinion guidance must not be change" (Zhongguo Jizhe, 2001, cited in Yuezhi Zhao, 2008, p. 102). In other words, "Whatever the circumstances, the nature [of the media] as the mouthpiece of the party cannot be changed" (Xinhua News Agency, 2002, cited in Yuezhi Zhao, 2008, p.102).

### 2.5.1.3 Media Reform Since 2003

2003 to 2006 saw the introduction of yet another profound reform in China—"cultural system reform". After nearly three decades of economic reform, cultural development was finally put on the Party-state agenda (X. Zhang, 2011). The new generation of the Party and state launched a new reform program focusing on the restructuring and development of the Chinese culture sector in the interests of "[sustaining] the economic reforms and [forging] a new hegemony over a fractured Chinese society" in its Document No. 21 in July, 2003 (X. Zhang, 2011, pp. 51-52; Yuezhi Zhao, 2008, p. 120).

In accordance with this document, the CCP not only shifted the cultural sector, including the media, from the periphery of policy-making to the core, but also conceptualised the new policy framework for accelerating the restructuring and development of the culture sector (X. Zhang, 2011, p. 52). As a sphere of systematic state-led, neoliberal development, culture, including media, was redefined as a market-driven cultural industry (Yuezhi Zhao, 2008, p. 109), considered "a new site for capitalistic development" (Yuezhi Zhao, 2008, p. 108) and "a strategic site for the development of 'comprehensive national power' [综合国力]", "both economic [hard] power and cultural or 'soft' power [软实力] in a competitive global context" (X. Zhang, 2011, p. 52; Yuezhi Zhao, 2008, p. 109).

According to this new reform policy, the cultural sector, including media, is divided into "cause-oriented culture undertaking" (文化事业), or "public interest-oriented culture

undertaking” (文化公益事业); that is, a public service sector, and a “culture industry” (文化产业) or commercial sector (X. Zhang, 2011; Yuezhi Zhao, 2008). Different reform principles are applied to them. The reform goals of the “public interest cultural enterprises” are to “increase investment, transform operating mechanisms, increase dynamism, and improve services”. The reform goals of the “culture industry” are to “innovate the system, transform operating mechanisms, pursue market orientation, and increase dynamism” (C. Li, 2003, cited in Y. Zhao, 2008, p. 111). All of the mainstream media entities (e.g., the Party organs and media conglomerates) are included in the category of “public interest-oriented” cultural undertakings (Yuezhi Zhao, 2008) while other entities, for example advertising, printing, distribution and transmission, fall under the category of culture industry (X. Zhang, 2011).

A nationwide pilot programme aimed at reforming the media and cultural sector was officially launched by the Party-state in June 2003. Thirty-five media and cultural units, including press, broadcasting groups and performance troupes, were identified as pilots for market-oriented restructuring and development. To ensure the “socialist” nature of the project, the editorial sectors were separated from the business sectors. The former remained state-monopolised and controlled by the government: no investment either overseas or private was allowed. The latter, such as printing and publishing, retail, information transmission and distribution, were opened to non-state investment and ownership (X. Zhang, 2011; Yuezhi Zhao, 2008). On 12 January, 2006, “Several Opinions on Deepening Cultural System Reform” was issued by the CCP Central Committee and China’s State Council. The principles of reform applying to the different sectors were re-emphasised. The important news media were undoubtedly “to follow the principle of correct guidance of public opinion, maintain the role of the mouthpiece of the Party and people, adjust the structure, integrate resources, and improve management, while the non-news units are now in a position to seek outside capital and become more market-driven in operation” (X. Zhang, 2011, p. 55). The overall program for restructuring the media and culture sector was finally launched throughout the country in 2006 (X. Zhang, 2011; Yuezhi Zhao, 2008).

The main thrust of restructuring the cultural and media sector was obviously. The Party used the strategy of separating institutional functions from business enterprises functions to reinforce its control of the core media organizations (X. Zhang, 2011) and to secure what Yuezhi Zhao refers to as “the commanding heights of a reconstructed communication and

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culture sector” (Yuezhi Zhao, 2008, p. 121). At the same time it allowed the commercial sector to flourish, i.e., to fulfill the Party’s dual objectives of sustaining economic growth and maintaining its hegemony (Yuezhi Zhao, 2008, p. 121).

## **2.5.2 Media Commercialisation with Chinese Characteristics: Party Logic versus Market Logic**

There can be no doubt that Chinese media have undergone dramatic change since the 1990s reforms. Marketisation has reduced Chinese media’s financial dependence upon the State. However, financial independence does not necessarily mean that the Chinese media have achieved editorial autonomy and can do whatever they wish (G. Wu, 2000). To the contrary, Chinese media now bear the double burden of having to face the “ambiguities and contradictions” caused by the tension between continuing political control and economic reform (C.-C. Lee, 1994).

From the very beginning, China’s economic development “has been disjunctive in nature: achieving economic modernization without yielding political control” (J. M. Chan, 1993, 25.5). Media, as an integral part of politics, became unavoidably involved in this tension. Chinese scholar Zhou He (2000) uses the metaphor “tug-of-war” to depict this tension. During this war, the media are “pulled in different directions by the forces of politics and those of an emerging market economy” (Z. He, 2000, p. 112). Operating within a mix of Party logic and market logic, the media have to contend with two masters: the Party and the public (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998).

In effect, the news media “...[are] bestowed with an unambiguous political mission” (Z. He, 2000, p. 118): they continually serve as “mouthpieces” of the Party. Although the Party’s control over the media has been relatively relaxed since the introduction of economic reform, restrictions on media practice persist. And, there are still ideological boundaries that journalists are not allowed to overstep. Coverage of important or sensitive political and policy issues remains tightly controlled (Hong & Cuthbert, 1991). In their attempts to avoid penalties, the media generally seek to prevent their journalists from overstepping the ideological

boundaries (J. M. Chan, 1993, 25.17). The ability to “mind the degree” (把握度) of the reportage, “that is, being sensitive to what can be done, what can be reported, how it can be done, and how it might be reported” regarding politically sensitive issues, is very important for journalists (Zhongdang Pan, 2000). As one veteran editor in Pan’s (2000) study of the practices of Chinese newspapers’ journalists stated: “Politics come first, communication comes second; propaganda comes first, news comes second. Every young journalist must learn this” (cited in Zhongdang Pan, 2000, p. 82).

Wu (2000) claims that commercialisation makes media’s survival and prosperity fundamentally dependent upon the media market. Appealing to a large audience means a larger market share. Therefore, in order to make a profit, media have to accommodate themselves to the needs of the market (J. M. Chan, 1993). Since the media reform, news media, even the Party organs, have in general adjusted their reportage, content and formats. They have extended their range of reportage to provide more information that may attract larger audiences (e.g., in the forms of business news, social news, entertainment news, and sports news) (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998), eye-catching topics that even include some politically taboo and sensitive topics (G. Wu, 2000). Some of the bolder media outlets, e.g., *The Southern Weekly* (《南方周末》), the *Beijing Youth Daily* (《北京青年报》) and the *Xinmin Evening News* (《新民晚报》) pursue “hit the edgeball” journalism.<sup>13</sup> They keep testing the boundaries by exposing social problems and sensitive political issues such as HIV/AIDS and migrant problems (Lynch, 1999, p. 96). Audiences favour these types of news stories and, at the same time, make journalists fulfil their professional responsibility (Lynch, 1999).

Gradually, a new innovative way of reporting - investigative journalism, a form of watchdog journalism - emerged and grew in China’s media (Polumbaum, 1990; Yuezhi Zhou, 2000). The concept of professionalism was imported into Chinese journalism, albeit there were different understandings and interpretations of professionalism between journalists who act as “mouthpieces” of the Party and as representatives of Party journalism and those who work for relatively independent and market-driven press, i.e., those who represent professional journalism (H. Yu, 2009). Specifically, Party journalists consider those who pursue

<sup>13</sup> Lynch, 1999, p. 258. The term “edgeball” derives from table tennis. When a journalist “hits an edgeball” (打擦边球), he or she strikes the ball in a way that causes it just to scrape the edge of the table. Propaganda commissars cannot possibly get the ball, so the point goes to the journalist.

professionalism as being propagandist of the state and mouthpieces of the Party, while journalists who subscribe to professional journalism – who refer to themselves as “professionals” – consider professionalism as “being the voice of the people and the conscience of society” and ‘gathering, disseminating, and analysing information according to the principles of objectivity, efficiency, and intellectual autonomy’ (H. Yu, 2009, p. 135). However, even though universally recognised professional codes, such as impartiality, objectivity, balance and truth were used by journalists in their reporting, it does not necessarily mean that they are able to report freely as their counterparts do in the West. They have to take situated action and maintain equilibrium in their reportage. In doing so, Chinese journalists have become mediators between Party-state and society. As mediators, they on the one hand serve both the state and the nation; on the other, they satisfy both the “Party logic” and the “market logic” (H. Yu, 2009, p. 130).

In sum, China’s news media have been transformed from rigorous “mouthpieces” and propaganda tools into a multi-structured media industry with multi-functions (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998), what Zhao He (2000) calls “Party Publicity Inc”. Although the news media still ‘serve as the Party’s voice to promote its interests, policies, and ideology’, and the Party still sets the ideological boundaries, news media have gained greater room for operating (Z. He, 2000). However, faced with the dilemma of having to satisfy both the Party and the public, the media have had to “improvise a variety of seemingly paradoxical strategies to stimulate audience interest without stepping out of official bounds” (C.-C. Lee, 2000b, p. 16). In the words of Chan (1993, 25.17), “media reforms in China can be characterized as commercialization without independence”.

### **2.5.3 Chinese Newspapers for the Market**

Chinese newspapers have expanded more rapidly than electronic media since the media reform. Compared to the electronic media, newspapers are more pluralistic in structure due to the relatively less technological and financial investment needed (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). By 2008, China had 1,943 newspapers. Among them, 224 were national-level newspapers, 826 were provincial-level and 877 were subprovincial-level (Z. Sun, Liu, & Liu, 4 December

2009). Chinese newspapers can be divided into five categories based on degree of control: 1) Party organs; 2) non-Party organs (i.e., organ newspapers of official or semi-official agencies; 3) non-organ newspapers (i.e., newspapers affiliated with an organisation); and, based on the scope of distribution: 4) national newspapers; and, 5) local newspapers (Zhongdang Pan, 2000, p. 76). They can also be distinguished as comprehensive newspapers and professional newspapers based upon content (G. Wu, 2000).

Party organs (including Central Party organs, provincial Party organs and municipal Party organs) such as *The People's Daily* (《人民日报》), the *Henan Daily* (《河南日报》), the *Yunnan Daily* (《云南日报》) and the *Kunming Daily* (《昆明日报》), are essentially the “mouthpieces” and “ears and eyes” of the Party-state and the “battle field” for propaganda. Their main task is to propagate Party and governments policies, directives, and peace and prosperity (Liangrong Li & Liu, 2009; Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). Non-Party organs, that is, those run by either Party institutions or non-Party institutions such as various central and local departments, social organisations and academic societies, while also organs newspapers, are usually more focused upon covering particular professions (G. Wu, 2000). The term ‘non-organ newspapers’ refers to newspapers affiliated with an organisation or media groups, such as evening newspapers, weekend editions and tabloids (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998), market-driven newspapers that are less ideological in orientation than the Party organs (J. M. Chan, 1993, 25.8).

The Party and the government undoubtedly apply different policies to media outlets. For example, even though the Party’s control over the Party organs is tighter than during the pro-democracy movement (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998), Party organs still lack editorial autonomy vis-a-vis political and sensitive news. Typically, Party journalism still dominates these forms of media (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). The dominant leading stories in Party organs across the country are still the policy directives, activities of the Party and governments leaders and achievements of the governments in various areas (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). In cases of non-Party organs and non-organ newspapers, the Party’s control is relatively more relaxed. However, they can be used as “mouthpieces” to suit Party needs (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998).

In terms of political influence, Party organs at the national, regional and local levels are most important because they correspond to the organisational structure of the Party. The main

subscribers to Party organs, such as *The People's Daily* and other Party organs, are units that have Communist Party committees (Lynch, 1999). Among these Party organs, *The people's Daily* is the flagship; along with *Xinhua News Agency*, another important media since Maoist times, the former continues to be of importance to the central Party although it has lost its hegemony in setting the agenda for - and shaping - public opinion (Lynch, 1999). Due to decentralisation, marketisation and technological advances, *The People's Daily* nowadays "can only set the agenda for a very few politically active individuals" (Lynch, 1999, p. 161). Before the media reform, lower-level organs and other media saw *The People's Daily* as signaling the directions of the coverage and the standard way of presentation (Lynch, 1999). Nowadays, lower-level newspapers have more autonomy in news selection and flexibility in news presentation. *The People's Daily* has become only one source of reference for lower-level newspapers with regard to important political issues.

In terms of popularity, non-organ papers such as the *Evening News*, general interest dailies and weekend editions are favourites among the public and best sellers in the market (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). Although these kinds of newspapers are non-Party organs, they are usually under the direct control of the municipal Party propaganda committee and mainly target urban readers (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). Compared with the Party organs, they are more diversified in content and format, usually carry more soft news, and are more entertainment oriented. Unlike the Party organs that depend on official subscriptions, evening circulation editions mainly rely upon market sales for most of their circulation (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998).

Weekend editions are under the control of the main Party organ. Although the majority of them are still supplementary to the Party organs, some among them (e.g., *The Southern Weekly* and the *Nanjing Daily's Weekend*) are independent newspapers because they have separate registration numbers (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). Weekend editions, which often have separate editorial teams and enjoy more flexible editorial policies compared to their parent papers, have more autonomy when choosing topics and contents (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). The parent papers consider the weekend edition a pilot project for testing the limits of the boundaries and the market-oriented reform. Many of these 'weekends' are very popular among the public and are often sold separately at the newsstands, although in truth they are not independent at all. To some extent, the "weekend edition has become a synonym for 'readability' and market-oriented journalism" (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998, p. 135).

Among these readable weekend editions, *The Southern Weekly*, under the Guangdong provincial Party organ, is the most popular and influential newspaper in China. *The Southern Weekly* consistently carries in-depth investigative stories on social issues related to topics that most of the Party organs will not touch or cannot publish; for example, AIDS in rural China, the tax burden on farmers, and migrant workers' rights (Rosenthal, 24 March 2002). *The Southern Weekly* has large numbers of loyal readers in intellectual and cultural circles (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998) and a very high circulation (1.5million copies in 2009) (Advertising Department of *The Southern Weekly*, 29 September 2009). In short, weekend editions have contributed to the transformation "of the journalistic agenda from narrow official propaganda to the social agenda " and "play a complementary watchdog role" that their parent papers are not able to fulfill (Yuezhi Zhou, 2000, p. 583).

In short, three decades of marketisation and commercialisation have greatly transformed the structure of the Chinese media. The market-driven mass appeal sector has been introduced into the traditional Party organ structure has resulted in the co-existence of different types of media outlets (i.e., Party organs, a market-driven and urban middle-class-oriented press) in a highly fragmented media structure. Due to their different natures, they play different roles and have different value orientations (Yuezhi Zhao, 2008). Apropos of the press, the Party organs continue to function as propaganda tools, as the mouthpieces of the Party. The market-driven mass appeal press (e.g., the "evening papers", the "metro papers") have become the means by which the provincial Party organs "apply market calculations" and seize the mass appeal market in Chinese urban centres (Yuezhi Zhao, 2008, p. 81).

Similar to the 19<sup>th</sup> century American penny press, and the Western class-based commercial press's market logic, these mass press are sold mostly on the streets and are heavily dependent upon the market for their revenue. They downplay narrow political news, underscore breaking events, the consumer angle, story format (sometimes over-sensationalised) and entertainment. They focus their attention on everyday life and the social domain: their social basis is the rising urban middle class (Yuezhi Zhao, 2000). They cater in the main to the tastes of affluent urban consumers and the business strata that advertisers chase. As a result, new patterns of inclusion and exclusion have been generated in Chinese social communication (Yuezhi Zhao, 2008). Moreover, similar to their counterparts in the West, Chinese journalists have developed some sense of professionalism and are applying innovative methods in their



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reporting both in form and content, improvement which has benefited from their relative financial and organisational autonomy. Nevertheless, there are still substantial differences between their practice and that of their Western counterparts. China's mass appeal press are not independent business enterprises: they are still part of the Party-controlled news media system. They have to give consideration to the propaganda needs of the Party in their practice. Because of their lack of independence, their state ownership, their partisanship, and their organisational and financial ties with traditional Party organ, they avoid violating the Party's propaganda and moral codes (Yuezhi Zhao, 2000, p. 12). In order to please "two masters" (Party and public), "they seek a middle road between traditional [P]arty organs and marginal lifestyle and crime tabloids and create a propagandist-commercial model of journalism" so as to make a balance between the Party line and the bottom line (Yuezhi Zhao, 1996; Yuezhi Zhao, 1998; Yuezhi Zhao, 2000, p. 12).

## 2.6 Summary

This chapter has commenced with a review of the literature relating to the construction of the press. The relevant literature, which deals in the main with the social construction of media reality and the relationship between media and society, delineates how media reality is socially constructed and the various factors or forces that shape media reality, namely media content. Then, the normative theories and models and other alternatives that are usually used to analyse the relationships between media function and types of societies are conceptualised. Finally, the construction of the press in the Chinese political and social contexts is addressed with focus on the Chinese Communist Party's ideology, its journalism doctrines and their influence on the mass media's practices in Maoist Era. Addressed also are the changes in the political construction of mass media in the Post-Mao Era.

A review of the literature reveals that media reality, namely media content, is directly influenced by the political, economic and social environment in which media are embedded. The types of political, economic and social systems that determine the functions of media in turn shape and frame media content. The thesis' review of the literature also indicates that far from being static, media systems keep continually changing (D. C. Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

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In the context of China, in line with the country's transition over the last three decades, China's media landscape has also changed radically. "[The] picture of uniformity and total top-down centralization no longer fits, ...and the Chinese media landscape is now marked by scalar contestation, conflicts, and contradictions" (W. Sun, 2010, pp. 539-540). Borrowing Bourdieu's terms, Colin Sparks (2010) describes today's Chinese media as "[a] heteronymous field articulated with both the political and economic fields in a variety of conflicting ways" (Bourdieu, 1998, cited in Colin Sparks 2010, pp.560). While on the one hand, media have become increasingly market-oriented, on the other, the media have been experiencing "increasing pressure toward political conformity" (C. Sparks, 2010, p. 558), "resulting in a shift in the mode of media control from "totalizing" to domination (W. Sun, 2010). Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the social contexts within which symbolic forms are framed and employed. In the following chapter, agenda-setting and framing theories will be reviewed. As well, the agenda-setting of HIV/AIDS as a public issue in Chinese media and the news framing of HIV/AIDS will be addressed

## **Chapter 3**

# **HIV/AIDS in the Chinese Press - From Agenda-setting to Framing**

### **3.1 Introduction**

News is a window on the world...The view through a window depends upon whether the window is large or small, has many panes or few, whether the glass is opaque or clear, whether the window faces a street or a backyard (Tuchman, 1978, p. 1).

The media influence and the power of the media have been the concern of communication scholars for several decades. In order to examine the effects and the power of media, different approaches or paradigms have been developed by scholars. This chapter outlines some of the most significant approaches. It commences with a brief summary of some basic effects paradigms which have evolved since the very beginning of mass media (section 3.2). This is followed by the conceptualisation of agenda-setting theory, and with exploration of the history of HIV/AIDS as a public issue in China through an agenda-setting lens (section 3.3). It also reviews framing theories and examines the news framing of HIV/AIDS in particular (section 3.4). The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the research approach adopted for the purposes of this study (section 3.5).

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## 3.2 Basic Media Effects Paradigm

Research into the ‘effects’ of media has been conducted for several decades. According to McQuail (2000), the entire study of this topic “is based on the assumption that the media have significant effects” (p. 416). Due to their willing acceptance of assumption, the public is often seen as “a gullible mass, cultural dopes, vulnerable to an ideological hypodermic needle” (Livingstone, 1996, p. 305). “Media messages are like symbolic ‘bullets’, striking every eye and ear, and resulting in effects on thought and behavior that are direct, immediate, uniform, and therefore powerful” (Lowery & DeFleur, 1995, p. 14). The earliest large-scale research, e.g., *the Payne Fund studies* and the investigation into the ‘*War of the Worlds*’ broadcast (by Orson Welles 30 October 1938), seemed strongly to support this hypothesis (G. G. Sparks, 2006). But subsequent studies, with more careful research designs, controls, and measurements, showed far less dramatic effects. The accumulating evidence did not support the notion that the media controlled people’s beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour (Lowery & DeFleur, 1995). Some scholars (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Klapper, 1960; Paul Felix Lazarsfeld, et al., 1948) rebutted the powerful effects of the media, claiming that not only was the media’s power overestimated, but that the media’s effects on public were limited - even minimal. Other scholars (Katz, et al., 1973; McQuail, et al., 1972) argued that the audience use media to satisfy their needs, that is, for information, identification and diversion. In pursuance of these theories, some main effect models will be examined in this section.

### 3.2.1 The “Powerful Media” Paradigm

Livingstone (1996) argues that by reviewing a variety of effects research undertaken over the past decades, one may conclude that effects research “alternates between...[the following] two extremes – first we believed in powerful effects, then came the argument for null effects, then the return to strong effects” (p. 305). The power of the mass media to influence behaviour was an assumption that prevailed during 1920s, 30s and 40s (Cumberbatch & Howitt, 1989). The leading formulation of the power of the media has been the “magic bullet” theory (Weimann, 2000), a powerful media paradigm suggesting that media’s influence is

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uniform, powerful, and direct. It assumed that the media has powerful effects that can inject ideas and opinions into audiences immediately and directly; messages to which audiences react strongly and uniformly (Weimann, 2000). As passive receivers of information, the public are regarded as undifferentiated masses vulnerable to outside influences. The “Powerful Media” paradigm, which includes bullet theories, hypodermic needle theories, stimulus response theories and theories of uniform influences (McQuail & Windahl, 1993), was widely accepted by early scholars of communication; for example, many research studies have been conducted since the 1920s. The earliest research findings seemed to support this prevailing belief, e.g., *the Payne Fund studies*, which examined various aspects of the influence of the movies on children, and the research into Welles’ *The Invasion from Mars*, which assessed the influence of radio on listeners in the United States.

At first, these research studies appeared to support the powerful media paradigm. However, shortly after, other effects research such as research into television violence on children was conducted, with some researchers finding that “not all people are affected in the same way by the same media content or media exposure” (Weimann, 2000, p. 19). Researchers also detected some methodological problems in these earlier research studies. The weakness of the “powerful media” paradigm revealed by these research findings and other accumulating evidence resulted in the inevitable decline of this particular paradigm (Weimann, 2000).

### **3.2.2 The “Minimal Effects” or “Limited Effects” Paradigm**

The 1950s and 1960s saw a paradigm shift in research into media effects. Two studies conducted in the 1940s foretold the demise of the “powerful media” paradigm.

The first study was undertaken by sociologists Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet (1948), who attempted to ascertain how media messages influenced voting in Erie County, Ohio during the 1940 Presidential election. Their findings were published in 1944 in *The People's Choice* (Paul Felix Lazarsfeld, et al., 1948). Although their research was originally based on the assumption that a message would be transmitted from the mass media to a ‘mass audience’, who would absorb the message, their findings suggested that media

effects were minimal. They found that the election campaign did not change voters' beliefs and positions, but rather reinforced the beliefs and positions they already held. *The People's Choice* was considered a precedent in a new perspective on media impact that suggested that rather than being as powerful as a magic bullet, the media had only limited effect, (G. G. Sparks, 2006).

The second set of studies by U.S. scholars examined the impact of a series of seven films collectively titled "*Why We Fight*", films that were shown to soldiers as part of their training to improve their understanding of the facts of the war, and to increase their confidence in the United States and the justice of its battles. But, the findings of the studies proved disappointing for those who were advocates of powerful media effects: the evidence indicated that the essential motivation of the soldiers who were fighting the war was not changed by their exposure to these films (G. G. Sparks, 2006), a result that destroyed the "magic bullet" theory.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, a variety of other studies supported the minimal effects of media; for example, Merton's *Mass Persuasion*, Katz and Lazarsfeld's *Personal Influence* and Klapper's *Law of Minimal Consequences* were key studies among this landmark research (Macnamara, 2003). Based on their studies of the presidential elections, Lazarsfeld and colleagues (Paul Felix Lazarsfeld, et al., 1948), working at the Bureau of Applied Social Research, Columbia University, developed the "limited effects theory", which suggests that media messages have only indirect and limited effects on the public, and that opinion leaders play an important role in mediating media messages (Paul Felix Lazarsfeld, et al., 1948). In 1955, Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) developed the "two-step flow of communication" model, which reiterated that media messages are mediated by opinion leaders who influence members of the communities. Media tend to reinforce predispositions rather than change them (Czitrom, 1982). This finding was supported by Klapper (1960), who stated in his work *The Effects of Mass Communication* that "mass communication ordinarily does not serve as a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effects" (p. 8) and concluded that the media have a tendency to reinforce existing attitudes, rather than change them or create new attitudes (Curran, 2002, p. 133; Klapper, 1960, p. 8; G. G. Sparks, 2006, p. 55). His findings became known as Klapper's 'law of minimal consequences' and triggered a 'limited effects' view of mass media (Curran, 2002, pp. 132-133; Macnamara, 2003, pp. 2-3). According to Sparks

(2006), the notion of selective exposure to communication is one important principle of the “limited-effects” paradigm. That is, audiences tend to subject themselves willingly to messages that they have already agreed upon and avoid messages about which they disagree (G. G. Sparks, 2006, p. 55).

### **3.2.3 The Uses and Gratifications Paradigm**

The uses and gratifications paradigm arose originally in the 1940s concomitant with the perceived inadequacy of the older tradition of effects studies. It underwent a revival in the 1970s and 1980s (Kitzinger, 2004). Contrary to other effect models, the uses and gratifications paradigm asks the question: “What do people do with the media?” rather than “what do the media do to people?” (Katz 1977, cited in Lull, 2000, p. 101). It emphasises individuals’ conscious choice between the various items of media content to satisfy their own purposes (Kitzinger, 2004). Thus, audiences are not homogeneous, but active in choosing and using media (McQuail, et al., 1972).

Many audience gratification research projects have been undertaken since the 1940s (Herzog, 1942; P.F. Lazarsfeld & Stanton, 1949; Paul F. Lazarsfeld & Stanton, 1942; Suchman, 1942). Early gratifications research attempted to examine why people used certain media content; for example, people’s motives for listening to certain radio programs and for reading certain newspapers (Katz, et al., 1973). These early research projects found that listeners enjoyed the programs for various reasons, e.g., for the educational appeal of quiz shows or for emotional release (Katz, et al., 1973).

From the 1970s on, researchers began to categorise the various motives for media use (Kate, Haas, & Gurevitch, 1973; Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Rosengren & Windahl, 1972). Rosengren and Windahl (1972), for example, found that audiences used media to satisfy certain needs including vicarious experiences and escapism, and involvement and interaction. They suggested that media uses and effects should be linked, and that researchers should examine what particular gratification or effects the media may have for/on audiences. Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch’s (1974) study revealed that audiences relied on the media to gain

more understanding of themselves, the people around them and society in general, and to increase their personal status and strengthen their relationships with others. Other researchers also developed their own typologies for audience gratification. Based upon Lasswell's (1948) four-functional interpretation of media, Wright (1960) developed a typology that contained four functions of media including surveillance, correlation, cultural transmission or socialisation and entertainment (Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1960). McQuail, Blumler and Brown (1972), who categorised the function of media as diversion, personal relationships, personal identity and surveillance in their typology, found that people utilise television for self-rating, social interaction, excitement, personal improvement and keeping abreast of happenings in the world around them. Five individual audience needs (i.e., escape, social interaction, identity, information, education and entertainment) were identified in Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch's (1974) typology of uses and gratifications developed in 1974.

According to Rubin & Windahl (1986), the core of these typologies or models is "the social and psychological origin of needs and motives for communicating, the centrality of audience initiative, and the role of functional alternatives in the gratification process" (p. 186). They emphasised people's choices and social interactions as important factors in the relationships between individual audiences and media messages, thus presenting a departure from the powerful (direct) effects models of communication research (Kitzinger, 2004). However, some scholars criticised the uses and gratifications paradigm for its over-emphasis of individualistic and psychologistic perspectives. Elliott (1974) argued that while the uses and gratifications paradigm focused on intra-individual processes, it neglected other social factors that had the potential to influence individuals' media use, such as social structures, for example. McQuail (1979), who supported this view, claimed that the uses and gratifications paradigm failed to link individual media use to larger social structures due to its individualistic approach, both in terms of conception and method (McQuail, 1979, cited in Rubin & Windahl 1986, p. 884). Rubin and Windahl (1986) argued that few researchers systematically investigated the effects of media use: their studies were limited to providing an explanation for the motives behind individuals' media behaviour. They proposed an audience-centred and society-based framework that stressed both the roles of the social system and functional alternatives in the media uses and effects process to enhance consideration of media effects (A. M. Rubin & Windahl, 1986, p. 186).



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## 3.3 Theory of Agenda-Setting

### 3.3.1 Basic Concept of Agenda-Setting

The 1970s saw the second major paradigm shift in research into media effects (Dietram A. Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). As earlier mass communication research had only found minimal effects as opposed to the directional effects on individual attitudes that many scholars had assumed, many mass communication researchers, disappointed in the paradigm of directional media effects, attempted to seek a new paradigm. This saw the paradigm of agenda-setting emerge as an alternative (James W. Dearing & Rogers, 1996, p. 13).

McQuail (2000) defines agenda-setting as a process by which a set of issues gain the attention of media within a hierarchy of importance. The ranking of the issue by the media influences the ranking order of significance attached to the same issues by the public and policymakers. McQuail's definition bespeaks the differences between the agenda-setting paradigm and other paradigms of media effects. The inquiry that the agenda-setting researchers investigate is not "what people believe about an issue but how they rank its importance" (Kitzinger, 2004, p. 13).

There are three main components in the agenda-setting process: the media agenda, the public agenda and the policy agenda: these three components interact and influence one another in the process of agenda-setting (James W. Dearing & Rogers, 1996). Due to the ongoing and intensive competition among issues to gain the attention of media professionals, the public and policy makers, salience is regarded as the key factor in agenda-setting (James W. Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Maxwell E. McCombs, 2004). Issues highlighted on the media agenda gain the attention of the public and policymakers, by extension affecting their perceptions of said issues. In other words, "the comparative salience of an issue on the media agenda affects how the public agenda is shaped, which in turn influences policymakers' consideration of the issue" (James W. Dearing & Rogers, 1996, p. 8). Agenda-setting reifies the very powerful influence exercised by the media's setting of priorities vis-à-vis issues concerning the public and their great ability to tell the public what to think about (Maxwell E. McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

Although agenda-setting was not developed as a new paradigm until 1972, some scholars (e.g., Lippmann, Lasswell and Cohen) had already conceptualised the early thinking about agenda-setting (James W. Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Maxwell E. McCombs, 2004). Among them, Lippmann (1922 [1991]), who first analysed the impact of the media on audience perceptions in 1922, “The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads” in his work *Public Opinion*, argued that people did not respond directly to first-hand knowledge of the real world but instead responded to the pseudo-environment created by the mass media (Lippmann, 1922 [1991], cited in McCombs 2004, p.3). Lippmann, by presuming a relationship between the mass media agenda and the public agenda, suggested that the mass media play an important role in shaping the images of the events of the real world in people’s minds (Lippmann, 1922 [1991], cited in McCombs 2004).

Lippmann’s notion was supported by Lasswell (1948), one of the forefathers of communication studies (James W. Dearing & Rogers, 1996). In 1948, Lasswell proposed the famous five “Ws” model of communication inquiry “*who says what to whom via which channels and with what effect?*” (James W. Dearing & Rogers, 1996, p. 11). According to Lasswell, “surveillance” and “correlation” were two of the most important functions of the mass media in society. His use of the term ‘surveillance’ suggests that the media gather and disseminate information by acting as gatekeepers in a given society: he uses ‘correlation’ to convey that media present the information to the public after having first selected and interpreted it. Hence, it is the media that decide the news value of events and the priorities of the significance of the events. Thus, media unarguably play an important role in both directing the public’s attention to issues and influencing their perceptions of said issues. Lasswell emphasised a correlation of attention on certain issues involving the media, public and policymakers (cited in James W. Dearing & Rogers, 1996, p. 11). This notion was interpreted by McCombs and Shaw (1972) as the “agenda-setting function of the mass media” and later engendered the paradigm of agenda-setting. The latter “offered a new way to think about the power of the mass media” (James W. Dearing & Rogers, 1996, p. 12).

Among all of the research into agenda-setting, McCombs and Shaw (1972) produced the landmark 1972 Chapel Hill study (Dietram A. Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007), the first empirical test of the agenda-setting hypothesis of the mass media. In their study, McCombs and Shaw asked 100 Chapel Hill voters to identify the most important issues in the 1968

presidential election, then, they compared the results with news coverage related to the campaign. They found a strong relationship between media coverage and issues that respondents considered important. McCombs and Shaw (1972) concluded that mass media set the agenda for public opinion by highlighting certain issues, and influenced what voters considered to be the important issues of the campaign, suggesting that the main function of the media was agenda-setting.

Like other new paradigms, the agenda-setting paradigm triggered a great amount of research that attempted to test the hypothesis of agenda-setting by employing various approaches. Among the researchers, Funkhouser (1973) investigated the major issues in three weekly news magazines for each consecutive year from 1960 to 1970. His findings were consistent with those of McCombs and Shaw. But, compared to McCombs and Shaw's study, Funkhouse's study went further by examining the influence of the real-world indicator on the media agenda. His findings showed that the real-world indicator was not unnecessarily an important variable associated with issue salience and media attention. He noted that "news media did not give a very accurate picture of what was going on in the nation during the sixties... the media seem to have attended to persons or agencies with the ability and motivation to call attention to particular issues by creating "news", and to have decreased their attention to other issues as related events..." (Funkhouser, 1973, p. 73). Funkhouser's findings were supported by other researchers' studies (Boot, 1985; Rogers, Dearing, & Chang, 1991; P. J. Shoemaker, 1989; Smith, 1993), who also found that the real-world indicator did not highly correlate with the media agenda, but rather was a 'trigger event' that pushed issues onto the media agenda. For example, the drug-related death of basketball star Len Bias in 1986 put the issue of drug abuse on both the media and public agendas in the United States during the mid-1980s rather than the real-world indicator of the number of drug-related deaths. Similarly, the issue of AIDS arose on the media and national agenda in the United States in 1980s due to a tragic story about a young boy, Ryan White, who had AIDS. The same phenomena happened regarding the 1984 Ethiopian famine. The media did not respond immediately to this famine until the NBC screened pictures of starving Ethiopian children on its evening news. Subsequently, massive news coverage appeared on all kinds of national news media over the next ten months (cited in James W. Dearing & Rogers, 1996). In sum, certain special news events play a significant role in pushing an event onto the media agenda (James W. Dearing & Rogers, 1996).

Although agenda-setting effects have been proved by many previous studies, they are not limitless and universal. There are some variables which affect media's role and impact on public issues. According to Winter, Eyal and Rogers (1982), issues can be divided into obtrusive and unobtrusive issues. The former refer to those that most individuals may experience directly and personally, such as inflation and unemployment, for example. Unobtrusive issues are those that an individual obtains second-hand, e.g., from mass media or others who also obtain information from mass media, including topics such as pollution, drug abuse and HIV/AIDS. Winter and others' 1982 study, which was subsequently supported by further studies, found that media only influence unobtrusive issues (cited in Maxwell E. McCombs, 1981; Maxwell E. McCombs, 2004, p. 132). For example, Zucker (1978) observed that "the less direct experience the people have with an issue,... the greater is the news media's influence on public opinion on that issue" (p. 293). Zhu, et al. (1993) argued that media tend to set the public agenda on issues of which they lack personal experience.

Another variable, i.e., the type of medium involved, influences how agenda-setting impacts upon public issues. Since the original McComb and Shaw Chapel Hill study, many researchers have attempted to ascertain which medium (i.e., newspapers or television) has proven more powerful in setting the public agenda. Their findings indicate no precise distinction between the various media regarding agenda-setting effects (Maxwell E. McCombs, 2004). For example, following their comparison of the agenda-setting effects of newspapers and television, Palmgreen and Clarke (Palmgreen & Clarke, 1991 [1977]) maintained that newspaper's impact was greater than that of television but only for local issues. Some studies suggest that print and broadcast media reinforce each other in the process of agenda-setting effects. Klaus Schoenbach's (1991 [1982]) research into the role of the mass media in the election campaign in West Germany showed that television can draw the public's attention to issues covered by newspapers. While David Hill's (1991 [1985]) study indicates that prior print media exposure can enhance the influence of television agenda-setting. Some studies demonstrate that different media impact upon public awareness of issues at different levels. Benton and Frazier (1991 [1976]) identified three levels of awareness in the public agenda: (1) awareness of the general issue names; for example, "the economy", "HIV/AIDS"; (2) awareness of the sub-issues, i.e., problems, causes and proposed solutions; and, (3) relational to proposed solution. Their research found that while television played an important role in setting the public agenda at level 1 (issues' names), newspapers

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significantly impacted upon setting the public agenda at Levels 2 and 3, which involved more in-depth knowledge of the general issues. Their findings showed that different types of medium affected the different levels of public information holding.

Previous research also indicated that some prestigious media, along with government, play important roles in agenda-setting. For example, *The New York Times* can set an issue onto the national media agenda, because once an issue is regarded as newsworthy by *The New York Times*, other U.S. news organizations take note (James W. Dearing & Rogers, 1996). The White House also plays an important role in the agenda-setting of an issue. The U.S. president can help set an issue on the national agenda by addressing it first on/in the media (James W. Dearing & Rogers, 1996). In addition, the ways in which the media frame an issue also affect whether it finds place on the media agenda or not. For example, the framing of AIDS as a “gay” disease by the media in the early 1980s influenced the news value of the AIDS issue and kept it from climbing the media agenda in the United States (James W. Dearing & Rogers, 1996).

In sum, the origins of the agenda-setting paradigm underpin the powerful effect of the mass media on public opinion: media have ability to shape public attention to social and political issues and to tell the public what issues are important (Maxwell E. McCombs, 2004). But, its emphasis of influence is different from other media effects paradigms. Agenda-setting shifts focus from “directional effects to cognitive effects” (James W. Dearing & Rogers, 1996, pp. 13-14); in addition, it shifts thinking about the instant effects of mass media to thinking about the “long-term effects of mass communication on knowledge and awareness” (Maxwell E. McCombs, 1981, p. 121). Recently, it evolved out of the combination of traditional agenda-setting with framing research (Maxwell E. McCombs, 2004). Scholars have started to examine agenda-setting theory on a more detailed level - called second level agenda-setting or attribute agenda-setting - which focuses on the media’s role in telling people “how to think about” objects rather than “what to think about” objects (Sheafer, 2007, p. 22).

### **3.3.2 HIV/AIDS Agenda-Setting in the Chinese Press**

Dearing and Rogers (1996) claim that “the agenda-setting process begins with an issue climbing the media agenda” (James W. Dearing & Rogers, 1996, p. 24); therefore, the

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HIV/AIDS issue had to be put on the media agenda before it could gain the attention of the public and policymakers.

Generally speaking, at the beginning of the advent of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the issue of HIV/AIDS did not attract the attention of media in most countries across the world: it climbed the media agenda in the United States in 1985, 4 years after the first HIV/AIDS cases were diagnosed (James W. Dearing & Rogers, 1996). It took five years for the HIV/AIDS issue to climb the media agenda in Britain after its first cases were discovered in 1981 (Miller, Kitzinger, Williams, & Beharrell, 1998). Thailand launched its massive Anti-AIDS public information campaign in 1991, although its first HIV/AIDS cases appeared in 1984 (AVERT, 13 August 2008). China's media followed suit as far as tardiness was concerned for although the first HIV/AIDS cases and first indigenous cases were diagnosed in China in 1985 and 1989 respectively, the AIDS issue did not attract the attention of the Chinese media until 1996, when *The People's Daily*, China's most important official newspaper, published its first front-page story about HIV/AIDS (X. Liu & Zhang, 2005). *The Southern Weekly*, one of the country's most open newspapers, also ran a front-page story in 1996, which heralded the first comprehensive exposure of the HIV/AIDS epidemic by the Chinese press. By that time, the number of infections stood at between 50,000 and 100,000 (Bureau of Hygiene & Tropical Diseases 1996). Since then, information surrounding HIV/AIDS has gradually increased: years 2000 and 2003 saw the reporting of HIV/AIDS peak on the Chinese media agenda (X. Liu & Zhang, 2005; TICC, 2005).

For the first 16 years of the AIDS epidemic, the volume of coverage was quite low on the Chinese media agenda. Most of the coverage focused on external HIV/AIDS epidemics; for example, the epidemics in the African countries (X. Liu & Zhang, 2005; M. Zhou & Li, 2003). The Chinese mass media were slow to respond to the issue due to the lack of involvement of two of the country's most important agenda-setters: (1) the Central government (the Chinese government chose not to talk about HIV/AIDS publicly until 2001); and, (2) *The People's Daily* (Y. Huang, 2005).

Due to China's hierarchical and monopolistic media system, *The People's Daily* plays an important role as an agenda-setter in China's media system. Important editorials in *The People's Daily* used to be aired on the national radio and television and reprinted by local news media (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). Although local newspapers have enjoyed some level of autonomy in selecting news, their editors have to carefully scrutinise *The People's Daily* for

signals as to what stories may be carried and how they should be presented (Lynch, 1999). Because the Chinese government exerts very tight control over the mass media, and sets its role and functions in line with the general and specific policies of the Party and the government, the media mainly serve as “mouthpieces” and “tools” of propaganda for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the government (Hsiao & Cheek, 1995). In order to guide public opinion, the Party usually sets the media agenda for politically sensitive issues. HIV/AIDS emerged as a highly politically, sensitive issue in China; at the beginning of the epidemic, the government strictly restricted public exposure to the facts surrounding the issue; this was the main reason for the media’s slow response to the HIV/AIDS outbreak. In line with China’s opening to the outside world and media reform, the Chinese media have gained more freedom to cover news which the public need and with which it is concerned (Hawkey, 2005). Every now and then, the media took risks to expose sensitive issues including reporting of the epidemic: *The Southern Weekly* was one of the newspapers that boldly exposed the outbreak in China. Its coverage of HIV/AIDS to a certain extent drew both public and government attention to the many and complex issues surrounding HIV/AIDS.

Agenda-setting theory suggests that in the main, real-world indicators did not correlate highly with the media agenda. But, a ‘trigger event’ such as a human crisis pushes related issues onto the media agenda (Boot, 1985; Rogers, et al., 1991; P. J. Shoemaker, 1989; Smith, 1993). In China, two “trigger events” pushed HIV/AIDS onto said agenda: (1) the massive spread of HIV/AIDS infection caused by the controversial circumstances surrounding the sale of blood plasma among farmers in Shancai county, Henan province. This tragedy was first revealed by the Chinese newspaper *The West China Metropolitan Newspaper* in 2000 (W. Zhang, 19 January 2008). The report triggered considerable in-depth coverage by both national and international media of HIV/AIDS issues, reportage that left the public shaken and impelled the government to change its HIV/AIDS policy (W. Zhang, 19 January 2008). In 2001, the Chinese Ministry of Health launched its first massive anti-AIDS campaign on World AIDS Day. This saw the central government’s budget for HIV/AIDS prevention and control increased greatly to 100 million CNY in 2001, compared to the meager 15 million CNY allocated per year from 1998 to 2000 (MOH & UNTG, 2003). Significantly, it indicated that the Chinese government considered HIV/AIDS a crucial problem, so much so that it had incorporated it into the national development strategy. The response of the government in turn influenced the HIV/AIDS coverage by the Chinese media (N. Yu, 2006). First, there was an

obvious increase in the amount of coverage of HIV/AIDS issues. Take *The People Daily* as an example: its amount of coverage in 2001 doubled that of 1999. Second, the stories and testimonials of those infected with HIV for the first time appeared in mass media (Bu & Liu, 2004; X. Liu & Zhang, 2005), demonstrating that media agenda and policy agenda interacted on the issue of HIV/AIDS.

Another “trigger event” was the 2003 SARS outbreak. The SARS crisis acted as a catalyst for significant policy change of HIV/AIDS issues in China (Y. Huang, 2005). After experiencing the major socio-political crisis caused by SARS, the government finally recognised the great threat that HIV/AIDS posed to the country’s socio-economic development. This prompted the Chinese government to attach strategic importance to the HIV/AIDS issue. On 1 December, 2003, Chinese premier Wen Jiabao’s public hand-shaking with PLWHAs sent a strong signal to society in general that the government had made a commitment to combating HIV/AIDS and would put HIV/AIDS issues on the government agenda. In effect, the government publicly acknowledged that PLWHAs deserved support and care (P. P. Pan, 2 December 2003; Xinhua News Agency, 1 December 2003). The shaking-hands event was significant because it was the first time that a senior Chinese leader had addressed the HIV/AIDS issue in public on television and via other mass media (P. P. Pan, 2 December 2003). The following year, the mass media showed Chinese president Hu Jintao shaking hands with PLWHAs, a strong indication that the government had loosened up its censorship of HIV/AIDS issues.

As the agenda-setting theory suggests, the media’s agenda regarding certain issues may be accelerated when well-known individuals become involved (Lang & Lang, 1983). The Chinese government senior leaders’ public involvement in the anti-AIDS campaign authenticated, generated and promoted the media’s coverage of HIV/AIDS. Their actions helped to push HIV/AIDS to the tip of the Chinese mass media’s agenda. The amount of coverage increased sharply in almost all mass media in 2003 and in subsequent years. For example, the amount of coverage in *The People’s Daily* in 2004 tripled that of 2002. Front-page stories about HIV/AIDS increased to 8 in 2003 compared with only one in 1996 (X. Liu & Zhang, 2005). Moreover, coverage of the domestic epidemic and associated problems increased significantly: coverage extended to case reports, people concerned with HIV/AIDS, and the socio-political aspects of the disease (X. Liu & Zhang, 2005; TICC, 2005). In light of the above, the year 2003 was considered a crucial year in China, not only because it



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witnessed a turning point in the central government's HIV/AIDS policy, but also because it was a watershed in the Chinese media's coverage of HIV/AIDS issues.

Apart from the influence of "trigger events", there were other factors that influenced the media agenda-setting of HIV/AIDS. World AIDS Day acted as a key news-generating factor that affected the media coverage of the HIV/AIDS agenda (Qiu, 2004; Traquina, 2004; N. Yu, 2006). Previous studies indicated that since 1997, most of the Chinese mass media's coverage of HIV/AIDS centred on World AIDS Day (Bu & Liu, 2004; X. Liu & Zhang, 2005; TICC, 2005), probably because most of the anti-AIDS campaigns organised by different government departments and organisations took place around and on World AIDS Day. These campaigns significantly helped to push the subject of AIDS onto the media agenda. Previous studies found that HIV/AIDS gradually started to dominate the media agenda around November each year: coverage peaked on December 1 then dropped rapidly after World AIDS Day (Bu & Liu, 2004; TICC, 2005). Take *The People's Daily* for example. The number of news stories addressing HIV/AIDS escalated from an average 1.1 per day in the first ten days of December to 29 per day on December 1 and 2, then dropped to 0.6 per day in the last ten days of December (2000 to 2004) (TICC, 2005).

Earlier studies indicate a high degree of similarity of mass media coverage of HIV/AIDS in terms of increase in the amount of coverage, sources, types of coverage and topics. Almost all mass media increased their coverage during November and December each year, with coverage particularly concentrated on World AIDS Day. The government and experts were the main sources of the HIV/AIDS coverage and general news constituted the main type of coverage. Most media coverage was concerned with government's policies, improvements in of medicine and treatment, and HIV/AIDS prevention programs (X. Liu & Zhang, 2005; TICC, 2005; N. Yu, 2006). The similarities that obtained in the HIV/AIDS coverage came as little surprise, given the direct government control over the mass media. Most of the Anti-AIDS campaigns reported by the mass media were organised by the government. When *The People's Daily*, the key 'mouthpiece' of the Party and the government, put HIV/AIDS issues on its agenda, other news organisations followed suit, trying to 'speak along the same lines'. Dearing and Rogers (1996) termed it "intermedia agenda-setting at work".

Apropos of the media-agenda setting of HIV/AIDS in China, it may be that the Chinese media's coverage did not accurately mirror the real situation of the epidemic: it was more a reflection of government policy, i.e., the status quo of China's politics (X. Liu & Zhang, 2005). This supports the assumption regarding the agenda-setting theory; that is, that media coverage does not necessarily reflect the reality of society and the real circumstances surrounding an issue (James W. Dearing & Rogers, 1996). Moreover, the government's influence on the Chinese media's agenda-setting of HIV/AIDS was significant and distinct. Some "trigger-events", along with World AIDS Day, acted as news-generating factors which helped to push HIV/AIDS onto media agendas. But, it seems that the public may not have been fully involved in the process of HIV/AIDS agenda-setting. The Party's tight control of the mass media may have been the main reason behind the absence of public opinion in agenda-setting: the fact that the public had few channels through which to express their opinions by extension restricted the potential impact of public opinion on agenda-setting by China's mass media.

## **3.4 The Framing of HIV/AIDS Stories**

### **3.4.1 Basic Concepts of Frames and Media Framing**

Framing, which represents an alternative approach to examining media influence, was developed alongside agenda-setting theory. But, whereas agenda-setting mainly focuses on the attention that media give to a particular topic or issue, framing essentially involves the nature of the coverage (Kitzinger, 2004).

The original notion of framing can be traced to Erving Goffman's (1974) seminal work entitled *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* in which Goffman views frame as the "schemata of interpretation"; that is, labeled frames that enable individuals to "locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms" (Goffman, 1974, p. 21). Individuals, according to Goffmann, actively classify and organise their life experiences to make sense of the world around them. Building

upon Goffman's thesis, a number of scholars have contributed to the research into media framing by providing various definitions. Pan and Kosicki (1993), for example, define frames as cognitive "windows" through which stories are "seen" (p. 59). Tuchman (1978) proposed that "the news frame organizes everyday reality... [it] is an essential feature of news" (p. 193). Gamson and Modigliani (1989) advanced Tuchman's definition by describing media frames as "interpretative packages" at the core of which is "a central organizing idea, for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue" (p. 3). Frames not only help journalists to identify and organise information quickly; as well, they enable them "to package it for efficient relay to their audiences" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7). In the process of news framing, journalists highlight specific aspects of "perceived reality". As a consequence, "dominant meaning consist[ing] of the problem, causal, evaluative, and treatment interpretations" can be suggested to audiences (Entman, 1993, p. 56). Framing also has significant implications for policy outcomes (Entman, 1991). Journalism, therefore, plays a major role in the construction of meanings and values in society (Entman, 1993).

My review of the framing literature revealed that most of the earlier studies of media framing focused on two areas alone: the first area was 'media frames' or 'journalistic frames' which focus on how news is framed. Researchers in this area focus on the production of news by news makers, news professionals and the media as an industry (Herbert J. Gans, 2004; Tuchman, 1978; Tunstall, 1971), or on the framing of the news context (S. Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Zhongdang Pan & Kosicki, 1993). The second area was 'individual frames' or 'audience frames', which focus on how media frames influence audiences. These studies mainly explore how news frames work on individuals and how individuals' frames influence their perceptions of an issue (S. Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Vincent Price & Tewksbury, 1997; Vincent Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1997).

Although all of the above studies adopted the concepts of 'frame' or 'framing', they did not share the same clear conceptual definitions and depended upon general 'applicable operationalizations', resulting in inconsistency in its application (de Vreese, 2005; Dietram A. Scheufele, 1999). Entman (1993), describing framing as 'a scattered conceptualization', called for the establishment of a framing paradigm.

In response to Entman's call, several scholars developed their own models of framing research. They considered framing a process along the lines of mass communication (D'Angelo, 2002; de Vreese, 2005; Dietram A. Scheufele, 1999). For example, Scheufele (1999), after classifying the previous approaches to framing research, developed a process model of framing research (Figure 3.1). According to Scheufele, the previous framing research could be classified into two dimensions: "the type of frame examined (i.e., media frames vs. audience frames) and the way frames are operationalized (i.e., independent variable or dependent variable)" (Dietram A. Scheufele, 1999, p. 103). Based on these two dimensions, the framing process consists of four distinct stages: 'framing building'; 'framing setting'; 'individual-level effects of framing'; and, 'a link between individual frames and media frames' (Dietram A. Scheufele, 1999).

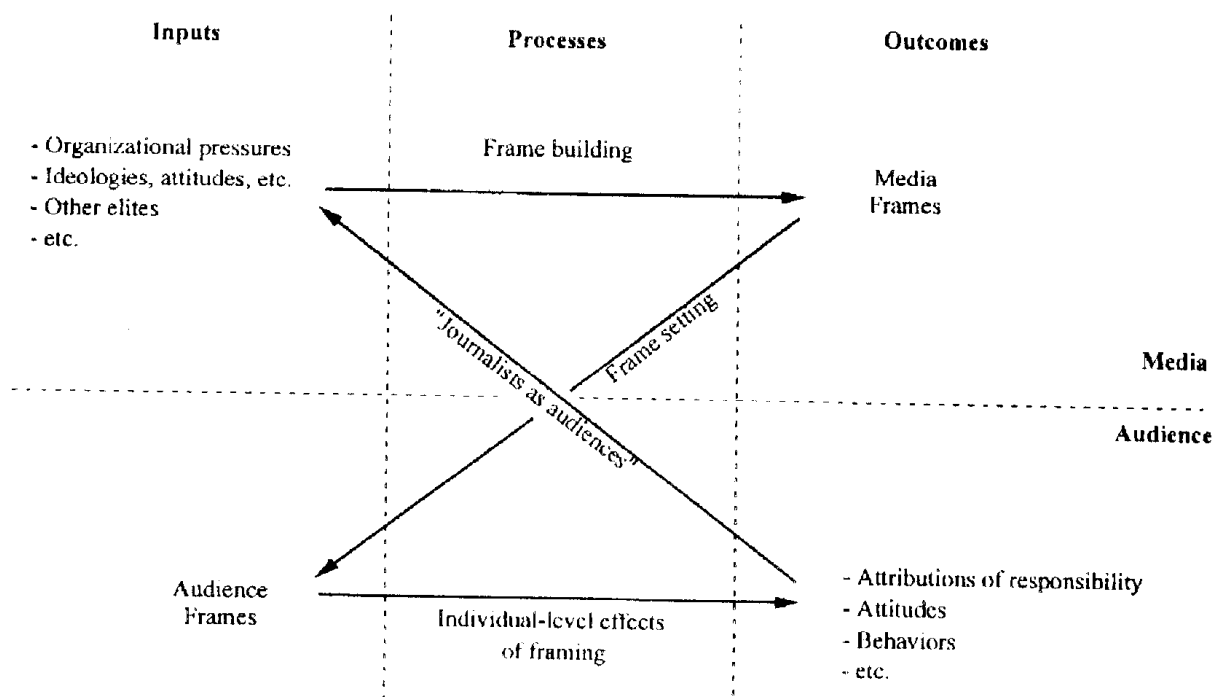


Figure 3.1 A Process Model of Framing Research

Source: Scheufele (1999), Framing as a Theory of Media Effects. *Journal of Communication*, 49(1), 103-122.

Scheufele (1999) borrowed the terms *frame building* and *frame setting* from agenda-setting research. In his view, 'media frames' or 'journalistic frames' are associated with 'frame building', while 'individual frames' or 'audience frames' are associated with 'frame setting'. Frame building, which occurs in the media production phase, includes both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence news production and selection (Dietram A. Scheufele, 2000), factors that influence the "structural qualities of news frames" (de Vreese, 2005, p. 52). "Intrinsic" factors are journalistic-centered, e.g., organisational pressure, ideology, and professional norms and values that determine how news organisations and journalists frame issues (Herbert J. Gans, 1979; Dietram A. Scheufele, 1999; Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). "Extrinsic" factors are external-centred factors, that is, "political actors, authorities, interest groups, and other elites" (Dietram A. Scheufele, 1999, p. 115). Both journalistic-centred and external-centred factors are equally important in the process of frame building, because this process occurs during the interaction between journalists and elites (de Vreese, 2005; Herbert J. Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978). The outcomes of the frame-building process are the frames manifested in the text (de Vreese, 2005). Frame-setting happens during the interaction between the media frames and the individual frames: media frames influence individuals' perceptions, interpretations, and evaluations of a particular issue (de Vreese, 2005; Dietram A. Scheufele, 1999).

Individual-level effects of framing deal with how the frames that individuals use influence their perceptions of attributions of responsibility, attitude and behaviour towards a particular issue (Dietram A. Scheufele, 1999) and the "mobilization for collective action aimed at social change" (W. A. Gamson, 1985, p. 620). In Scheufele's model, there is a link between individual frames and media frames. Scheufele argues that to some extent, journalists themselves are audience. They may also be influenced by the frames that they adopt in the news media. Thus, in the process of framing, media frames and individual frames interact and interplay with each other (Dietram A. Scheufele, 1999).

Entman (1991) states that news frames are built on textual and visual elements such as "keywords, metaphors, concepts, symbols and visual images". Thus, frames can be identified by examining "particular words and visual images" (Entman, 1991, p. 7). Other scholars (e.g. Cappella & Jamieson, Pan and Kosicki, Gamson and Modigliani) used the term "framing device" to indicate these elements. Pan and Kosicki (1993) regard "framing devices" as "signifying elements of a theme": they are "structurally located lexical choices of codes constructed by following certain shared rules and conventions" (Zhongdang Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 59). In effect, they are tools that enable newsmakers to "make a frame communicable

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through the news media” (Zhongdang Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 59). Cappella and Jamieson (1997), extending this notion further, claim that “framing devices carry news frames” (p. 45).

Earlier scholars examined a variety of framing devices during their studies. Pan and Kosicki (Zhongdang Pan & Kosicki, 1993), for example, classified the framing devices used in news discourse into four categories according to four structural dimensions: (1) syntactical structure, or “patterns of the arrangements of words or phrases”; (2) script structure, that is, the newsworthiness of an event and the structure of representation of the story, such as five Ws and one H in news writing; (3) thematic structures, i.e., a “multi-layered hierarchy” with a main theme “connecting various subthemes as the major nodes, that, in turn, are connected to supporting elements”; and, (4) rhetorical structures, “the stylistic choices made by journalists in relation to their intended effects” such as “metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images” (Zhongdang Pan & Kosicki, 1993, pp. 59-61).

Gamson and Modigliani (1989), who distinguished the frame devices according to their functions, identified five frame devices that imply how to think about a particular issue: (1) metaphors; (2) exemplars; (3) catch phrases; (4) depictions; and, (5) visual images. As well as these five devices, they also identified three reasoning devices that justify what is done about an issue: (1) roots; (2) consequences; and, (3) appeals to principle (William A. Gamson & Lasch, 1983; William A. Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Tankard (2001) suggests that news frames can be detected via eleven framing mechanisms or focal points in the text: headlines, subheads, photos, photo captions, leads, source selection, quotes selection, pull quotes, logos, statistics and charts, and concluding statements and paragraphs (Tankard, 2001, p. 101). In sum, “framing devices” not only help researchers to identify frames in news text, but also help them to improve validity and reliability. “Framing devices” provide objective and verifiable detection of frames in news text (M. Wu, 2006, p. 255).

As regards the types of frames, previous researchers indicate that there are two different types of media frames in terms of nature and content: issue-specific frames and generic frames. Issue-specific frames are “pertinent only to specific topics or events” (e.g., women’s movement and labour disputes) while generic frames can be identified across different issues and cultural contexts (de Vreese, 2005, p. 54). Iyengar (1991) provides a classic example of generic frames. In his analysis of the US network coverage of social issues from 1980 to 1981,

he identified two main news frames: episodic and thematic. Episodic frames focus on specific events. When news is framed episodically, public issues are constructed around specific cases and individuals. By contrast, thematic frames emphasise general evidence and the context of issues. Iyengar's research suggests that the type of news frame used influences the ways in which individuals attribute responsibility. He concludes that "episodic framing tends to elicit individualistic rather than societal attributions of responsibility while thematic framing has the opposite effect" (Shanto Iyengar, 1991, pp. 15-16).

After analysing depth interviews and media coverage, Neuman et al. (1992) identified five frames in terms of themes commonly used by media and audiences when discussing current affairs. They found that 'human impact', 'powerlessness', 'economics', 'moral values', and 'conflict' were not only commonly used in their audience interviews, but also presented in the news coverage. Based on Neuman et al.'s research, Semerko and Valkenburt (2000) developed five news frames: 'conflict', 'human interest', 'economic consequences', 'morality' and 'attribution of responsibility' (pp. 95-96). The conflict frame emphasises conflict between individuals, groups, institutions or countries: the human interest frame brings an individual's story or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue or problem; the economic consequences frame presents an event, problem or issue in terms of the economic consequences that will affect an individual, group, institution, region or country; the morality frame presents an event or issue in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions; and, the responsibility frame presents an issue or problem in a way as to attribute responsibility to either the government or to an individual or group for causing or solving the problem. Their study indicates that the most commonly used frame was the attribution of responsibility frame, followed by the conflict and economic consequences frames (H. A. Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

### **3.4.2 News Framing of HIV/AIDS**

The study of AIDS reporting reveals that the coverage of AIDS worldwide has roughly undergone three phases: initial reaction of fear and ignorance, development of experience and understanding, and, concentration on precise biomedical and policy development (Netter, 1992).

It seems that victimisation, deviance, abnormality and blame are often attached to the representation of diseases including HIV/AIDS (Gilman, 1988). The “healthy us” and “diseased other” dichotomy was a common frame used by news media in the initial phase of the epidemic (Juanne N. Clarke, 1992; Gilman, 1988; Lupton, 1993): AIDS was not viewed as a general public health problem, but as a problem of ‘others’. Albert (1986), who analysed AIDS coverage by U.S. magazines for the two-year period 1982 to 1984, found a boundary constructed between healthy readers and those affected by HIV. Whereas the perceived deviant character of the victims was emphasised in the news stories, the problematic aspect of the illness was disregarded. Clark (1992), who undertook a study of AIDS coverage in a sample of popular North American and Canadian magazines between 1980 and 1985, reached the same conclusion regarding the “healthy us” and “diseased other” dichotomy. He found AIDS described as an “overpowering enemy and a source of threat”, a consequence of the “gay lifestyle”. Lupton’s (1993) study reveals a similar ideological frame in the homophobic narrative surrounding terms such as the “heterosexual self” and the “homosexual other” in the Australian metropolitan press between the latter part of 1986 and the early part 1987. Bonacci’s (1992) study of AIDS coverage in several Asian countries showed “otherisation” constantly emphasised by Asian media as well. News coverage in these countries usually claimed that AIDS was imported into their countries through contact with Westerners. A study of the coverage of AIDS by China’s most prestigious newspaper *The People’s Daily* also showed AIDS framed as a “foreigner’s disease” in the late 1980s and early 1990s (X. Liu & Zhang, 2005).

In order to maintain a ‘safe’ distance from those affected by HIV, derogatory labels or metaphors are attached to those who we believe or fear to be more at risk than the “healthy us”. For example, labels such as the “Four-H” disease were used to distinguish the homosexual population, Haitians, heroin addicts and haemophiliacs from the “healthy us” (Grmek, 1990). The labels categorised HIV victims as “innocent victims” and “guilty victims” (Juanne N. Clarke, 2006), categorisations implying moral judgments. ‘Guilty’ victims were stigmatised: some people suggested that they contracted the disease after engaging in sinful sexual behaviour (Juanne N. Clarke, 1992; Lupton, 1993). For instance, a study of Malaysia’s English language newspapers over the period 1991 to 1992 showed that AIDS was considered a disease peculiar to abnormal and homosexual populations: sex workers and intravenous drug users were seen as the source of the spread of HIV (Lim, 1995). Moreover, rhetoric



surrounding similar blame attribution in terms of the origin of the HIV virus and its spread was also found in the news coverage (Bardhan, 2001; Bonacci, 1992; Ren, Hust, & Zhang, 2010; Sontag, 2001). Gilman's (1988) findings revealed that the western press was inclined to label Africa as the original source of the HIV virus; France and Germany blamed the United States for its spread; and, Haiti was similarly denounced by the United States. The Asian countries, on the other hand, considered the western countries responsible for the spread of the disease (Bonacci, 1992; Sontag, 2001). Blame attribution and the inactive response of governments were the hallmarks of the early phase of the AIDS coverage (J. Tong, 2006).

The rise in the numbers of heterosexuals infected by HIV/AIDS underpinned the transformation of the frames of HIV/AIDS in news narratives. When the disease was seen as a universal epidemic, seeking a biomedical cure became the object of public concern. Normalisation and medicalisation of HIV/AIDS emerged as the major news frames (Bardhan, 2001; McAllister, 1992). The volume of informative media coverage increased, and the biomedical theme became a consistent routine theme in news coverage worldwide (Bardhan, 2001; Sturken, 1997). In her study of the coverage of AIDS by mainstream U.S. news media, Watts (1993) found that the dominant coverage of AIDS was the quest for a scientific cure, and that the main sources of the news stories were scientists and biomedical researchers. A privileging of the biomedical frame in the news media in England was also detected in the local studies of the news media (Bardhan, 2001; Berridge, 1991; K. Williams & D. Miller, 1995; Rocheron & Linné, 1989; H. Semetko & Goldberg, 1993). Bardhan's (2001) study of 5 transnational wire services (i.e., *the Associated Press*, *Agence France-Presse*, *Reuters*, *Telegrafnoye Aгенstvo Sovetskovo Soyuz* and *Inter Press Service*) also supported this finding. Bardhan's analysis showed that the biomedical frame, which emphasised the medical and scientific aspects of AIDS, dominated the coverage by five wire services in the late-1980s. It remained to the fore in the 1990s, although by then socioeconomic, cultural, policy, human rights and ethical aspects of the pandemic were being emphasised and prevention and education, and the projection of HIV/AIDS as a globally interrelated phenomenon, were also drawing attention (Bardhan, 2001, p. 283). Bardhan's findings also indicate that biomedical sources (i.e., scientists), researchers and official news makers were overwhelmingly dominant voices in the news coverage of the above five wire services (Bardhan, 2001). Liu and Zhang's (2005) findings vis-a-vis AIDS coverage by *The People's Daily*, China's official newspaper, over the period 1988 to 2003, showed that prevention and cure, and medical frames remained

the top frames and had not changed significantly during the nineteen-year period, although socio-political and economic aspects of AIDS had a place in the coverage. Recent research into AIDS framing by four mainstream Chinese newspapers from 2003 to 2006, conducted by Chinese scholar Mingxin Zhang (2009), indicates that the prevention and cure, and political frames dominated coverage and the socio-economic frame was emphasized; but, although there were some differences in the adoption of frames between the Party organs and the journalistic professionalism pursued newspapers, the former tended to emphasise the biomedical aspect of AIDS, while the latter placed emphasis on the socio-economic aspects of AIDS.

But, as the epidemic continued to evolve, and news coverage of HIV/AIDS remained constant, in time the topic gradually became stale news. The volume of coverage declined steadily, having become routine for journalists (Bardhan, 2001) who found they had to work harder to get their AIDS stories published by the media (Hernandez, 1994). In the words of Bardhan THE (2001): “The AIDS coverage has become routinised and is more reactive than proactive, and passive description dominates over active narration about the future of the pandemic” (Bardhan, 2001, p. 303).

### **3.4.3 Framing Public Discourse of HIV/AIDS**

McAllister (1992) argues that “AIDS is the most explicitly politicized of medical conditions”. As a medical and social phenomenon, it involves social power (McAllister, 1992, p. 196). Thus, questions pertinent to how AIDS is talked about, how resources are allocated, who are described as “risk groups,” and who determines AIDS, underscore the inseparable connection between AIDS and power in society (McAllister, 1992, p. 196). Within these power relations, “medicine is becoming a major institution of social control” through the medicalisation of deviant behaviour (Conrad, 1975; Zola, 1972, p. 487). Clarke (1984) noted that: “Normality and abnormality tend now to be defined as medical conditions. What was once seen as sin may now be considered illness; and what once was grace or holiness, now may be viewed as health” (p. 205). According to Conrad, the term “medicalization” suggests that behaviour is defined as a medical problem or illness and some type of treatment is assigned for it (Conrad, 1975). Medicalisation occurs when medicalised language is used (McAllister, 1992).

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There is some evidence that mass media are willing to accept medicalised discourse. For example, Gill Seidel (1993), who studied the competing discourses of HIV/AIDS circulating within sub-Saharan Africa, found medical and medico-moral to be dominant discourses. Medicalised portrayals of deviance, for example “prostitutes” or “promiscuous people”, found prominence in media. Medicalised discourse not only shaped public perceptions of and responses to the pandemic and to those living with HIV/AIDS, but also, to a great degree, affected policy design and intervention in the national and international arenas (Seidel, 1993). Conrad (1975) suggested that deviance (i.e., alcoholism, insanity and drug addiction) is regarded as a manifestation of illness in modern society. Medicalised discourse is encouraged by all mainstream media because it concords the news value of objectivity and meets the rhetorical necessities of journalism, in the process “making the strange familiar” (McAllister, 1992, p. 207).

Metaphor has been widely used by media as an important tool for simplifying complex ideas and creating understanding. In the words of Aristotle: “Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else” (Aristotle 1457, cited in Sontag, 2001, p. 93). Similar to other diseases (i.e., tuberculosis and cancer), HIV/AIDS is associated with certain myths, ideologies and metaphors. Media use metaphors to reify the disease in the minds of the public and increase their understanding of it (Sontag, 2001). But, metaphors transform ideas while creating understanding (Nelkin, 1987). They “can trivialize an event or render it important; marginalize some groups, empower others; define an issue as a problem or reduce it to a routine” (Nelkin, 1987, p. 11).

Sontag (2001) notes that biomedical meaning and non-biomedical cultural meaning distinguish illnesses such as tuberculosis, cancer and AIDS. Because cultural meaning is so strong, patients are labeled and described as persons with a specific illness. The cultural meaning of AIDS not only creates an inseparable link between certain demographic groups and AIDS, but also “becomes a part of these groups’ identity....a metaphor for attributed personal characteristics of members of these groups” (cited in McAllister, 1992, p. 210). Earlier studies (Albert, 1986; Karpf, 1988; C. Patton, 1985; Seidman, 1988; Treichler, 1987) found an AIDS-as-group-metaphor (e.g., “risk group”) established in early AIDS coverage. For example, AIDS was portrayed as a “gay” disease and associated with the gay lifestyle. And, because “risk groups” were labeled social “deviants”, AIDS identified people

accordingly (cited in McAllister, 1992, p. 210). Sontag (2001) argues that social connections of illness with certain groups may lead to the blaming of individual victims. For example: “The tubercular could be an outlaw or a misfit; the cancer personality is regarded ...as one of life’s losers” (Sontag, 2001). She also notes that when AIDS is associated with “risk groups”, “the archaic idea... that illness has [been] judged” is revived (p. 134). As a consequence, those with the disease may be stigmatised, especially if society regards their behaviour or social personas as “deviant” (McAllister, 1992). While some members of the general public may view HIV/AIDS as a remote problem and opt not to take the necessary precautions against it (Spears, Abraham, Abrams, & Sheeran, 1992), others may attribute responsibility to members of “at risk” groups (Xiufang Li & Chitty, 2009).

Sontag (2001) and others (Connelly & Macleod, 2003; Ren, et al., 2010) found that from the outset, metaphors such as “plague”, “revenge” metaphors and “military” metaphors” were widely used by the Western press to describe AIDS. These metaphors were also utilised by the African and Asian media. Connelly and Macleod’s (2003) research into discourses of HIV/AIDS in South African daily newspapers showed HIV/AIDS framed as “war”. de Souza’s (2007) study of media framing of HIV/AIDS in Indian newspapers revealed a similar pattern. Ren, Hust and Zhang’s (2010) analysis of anti-stigma/stigma associated with HIV/AIDS revealed that the Chinese press also used war metaphors and other overt and covert stigmatising metaphors and language in their coverage of the topic, metaphors that reinforced the stigma attached to PLWHAs. “Plague” and “revenge” metaphors connote judgment: “war” metaphors” position power relations among different groups of people and imply victims as “innocent” or “guilty” (Connelly & Macleod, 2003; Sontag, 2001).

Dearing and Roger (1992) argue that “issues are already laden with meanings prior to receiving news coverage” (p. 174). McAllister (1992) observes that the information imparted in news articles about AIDS is essentially controlled by certain medical organisations and medical journals. For example, the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) was the main source of information for the American press during the early years of the epidemic. This is also true of the Chinese media. Chinese scholar Dun Li (2008a, p. 80) notes that from the beginning of HIV/AIDS outbreak in China, information about HIV/AIDS in Chinese media was monopolised by health administration departments and their affiliated centres for disease control (CDCs), with CDC discourse emphasising the “who” element more than anything else

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(Albert, 1986, cited in McAllister 1992, p. 214). Reporting mainly contained information pertaining to the definition of AIDS, the transmission routes, the consequences of contracting AIDS, means of prevention, “at risk” groups and the potential threat posed by such groups to others (Jun Jing, 2006). The highlighting of *who* were “at risk” groups resulted in a strong link being created between the disease and a particular demographic group. Moreover, due to the emphasis that the news reportage placed upon the “deviant” nature of those with the disease, those who contracted AIDS became subjects of cultural meaning and cultural judgment. “AIDS became a metaphor for those...who violated social norms.” (McAllister, 1992, p. 212).

### 3.5 Summary

This chapter has reviewed several paradigms of media influence including: the “powerful media” paradigm, the “minimal effects” or “limited effect” paradigm, uses and gratifications paradigm, agenda-setting paradigm and framing. It has also highlighted the Chinese media’s agenda-setting of HIV/AIDS issues and conceptualised framing theories, with particular focus on news framing of HIV/AIDS.

A review of effects research conducted over past decades reveals that effects research has variously shifted from a powerful to a limited to a more powerful model (McQuail, 2000). The renewal approach to media effects has shifted attention from direct attitude and affect to long-term change and cognition (McQuail, 2000). The focus of renewal effects has been upon “intervening variables of context, and disposition and motivation”, and the process of media production and the construction of media content (McQuail, 2000, p. 420). McQuail (2000) proposes that the transformation of media effect paradigms has resulted in “a methodological shift, especially away from quantitative survey methods” (p. 421).

Reviews of the extant literature addressing theories concerning the influences on mass media content and the relationship between media and society (chapter 2) and the relevant theories surrounding media influence (chapter 3) provide the theoretical foundation for this study and help to answer the research questions posed in chapters 5 and 6. In the chapter that follows, I

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will discuss my methodological approach, which employs the naturalistic paradigm and adopts qualitative methods for both collecting and analysing data. In addition, I will provide a detailed description of the operational process and discuss the issue of credibility.

# **Chapter 4**

## **Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Methodology refers to...the principles that underlie and guide the full process of studying the obdurate character of the given empirical world (Blumer, 1969).

According to Herbert Blumer's (1969) definition, methodology "embraces the entire scientific quest" and "complete scientific act" that "has to fit the obdurate character of the social world under study" (p.23). It (or 'they' in terms of the methodologies) comprises/comprise a full scope of strategies and procedures of a study including "developing a picture of an empirical world; asking questions about that world and turning these into researchable problems; finding the best means of doing so – that involve choices about methods and the data to be sought, the development and use of concepts, and the interpretation of findings" (Alasuutari, Bickman, & Brannen, 2008, p. 1). The primary aims of this chapter are first to discuss methodology in the context of this study (Section 4.2), and then the specific methods adopted for purposes of data collection and data analysis (Section 4.3). I also detail the operational procedures (Section 4.4), the selection of research sites, research sample and data sources, data collection and data analyses. This is followed by a discussion of the issue of credibility of this study (Section 4.5). The chapter concludes with a summary of the methodologies employed and the operational procedures (Section 4.6).

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## 4.2 Discussion of Methodological Context

Time and different academic disciplines have shown that there are different ways to approach social inquiry. Researchers in general find they have to select from varieties of research approaches or paradigms. “Paradigms provide scientists not only with a map but also with some of the directions essential for map-making” (Kuhn, 1970, p. 109, cited in Corbetta 2003, p.10). Creswell suggests that paradigms not only help us understand phenomena and “advance assumptions about the social world”, but also tell us “how science should be conducted, and what constitutes legitimate problem, solutions, and criteria of ‘proof’”. Thus, paradigms embrace both theories and methods (John W. Creswell, 1994, p. 1).

Although there are many different appellations attached to paradigms, Frey, Botan and Kreps (2000) identify two major paradigms (or ‘worldviews’ in social sciences): positivist versus naturalistic. From the 1920s up to the present day, so called ‘paradigm wars’ or methodological debate have persisted between the different schools of social science (Alastalo, 2008; Bryman, 2008a; Nilson, 2008). The debate surrounding paradigms is rooted in their philosophical positions, that is, in their epistemological and ontological differences, which determine the choice of technical methods (i.e., quantitative or qualitative) employed by researchers in practice (Bryman, 2008a).

The positivist paradigm (or positivism), an epistemological position that emphasises ‘the importance of imitating the natural sciences’ (Bryman, 2008b, p. 13) is mainly concerned with “how to apply some of the methods used in the physical sciences to the study of human behavior” (Frey, et al., 2000, p. 18); the naturalistic paradigm, on the other hand, adopts an ontological position that centres on the socially-constructed nature of reality and is mainly concerned with “the development of methods that capture the socially constructed and situated nature of human behavior” (Frey, et al., 2000, p. 18). Thus, while the positivist paradigm emphasises the *science*, the naturalistic paradigm emphasises *social* as in “social science” (Frey, et al., 2000, p. 18, original emphasis).

The adoption of different paradigms influences not only the researcher’s role vis-à-vis values in the research process, but also his/her choice of research methods. Advocates of the



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positivist paradigm claim that “research can be *value-free* and *unbiased*”, whereas advocates of the naturalistic paradigm maintain that “research is inherently *value-laden* and *biased*” (Frey, et al., 2000, p. 19, original emphasis).

Researchers who adopt the positive paradigm are apt to employ a deductive approach in which emphasis is upon the testing of theories (Bryman, 2008b). Positive researchers incline towards quantitative methods that stress quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2008b). Data take the form of meaningful numbers that often obtain from experiments, surveys, content analysis and interaction analysis (Frey, et al., 2000). Through quantification, ‘*context-free*’ conclusions can be generated and “be generalized to people, situations, and time periods other than the ones studies” (Frey, et al., 2000, p. 19, original emphasis).

In contrast, researchers who adopt the naturalistic paradigm tend to employ the inductive approach, according to which stress is upon the generation of theories (Bryman, 2008b). Because the purpose of naturalistic research is to obtain “a *wholistic understanding* of the patterns and behaviors that characterize human beings” (Frey, et al., 2000, p. 20, original emphasis), or in Denzin and Lincoln’s (1994) words, to seek to “make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them”, research is often conducted in the natural setting, wherein research participants feel they can behave ‘normally’, rather than in settings created and controlled by researchers (Norman K. Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Frey, et al., 2000). Researchers, according to Bryman (2008b), tend to use qualitative methods that focus on words rather than quantification when collecting and analysing data. In the research process, data is in the main obtained from participant observation and in-depth interviews, performance studies and some form of rhetorical criticism; thus, they may take the form of symbols other than meaningful numbers (Frey, et al., 2000, p. 20). And, although the outcome of the research may be limited to ‘*context-bound findings*’ and only apply to a particular cross-section of people, ethnic group, situation, or time period, it may notwithstanding render “a rich *understanding* of [a particular] social context; and, in some cases, serve the purpose of promoting *social change*” (Frey, et al., 2000, p. 20, original emphasis).

David Silverman (2010) argues that “in choosing a method, everything depends upon what you are trying to find out. No method of research, quantitative or qualitative, is intrinsically

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better than any other” (2010, p.10). As regards my research, I seek to examine the construction of HIV/AIDS in Chinese newspapers, to ascertain any influencing factors and provide alternatives for improvement. In order to attain this goal, I need to acquire a detailed understanding of the issue under scrutiny and the context in which my research participants (journalists) address HIV/AIDS issues; as well, I need to share their experience and hear their stories, voices and opinions because only then will I gain a comprehensive understanding of their views of – and approaches to reporting – the topic. To this end, clearly the naturalistic paradigm at the paradigm-level and the qualitative approach at the method-level are best fitted to serve the purposes of my research inquiry.

## **4.3 Rationale for the selection of a particular methodological approach**

### **4.3.1 The Pertinence of Research Questions and Instruments**

The research results will be derived from the following five core questions:

- (1) How do Chinese journalists at the national, provincial and city levels consider HIV/AIDS issues?
- (2) How is HIV/AIDS framed in Chinese newspapers? What is the dominant discourse surrounding HIV/AIDS in Chinese national, provincial and metropolitan newspapers? And how does this discourse relate to the ways in which the issue is framed by different journalists at different levels of the Chinese administrative system?
- (3) What factors influence the ways in which different levels of journalists frame the HIV/AIDS issue?
- (4) How does journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS affect public policy? Are there positive and negative consequences associated with the development of public policy?

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(5) How can HIV/AIDS be reframed to evoke a different way of thinking, one that embraces a broader range of alternative policies? What forms would new ways of framing HIV/AIDS take?

Drawing upon questions and related theories, the following five propositions are examined and analysed:

- (1) National and provincial policy framing of HIV/AIDS influences the journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS;
- (2) Internal and external factors of media organisations influence the journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS;
- (3) Journalistic framing, to a certain extent, influences public policy making;
- (4) There is a greater space for public deviation at the level of national journalists regarding national HIV/AIDS policy framing than at the level of local journalists;
- (5) Private framing by journalists influences the journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS.

Question 5 is based upon a question posed by FrameWorks Institution (FrameWorks Institute 2008) in their Strategic Frame Analysis.

“Data are the starting point of any empirical research” (Krippendorff, 2004). In my attempt to obtain data for this research, two instruments, i.e., textual analysis and semi-structured in-depth interviews were utilised. The relationships between research questions, propositions and methods are shown below in Figure 4.1.

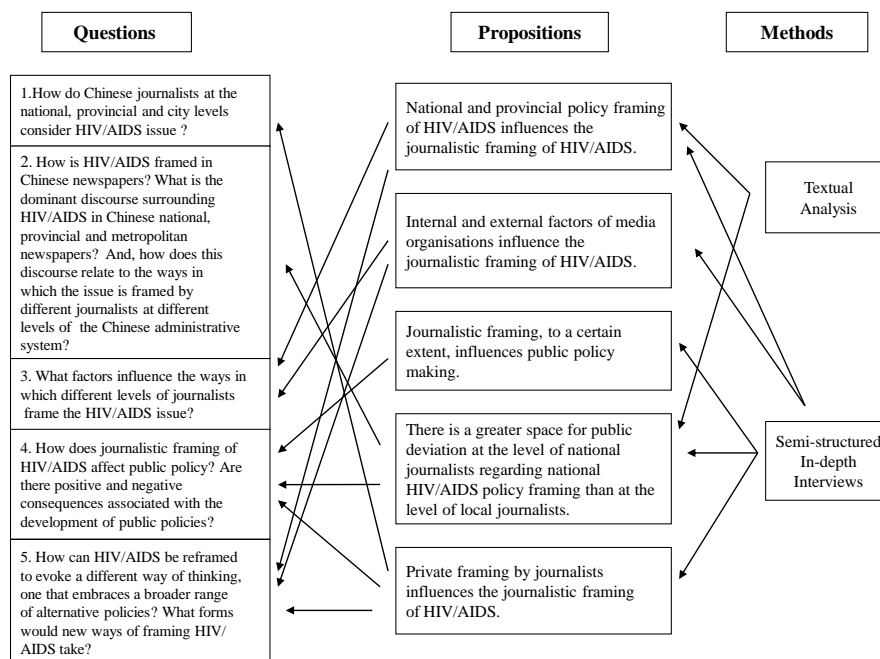


Figure 4.1 Relationship between Research Questions, Propositions and Methods

### 4.3.2 Textual Analysis

“Documents can be treated as a source of data in their own right – in effect an alternative to questionnaires, interviews or observation” (Denscombe, 2007, p. 227). Newspapers, as written forms of documents, are widely used by scholars as social research data (Corbetta, 2003; Denscombe, 2007) because they systematically provide a daily valuable source of ‘factual and cultural aspects of our societies’ for research purposes (Corbetta, 2003, p. 297). Textual analysis is an important research method used to study the characteristics of recorded or visual messages, i.e., newspaper articles and television programs (Frey, et al., 2000). In tandem with textual analysis, some observational research strategies, i.e., content analysis, interaction analysis, discourse analysis and rhetorical criticism are adopted when analysing language, symbols, numbers, and nonverbal cues of existing records or texts (Frey, et al., 2000).

In my study, pursuant to my goal of achieving the research objectives, I aim: (a) to study the ways in which Chinese newspapers present HIV/AIDS issues, and the major discourse and

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influencing factors surrounding HIV/AIDS in Chinese newspapers; and, (b) to uncover the nature of the social reality of HIV/AIDS in China as perceived and interpreted by news professionals. To this end, newspapers were chosen as one of source of data. Textual analysis was adopted as a principal method to examine the performance of Chinese press vis-à-vis HIV/AIDS reportage.

Several reasons accounted for my choice of newspapers, the first being that newspapers remain one of the most powerful mass media in China. According to the first nationwide investigation into media credibility in 2007, the scale of public accessibility of newspapers is 79.63%, second to that of television (95.52%) and higher than the Internet (43.56%), news magazines (37.77%) and radio (34.18%) (G. Yu, Zhang, & Jin, 2007). Second, Chinese mass media were identified by the public as a primary source of information about HIV/AIDS (Bu & Liu, 2004; Li Li, et al., 2009; TICC, 2005). Newspapers (53.5%), along with TV (79.2%) and the Internet (34.1%) were among the five leading HIV/AIDS information sources (CHAMP, 2008). Third, newspapers provided complete and consecutive news coverage of HIV/AIDS issues from 2000 to 2008 and, for this reason, adequately serve the purposes of this research.

### **4.3.3 Semi-structured In-depth Interviews**

In-depth interviews are a qualitative research method used to explore the more complex and subtle phenomena surrounding a given topic of interest (Denscombe, 2007; H. J. Rubin & Rubin, 2005). They allow researchers to “gain insights into things like people’s opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences”, to investigate sensitive issues and to obtain ‘privileged information’ from key players in the field (Denscombe, 2007, pp. 174-175). In addition, they allow researchers to examine and interpret the motivations behind interviewees’ actions and to identify the various constraints they face, thus enabling a better understanding of the meanings of the social phenomena under scrutiny (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

In my study, the semi-structured in-depth interview method was adopted because not only is it flexible, but it enabled interviewees to relax and develop their ideas, to speak more widely (Corbetta, 2003) and to provide open-ended answers to the questions (Denscombe, 2007) I

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raised during the course of the interviews. At the same time, it ensured that I could deal with all of the relevant themes and obtain all of the information critical to the validity of the study (Corbetta, 2003).

In sum, the value of the semi-structured in-depth interview method for this study derived from its ability to gain rich qualitative data based upon the perspectives of selected journalists. It allowed me to share their experiences of HIV/AIDS reportage and to uncover hidden information and constraints involved in newsroom decision-making that affect journalistic patterns and Chinese newspapers' framing of HIV/AIDS issues.

## **4.4 Operationalisation of Methods**

### **4.4.1 Research Sites**

Data were collected in three cities in China: Beijing, Kunming city (Yunnan province) and Zhengzhou city (Henan province).

Several reasons contributed to the selection of my research locations. Of the 31 provinces of China, only six were severely affected due to the unevenness of the country's HIV/AIDS epidemic: Yunnan, Henan, Guangxi, Xinjiang, Guangdong and Sichuan. These provinces accounted for 80 per cent of the total number of reported HIV/AIDS cases in China (Xinhuanet, 1 December 2008). Among them, Yunnan and Henan, the two provinces initially attacked by HIV, remain the most heavily affected in China (SCAWCO & UNTG, 2007). For this reason, they are representative of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in terms of degree of severity and modes of transmission (i.e., intravenous drug use and commercial blood donations).

All of the interviews with informants from Yunnan's two selected local newspapers were conducted in Kunming, the provincial capital city. Interviews with informants from Henan's two selected local newspapers were conducted in Zhengzhou, the capital city of Henan province. Beijing, China's capital and the hub of all national level media, is the country's political, cultural and economic centre. Most of my interviews with journalists from the national level media were conducted in Beijing.

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## 4.4.2 Research Samples and Data Sources

### 4.4.2.1 Selection of Newspaper Samples

The sample newspapers selected for the study include: *The People's Daily*, *The Southern Weekly*; the *Yunnan Daily*, *The Spring City Evening*, the *Henan Daily* and the *Dahe Daily*.

#### ***Rationale for Sampling Newspapers***

The criteria for sampling newspapers were based upon research conducted by Chinese scholars Wei Bu and Xiaohong Liu (2004), according to whom the major sources of HIV/AIDS coverage in China were the following three forms of media: dominant, professional and local. Dominant media, in particular national-level dominant media, e.g., *The People's Daily* and *Xinhua News Agency*, which represent the Chinese government's stance; professional media that target medical workers and health workers; and, local media, including provincial and city level media, which mainly target local audiences. Due to local media's flexibility of reporting, they are more accessible to audiences than the two forms mentioned earlier. Professional media will be omitted from my research due to the scope of their target audiences and their characteristics of specialisation. National and local newspapers will be selected for my research.

In 2008, newspapers in China totaled in excess of 2,081 (Xinhuanet, 8 October 2008). After a period of analysis, I finally chose *The People's Daily*, *The Southern Weekly*, the *Yunnan Daily*, *The Spring City Evening*, the *Henan Daily* and the *Dahe Daily* as my subjects for study. Among the six newspapers, *The People's Daily* and *The Southern Weekly* were national newspapers.

These six newspapers were chosen for particular reasons:

First, they were representative of different types of newspapers in China; that is, national versus local and organ papers versus market-oriented or commercial newspapers. Due to their

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different natures, they differ in their coverage and distribution; as well, their targets are different. The choice of newspapers from different levels (national versus local) and of different natures (organ papers versus commercial papers) should afford a better view of the coverage of HIV/AIDS by the Chinese media.

Party organs are closely related to and partially financed by the Party and the government. Because of their political role, they have various advantages; for example, privileged distribution through Party channels to state-owned firms and institutions. They mainly target the so-called official world (X. Zhang, 2011). Market-oriented or commercial media (e.g., the urban dailies and weekends) are less related to the China Communist Party and the government, and entirely dependent upon the market financially. They “make up the most resource-rich segment of the Chinese press” (Zhao 2008, p. 296). “Evening papers” and “metro papers”, are the core of mass appeal newspapers in China. Although they are subsidiaries of provincial and national party organs, they “operate as semi-autonomous business units, serving as the perfect media for the Party to reach the rising urban consumer strata” (Yuezhi Zhao, 2008, p. 81).

Among the six newspapers, *The People's Daily*, the Party organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CCP), is the most authoritative and influential newspaper in China with a daily circulation of 2,300,000. As the mouthpiece of the Communist Party of China, *The People's Daily* generally provides direct information about the policies and viewpoints of the Party (Meihua Info, 2008), and, for this reason, represents the Chinese government's stance on HIV/AIDS.

*The Southern Weekly*, which is based in Guangzhou city, Southeastern China, is one of the country's most popular and influential newspapers. It is also representative of commercial newspaper in China. Although under the aegis of the Guangdong provincial Party, it is an independent newspaper because it has a separate registration number (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). It is distributed nationally and has a weekly circulation of 1,300,000 (Meihua Info, 2008). *The Southern Weekly* is known for its in-depth investigative reporting of social issues related to topics that most of the Party organs either opt not to touch or cannot publish; for example, AIDS in rural China and migrant workers' rights (Rosenthal, 24 March 2002). Their reporting is apt to be relatively humanistic, with an eye on the common people (Meihua Info, 2008).



*The Southern Weekly*, one of the first newspapers to report on HIV/AIDS issues, has continually shown its concern for the outbreak since the late 1990s.

The other four newspapers, the *Yunnan Daily*, *The Spring City Evening*, the *Henan Daily* and the *Dahe Daily* are local newspapers. They were selected because they are published and distributed in two of the most widely HIV-infected provinces in China. The *Yunnan Daily* and the *Henan Daily* are two provincial Party organs with a daily circulation of 200,000 and 380,000 respectively (Meihua Info, 2008). Each reflects the stance of its local government on the HIV/AIDS issue.

*The Spring City Evening* and the *Dahe Daily* are metropolitan newspapers. In terms of daily circulation, both ranked first in their own provinces with circulations of four hundred and fifty thousand and one million and twenty thousand respectively. They are most influential and popular newspaper among the local people (Meihua Info, 2008).

The six newspapers have their Internet presence: it allows them to deliver HIV/AIDS information to a larger audience, particularly to young audiences.

With the rapid development of information and communication technology (ICT) in China, the Internet has tremendously changed the way of communication and interaction between the traditional media and their audience. The Internet has become one of the main channels through which the public obtain and share information, and exchange ideas. Since the 1990s, under the pressure of the new communication technology, China's traditional media outlets have started to run their own websites. In 2000, there were 160 newspapers published in Internet version (53bk.com, 2010). Nowadays, all of the mainstream media in China have their own websites and online edition. Among these newspapers, *The People's Daily*<sup>14</sup>, *The Southern Weekly*<sup>15</sup>, the *Henan Daily*<sup>16</sup>, the *Dahe Daily*<sup>17</sup>, the *Yunnan Daily*<sup>18</sup>, and *The Spring City Evening*<sup>19</sup> established their own websites earlier. For example, *The People's Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily* established their websites and provided online editions in January 1998 and July 1999 respectively (People.com.cn; Yunnan.cn, 2010). Moreover, the six newspapers

<sup>14</sup> The People's Daily: <http://paper.people.com.cn>

<sup>15</sup> The Southern Weekly: <http://www.infzm.com>

<sup>16</sup> Henan Daily: [http://newspaper.dahe.cn/hnrb/html/2012-04/06/node\\_43.htm](http://newspaper.dahe.cn/hnrb/html/2012-04/06/node_43.htm)

<sup>17</sup> Dahe Daily: [http://newspaper.dahe.cn/dhb/html/2012-04/06/node\\_66.htm](http://newspaper.dahe.cn/dhb/html/2012-04/06/node_66.htm)

<sup>18</sup> Yunnan Daily: [http://yndaily.yunnan.cn/html/2012-04/06/node\\_2.htm](http://yndaily.yunnan.cn/html/2012-04/06/node_2.htm)

<sup>19</sup> The Spring City Evening: [http://ccwb.yunnan.cn/html/2012-04/06/node\\_19.htm](http://ccwb.yunnan.cn/html/2012-04/06/node_19.htm)

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provide online forums that allow the public to express their opinions and participate in the discussion of issues they find concerning. In short, their newspapers on the Internet play a role equally important as that of their print counterparts in delivering information and informing the public.

***Period of study:***

My period of study of the coverage of HIV/AIDS issues by the selected newspapers spanned from 1 November to 31 December each year from 2000 to 2008. The reasons for selecting this period were as follows: (a) after the year 2000, the Chinese government increased political commitment and placed prevention of HIV/AIDS on the agenda of leaders of government and the ruling party (MOH & UNTG, 2003). As a result, the coverage of HIV/AIDS-related issues increased greatly in China's newspapers (Bu & Liu, 2004; TICC, 2005); (b) previous research indicated that Chinese newspapers' coverage of HIV/AIDS mainly appeared in November and December each year, in particular around 1 December, World AIDS Day (Xiguang Li & Zhou, 2005).

#### 4.4.2.2 Selection of Informants

Strauss and Corbin (1990) regard informants as 'experts', i.e., as people who specialise in local knowledge. In other words, informants or interviewees are a particular people, who possess a substantial amount of knowledge of issues relevant to a particular research topic. The aim of my study is to examine the ways in which HIV/AIDS is represented in Chinese newspapers, to identify the dominant frames and discourses surrounding HIV/AIDS, and to explore the factors that influence the representation of HIV/AIDS in said Chinese newspapers. To this end, journalists and editors involved in HIV/AIDS reportage were deemed appropriate informants for this study. In particular, those who had covered HIV/AIDS issues in the six selected newspapers were included in the list of in-depth interviews. Some were also recruited from other national media, e.g., from *Xinhua News Agency*, due to its guiding function for other media and its important news releases about HIV/AIDS, which were invariably published by local newspapers.

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### 4.4.3 Procedures

#### 4.4.3.1 Data Collection

My field research was conducted between April and July 2009 in three cities in China: Beijing (China's capital city), Kunming (Yunnan province) and Zhengzhou (Henan province). Textual analysis and semi-structured in-depth interviews were the two instruments employed for examination/interpretation and collection data respectively. Newspapers texts collection was undertaken parallel with interviews according to the following schedule:

- (1) Kunming: 3 April to 29 June 2009; 20 July to 28 July 2009
- (2) Beijing: 1 June to 26 June 2009
- (3) Zhengzhou: 29 June to 17 July, 2009

##### 4.4.3.1.1 Newspapers Data Collection

With the exception of *The People's Daily*, full texts of all of the stories relating to HIV/AIDS in the other five newspapers were photocopied from the original newspapers due to the unavailability of electronic versions. The sample comprised 981 stories of which 155 were from *The People's Daily*, 61 from *The Southern Weekly*, 100 from the *Henan Daily*, 147 from the *Dahe Daily*, 203 from the *Yunnan Daily*, and 315 from *The Spring City Evening*.

##### 4.4.3.1.2 Conducting Semi-Structured In-Depth Interviews

Several steps were taken to conduct in-depth interviews:

###### (1) Identifying journalists

My recruitment of informants or interviewees was based (a) upon recommendations made by the Centre for International Communication Studies, School of Journalism & Communication, Tsinghua University, which had been organising annual training workshops for journalists

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who report regularly on HIV/AIDS issues nationwide; and, (b) upon a scan of the news coverage of HIV/AIDS in the six newspapers. Thirty journalists and editors were identified and recruited for participation in interviews.

## (2) Contacting interviewees

The potential interviewees were initially contacted by email or telephone calls addressing the purpose of the study. Twenty-eight potential interviewees agreed to participate. Only two who worked for the *Henan Daily* declined my invitation because they were told by their organisation that they were not allowed to participate in the research interviews without first obtaining the permission of the Provincial Propaganda Department. Hence, in order to ascertain the factors that affected the coverage of HIV/AIDS in Henan's press, journalists from other media in the province were contacted and recruited to take part in the interviews. After those contacted accepted my invitation, a phone call confirming the dates and venues followed.

## (3) Interview Questions

Interviews were semi-structured and included some predetermined and open-ended questions. Because the interviewees involved both journalists who wrote the news stories and editors who were in charge of distributing news dispatches in the newsrooms, the interview questions differed slightly in accordance with the journalists/editor's roles.

The top 9 interview questions for journalist participants are listed below for general reference:

- 1) Why do you report HIV/AIDS issues? What is your motivation? Is it important to report on HIV/AIDS? Why?
- 2) How do you think personally about HIV/AIDS? And, as a professional media worker, how do you think about HIV/AIDS in social, economic and political terms? How have you reached that opinion?
- 3) If you had to explain HIV/AIDS to someone who has no knowledge of the disease, how would you explain it? Are there any images or pictures that come to mind when you think about associated issues?
- 4) What kind of news stories related to HIV/AIDS do you usually cover? Where do your sources come from? What is your main concern regarding HIV/AIDS?
- 5) What criteria do you apply when selecting news for your news organisation, especially

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news related to HIV/AIDS?

- 6) Do you feel any pressure when reporting on HIV/AIDS? If so, what form of pressure? Where does it come from?
- 7) How do you think about the social impact of your coverage of HIV/AIDS?
- 8) Do you think that Chinese journalists currently have to contend with problems when covering HIV/AIDS and, if so, what kinds of problems? What are your suggestions for the further reporting of HIV/AIDS?
- 9) What kind of support – if any - do you need when reporting on HIV/AIDS?

The top 9 questions compiled for editor participants, i.e., for those in charge of distributing news dispatches in the newsrooms, are listed below for general reference:

- 1) What criteria do you use to support and assess your colleagues' coverage of HIV/AIDS?
- 2) What topics or themes surrounding HIV/AIDS are considered most newsworthy by your organisation?
- 3) Do you refer to any media coverage of HIV/AIDS as reference when you are in the newsroom? If so, to which? And why?
- 4) How do you personally think about HIV/AIDS? And how, as a professional media worker, do you think about HIV/AIDS in social, economic and political terms?
- 5) What form do you think good coverage of HIV/AIDS should take?
- 6) What kinds of topics or themes do you expect from your colleagues' coverage of HIV/AIDS?
- 7) Does your news organisation experience any pressure when reporting on HIV/AIDS?
- 8) From your point of view, what needs to be improved in the coverage of HIV/AIDS?
- 9) From your point of view, what role should the media play in the prevention of HIV/AIDS?

#### (4) Conducting interviews

Interviews were conducted in Kunming, Beijing and Zhengzhou during consecutive months in April to July 2009. Prior to the interviews, each interviewee was asked to read and sign a Consent Form (in the Chinese language), which explicitly stated the purpose of the research project and the research ethic, including the choice of being identified or remaining anonymous. It is worthy noting that the majority of the journalists requested anonymity. Permission to use audio-recording or note-taking was obtained before each interview. Interviews lasted from forty-five minutes to two hours and proceeded until no new themes

emerged. Twenty-seven interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the interviewees. One interviewee expressed unwillingness to be recorded: two answered via email due to being physically unavailable to meet in person. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. An overview of the interviews appears in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Overview of Interviews

Level of Media	Name of Newspaper	Number of Interviewees	Audio Taped	Non-audio Taped	Email
National	<i>The People's Daily</i>	3	3		
	<i>The Southern Weekly</i>	10	10		
	<i>Other Media</i>	3	4		
Provincial	<i>Henan Daily</i>	1			1
	<i>Yunnan Daily</i>	3	3		
	<i>Other Media</i>	3	2		
Metropolitan	<i>Dahe Daily</i>	3	2	1	
	<i>The Spring City Evening</i>	4	3		1
Total		30	27	1	2

Table 4.1 shows that 3 interviewees worked for *The People's Daily*, 10 for *The Southern Weekly*, 1 for the *Henan Daily*, 3 for the *Yunnan Daily*, 3 for the *Dahe Daily*, 4 for *The Spring City Evening*, and 6 for other media. The number of the interviewees was not even among the six newspapers, because it depended both upon the numbers of journalists involved in HIV/AIDS reportage for the different newspapers from 2000 to 2008 and the number who agreed to be interviewed. Among the thirty interviewees, 5 editors at different levels (e.g. editor in charge, editorial director and editor) participated in the interviews. They were from *The Southern Weekly*, the *Yunnan Daily*, the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening* respectively.

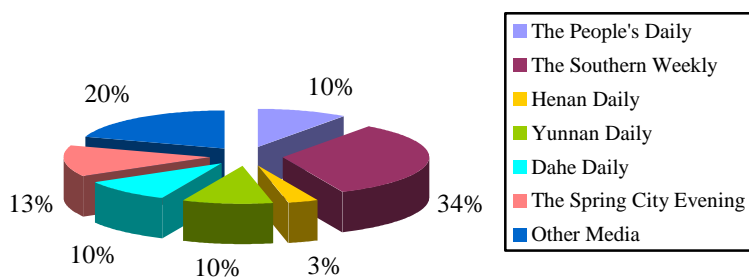


Figure 4.2 Percentage of interviewees from different press

Figure 4.2 shows that of the six newspapers, *The Southern Weekly* showed the largest proportion of interviewees, with 34 % of the total number. That was because more journalists and editors were involved in HIV/AIDS coverage in *The Southern Weekly* between 2000 and 2008 compared to the other five newspapers. To some degree, this proved that *The Southern Weekly* attached considerable importance to their HIV/AIDS coverage.

Figure 4.2 also shows that the *Henan Daily* had the lowest number of interviewees (3% out of the total number), not only because few of its journalists were involved in HIV/AIDS coverage between 2000 and 2008, but also because few of its journalists agreed to the research interviews due to restrictions imposed by their organisation. The only interviewee who responded to the proposed interview via email opted only to express her opinion regarding the improvement of HIV/AIDS coverage in the future, rather than answer the research questions. Hence, in order to determine the factors that affected the coverage of HIV/AIDS by Henan's press, journalists from other media (e.g., *Xinhua News Agency* and other media in the province) were interviewed.

There was one similarity between the journalists representing the Party organs (i.e., *The People's Daily*, the *Henan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily*) and their affiliated newspapers (i.e., the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*) that is worthy of note; that is, that the majority of them was in charge of covering health-related issues because HIV/AIDS was assigned to the domain of health. Thus HIV/AIDS was likely to receive daily routine coverage. But important HIV/AIDS events, in particular those related to politics, were usually covered by journalists in charge of the political news.

#### 4.4.3.2 Data analysis

"Data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data...for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion" (John W. Creswell, 2007 p. 148). In order to achieve this, many approaches can be adopted. For the purposes of my data analysis, for example, qualitative content analysis was employed.

Silverman (2001) claims that content analysis is an accepted method of textual investigation, particularly in the field of mass communications. A widely-used method for analysing written, verbal or visual communication messages (Cole, 1988), it may be utilised with both

qualitative and quantitative data, and in either an inductive or deductive way (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). It provides a methodological approach to establishing patterns of representation in media content over a given period of time (Deacon, Pickering, Golding, & Murdock, 1999, p. 132). Qualitative content analysis, in particular, can help researchers to conduct in-depth studies of relatively focused areas and to generate ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973, cited in Denscombe 2007, p.248) when dealing with complex social situations (Denscombe, 2007). Thus, in the case of this thesis, qualitative content analysis has proven well suited to exploring and discovering the frames, discourses and influencing factors that may otherwise have remained hidden in the news content of the current study.

#### 4.4.3.2.1 Newspapers Textual Analysis

Previous research into HIV/AIDS coverage by Chinese mass media undertaken by Chinese scholars Wei Bu and Xiaohong Liu’s (2004) and by Tsinghua International Center (2005) for Communication Studies, along with Bardhan (2001) and Ren’s (2010) analyses, have proven the basis for deductively-derived frames. The story is one of unity of analyses. A variety of framing devices, including words, metaphors, exemplars, depictions, catchphrases, headlines, leads, source selections, quotes selections, and concluding statements and paragraphs (William A. Gamson & Modigliani, 1989) were used to detect the frames. In the case of this thesis, in order to establish trustworthiness of data and to obtain valid and reliable inference, two coders were involved in the coding and a three-stage analysis process was conducted.

I (the thesis author), as one of the two coders, read and reread all of the articles so as to gain an overview of the content. I examined ten per cent of the data according to the identified frames in order to see if there was congruence. Where the data suggested some modifications, these were considered and, where appropriate, adopted as frames (inductively derived frames). The frames were drawn from the main topics, which were clearly defined to ensure accuracy and consistency. When any overlap of the topics occurred, preference was given to the topic identified in the headline and lead paragraph. Topic selection was conducted to ensure maximum variation sampling by covering a variety of topics for in-depth analysis.

In the second stage, a codebook of codes was developed to achieve acceptable levels of reliability. This codebook included the definition of each code and the text segments assigned to each code. For purposes of testing the codebook, a random sample of each month (i.e.,



November and December) of each year (2000 to 2008) was coded by two coders. The percentage of agreement between the two coders was 93.75%, a figure deemed acceptable (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Then, the entire data (i.e., 981 news stories) were coded independently by two coders. After identifying the dominant frames, news stories were selected for in-depth analysis. The criteria for selecting articles were information density and analysis-friendly data. The number of articles analysed in-depth totaled 495.

The third stage required analysing the selected articles thoroughly and identifying the dominant discourse emerging from the main topics. This analysis specifically focused upon metaphor, terminology and key themes to be identified. Themes were drawn from the literature discussed previously; i.e., themes considered important to the discourses surrounding the general HIV/AIDS pandemic in news media (de Souza, 2007; Wenham, Harris, & Sebar, 2009). In addition, dominant sources or newsmakers, metaphors and terminology related to HIV/AIDS and PLWHAs were also analysed in-depth.

#### 4.4.3.2.2 In-depth Interview Data Analysis

The topics were units of analysis. First, all written transcripts were re-read several times to obtain an overall picture of their content. Then, significant phrases or sentences were identified in each transcript and meanings formulated. The latter were clustered into themes allowing for the emergence of themes common to all transcripts until the emergence of themes was exhausted.

In order to protect the identities of individual interviewees, anonymous coding systems were used in the interview transcripts analysis. Interviewees were represented by different codes using the ‘approach’ method (I–Interview): the location or organisation in which the interviewee was based (i.e., Y–Yunnan; H–Henan; P–*The People’s Daily*; S–*The Southern Weekly*; N–national media), number (01–10), signifying participants’ roles in their respective media organisations (J–Journalists; E–Editor). For example:

IP-01-J: Interviewee from *The People’s Daily* No. 1, a journalist.

IY-05-J+E: Interviewee from Yunnan province No. 5, once a journalist and now an editor in charge

The results of analyses appear in Chapters 5 and 6 are discussed in Chapter 7.

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## 4.5 Issue of Credibility of the Research

David Silverman (2000) argues that credibility is essential to both qualitative and quantitative research. ‘Validity’ and ‘reliability’ are two concepts central to any discussion of credibility or trustworthiness.

Hammersley (1990) provides frequently quoted definitions of ‘reliability’ and ‘validity’:

By validity, I mean truth: interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers (p. 57).

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions (p. 67).

Reliability mainly concerns whether the data and the methods of data gathering are reliable and lead to valid results: validity mainly concerns the “accuracy” of the findings (John W. Creswell, 2007 ; Silverman, 2001).

Silverman (2001) suggests “that high reliability in qualitative research is associated with... **low-inference descriptors**” (p. 226, original emphasis). Reliability can be enhanced if the researcher obtains detailed fieldnotes by recording and transcribing his/her interviews. It also can be improved by using a standard method known as ‘inter-raters reliability’ to compare analyses of the same data by several researchers, particularly in interview and textual studies, and by presenting long extracts of data in research reports (Silverman, 2001, pp. 230-231).

To satisfy the criterion of reliability, almost all of my interviews, with the exception of one that was tape-recorded, were well transcribed. The two e-mail interviews readily satisfied this criterion because the interviewees did their own transcribing (Silverman, 2001). The standard method, i.e. ‘inter-raters reliability’, was employed in my data analysis. Long extracts from both newspapers texts and interview transcripts are presented in chapters 5 and 6.

With reference to validity, Johnson (1997) argues that there are three types that can be discussed in qualitative research: (1) ‘descriptive validity’ refers to factual accuracy in reporting by the qualitative researcher; (2) ‘interpretive validity’ refers to the accurate

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portrayal of the *meaning* (i.e., the participants' viewpoints) attached by research participants and by the qualitative researcher; and, (3) 'theoretical validity' refers to the degree to which a theory or theoretical explanation developed from a research study fits the data and is, therefore, credible and defensible (1997, pp. 285-286, original emphasis). In order to ensure validity, qualitative researchers have developed particular strategies including triangulation (i.e. data triangulation, methods triangulation, investigator triangulation and theory triangulation), peer review, participant feedback, negative case analysis, and rich, thick description (John W. Creswell, 2007 ; Johnson, 1997).

Among these strategies, investigator triangulation, that is, using multiple observers or analysts, is usually used to acquire descriptive validity in qualitative research. Triangulating observers or analysts allow researchers to cross-check data collection and analyses, help reduce any potential research bias, and enhance the credibility of the research (Johnson, 1997; M. Q. Patton, 2002).

In order to satisfy interpretive validity, researchers are required to accurately portray the meaning attached by participants involved in the studies (Johnson, 1997); in order to provide a valid account of participants, it is important for the researcher to understand the former's inner worlds, or in other words, their phenomenological worlds (Johnson, 1997, p. 285). Participant feedback, or what Patton (2002) calls 'review by inquiry participants', is considered the most important strategy for obtaining interpretive validity. Sharing researchers' interpretations of participants' viewpoints with the participant and other members of the group will help to reduce miscommunication and increase accuracy, completeness and fairness (Johnson, 1997; M. Q. Patton, 2002). Moreover, using low inference descriptors, e.g., verbatim or word-for-word, whereby participants' exact words appear in direct quotations, is also helpful for promoting interpretive validity (Johnson, 1997).

Apropos of theoretical validity, one commonly used strategy is theory triangulation; that is, using different theoretical perspectives to examine the phenomenon under scrutiny (Johnson, 1997; M. Q. Patton, 2002). Multiple theoretical perspectives can provide researchers with insights and help them develop a more cogent explanation (Johnson, 1997).

All of the strategies mentioned above are used to improve the internal validity of qualitative research: an additional two strategies are methods triangulation and data triangulation (Johnson, 1997; M. Q. Patton, 2002). When using methods triangulation, the researcher may employ different methods in a single research study (e.g., ethnography, survey, experimental,

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for example). As well, he/she may employ different types of data collection procedures; for example, interviews, questionnaires and observation (Johnson, 1997, p. 288). When using data triangulation, the researcher uses multiple data sources in a single research study; e.g., the use of multiple interviews or collecting data at different times, in different places, and from different people (Johnson, 1997, p. 289). These two strategies, which provide research with different kinds of data that help researchers to understand the reasons for the differences, can also help to ensure the credibility of research findings (M. Q. Patton, 2002, p. 560).

I have employed triangulation strategies (i.e., investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, methods triangulation and data triangulation) in my study in the interests of improving research validity. Participant feedback was obtained through participants' reviewing of the transcripts and quotes used in my findings chapter (chapter 6). Verbatim (i.e., direct quotations), the lowest inference descriptor, was also used so that the reader may experience the participants' actual language, dialects, and personal meanings (Johnson, 1997). The implementation of the above strategies has contributed to the overall credibility of my research findings.

As regards external validity, it concerns how far the results of a study can be generalised (Bryman, 2008b; Johnson, 1997). My study does not intend to generalise the findings from the six newspapers to all of China's press or media. Rather, through the logic and value of purposeful sampling (Bryman, 2008b) and rigorous and in-depth investigation (Norman K. Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), this research may generate a rich understanding of - and insight into - principles that might be applied to other Chinese press and media vis-à-vis the framing of HIV/AIDS. As well, it will serve the qualitative research purposes of advancing a social justice agenda (Norman K. Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, cited in Cresswell 2007, p.3) and promoting social change (Frey, et al., 2000, p. 20).

## **4.6 Summary**

This chapter, which aims to map a guideline for this study, discusses the methodologies employed and details the operational procedures. Based upon my research inquiry and

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research purpose, my research is situated in naturalistic paradigm and, to this end, has adopted a qualitative approach. Two instruments, i.e., text analyses and semi-structured in-depth interviews were used for data collection. Qualitative content analysis was adopted as a data analysis instrument. Particular strategies, for example, triangulations, participant feedback, ‘inter-raters reliability’ and low-inference descriptors were employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. The next chapter, in which I present my analysis of textual analyses of newspaper data, is titled “Dominant HIV/AIDS Frames and Discourse in Chinese Newspaper”.

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## Chapter 5

# Dominant HIV/AIDS Frames and Discourse In Chinese Newspapers

### 5.1 Introduction

This Chapter aims to answer research **Question Two** (How is HIV/AIDS framed in Chinese newspapers? What is the dominant discourse surrounding HIV/AIDS in Chinese national, provincial and metropolitan newspapers? And, how does this discourse relate to the ways in which the issue is framed by different journalists at different levels of the Chinese administrative system?) and research **Question Four** (How does journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS affect public policy? Are there positive and negative consequences associated with the development of public policy? ). The information presented in this chapter results from analyses undertaken of the six selected newspapers (i.e., *The People's Daily*, *The Southern Weekly*, the *Henan Daily*, the *Yunnan Daily*, the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*). First, an overview of data from the six newspapers will be provided (section 5.2.); this will be followed by a discussion of the news sources/news makers who dominate the HIV/AIDS coverage (section 5.3.). As well, I will discuss the dominant frames of HIV/AIDS coverage across the six newspapers (section 5.4.). The framing of AIDS risk and risk groups will be examined in section 5.5. The key themes that are usually associated with HIV/AIDS coverage, i.e., attribution of causation (section 5.6.), responsibilities (section 5.7.) and solutions (section 5.8.) will be discussed respectively. Section 5.9 concludes the chapter with a brief summary.

## 5.2 Overview of Newspaper Coverage of HIV/AIDS-Related Issues in the Six Newspapers

During my research period (November 1 to December 31, each year from 2000 to 2008), 981 news articles (including general news, features, commentaries, and HIV/AIDS knowledge) relating to HIV/AIDS issues appeared in the six selected Chinese newspapers: 155 in *The People's Daily*; 61 in *The Southern Weekly*; 100 in the *Henan Daily*; 203 in the *Yunnan Daily*; 147 in the *Dahe Daily*, and, 315 in *The Spring City Evening* (See Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 The Quantity of News Coverage Related to HIV/AIDS Issues in the Six Newspapers (Nov.1 - Dec. 31, 2000 - 2008)

Variable Name of Newspaper	Number of articles for analysis	Percentage of analysed articles
<i>The People's Daily</i> (National)	155	15.8%
<i>The Southern Weekly</i> (National)	61	6.22%
<i>Henan Daily</i> (Provincial)	100	10.19%
<i>Yunnan Daily</i> (Provincial)	203	20.69%
<i>Dahe Daily</i> (Metropolitan)	147	14.98%
<i>The Spring City Evening</i> (Metropolitan)	315	32.11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>981</b>	<b>100%</b>

The volume of HIV/AIDS coverage by the six newspapers underwent change in tandem with the development of the HIV/AIDS epidemic during the period 2000 to 2008. Fig. 5.1 shows the changes in the volume of the news coverage of HIV/AIDS in the six newspapers.

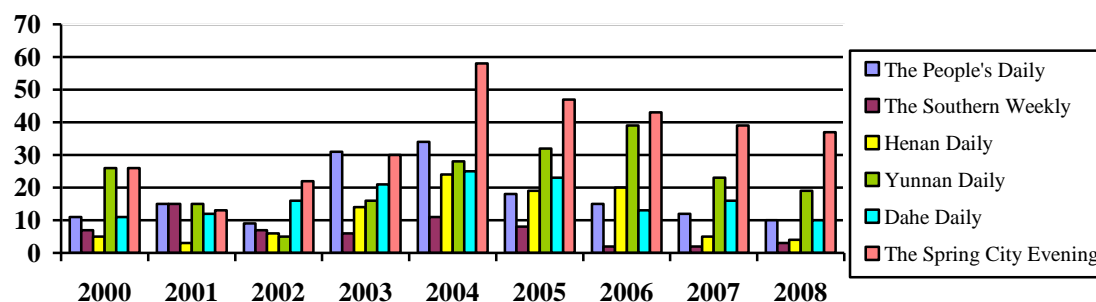


Figure 5.1 Changes in the volume of HIV/AIDS coverage in the six newspapers (Nov. 1 to Dec. 31, 2000 to 2008)



Fig. 5.1 shows that the volume of coverage of HIV/AIDS across the six newspapers increased rapidly between 2003 and 2004. The year 2004 in particular marked the climax of HIV/AIDS coverage by *The People's Daily*, the *Henan Daily*, the *Yunnan Daily*, the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*. But, the volume of coverage gradually decreased post-2005, with the exception of the *Yunnan Daily*, which saw a rapid decrease in its coverage post-2006. Several reasons accounted for the rapid increase in the volume of coverage of HIV/AIDS in 2003 and 2004. This two year period saw two important historical events involving the prevention of HIV/AIDS enacted in China. Premier Wen Jiaobao visited and shook hands with AIDS patients in Beijing Ditan Hospital on World AIDS Day, 2003. It was the first time that a senior Chinese government official had openly expressed concern regarding HIV/AIDS and PLWHAs. The following year, President Hu Jintao visited and shook hands with AIDS patients in Beijing You An Hospital on World AIDS Day, 2004. These two historical events indicated that the Chinese government had put HIV/AIDS on the political agenda and attached importance to HIV/AIDS-related issues; as a result, coverage by mass media, including newspapers, of HIV/AIDS-related issues rose rapidly. Since 2005, HIV/AIDS news reportage has gradually become stale news, that is, become routinised. And, the volume of coverage has decreased gradually, year after year.

### 5.2.1 The People's Daily

One hundred and fifty-five news stories, including general news, features/special reports, commentaries and knowledge related to HIV/AIDS issues were published in *The People's Daily* between November 1 and December 31, from 2000 to 2008: 11 in 2000, 15 in 2001, 9 in 2002, 31 in 2003, 34 in 2004, 18 in 2005, 15 in 2006, 12 in 2007, and, 10 in 2008 (See Figure 5.2).

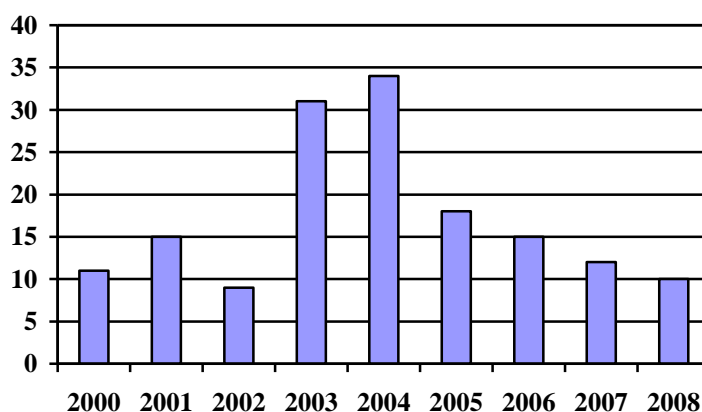


Figure 5.2 Volume of HIV/AIDS coverage by *The People's Daily* (Nov. 1 to Dec. 31, 2000 to 2008)

Generally speaking, in terms of volume of coverage, the average number of reportages of HIV/AIDS in *The People's Daily* was approximately 10 during the period November 1 to December 31, 2000 to 2003. And, while number of HIV/AIDS stories reported increased rapidly in 2003 (n=31) and 2004 (n=34), HIV/AIDS coverage has gradually decreased since 2005. In terms of types of news stories related to HIV/AIDS issues (see Figure 5.3), the majority of news stories was general news, which accounted for 69% of the total number. In-depth coverage, e.g., features/special reports, editorials/commentaries and special interviews accounted for 22% only. AIDS knowledge accounted for 3%. Other types of coverage, such as news photographs and public discussions, accounted for 6% only.

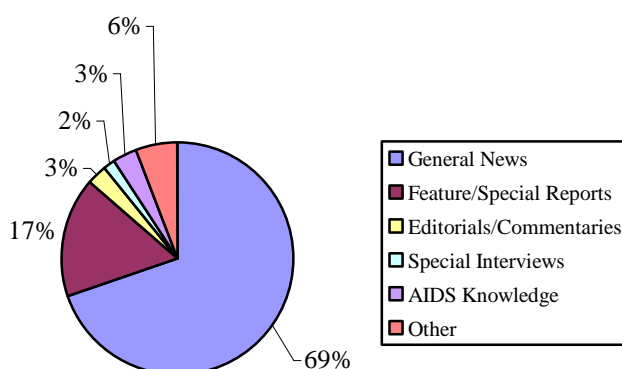


Figure 5.3 Types of HIV/AIDS coverage by *The People's Daily* (Nov. 1 to Dec. 31, 2000 to 2008)

Among the 155 news stories, 29 (19.21%) reported on external HIV/AIDS epidemics, in particular, epidemics in African countries. The most prominent years of reporting external coverage were 2000 and 2001, with external news accounting for 72.73% and 40% of the total number of coverage in the years 2000 and 2001 respectively. Since 2002, the coverage of external epidemics has decreased on an average of 2 items per year. In addition, in terms of content, coverage usually focused upon the world HIV/AIDS epidemics, national and local epidemics in China, senior government officials' activities, government action, measures and policies surrounding HIV/AIDS issues, and the achievements of government in HIV/AIDS prevention. Few individuals' cases appeared in the coverage. Since 2005, the few individual stories of PLWHAs that have appeared in *The People's Daily* have all been positive.

### 5.2.2 The Southern Weekly

*The Southern Weekly*, which is well known for its investigative exposés and in-depth reports, is considered the most influential liberal newspaper in China (Rosenthal, 24 March 2002). The number of news stories covering HIV/AIDS issues in the period November 1 to December 31, 2000 to 2008 totaled 61: 7 in 2000, 15 in 2001, 7 in 2002, 6 in 2003, 11 in 2004, 8 in 2005, 2 in 2006, 2 in 2007, and 3 in 2008 (See Figure 5.4).

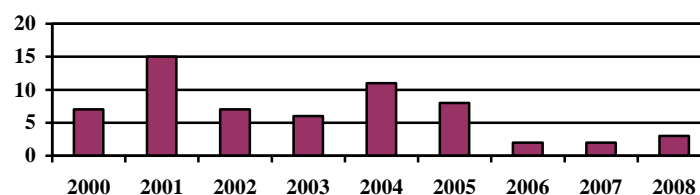


Figure 5.4 Volume of HIV/AIDS coverage by *The Southern Weekly* (Nov. 1 to Dec. 31, 2000 to 2008)

In terms of fluctuations of HIV/AIDS coverage, reportage of HIV/AIDS by *The Southern Weekly* reached two peaks in 2001 and 2004 respectively. *The Southern Weekly* was one of the earliest mass media to expose details of HIV/AIDS being contracted via blood donations in Henan province in 2000. Coverage reached 15 between November 1 and December 31, 2001; 2004 also saw an 11 story increase in the volume of coverage. But, by 2006, the volume of

HIV/AIDS coverage had decreased rapidly. Post 2005, there were, on average, 2 news stories annually. In terms of types of news stories (See Figure 5.5), the majority, unlike in *The People's Daily*, was features/special reports, accounting for more than half of the total number. General news only accounted for 11%: the remainder were editorials/commentaries (15%), special interviews (13%), AIDS knowledge (5%) and other (2%). There was little external coverage by *The Southern Weekly*.

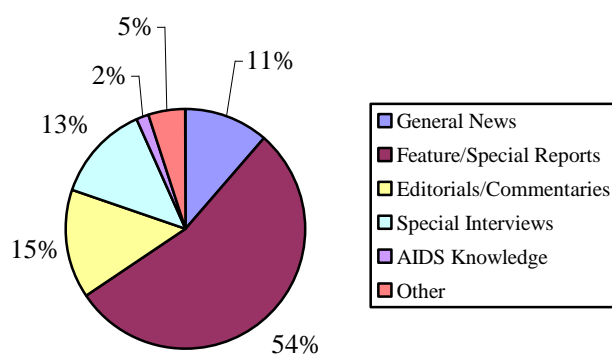


Figure 5.5 Types of HIV/AIDS coverage by *The Southern Weekly* (Nov. 1 to Dec. 31, 2000 to 2008)

### 5.2.3 Henan Daily

A total of 100 news stories related to HIV/AIDS were published in the *Henan Daily* from November 1 to December 31, 2000 to 2008: 5 in 2000, 3 in 2001, 6 in 2002, 14 in 2003, 24 in 2004, 19 in 2005, 20 in 2006, 5 in 2007, and 4 in 2008 (See Figure 5.6).

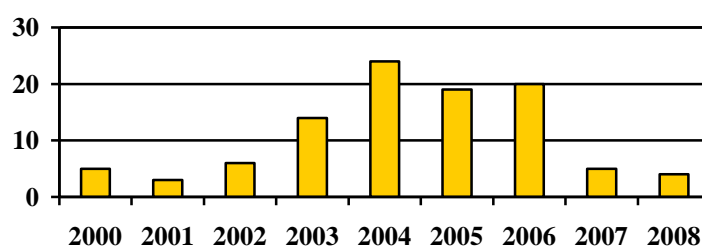


Figure 5.6: Volume of HIV/AIDS coverage by the *Henan Daily* (Nov. 1 to Dec. 31, 2000 to 2008)

In terms of fluctuations of HIV/AIDS coverage, there was little coverage of HIV/AIDS in the *Henan Daily* prior to 2003. The average yearly coverage during November 1 to December 31, 2000 to 2002 was less than five items. Clearly it did not match the severity of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the province. Since 2003, the coverage of HIV/AIDS has nearly tripled. The year 2004 marked the climax of HIV/AIDS coverage (n=24) by the *Henan Daily*. And, while HIV/AIDS related issues continued to receive attention in 2005 and 2006, the volume of coverage has gradually decreased since 2007. In terms of types of news stories (See Figure 5.7), the majority of news coverage in the *Henan Daily* was general news, accounting for 70% of the total coverage: Feature/Special reports accounted for 15%, and AIDS knowledge for 11%. The remainder (4%) of the coverage was constituted by special interviews (2%), editorials/commentaries (1%) and other types of coverage (1%).

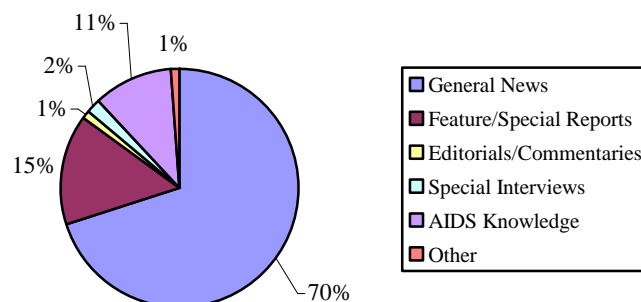


Figure 5.7 Types of HIV/AIDS coverage by the *Henan Daily* (Nov. 1 to 31 Dec., 2000 to 2008)

## 5.2.4 Yunnan Daily

News stories relating to HIV/AIDS issues that appeared between November 1 and December 31, 2000 to 2008 in the *Yunnan Daily* totaled 203: 26 in 2000, 15 in 2001, 5 in 2002, 16 in 2003, 28 in 2004, 32 in 2005, 39 in 2006, 23 in 2007, and 19 in 2008 (See Figure 5.8).

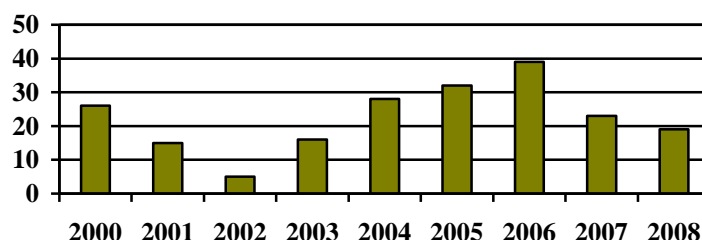


Figure 5.8 Volume of HIV/AIDS coverage by the *Yunnan Daily* (Nov. 1 to Dec. 31, 2000 to 2008)

As regards changes in the numbers of HIV/AIDS coverage, coverage by the *Yunnan Daily* peaked in 2000, and again in 2006: 2002 saw the lowest point of coverage by 5 items concomitant with the increase in central government concern for HIV/AIDS issues in 2003. The volume of HIV/AIDS coverage increased rapidly, reaching peak coverage by 39 items in 2006. But, since 2007, coverage has decreased. In terms of types of news stories (See Figure 5.9), similar to *The People's Daily* and the *Henan Daily*, the majority of news coverage in the *Yunnan Daily* was general news that accounted for half of the total number of coverage. Features/special reports accounted for 11.33%. The most prominent feature noted was that AIDS knowledge accounted for 33.99% of the total coverage. Editorial/commentaries and other types of coverage accounted for approximately 4% only.

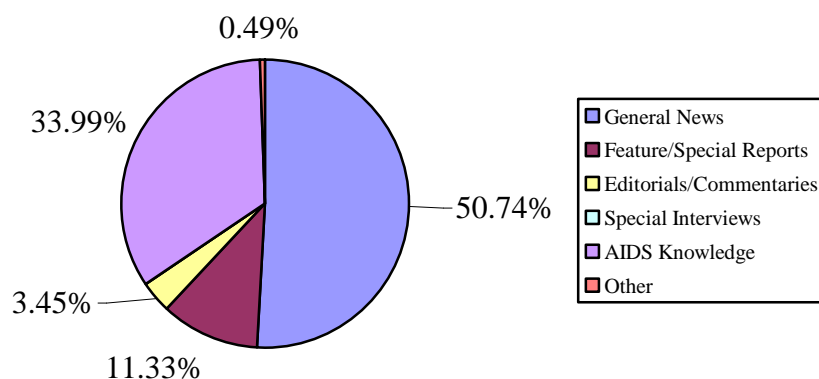


Figure 5.9 Types of HIV/AIDS coverage by the *Yunnan Daily* (Nov. 1 to Dec. 31, 2000 to 2008)

### 5.2.5 Dahe Daily

The *Dahe Daily* published 147 news stories covering HIV/AIDS issues between November 1 to December 31, 2000 to 2008: 11 in 2000, 12 in 2001, 16 in 2002, 21 in 2003, 25 in 2004, 23 in 2005, 13 in 2006, 16 in 2007, and 10 in 2008 (See Figure 5.10).

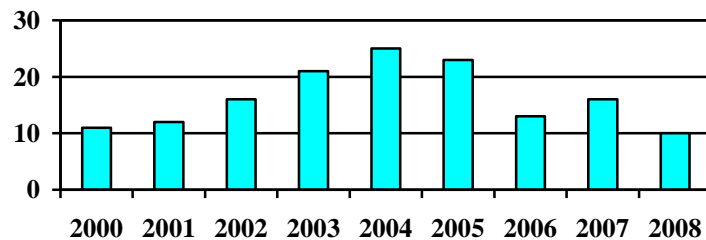


Figure 5.10 Volume of HIV/AIDS coverage by the *Dahe Daily* (Nov. 1 to Dec. 31, 2000 to 2008)

In terms of fluctuation of HIV/AIDS coverage, the volume of coverage gradually increased from 2000 onwards, reaching its climax in 2004 with 25 items. After 2004, the volume of coverage gradually decreased. In terms of the types of news stories (See Figure 5.11), similar to *The People's Daily*, the *Henan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily*, the majority of news coverage in the *Dahe Daily* was general news, accounting for 68% of the total coverage. Features/special reports and editorials/commentaries accounted for 11% and 9% respectively, while AIDS knowledge accounted for 10%. Special interviews and other types of coverage accounted for 2%.

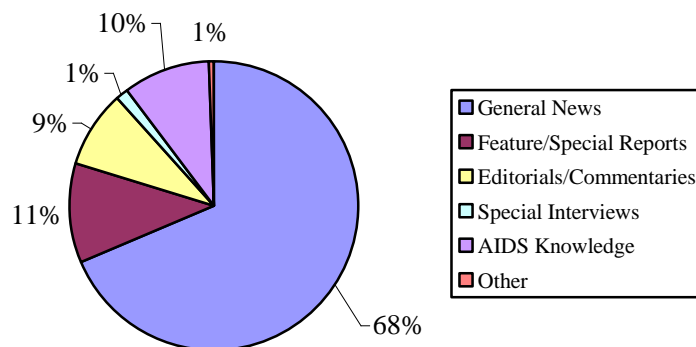


Figure 5.11 Types of HIV/AIDS coverage by the *Dahe Daily* (Nov. 1 to Dec. 31, 2000 to 2008)

### 5.2.6 The Spring City Evening

The number of the news stories relating to HIV/AIDS issues from November 1 to December 31, 2000 to 2008 that appeared in *The Spring City Evening* totaled 315: 26 in 2000, 13 in 2001, 22 in 2002, 30 in 2003, 58 in 2004, 47 in 2005, 43 in 2006, 39 in 2007, and 37 in 2008 (See Figure 5.12).

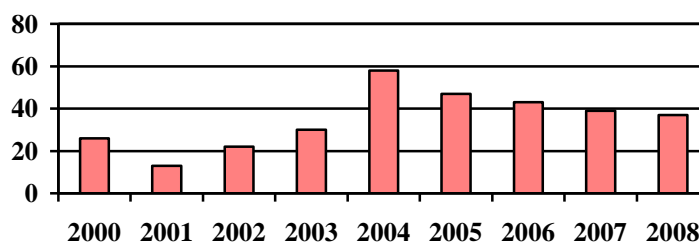


Figure 5.12 Volume of HIV/AIDS coverage by *The Spring City Evening* (Nov. 1 to Dec. 31, 2000 to 2008)



The amount of HIV/AIDS coverage by *The Spring City Evening* decreased to its lowest point in 2001 (n-13): it gradually started to increase again in 2002, reaching its peak in 2004 (n-58). The volume of coverage of HIV/AIDS decreased slightly again post-2004. In terms of types of news stories (See Figure 5.13), general news dominated the coverage of HIV/AIDS by *The Spring City Evening*, similar to *The People's Daily*, the *Henan Daily*, the *Yunnan Daily*, and the *Dahe Daily* accounting for 67% of the total number of coverage. Features/special reports accounted for 17%. AIDS knowledge accounted for 8%. Editorials/commentaries, special interviews and other types of coverage accounted for 8% of the total.

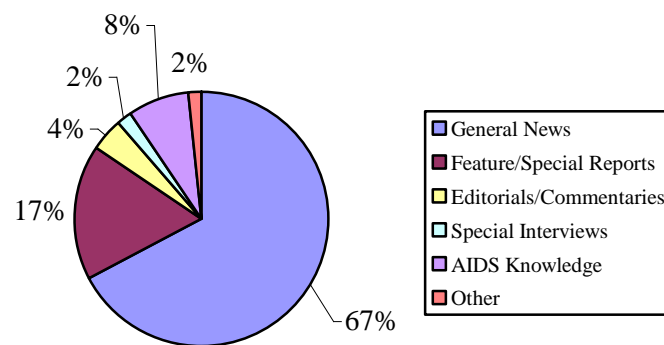


Figure 5.13 Types of HIV/AIDS coverage by *The Spring City Evening* (Nov. 1 to Dec. 31, 2000 to 2008)

### 5.3 Dominant HIV/AIDS Sources/News Makers: Contributors to the HIV/AIDS Coverage by the Six Newspapers

Journalists rely heavily on sources or news makers for their products. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) claim that sources have an enormous influence on mass media content because they can “stimulate or constrain the diffusion of information according to their own interests, and journalists’ choice of which source to interview can color the stories they write” (p. 219). In the case of HIV/AIDS, many actors can become sources - or news makers - of information

pertinent to HIV/AIDS issues. However, input from the various sources may not be included and/or treated equally by journalists. Therefore, analysis of said news sources or news makers may reveal whose voices and stances dominate HIV/AIDS related issues and influence the news content. This section will focus on the contextualisation of the sources of HIV/AIDS coverage by the six newspapers. The dominant news sources/news makers of each newspaper will be explored one by one (section 5.3.1. to 5.3.6); followed by a summary of this source group as a whole (section 5.3.7.).

### 5.3.1 Dominant News Sources/News Makers: The People's Daily (2000-2008)

The results of the research show that the source groups/news makers that contributed to HIV/AIDS coverage in *The People's Daily* were as follows: government (49/31.61%); other media (41/26.45%); other sources (20/12.9%); NGO/International organisations (14/9.03%); doctors/nurses/medical organisations (11/7.1%); specialists/experts (8/5.16%); unknown (7/4.52%); and PLWHAs and their family members (5/3.23%) (See Figure 5.14).

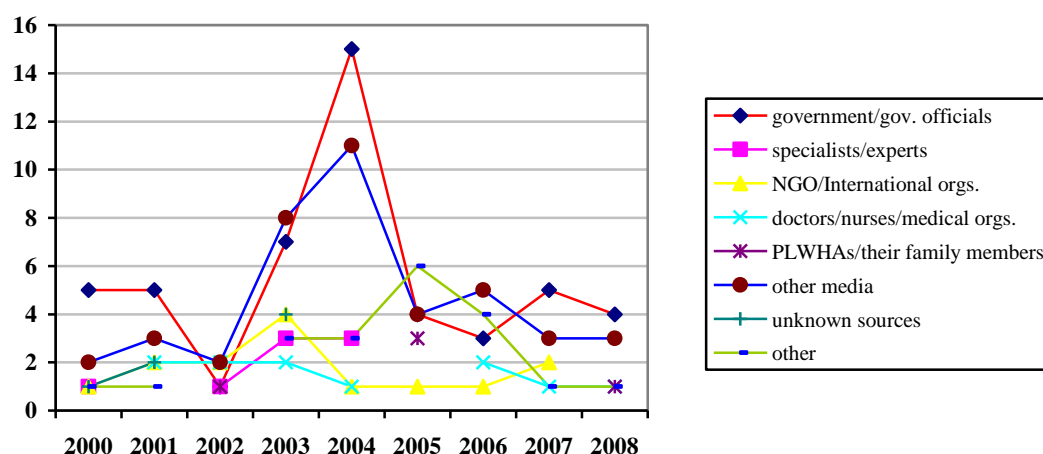


Figure 5.14 Dominant news sources/news makers: *The People's Daily*

Fig. 5.14 shows that the government was a major news maker regarding HIV/AIDS issues in *The People's Daily* between 2000 to 2008. Other media (i.e., *Xinhua News Agency*)

functioned as major news suppliers to *The People's Daily*. Worthy of note is the fact that 59% of the news stories provided by *Xinhua News Agency* were sourced from the government. The research results also show NGOS and NGO international organisations represented in some coverage (9.03%), although their voices were not dominant. But, throughout, the voices of the PLWHAs and their families remained marginal. Only 5 (3.23%) news stories out of 155 were sourced from PLWHAs.

### 5.3.2 Dominant News Sources/News Makers: The Southern Weekly (2000-2008)

The results of the research indicated that the dominant news sources/news makers of HIV/AIDS coverage in *The Southern Weekly* were specialists/experts (16/26.23%); other (12/19.67%); government (11/18.03%); PLWHAs and their family members (9/14.75%); doctors/nurses/medical organisations (6/9.84%); NGO/International organisations (5/8.2%); and other media (2/3.28%). (See Figure 5.15).



Figure 5.15 Dominant news sources/news makers: *The Southern Weekly*

Fig. 5.15 shows that specialists/experts were considered *The Southern Weekly's* most important news sources from 2000 to 2006, although the volume of usage varied yearly. The government was another important source for *The Southern Weekly* between 2000 and 2005. Compared with the other 5 newspapers, as a weekly newspaper, *The Southern Weekly's* usage

of PLWHAs as sources was relatively generous, i.e., 9 items out of 61 AIDS-related stories. Most of the sources involving doctors/nurses/medical organisations appeared between 2003 and 2004. Only 3 news stories drew upon NGO/International organisations sources, and only 2 used other media as sources.

### 5.3.3 Dominant News Sources/News Makers: Henan Daily (2000-2008)

The results of the research show that the government (44/44%); other media (41/41%); other sources (7/7%); doctors/nurses/medical organisations (3/3%); NGO/International organisations (2/2%); unknown (2/2%); and, PLWHAs/their family members (1/1%) were the *Henan Daily*'s main news sources/news makers from November 1 to December 31, 2000 to 2008 (See Figure 5.16).

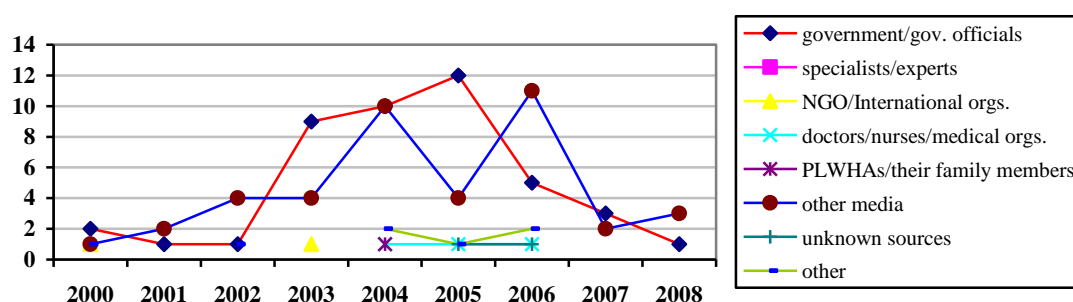


Figure 5.16 Dominant news sources/news makers: *Henan Daily*

Fig. 5.16 clearly reveals that the *Henan Daily* relied heavily upon government and other media sources from 2000 to 2008. Government and/or governmental officials constituted 44 (44%) of news sources, with 41% sourced from other media, i.e., press releases from *Xinhua News Agency* or reprinted stories from other media. Government sources and other media sources (mainly the *Xinhua News Agency*) accounted for 85% of the total sources; doctors/nurses/medical organisations, and others were few and mainly sourced between 2004 and 2006. Three were identified as NGOs and INGOs: only one news item out of 100 was sourced from a PLWHA.

### 5.3.4 Dominant News Sources/News Makers: Yunnan Daily (2000-2008)

The research results shows that the *Yunnan Daily*'s dominant news source/news makers were as follows: government (71/34.98%); unknown (49/24.14%); NGO/International organisations (33/16.26%); other media (28/13.79%); other (12/5.91%); doctors/nurses/medical organisations (6/2.96%); specialists/experts (4/1.97%); and PLWHAs/their family members (0) (See Figure 5.17).

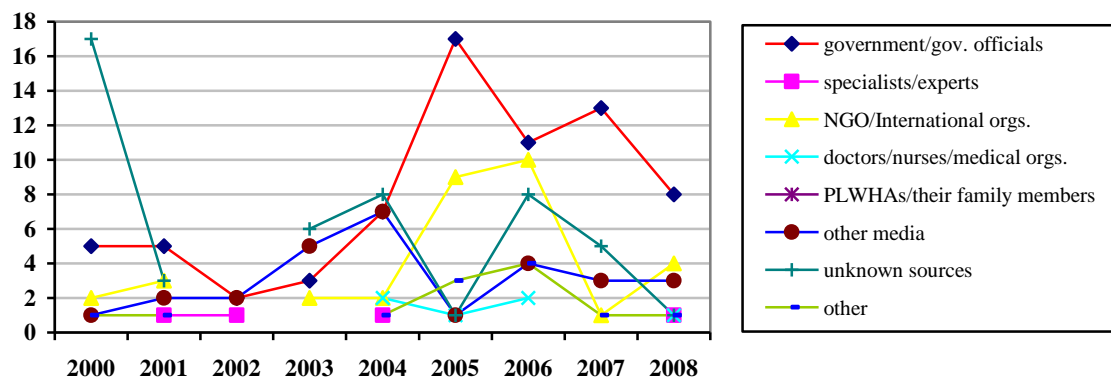


Figure 5.17 Dominant news sources/news makers: *Yunnan Daily*

Fig. 5.17 indicates that the government (71/34.98%) and other media (28/13.79%) were the two continual major news makers addressing the HIV/AIDS issue in the *Yunnan Daily* from November 1 to December 31, 2000 to 2008. The 49 news stories out of 203 articles that did not mention their sources were mainly articles disseminating AIDS knowledge. The research results also show that the *Yunnan Daily* drew upon NGO/INGO sources continually from 2003 onwards, mainly for its news coverage of HIV/AIDS (with 33 sourced).. Most of these articles focused upon AIDS knowledge promotion and education. Twelve news stories drew upon other sources, while ten used doctors and experts as sources. Of particular note is the fact that PLWHAs were neglected as sources.

### 5.3.5 Dominant News Sources/News Makers: *Dahe Daily* (2000-2008)

The results of the research show that the *Dahe Daily*'s dominant news source/news makers were: other media (44/29.93%); government (38/25.85%); other (33/22.45%); doctors/nurses/medical organisations (13/8.84%); unknown (6/4.08%); specialists/experts (5/3.4%); NGO/International organisations (5/3.4%); PLWHAs/their family members (3/2.04%) (See Figure 5.18)

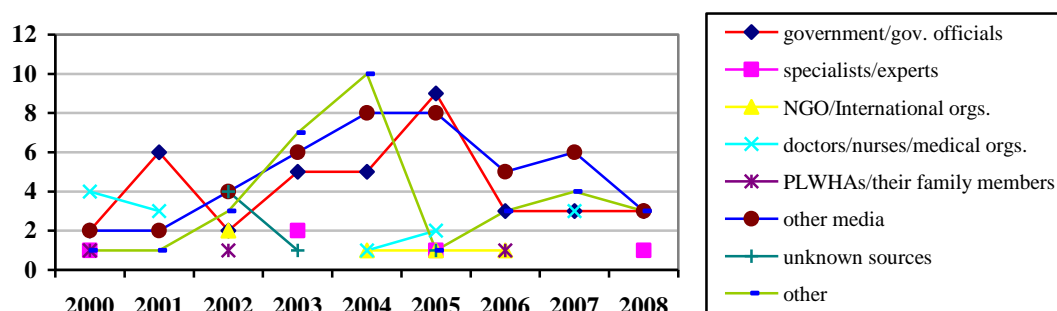


Figure 5.18 Dominant news sources/news makers: *Dahe Daily*

Similar to the *Henan Daily*, Fig. 5.18 reveals that the *Dahe Daily* also relied heavily upon government sources that were dominant between 2000 and 2008. Among its 147 news stories, 38 (25.85%) could be sourced from government bodies/officials, with 44 (29.93%) either based on press releases from the *Xinhua News Agency* or reprinted from other media. A miscellany of other sources, e.g., multiple, non-governmental institutions (e.g., enterprises, educational institutions) and individual, that were excluded from the main source categories, constituted another dominant source between 2000 and 2008. Thirty three (22.45%) news stories adopted other sources and 13 (8.84%) sourced doctors/nurses/medical organisations and specialists/experts. There was little non-governmental organisations, international organisations and PLWHAs sourcing (3.4% [5 items] and 2.04% [3 items] respectively).

### 5.3.6 Dominant News Sources/News Makers: The Spring City Evening (2000-2008)

The research shows that *The Spring City Evening*'s dominant news sources/news makers included government (87/ 27.62%); other (71/22.54%); other media (53/16.83%); NGOs/International organisations (32/10.16%); doctors/nurses/medical organisations (29/9.21%); specialists/experts (15/4.76%); PLWHAs/their family members (14/4.44%); and, unknown (14/4.44%) (See Figure 5.19).

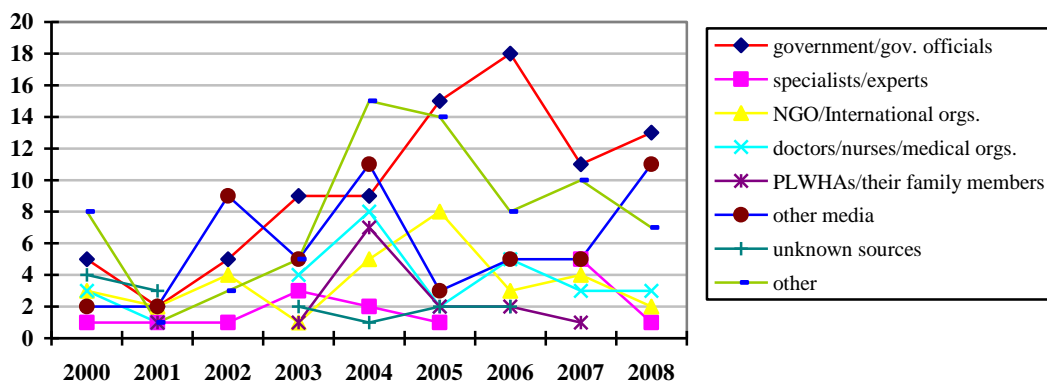


Figure 5.19 Dominant news sources/news makers: *The Spring City Evening*

Fig. 5.19 shows government/government officials as major news makers vis-à-vis the HIV/AIDS issue for *The Spring City Evening* between 2000 and 2008: 87 (27.62%) items out of 315 news stories. There was a tendency to scale up reliance on government sources after 2001 and a slight scaling down after 2006. Sources from other channels, e.g., multiple or non-governmental institutions (e.g., enterprises, educational institutions) that were excluded from the main source categories, were also main sources totaling 71 (22.54%) items in *The Spring City Evening*. The chart in Fig. 5.19 shows that other media, NGO/INGO and individual sources were continuously drawn upon by *The Spring City Evening*, although the numbers were less than those of government and other channels. Doctors/nurses/medical organisations (29/9.21%) and experts (15/4.76%) also numbered among sources used by *The Spring City Evening*, as were PLWHAs/PLWHA family members (14/4.44%) and the 'unknown' (14/4.44%) category, which had parity with the PLWHA category. *The Spring City*

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*Evening's* sources of HIV/AIDS coverage were more diverse than those of the other 5 newspapers.

### 5.3.7 Dominant News Sources/News Makers in the Six Newspapers: A Summary

The results of the analyses of the six newspapers (See Figure 5.20) reveal that the most dominant news sources/news makers addressing the HIV/AIDS issue in the six Chinese newspapers between 2000 and 2008 were governmental sources: governmental departments and governmental officials at all levels accounted for 32%. Other media constituted the second largest source, e.g., the *Xinhua News Agency*, accounting for 21% of the total sources. A form of behaviour known as “pack journalism” (Parenti, 1993) pervades Chinese newspapers. Journalists in the Chinese context not only take their cues from other media and cover the ‘same beats’, but also extract press releases directly from other media, a process called *fa tong gao* (发通稿) in the Chinese language. In accordance with Chinese news media regulations, all mass media are required by the State to use the same news release distributed by a State-approved authoritative news agency or news medium such as the *Xinhua News Agency* or *The People's Daily*. This particularly applies when reporting important senior government officials' activities or other important issues, so as to report the same account in each news item. The *Xinhua News Agency* acts as an agenda-setter for other media for important HIV/AIDS coverage in China. With the exception of *The Southern Weekly*, all five other newspapers directly reprinted some important coverage of governmental senior officials, for example, President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao's visits with PLWHAs, and their investigation of provincial prevention of HIV/AIDS. The *Henan Daily* and the *Dahe Daily*, two newspapers published in Henan province stood out most prominently in this respect. Over 40% of their coverage was drawn from other media, mainly from the *Xinhua News Agency* (for details see 5.3.4 and 5.3.6). The third largest source was ‘other’ sources, which accounted for 16%. ‘Other’ sources include non-governmental institutions (e.g., enterprises, educational institutions) or individual sources that are excluded from the main source categories. The voices of the PLWHAs remained marginal and varied among the six newspapers, accounting for 3% of the total only.



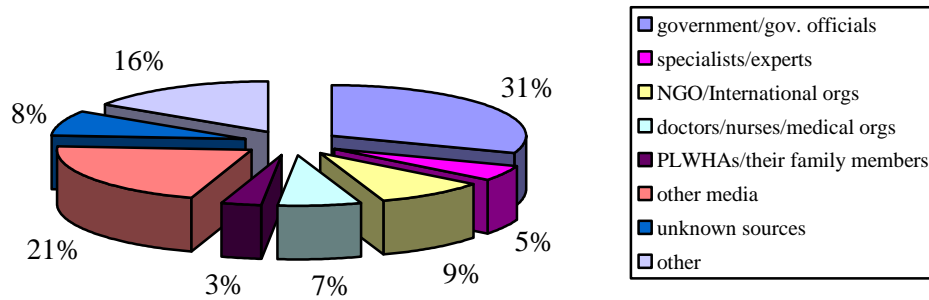


Figure 5.20 Dominant news sources/news makers of HIV/AIDS in the six newspapers

## 5.4 Dominant HIV/AIDS Frames in the Six Newspapers

This section presents the results of the analysis of the dominant forms of HIV/AIDS framing adopted by the six newspapers for their coverage from November 1 to December 31, 2000 to 2008. The dominant frames of each newspaper will be described singly and in detail from section 5.4.1. through to section 5.4.6., followed by a summary of the dominant frames across the six newspapers in section 5.4.7.

### 5.4.1 Dominant HIV/AIDS Frames: *The People's Daily* (2000-2008)

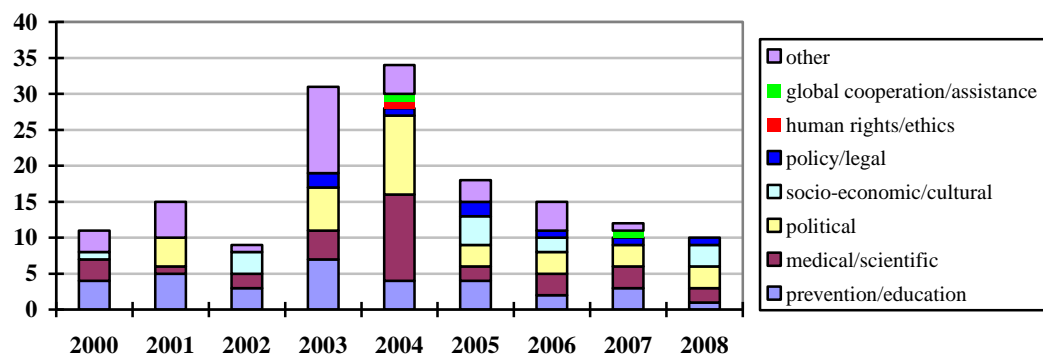


Figure 5.21 Dominant frames: *The People's Daily*

Fig. 5.21 shows that the prevention/education frame (n=33) and the political frame (n=33), along with the miscellany of frames (including routine and event-oriented coverage) labeled 'other' (n=33), dominated the coverage of HIV/AIDS issues in *The People's Daily* from November 1 to December 31, 2000 to 2008, each accounting for 21.29%, making a total of 99 items accounting for 63.87% of the total number of frames. The medical/scientific frame (n=32), which followed close behind, accounted for 20.65% of the total: the socio-economic/cultural frame (n=13) for 8.39%; and, the policy/legal frame (n=8) for 5.15%. Global cooperation (n=2) and human rights (n=1) only accounted for 1.29% and 0.65% of the total number of frames respectively: the prevention/education and medical/scientific frames remained consistent from 2000 to 2008, although their percentages tended to vary each year. The prevention/education frame took first place in the dominant frames for five years, while the political frame retained its position as a dominant frame (since 2003) after the Central government emphasised the importance of HIV/AIDS. Compared with the first four dominant frames (i.e. the political, prevention/education, 'other' and medical/scientific frames), the percentages of the socio-economic/cultural frame, policy/legal, human rights/ethics, and global cooperation were low. There was particularly little coverage of global cooperation and human rights/ethics by *The People's Daily* during the period November 1 to December 31, 2000 to 2008. In general, HIV/AIDS coverage by *The People's Daily* usually focused on the world HIV/AIDS epidemic; the national and local epidemics in China; the actions and measures taken by the government; policies and strategies implemented by the government; government senior officials' activities surrounding HIV/AIDS issues; and, achievements of the government in the prevention of HIV/AIDS. The 'other' frame, which became the dominant frame, implied that other news stories attracted daily routine coverage, for example, the open ceremony of the HIV/AIDS campaign and events/activities related to HIV/AIDS issues. Coverage of individual stories of PLWHAs was marginal in *The People's Daily*.

## 5.4.2 Dominant HIV/AIDS Frames: *The Southern Weekly* (2000-2008)

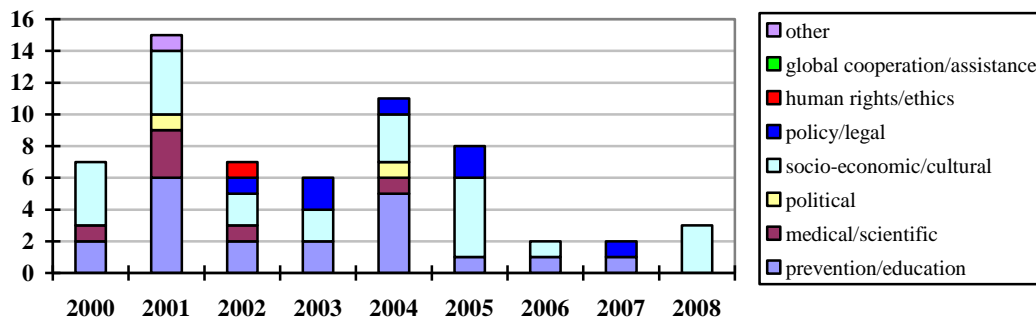


Figure 5.22 Dominant frames: *The Southern Weekly*

Fig. 5.22 shows that the socio-economic/cultural frame (n=24) was the most dominant frame used by *The Southern Weekly*, accounting for 39.34% of the number of frames. The prevention/education frame, the second most dominant frame (n=20), accounted for 32.79%. This was followed by policy/legal (n=7) (11.48%) and medical/scientific (n=6) (9.84%). The political frame (n=2) accounted for 3.28%, while the human rights/ethics frame (n=1) and 'other' frames (n=1) accounted for 1.64% respectively. The socio-economic/cultural and prevention/education frames consistently dominated the HIV/AIDS coverage in *The Southern Weekly* from November 1 to December 31, 2000 to 2008. Compared with *The People's Daily*, the percentages of the medical/scientific and political frames were low. As regards the human rights/ethics frame, whereas a few news stories directly covered the human rights/ethics of the PLWHAs, others only indirectly addressed their rights. In general, HIV/AIDS coverage by *The Southern Weekly* usually specified the socio-economic and cultural aspects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and the influence of HIV/AIDS on society and individual lives. Compared with the other five newspapers, *The Southern Weekly* included more individual cases in their stories: its HIV/AIDS coverage basically reflected the development of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and its impact on Chinese society. The news stories of 2000 and 2001 mainly focused on the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Henan province after the explosion of HIV/AIDS among the illegal plasma donors. Coverage during 2002 and 2003 concentrated more upon the policy and legal aspects of HIV/AIDS. The 2004/2005 coverage was

concerned with pragmatic prevention measurements, e.g., prevention of mother-to-child transmission, and methadone maintenance programs. And, when the problem of orphaning caused by HIV/AIDS became increasingly serious, the focal point of *The Southern Weekly's* coverage switched to covering their everyday living, educational and mental health problems and problems surrounding the help and support of those orphaned.

### 5.4.3 Dominant HIV/AIDS Frames: *Henan Daily* (2000-2008)

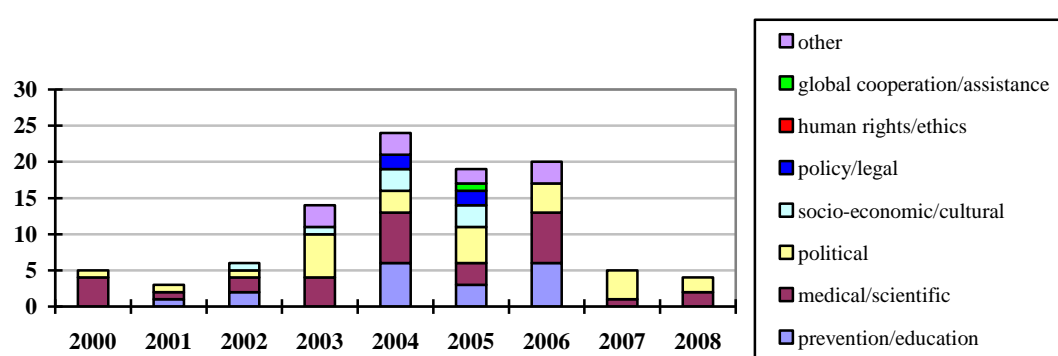


Figure 5.23 Dominant frames: *Henan Daily*

Fig. 5.23 shows that the medical/scientific ( $n=31$ ) and political frames ( $n=27$ ) were the *Henan Daily's* two most dominant frames from November 1 to December 31, 2000 to 2008, accounting for 31% and 27% respectively. The third most prominent was prevention/education ( $n=18$ ) frame, which accounted for 18% of the total number. These were followed by a miscellany of frames labeled 'other' ( $n=11$ ), which accounted for 11%; and, the socio-economic/cultural frame ( $n=8$ ), which accounted for 8%. The policy/legal frame ( $n=4$ ) accounted for 4% only: global cooperation/assistance ( $n=1$ ) accounted for 1% of the total number of frames. There was no coverage addressing human rights. The chart in Fig. 5.23 also indicates that the medical/scientific and political frames were two consistently dominant frames used by the *Henan Daily* between November 1 and December 31, 2000 to 2008. The use of political framing increased greatly from 2003 on, after the Central government expressed its concern regarding the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Henan province; at the time, senior government officials (including Premier Wen Jiabao) paid several visits to Henan province. In general, the HIV/AIDS coverage by the *Henan Daily* usually centred on

government officials' activities, government actions and measures taken, and government's achievements in the prevention of HIV/AIDS, with focus on either the Central government or the provincial government.

#### 5.4.4 Dominant HIV/AIDS Frames: *Yunnan Daily* (2000-2008)

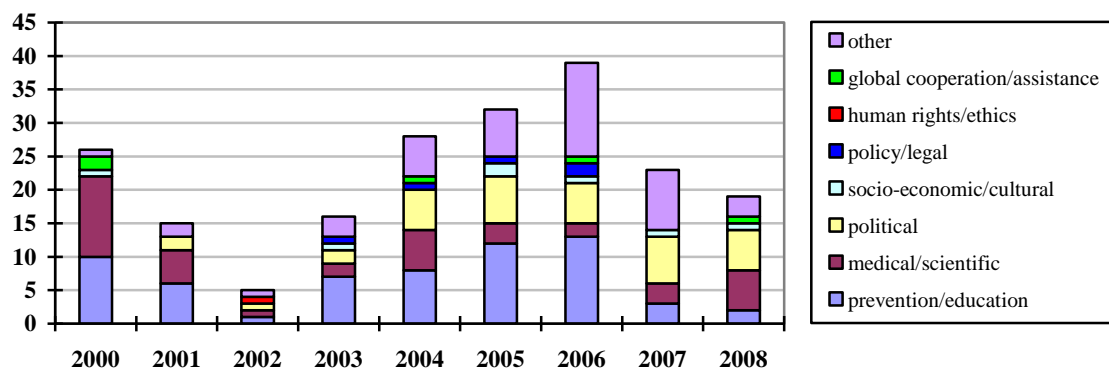


Figure 5.24 Dominant frames: *Yunnan Daily*

Fig. 5.24 shows that the most dominant frame used by the *Yunnan Daily* was the prevention/education frame (n=62), which accounted for 30.54% of the total volume of frames. The second most dominant was the collection of frames dubbed the 'other' frame (n=46), which accounted for 22.66%. The medical/scientific (n=40) and political frames (n=37) were also prominent among the dominant frames, accounting for 19.7% and 18.23% of the total number respectively. They were followed by the socio-economic/cultural frame (n=7) (3.45%); the policy/legal frame (n=5) (2.46%), and the global cooperation frame (n=5) (2.46%). Human rights (n=1) only accounted for 0.49% of the total number of frames. Moreover, the chart reveals that the prevention/education, medical/scientific, and political frames dominated HIV/AIDS coverage by the *Yunnan Daily* from November 1 to December 31, 2000 to 2008, although there were some changes noted in the annual percentages. The miscellany of frames dubbed 'other' became prominent when more daily routine coverage appeared in the newspapers. Similar to the *Henan Daily*, the political frame ramped up, then remained steady from 2003 on. The HIV/AIDS coverage usually centred on government officials' activities, government actions and measures taken, and the achievements of the government in the prevention of HIV/AIDS, with focus on either the Central government or the provincial governments.

### 5.4.5 Dominant HIV/AIDS Frames: *Dahe Daily* (2000-2008)

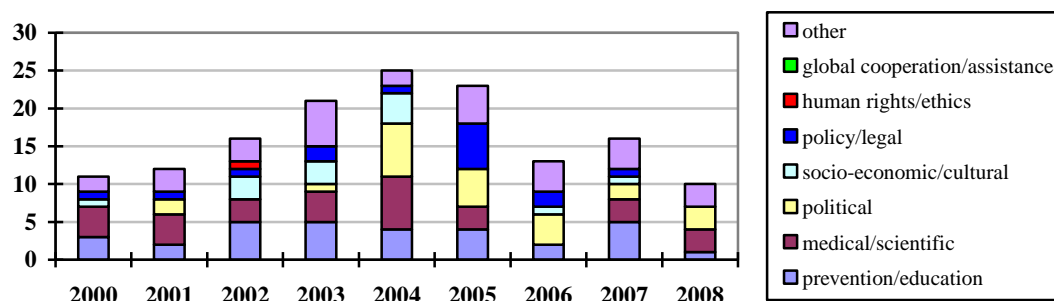


Figure 5.25 Dominant frames: *Dahe Daily*

The chart in Fig. 5.25 shows that the group of frames dubbed the ‘other’ frame (n=32) was most dominant in the *Dahe Daily*, accounting for 26.38% of the total. The prevention/education (n=31) and medical/scientific frames (n=31) proved the second most dominant frames accounting for 26.11% respectively. The political frame (n=24), the third most dominant frame, accounted for 15.29%, followed by the policy/legal (n=15) and socio-economic/cultural frames (n=13), which accounted for 9.55% and 8.28% respectively. The percentage of the human rights/ethics frame (n=1) was lower, accounting for 0.64% of the total number of frames only. The chart also demonstrates that the prevention/education and ‘other’ frames were constantly dominant from November 1 to December 31, 2000 to 2008 in the *Dahe Daily*, although some changes of percentage occurred yearly. Similar to the *Henan Daily*, the political frame increased greatly and stayed steady from 2003 on for the same reasons, i.e., the central government’s placing of additional concern on the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Henan province, and senior government officials’ (i.e., Premier Wen Jiabao’s) frequent visits to Henan province. But, there was more coverage of the action taken by the government to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS - and associated governmental officials’ activities - in the *Dahe Daily*. In addition, similar to the *Yunnan Daily*, the ‘other’ group became dominant concomitant with daily routine reportage.

### 5.4.6 Dominant HIV/AIDS Frames: *The Spring City Evening* (2000-2008)

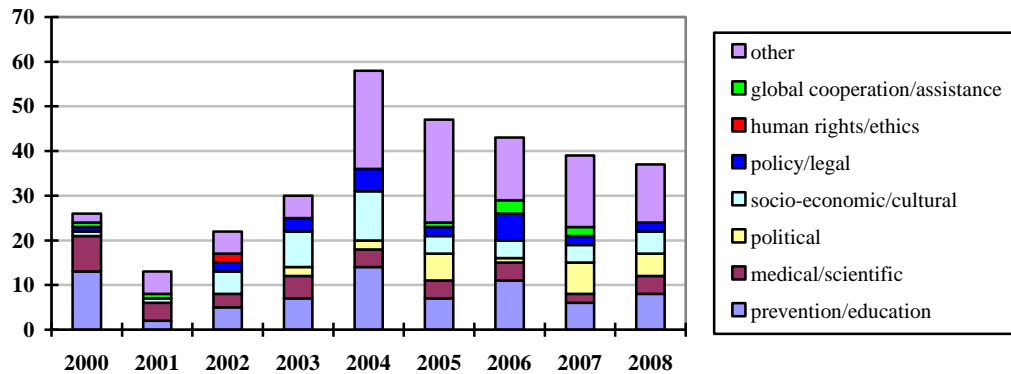


Figure 5.26 Dominant frames: *The Spring City Evening*

Fig. 5.26 reveals that, similar to the *Dahe Daily*, *The Spring City Evening*' most dominant frame was the 'other' group (n=105), which accounted for 33.33% of the total frames. The prevention/education frame (n=73) followed, accounting for 23.17%, then came the socio-economic/cultural frame (n=43), which accounted for 13.17% of the coverage, the medical/scientific frame (n=38) (12.06%), and political frame (n=23) and the policy/legal frame (n=23), accounting for 7.3% respectively. Global cooperation (n=8) rated 2.54%, while human rights/ethics (n=1) accounted for 0.63% of the total number of frames only. The chart in Fig 5.25 also shows that the prevention/education and medical frames continued to dominate *The Spring City Evening* reportage from November 1 to December 31, 2000 to 2008. Compared with *The People's Daily*, the *Henan Daily*, the *Yunnan Daily* and the *Dahe Daily*, *The Spring City Evening* leaned more towards the socio-economic/cultural frame, suggesting that there was more coverage of the socio-economical and cultural aspects of HIV/AIDS in *The Spring City Evening*, albeit much less than in *The Southern Weekly*. The 'other' miscellany became dominant, taking first place among the dominant frames after 2004 indicating that there was a ramping up of daily routine coverage by *The Spring City Evening* post that year.

### 5.4.7 Dominant HIV/AIDS Frames in the Six Newspapers: A Summary

The research results show that the dominant frames associated with the HIV/AIDS issue as a whole, in the six Chinese newspapers in rank sequence, are as follows: prevention/education; ‘other’; medical/scientific; political; socio-economic/cultural; policy/legal; global cooperation/assistance; and, human rights/ethics (See Fig. 5.27).

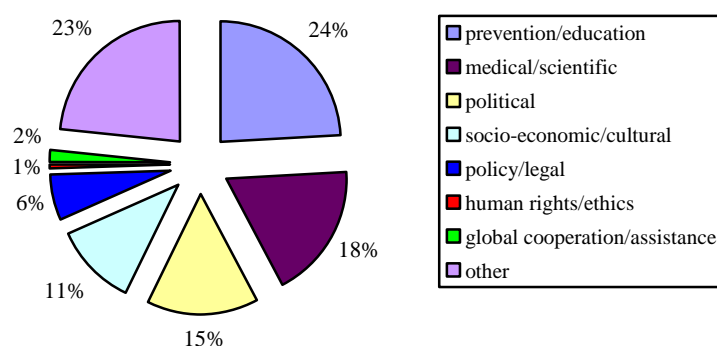


Figure 5.27 Dominant frames in the six newspapers on the whole

The pie chart (Fig. 5.27) nominates the prevention/education frame the most dominant frame (n=237) in the coverage of HIV/AIDS in the six newspapers, accounting for 24% of the total number of frames. The ‘other’ group of frames (n=228) proved the second most prominent, accounting for 23%. The medical/scientific frame (n=178) took third place, accounting for 18%. Then came the political frame (n=147) accounting for 15%, the socio-economic/cultural frame (n=108, 11%), and the policy-legal frame (n=61, 6%). The global cooperation/assistance (n=16) and human rights/ethics frames (n=6) ranked very low, accounting for 2% and 1% respectively.

The research results show that the prevention/education frame led consistently as the dominant frame from November 1 to December 31, 2000 to 2008 in *The People’s Daily*, the *Yunnan Daily*, the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*, and was a continuous frame in *The Southern Weekly* from 2000 to 2007. Items that were excluded from the principal frames were



events and campaigns related to HIV/AIDS and routine reportage. These became the second dominant cluster of frames due to the increasing concern of society as a whole vis-a-vis HIV/AIDS issues and the increasing activities and events surrounding these issues. It also suggests a routinisation of HIV/AIDS related issues. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the two metropolitan news papers, the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*. The ‘other’ cluster of frames took primacy of place in these two newspapers. The medical/scientific frame also persisted in *The People’s Daily*, the *Henan Daily*, the *Yunnan Daily* and *The Spring City Evening* between 2000 and 2008. And, although this frame’s ranking was not consistent across the years, it ranked second in dominance in *The Southern Weekly*. Regarding the political frame, since 2003 it has generally increased in volume and maintained its position as a dominant frame in the Party organs (i.e., *The People’s Daily*, the *Henan Daily*, the *Yunnan Daily*) and their affiliated newspapers (i.e., the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*), particularly after the central government placed importance on the HIV/AIDS issue and invested more effort in the prevention of the disease. As far as the socio-economic/cultural frame is concerned, a major difference noted was that *The Southern Weekly* was more likely to adopt this frame than the other five newspapers; With the exception of the year 2007, it has consistently been the first dominant frame of *The Southern Weekly*. In addition, the news stories in *The Southern Weekly* were more likely to focus on the impact of the HIV/AIDS on individuals’ lives and to express concern over the dignity and rights of PLWHAs, a policy in conformity with the principles and characteristics of the newspaper, i.e., to “reflect the social reality, keep close to the real life, concern for the people's livelihoods, maintain righteousness, and hold conscience” (*The Southern Weekly*, 2009). Moreover, the percentage of the policy/legal frame was much lower than the previous five leading frames. Except for *The Southern Weekly*, which showed a percentage of 11.48, the percentages in the other five newspapers were less than ten. The global cooperation and the human rights/ethics frames’ percentages were marginal, accounting for 3% in total. Although articles emphasising the rights and ethical aspects of HIV/AIDS in the six newspapers were marginal, progress could be noted when comparisons were drawn with the findings of previous studies (TICC, 2005; Z. Xu & Qi, 2007).

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## 5.5 Metaphors and Terminology Related to

### HIV/AIDS and PLWHAs

In her book titled *Illness as metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors*, Sontag (2001) defines metaphors as “giving the thing a name that belongs to something else” (p. 93). She notes that metaphors have been used to describe the body, illness and health throughout history. According to Sontag (2001), as with other diseases such as tuberculosis and cancer, HIV/AIDS is associated with certain myths, ideologies and metaphors. By using metaphors, HIV/AIDS can be represented in a more concrete way and be more easily understood/misunderstood by people in general. The research results show that a variety of metaphors and terms were employed to describe the natures of HIV/AIDS and PLWHAs in the six Chinese newspapers. This section will first contextualise these metaphors and terms, then discuss their impact on the public perception of HIV/AIDS and PLWHAs in Chinese society.

#### 5.5.1 Metaphors Used to Describe the Nature of HIV/AIDS

At the beginning of the epidemic, HIV/AIDS was framed in the Chinese press as an invader from the outside world and from outside the body (Y. R. Zhou, 2007). When indigenous HIV/AIDS was detected among intravenous drug users and prostitutes, it was initially framed as an incurable fatal disease, a plague-like disease, caused by ‘deviance’. The metaphors commonly used to signify HIV/AIDS are demon/AIDS demon (病魔/艾滋病魔), plague (瘟疫), super cancer (超级癌症), ghost (幽灵), killer/killer of the century/number one killer of human beings (杀手/世纪杀手/人类头号杀手), disaster/country’s disaster (灾难/国家灾难), and century’s pain (纪之痛). The severity of AIDS saw it described as an incurable disease/fatal disease (绝症), weird/strange disease (怪病), stubborn disease (顽疾), and death penalty (死刑). These metaphors were employed in both headlines and news texts. Examples of employing these metaphors can be found in headlines such as: “Weird Disease” (*The*

*Southern Weekly*, 30 November 2000), “AIDS demon approaches common people” (*The Spring City Evening*, 28 November 2000), “Why AIDS is considered an incurable disease—Exploration of the characteristics of HIV virus” (*Yunnan Daily*, 2 December 2001), , “AIDS— ‘super cancer’ that threatens human being” (*The Spring City Evening*, 12 December 2001), “How to save the nation from AIDS disaster” (*The Southern Weekly*, 4 December 2003), “AIDS demon threatens not only AIDS patients but also human beings” (*The Spring City Evening*, 30 November 2003), “Comforting life with love and relying on science to conquer Demon— A report of President Hu Jintao’s investigation of HIV/AIDS prevention in Beijing” (*The People’s Daily*, 1 December 2007), and “Fighting against a stubborn illness together with one heart: the overview of the three-years people’s war on HIV/AIDS prevention in Yunnan” (*Yunnan Daily*, 3 December 2007). The above metaphors were frequently used in the news coverage of the six newspapers compared with other metaphors before 2004. Since 2004, in line with the increasing importance attached to the HIV/AIDS issue, and the increasingly pragmatic measures taken by the central government and governments at all levels in China, the use of military metaphors by the press has increased accordingly.

### 5.5.2 Military Metaphors

Military metaphors have been used commonly in the western press to describe AIDS since the beginning of the epidemic. They have also been utilised by the Chinese press to describe the different aspects and connotations of AIDS. Since HIV/AIDS was constructed as a killer/century killer/number one killer and enemy, the government’s and other stakeholders’ efforts to control the epidemic have been described using consonant terms such as fight, combat, challenge, defeat and battle, terminology that sees HIV/AIDS constructed as an enemy of society as a whole. It is a war, a people’s war. Military metaphors, especially war metaphors, have been employed in either news headlines or news texts. Examples in news headlines can be found in the *Yunnan Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*: “Declaring war on HIV/AIDS on all fronts: an overview of Yunnan provincial HIV/AIDS prevention” (*Yunnan Daily*, 2 December 2004); “Fighting against a stubborn illness together with one heart: an overview of three-year’s people’s war on HIV/AIDS prevention in Yunnan” (*Yunnan Daily*, 3 December 2007); “Improving mechanism and combining prevention with treatment: a new

people's war on HIV/AIDS is launched in Yunnan" (*Yunnan Daily*, 1 December 2008); "Only eight counties without HIV infectious cases: HIV infectors have exceeded 80,000. Yunnan has become one of the main national war fields in the prevention of HIV/AIDS" (*The Spring City Evening*, 27 November 2004); "Three-year-people's war of Yunnan Province has achieved its anticipated goal; the tendency of the rapid increase of HIV/AIDS has been basically contained" (*The Spring City Evening*, 1 December 2007).

The War metaphors appeared in the news texts of all six newspapers. The extracts displayed below may be indicative of the ways in which they were employed.

Extract 1: For the country, the nation and the people, the health departments and the workers in the medical care services at all levels should pay particular attention to it [the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS]...should fight a people's war (*The People's Daily*, 3 December 2004).

Extract 2: AIDS is a war. When war takes place, the whole nation should unite against the enemy. AIDS is a war of extraordinary size. In this war, we will lose not only people, but also all that is doomed to lose in a war (*The Southern Weekly*, 29 November 2001).

Extract 3: [The governor of Henan province] Li Chengyu emphasised that...we should further enhance the prevention and treatment, and help and support those in need...we must resolutely win the tough war in the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS (*Henan Daily*, 25 December 2003 ).

Extract 4: Fighting in an AIDS war, we still have a long way to go (*Dahe Daily*, 25 December 2004).

Extract 5: We appeal for the public's care and love for those who live with HIV/AIDS, and encourage more people to join the people's war against the century demon (*Yunnan Daily*, 1 December 2005).

Extract 6: Today is the twenty-first World AIDS Day. Based on the theme 'Stop AIDS, Keep the Promise', a new people's war on the prevention of HIV/AIDS has been launched in Yunnan province (*The Spring City Evening*, 1 December 2008b).

Among the six newspapers, the *Yunnan Daily* and *The Spring City Evening* utilised the war/the people's war metaphors in their coverage most frequently. The term war/the people's war were often used, especially post 2004 when the Yunnan government launched two rounds of war, prohibiting drugs and urging the prevention of HIV/AIDS. *The Southern Weekly* used few metaphors, only in its coverage of 2001. With the exception of the war/people's war metaphor, many other military discourses, for example, invade (入侵), threaten (威胁), victim (受害者), enemy (敌人), fight (做斗争), combat (抗击), battle (战役), resist (抵抗), attack/strike (侵袭), weapon (武器), win (赢得), triumph over/overcome (战胜), conquer (征服), and battlefield/battlefield (前线/战场) were frequently employed in the news coverage of the six newspapers. Examples of the ways in which metaphors were employed to describe HIV/AIDS using military language appear in the following extracts.

Extract 7: Once the HIV virus invades the body, it cuts off the body's immune channels.....In the end, the HIV virus will increase without limit, and cause the breakdown of the body's immune system (*Yunnan Daily*, 6 December 2000).

Extract 8: AIDS demon threatens not only AIDS patients but also human beings (*The Spring City Evening*, 30 November 2003)

Extract 9: Fighting against HIV/AIDS is a matter of survival of nation and a matter of the national security. There is a heavy responsibility for human beings and a long way to go (*The Spring City Evening*, 14 December 2000).

Extract 10: AIDS is not only an enemy of the AIDS patients, but also an enemy of the public. It is an enemy of the human being (*The Southern Weekly*, 11 December 2003)

Extract 11: The whole society should stand up and resist HIV/AIDS as we resisted SARS (*Henan Daily*, 2 December 2003).

Extract 12: I firmly believe that human beings will finally conquer AIDS. Let's work closely together and make every effort to that end (*The People's Daily*, 1 December 2007).

These extracts show that HIV/AIDS was constructed as invasive and threatening to both body and society, an enemy not only of people who live with HIV/AIDS, but also of the whole of

society. Therefore, war, a people's war, was needed in order to conquer the enemy. Governments initiated and directed the people's war against HIV/AIDS: the public were expected to join in the people's war in response to the governments' call, that is, to win the people's war against HIV/AIDS. Previous studies (Connelly & Macleod, 2003; Lupton, 1994) have indicated that war discourse functions to position different groups of subjects in relations of power. The government is positioned as a commander, who directs the war through policy and interventionist strategies. Experts, as authorities of AIDS knowledge, dominate the investigative practices and commentary on the war. The ordinary citizen is motivated to undertake prevention and caring roles. The diseased body (i.e., the PLWHA), being positioned as the polluter or infector, is cast as the 'Other', and its voice is silenced (Connelly & Macleod, 2003). Normally, at least two sides engage in war; thus, a dichotomy is instantly created connoting opposites of 'good' and 'evil', 'accepted' and 'unaccepted', and 'us' and 'them' (Connelly & Macleod, 2003).

### 5.5.3 Terms Used to Label PLWHAs

Analysis of the current research shows that certain terms were employed to label PLWHAs and those affected by AIDS in the coverage of the six newspapers. Commonly used labels included: AIDS Orphan (艾滋孤儿), AIDS Mother (艾滋妈妈), AIDS Girl (艾滋女), AIDS Boy (艾滋男孩), AIDS Couple (艾滋病夫妇), AIDS Pickpockets (艾滋小偷), AIDS Suspect (艾滋病嫌疑犯), AIDS Family (艾滋病家庭), and AIDS Village (艾滋村/艾滋病村). These labels were especially prominent in the headlines. Some examples of headlines in the six newspapers are indicative of how these labels were employed: "An AIDS Suspect was detained in Wuhan" (*The People's Daily*, 12 November 2003); "I have been concerned about you all the time"—A report of the visit of Premier Wen Jiabao to AIDS Orphans and AIDS patients in Fuyang" (*The People's Daily*, 1 December 2008); "AIDS Mothers, an unapproachable group" (*The Southern Weekly*, 11 November 2004); "An investigation visit to the cadres of Henan province who were stationed in "AIDS Village" for ten months: I was besieged six times by AIDS patients" (*The Southern Weekly*, 23 December 2004); "The relief system that supports the students who come from AIDS Families being established in Henan" province (*Henan Daily*, 1 December 2005); "AIDS orphans live in the "Sunny Home" (Henan Daily, 2004, December 29); "The civil affairs department of Jiangsu province expressed that

they will never give the green light to ‘AIDS persons’” (*Dahe Daily*, 28 November 2002); “Bill Clinton embraced ‘AIDS Boy’ in Tsinghua University” (*Dahe Daily*, 11 November 2003); “AIDS Orphans visited Zhong Nan Hai” (*Dahe Daily*, 2 December 2006); ‘AIDS Girl’ got married yesterday” (*The Spring City Evening*, 13 November 2002); “Thirteen AIDS Pickpockets were put in the same prison, some of them have visited prostitutes many times” (*The Spring City Evening*, 26 November 2003); and, “‘AIDS Orphan’ was admitted to a university” (*The Spring City Evening*, 1 December 2008a).

The research shows that these terms were often used in press coverage after 2003. “AIDS Orphan” was the most frequently used term in the coverage of the six newspapers; of the six, the *Yunnan Daily* employed fewer of these labels in both their headlines and news texts. The two metropolitan newspapers (i.e., the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*) utilised them more frequently. Previous studies (Ren, et al., 2010; Weiss & Ramakrishna, 2006) reveal that a disease becomes stigmatised when an individual’s identity is named after the disease. Moreover, using overt language to describe or label, rather than the individual’s name or other personal identifying information, can reinforce stigmatisation of the disease and of those who are affected by the disease (Sontag, 2001).

#### **5.5.4 Terms and Metaphors Used to Frame Risk Groups**

When the first AIDS case was reported in China in 1985, it was constructed as an invasion from the West. The framing of AIDS as an ‘invader’ shifted after indigenous AIDS cases were detected among intravenous drug users and prostitutes in China in 1989. Since then, AIDS has been constructed as a problem of deviance, e.g., intravenous drug use and promiscuity (Bu & Liu, 2004). Because of its particular transmission route, AIDS is considered a “filthy disease, and is highly stigmatised” (China.com.cn, 2002). Over time, its conception as a “filthy disease” has changed little, even after AIDS cases broke out among blood donors in Henan province. The stigmatising of AIDS is manifested in the Chinese press through the framing of HIV/AIDS risk groups.

The current study reveals that the Chinese press prefers to frame the problem of HIV infection in terms of ‘high risk group’, rather than ‘high risky practices’. Particular terms, such as “*gao*

*wei ren qun*” (high risk group) / “*wei xian ren qun*” (highly dangerous group)<sup>20</sup> commonly appeared in news stories in the six newspapers. These two terms target in turn intravenous drug users (IDUs) (静脉吸毒者), “*an chang*”<sup>21</sup>(hidden prostitutes) (暗娼)/prostitutes (妓女), homosexuals (同性恋) and promiscuous groups (性乱人群); they tend to be employed in news texts rather than in the headlines. The percentage of news stories employing the two terms was 11.52 of the total news stories of the six newspapers. Moreover, HIV transmission has generally been associated with certain social groups, e.g., intravenous drug users, *an chang*/prostitutes, gay men/gay women and promiscuous people (e.g., brothel patrons). Moreover, the framing of HIV infection in terms of ‘high risk group’ is still used even after 2004 when the infection started to spread amongst the general population. While on the one hand, the news press presented HIV/AIDS as a general public health problem, and suggested that AIDS was no longer simply a disease of the ‘other’ but a potential risk to all who conduct certain risky practices such as sharing needles and engaging in unprotected intercourse, on the other, the press continued to emphasise “*gao wei ren qun*” (high risk group) / “*wei xian ren qun*” (highly dangerous group). The result of overemphasising these groups not only had the potential to incite marginalisation and stigmatisation of certain social groups at risk of HIV infection, but also to reinforce the notion that HIV/AIDS was a problem of the “other”. As a consequence, members of the general public came to consider HIV/AIDS a problem far removed from them and neglected to take the necessary precautions against it (Spears, et al., 1992). Moreover, the framing of HIV/AIDS in terms of “high risk group” rather than “high risky practices” could result in discrimination against and stigmatisation of those affected by the disease. As Sontag (2001) notes, when AIDS is considered a disease peculiar to “risk groups” alone, it brings back “the archaic idea... that illness has [been] judged” (p. 134).

## 5.6 The Attribution of Causation

The most commonly used attribution of causation relates to the tracing of the sources and reasons that led to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The study found some differences and similarities in the representation of causation among the six newspapers. Very different emphases on the

<sup>20</sup> “*gao wei ren qun*” in Chinese language “高危人群”; “*wei xian ren qun*” “危险人群”

<sup>21</sup> “*an Chang*” a term normally used in government documents in China meaning prostitute. Prostitution is illegal and an underground activity in China. The term is still being used in the AIDS coverage of *The People’s Daily*, although other mass media are now using the term “sex worker”.



causation of the epidemic were noted in the Yunnan and Henan newspapers published prior to 2004. A dominant factor consistently identified in the texts of the *Yunnan Daily* and *The Spring City Evening* was the “decline in cultural values and the re-emergence of social evils” “evil lifestyles” and “high risk behaviours” such as prostitution, drug trafficking, promiscuity and unsafe sex. The sum total of these perceived social ‘menaces’ represented a contribution to the spread of HIV/AIDS over time (X. Zhu, 2010). Although overt depictions of these attributes have decreased in the coverage since 2004, there are still clues in news stories that suggest the responsibilities and the solution. This attribution coincided with the characteristics of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Yunnan province, where intravenous drug abuse and sexual transmission have been the main modes of HIV/AIDS diffusion. Contaminated blood collection was identified as the main cause of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Henan’s two newspapers, an attribution that concurred with the features of the Henan epidemic. “Decline in cultural values and re-emergence of social evils” was also highlighted in the news stories, even when contaminated blood transmission was the main mode of HIV/AIDS transmission in the province before 2004. Attributions of “social evil”, “evil lifestyle” and high risk behaviours continued to be stressed in *Henan Daily* and *Dahe Daily* post 2004 even after illegal blood collection in Henan came under control, the rate of sexual transmission continued to increase. Similar issues suggesting causation, such as promiscuity and laxity of personal care/sexual activities also appeared in some news stories in *The People’s Daily*. Contaminated blood collection was identified as the main cause of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in news stories in *The People’s Daily* and *The Southern Weekly*. Four local newspapers increased their imputation of causation to personal behaviours, e.g., drug use, sex activities, prostitution, promiscuity and seeking payment for blood donations.

Personal behaviors are the main reasons that cause the transmission of HIV. Those personal behaviors are more likely associated with privacy....Therefore, the change of the personal behaviors of those people is the key factor that decides whether we can or can not control the spread of HIV/AIDS (*Yunnan Daily*, 1 December 2006).

Similar accounts appeared in the news stories in *The Spring City Evening*.

The transmission of HIV in our province is mainly through the personal behaviors. Because some people are reluctant to take the HIV antibody test, it hinders the progress of the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (*The Spring City Evening*, 29 November 2004).

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Similar attribution was noted in Henan's newspapers.

The peasants who came from the poor areas individually and spontaneously sold their blood frequently in the province and throughout the country. Because the blood collectors violated the sanitary standard operation during the blood collection, it resulted in HIV cross infection among the paid blood donors (*Dahe Daily*, 3 December 2001).

Although socio-economic causes were important factors that led to the spread of HIV/AIDS in China (Jun Jing, 2005), except for *The Southern Weekly*, few news stories in the other five newspapers addressed the underlying social and economic inequalities that underpinned the spread of HIV/AIDS. The reporting's emphasis on the causes of the deterioration of cultural values and individual behaviour overshadowed the socio-economic factors. From the outset, HIV/AIDS in China was closely related to poverty. Most of the people living with HIV/AIDS in China come from vulnerable groups, for example, ethnic minorities from border areas, farmers from poverty-stricken areas, and informal employment women (Jun Jing, 2005). To a certain extent, the causation addressed in the texts reinforced the dichotomy of "healthy us" and "diseased other". AIDS was not seen as a community problem; rather, it was viewed as a certain social group's problem, a problem located some distance from "healthy us".

## 5.7 The Attribution of Responsibility

The study reveals that blame attribution also found its way into news stories in the four local newspapers. There were very different pictures of blame attribution between the newspapers of the two provinces. In the two newspapers published in Yunnan Province, the *Yunnan Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*, the news stories tended to blame 'social deviants' (e.g., drug addicts, prostitutes and degenerate persons) for the spread of HIV/AIDS. Social deviants were often labeled, "AIDS Girls", "AIDS Pickpockets", "*an chang* (Hidden Prostitutes)" and "high risk groups", particularly in the news stories of *The Spring City Evening*. Most of the coverage of people living with HIV/AIDS was presented in a negative way. For example, "Drug-addict-girl Spread 'AIDS Demon' through Prostitution" (*The Spring City Evening*, 3 December 2003); "A policeman was attacked with a syringe filled with HIV-infected blood in Zhaotong" (*The Spring City Evening*, 11 December 2004 ). This characteristic was more prominent in the coverage published before 2004. It is worthy of note that the use of overtly

discriminatory language is gradually decreasing: more positive coverage has appeared in *The Spring City Evening* since 2004. The findings also reveal no difference in blame attribution between the *Yunnan Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*.

On the other hand, very different forms of blame attribution were evinced in the two newspapers published in Henan Province: the *Henan Daily* and the *Dahe Daily*. The analysed texts revealed that the majority of coverage in the two newspapers related to HIV/AIDS took the forms of either reprints of news coverage by *Xinhua News Agency* or other provincial media, or focused upon the global or national epidemics. The local coverage addressing HIV/AIDS issues was confined to reporting activities surrounding the annual World AIDS Day campaigns, HIV/AIDS knowledge, and the achievements of the local government in the prevention of HIV/AIDS and the provincial epidemics. Only a few articles referred to the causation of and the responsibility for the epidemic. Rather than alluding to the local government's flawed policy of developing a blood economy and the unsanitary practices that prevailed in semi-official and illegal blood collection stations that led to the spread of HIV/AIDS (Anagnost, 2006; J. Zhao, 2006), some ambiguous parties (e.g., identified as "some places" (一些地方) and blood products companies were blamed for the spread of the disease (X. Zhu, 2010). An example from the *Henan Daily* may indicate the mode of blame attribution in Henan's newspapers.

The main reason that accounted for the transmission of HIV/AIDS in the province is that some places (一些地方) and some blood products companies set up plasma collection stations without permission and violated the sanitary standards of the operation while collecting plasma. This resulted in HIV cross transmission before 1995 and caused the spread of HIV/AIDS in Henan (*Henan Daily*, 13 November 2003).

The same reporting style was evident in the *Dahe Daily*.

Around 1995, driven by economic interest, some "Blood Heads" and "Blood Masters"<sup>22</sup> collected blood privately in Henan; and some blood products companies set up plasma collection stations without permission as well in Henan...Because the blood collectors violated the sanitary standard operation during the blood collection, it resulted in HIV cross infection among the paid blood donors (*Dahe Daily*, 3 December 2001).

<sup>22</sup> The terms "Blood Head" and "Blood Master" refer to those who organised people to sell their blood illegally and stood to profit from it. They mainly appeared in some areas of Central China, e.g., in Henan province and Anhui province in the mid-1990s when illegal blood collection prevailed in these areas.

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From 2005 onwards, the attribution of blame in the two Henan newspapers shifted to the socially deviant as local governments began to successfully gain control of blood transmission; but, sexual transmission continued to increase.

As regards the two national newspapers, most of the coverage of *The People's Daily* focused on the activities of government officials, measures and policies of the government regarding HIV/AIDS prevention, and on the achievements of the government in the prevention of HIV/AIDS. The few news stories involving individual cases were presented in a positive way. Only a few stories attributed the perceived cause to the individual's general behaviour and promiscuous life style. The focus of its coverage, and the positive mode of representation of *The People's Daily*, coincided with the characteristics of the newspaper. *The People's Daily* was not only a newspaper: it was also a political paper (Bai, 2010) that directed public opinion. Its main roles were to disseminate the Party's major principles and policies, and to promote a positive image of the Party and government. However, one major change was noted in *The People's Daily's* coverage of individual cases. Stories about ordinary people gradually increased from 2005 on. Take the following coverage for example. "An interviewing with two AIDS patients who had shaken hands with the President Hu Jintao on World AIDS Day, 2004" (*The People's Daily*, 2 December 2005); and, "Meng Lin and Mu Rongfeng—Two grass roots battle HIV/AIDS" (*The People's Daily*, 9 December 2008). Conversely, most of the news stories in *The Southern Weekly* focused on the transmission of HIV/AIDS via blood transmission/contaminated products in Henan province. Most of the stories, especially the news stories of 2000 and 2001, involved individual cases of PLWHAs, specifically the poor, innocent peasants who contracted HIV through contaminated blood transmissions. The news stories were more likely to reflect the impact of HIV/AIDS on their personal lives, the social and economic panic they were facing, the social problems caused by HIV/AIDS such as orphaning, and the dignity and rights of people living with HIV/AIDS. The news stories in *The Southern Weekly* seldom laid individual blame; they examined the deep-seated causes of HIV/AIDS problems, e.g., poverty generated by the inequities of the social and economic structure. The focus of its coverage and the representations of *The Southern Weekly* were in conformity with the principles and characteristics of the newspaper, i.e., "reflect the social reality, keep close to the real life, concern the people's livelihoods, maintain righteousness, and hold conscience" (*The Southern Weekly*, 2009).

However, one common point was shared by the six newspapers' the news coverage prior to 2004: coverage either overtly stressed or covertly hinted at "innocent victims" and "guilty victims", especially when individual cases were reported. In such coverage, the infection routes of the individual cases were usually traced, especially in cases categorised as "innocent victims". For instance, in the following articles: "AIDS Patients Bravely Fight for Medical Insurance" (*The Spring City Evening*, 30 November 2002); "Be infected AIDS by blood transfusion, a peasant has lodged a claim for a million yuan" (*The Spring City Evening*, 9 November 2004); "'Let the whole society care for them'— President Hu Jintao visited AIDS patients" (*The People's Daily*, 2 December 2004); "The voice of Xiao Li" (*The Southern Weekly*, 29 November 2001), "The life of an HIV infector" (*Dahe Daily*, 8 December 2000), the innocence of the mode of infection of the patients was emphasised. Some news stories overtly expressed the fact that those who contracted HIV through blood transmission, and children who contracted HIV from their mothers, were innocent victims. A typical example extracted from *The Spring City Evening* read as follows:

Among the HIV infectors that I have met, some of them were infected through intravenous drug abuse; some of them were infected due to their immoral behaviours. They had faults, but are not deserving of death. However, for those AIDS patients who contracted HIV through blood transfusion and those infants and children who contracted HIV through their mother, they are innocent victims, said volunteer Xu Xuezhong (*The Spring City Evening*, 4 December 2006).

The Minister of Health expressed the same opinion in the *Dahe Daily*

Minister Gao Qiang said: "The Ministry of Health and WHO made a joint assessment of the current epidemic of HIV/AIDS in China this year. The result of the assessment shows that there are about 70,000 people including hemophilia HIV infectors... Most of those HIV infection cases occurred before China issued "*Blood Donation Law of the People's Republic of China*" in 1998. The HIV infectors who contracted through blood collections are innocent... At present, the vast majority of those who are receiving free antiviral treatment from the government come from this group (*Dahe Daily*, 1 December 2005).

This account infers that the attribution of "innocent victims" and "guilty victims" may to some extent influence the policy of HIV/AIDS treatment and actual operation. "Innocent victims" may be given priority, may enjoy free treatment, even when the sources of free treatment are limited.

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## 5.8 Suggested Solutions

As Entman (1993) notes, news coverage provides treatment recommendations; in other words, it informs the public how to act on certain issues. The research reveals that the news stories about HIV/AIDS in the six newspapers served this purpose.

A particular mindset, commonly evinced in the texts of the six newspapers, suggested that the solution to AIDS prevention was education. For example, *The People's Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily* highlighted the importance of AIDS education in their headlines: "Education is the key in the prevention of HIV/AIDS" (*The People's Daily*, 4 December 2000); "President Hu Jintao inspected the AIDS prevention work in Beijing Ditan Hospital and stressed 'Let everyone gain AIDS prevention knowledge, and let every patient receive timely treatment'" (*The People's Daily*, 2 December 2008); and, "The best vaccine in the prevention of the HIV/AIDS is education -- a glance at the national schools' meeting on HIV/AIDS prevention" (*Yunnan Daily*, 3 December 2006). The importance of AIDS education was also emphasised in the news texts. The following examples were derived from the texts of *The People's Daily*.

Extract 13: The experts said that the best 'vaccine' for preventing HIV/AIDS is [AIDS health] education, especially the education of young people (*The People's Daily*, 14 November 2001).

Extract 14: Only through education, the public can know AIDS, find the risks of AIDS, master the means of AIDS prevention ..." (*The people's Daily*, 1 December 2002).

Extract 15: It is a long-term and arduous task. [We] should ... strengthen AIDS prevention education and AIDS knowledge dissemination...and put up an unbreakable wall to hold back HIV/AIDS (*The People's Daily*, 2 December 2007).

Similar to *The People's Daily*, the news columns in the other five newspapers also emphasised the importance of AIDS education to varying degrees. One article in *The Southern Weekly* stressed the advantages of conducting AIDS education sooner rather than later (*The Southern Weekly*, 29 November 2001). Some articles in the *Henan Daily*, quoting experts' opinions, pointed out that the dissemination of AIDS knowledge among the public would not only promote public awareness of AIDS prevention, but also help eliminate discrimination against

PLWHAs (Henan Daily, 2 December 2006). In addition, the importance of education was highlighted in the two metropolitan newspapers.

It seems that apart from advocating education, other solutions seemed to vary between the national and the four local newspapers. In the case of the two national newspapers, *The People's Daily* emphasised effective implementation of government prevention and treatment policies while *The Southern Weekly* stressed the importance of the government adopting a pragmatic attitude towards HIV/AIDS prevention and of government legislation to protect concerned people's basic rights to access medical treatment, education and marriage. As well, *The Southern Weekly* recommended regulating AIDS prevention and AIDS relief. Their advocacies are evident in the following headlines: "Correct and pragmatic AIDS politics must be executed rapidly" (The Southern Weekly, 28 November 2002 ); "I have AIDS, but I want to get married" (The Southern Weekly, 21 November 2002); "The emerging cases of catching AIDS voluntarily are crying for timely renewal of the law" (The Southern Weekly, 27 November 2003); and, "The relief of AIDS patients is bound to obey the law—an interview with HIV/AIDS prevention expert, Professor Li Dun from Tsinghua university" (The Southern Weekly, 1December 2005).

Comments relating to the solution appeared very similar across the four local newspapers: lifestyle changes, care and comfort of PLWHAs, and the participation of the whole society in the prevention of HIV/AIDS. For example, self-control, i.e., abstaining from immoral conduct, was stressed as a radical measure for individuals to take to avoid sexual transmission of HIV. The following extracts derived from the four local newspapers serve as examples:

Extract 16: As long as everyone exercises self-control, adheres to sexual morality, uses contraceptive condoms correctly and avoids drugs, AIDS will not be able to spread rapidly (Henan Daily, 25 November 2003).

Extract 17: Exercise self-control, adhere to sexual morality, use condoms correctly, refuse drugs, cherish life...(Yunnan Daily, 25 November 2004).

Extract 18: [We should] adhere to sexual morality, exercise self-control. At the same time, [we should] disseminate AIDS prevention knowledge, because dissemination of AIDS prevention knowledge is the basic measure (Dahe Daily, 30 November2007 ).

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Extract 19: Exercising self-control, avoiding promiscuity and multiple sexual partners, and adhering to sexual morality are radical measures to prevent sexual transmission of HIV/AIDS (The Spring City Evening, 1 December 2002 ).

Coverage of condom protection was included in the texts. However, apart from a few news items in *The Southern Weekly* and *The Spring City Evening*, and limited AIDS prevention knowledge in the *Yunnan Daily* and the *Henan Daily*, there was little focus on prevention messages. Rather, focus was upon debate as to whether strategies for promoting condoms among the public and installing public condom vending machines would lead to the decline of the HIV/AIDS epidemic or encourage prostitution. There was virtually no discussion of safe-sex practices critical to both heterosexual and homosexual transmission. There was evidence of reporting on needle-exchange programs and antiretroviral (ART) treatment; but, in general, focus was upon the government's initiatives to manage the HIV/AIDS problem rather than on practical information for those seeking treatment (X. Zhu, 2010).

'Caring for the people living with HIV/AIDS' was highlighted in the four local newspapers. But, it was little more than a slogan because no specific action was recommended. Some articles seemed to imply that this kind of 'caring' served a purpose. Caring for "them" (those living with HIV/AIDS) would benefit "healthy us". The following examples from headlines may illustrate this perception: "Caring for them is caring for ourselves" (Yunnan Daily, 1 December 2003); "Helping them is helping ourselves"—a glance at the campaign concerning women and combating HIV/AIDS (Henan Daily, 2 December 2004); and, "Experts' advice: Removing discrimination and indifference towards PLWHA will eventually protect us better" (The Spring City Evening, 1 December 2002).

Further examples appear below:

Extract 20: If we do not provide them with a comfortable social environment that encourages them to seek treatment, they will conceal themselves among us as infection sources. It will be more hazardous to us. Citizen Zhen Qiang pointed out that eliminating discrimination towards people living with HIV/AIDS, in a sense, is eventually protecting ourselves (The Spring City Evening, 1 December 2002).



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Extract 21: Discrimination is the biggest barrier to controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing care and help to people living with HIV/AIDS.....A disdainful look, scare, alienation and discrimination will only result in their attempting to escape the aversion of the public. In seeking their safety, they may conceal their illness. This may ... prove unsafe for society. Therefore, let us care more for HIV-infected persons, because caring for “them” is caring for “ourselves” (Yunnan Daily, 1 December 2003).

Extract 22: AIDS patients are, in fact victims. Discriminating against them is not only immoral, but may also cause additional social problems. AIDS is our common enemy. Therefore, helping them and caring for them is helping us and caring for ourselves (Henan Daily, 2 December 2004).

Extract 23: If we are unable to find the AIDS patients and help them..., it will be impossible for us to find the disease source and cut it off. We may become new victims and infected person ... Therefore, only by rendering them our understanding, tolerance, respect and care will they be touched, stand out bravely and be happy to cooperate with doctors in their treatment. Only when the disease source is captured and cut off will the spread of HIV/AIDS diminish and the mutual safety and happiness of the whole of society will be fulfilled (Yunnan Daily, 5 December 2008).

While public participation in the prevention of HIV/AIDS was also emphasised in the coverage, no specific action was suggested.

## 5.9 Summary

This chapter presents the research results from the analyses of the six selected Chinese newspapers (*The People's Daily*, *The Southern Weekly*, the *Henan Daily*, the *Yunnan Daily*, the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*). A total of 981 news stories related to HIV/AIDS coverage that appeared in the six newspapers from November 1 to December 31, 2000 to 2008, were analysed. Focus is upon the dominant sources and dominant frames, the metaphors and terms utilised in the description of HIV/AIDS and PLWHAs, the metaphors used to frame risk and risk groups, and the key themes that dominated the newspapers' HIV/AIDS coverage.

The research results reveal that the prevention/education frame, the miscellany of frames dubbed ‘other’, and the medical/scientific, political and socio-economic/cultural frames were the dominant frames. Use of the policy/legal, global cooperation/assistance and human rights/ethics frames was significant in the six newspapers. The prevention/education and medical/scientific frames were dominant during the years 2000 to 2008 across the six newspapers. A major difference noted was that the Party organs (*The People’s Daily*, *the Henan Daily*, *the Yunnan Daily*) and their affiliated newspapers (*the Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*) tended to adopt the political frame and the miscellany of frames labeled ‘other’, which included routine and event-oriented coverage, while the more independent-minded and liberal newspaper, *The Southern Weekly*, was more likely to adopt the socio-economic/cultural frame compared with the other five newspapers that evinced a predilection for the behavioural frame. Minimal differences in terms of frames were found across the four local newspapers. Use of the human rights/ethics frame is still marginal, but progress was noted when compared with the findings of previous studies (Bu & Liu, 2004; X. Liu & Zhang, 2005; TICC, 2005). In addition, the government voice still dominates the HIV/AIDS issue in the Chinese press, and the voices of the PLWHAs continue to be marginalised.

The dominant discourse surrounding HIV/AIDS has framed the disease as primarily a problem of certain social groups, e.g., intravenous drug users, prostitutes and promiscuous persons, rather than as risky practice. The aforementioned are considered the sources of transmission and the infectors. Labels continue to be attached to those affected by HIV/AIDS, and the divisive “innocent victims”/“guilty victims” labels persist in the discourse. Coverage of HIV/AIDS in the Chinese press tends to marginalise victims and is morality-centred.

In short, my findings indicate that there are many similarities in the coverage of HIV/AIDS between Chinese media and that of other countries in the world. The framing and representations of HIV/AIDS in the Chinese media were basically consistent with the trends of media reportage worldwide, a topic I discuss in Chapter 3. That is, the Chinese media’s coverage of HIV/AIDS has gone from initial denial to acceptance, from framing AIDS as a ‘foreigner’s disease’ to a Chinese domestic one which is peculiar to certain social groups, and from demonising to humanizing HIV/AIDS and PLWHAs. Similar to other countries, a medicalised AIDS discourse and a “healthy us” and “diseased other” dichotomy also found

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prominence in Chinese media. However, situated as it was in the specific context of China's political, socio-economic and culture spheres, the Chinese coverage of HIV/AIDS manifested a somewhat unique feature; that is, it had the apparent characteristics of Party journalism. In other words, Party-state-centred framing dominated China's HIV/AIDS coverage, although there was a tendency towards socio-economic framing in the newly rising professional journalism. Consequently, the HIV/AIDS coverage in Chinese media was characterised by "less with what actually happens in society and more with what the authorities have or have not done, less with the socio-economic conditions and more with the...individual cases, less with the voices and faces of PLWHA and more with leaders and experts" (H. Yu, 2012, p. 19).

McQuail (1994), noting the relationship between media and society, claims that as it is constructed within a given national framework, media's performance is invariably confined within this framework. Hence, media content "is shaped, pounded, constrained, encouraged by a multitude of forces" in their own society (Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. ix), forces that directly impact upon the media's construction of reality. Therefore, it is important to explore the forces or factors that shape the media coverage of HIV/AIDS in the Chinese press. In the next chapter, the results of the analysis of the interview data will be presented in an attempt to identify which forces and factors influence the representation of HIV/AIDS in the Chinese press.

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## **Chapter 6**

# **Investigation of the Social Construction of the HIV/AIDS Reality: Interviews with Journalists**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The dominant sources and frames used by the six selected newspapers for their HIV/AIDS coverage, and the dominant discourse surrounding HIV/AIDS featured in the coverage by the six newspapers were examined and presented in the preceding chapter (Chapter 5). Previous studies (McQuail, 1994; Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) indicate that media content is a social construction rather than a reflection of an objective reality. Many factors arising from the internal and external contexts of media organisations affect media content. In other words, many factors combine to determine how media content is shaped. The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the interviews conducted with 30 journalists and editors (who had covered or edited HIV/AIDS news stories from the six newspapers and other media such as the *Xinhua News Agency*) in an attempt to ascertain the factors that influenced their coverage of HIV/AIDS and to suggest alternative approaches to future coverage in China. The five Core Research Questions of this thesis were addressed in interviews through 9 Interview Questions with journalists and 9 Interview Questions with editors respectively.

In this chapter, I report the results of the analysis under each Core Research Question after (1) identifying the journalists' attitudes towards HIV/AIDS and PLWHAs (RQ1, section 6.2); (2) identifying the journalistic frames that were adopted in the coverage (RQ2, section 6.3); (3)

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identifying the factors that influenced the framing of the coverage of HIV/AIDS (RQ3, section 6.4); (4) identifying the impact of the coverage on public policies (RQ4, section 6.5); and, (5) identifying alternative frames that may be adopted in future coverage (RQ5, section 6.6). A summary of the chapter will be presented in section 6.7.

## **6.2 Analysis of Research Question 1: Journalists’ Attitudes Towards HIV/AIDS and PLWHAs**

Research question 1 sought to examine the attitudes of journalists and editors towards HIV/AIDS and PLWHAs, i.e., to explore how journalists and editors frame HIV/AIDS and PLWHAs. My analysis of the transcripts began by placing the frames that journalists and editors adopted when describing HIV/AIDS into three categories: main, secondary, and noteworthy idiosyncratic frames. The medical/scientific, socio-economic/cultural and political frames constituted the main frames. The secondary frames included others’ problems (i.e., foreigners’ problems and certain social groups’ problems), while the noteworthy idiosyncratic frame was the consequence of local government negligence. My analysis identified two main frames that journalists and editors employed to describe PLWHAs: common patients and victims (“innocent victims” vs. “deserved victims”).

### **6.2.1 Framing HIV/AIDS**

#### *Main frames*

According to my analysis, the medical/scientific, socio-economic/cultural and political frames were the main frames that journalists and editors used to describe HIV/AIDS. All of the journalists and editors (30 interviewees) considered AIDS to be a medical problem, a common infectious disease and a public health problem. The words and phrases they used most frequently to describe the condition were ‘disease’ (疾病), ‘common disease’ (普通疾病), ‘chronic infectious disease’ (慢性传染病), ‘incurable disease’ (不治之症), ‘special

disease’ (特殊疾病), ‘stigmatised disease’ (耻辱感强的病), and, ‘public health problem’ (公共健康问题). Female interviewee IY-05-J+E,<sup>23</sup> providing a representative definition of AIDS, said: “From my point of view, AIDS is a common disease. It is ... a chronic infectious disease that is similar to hepatitis B.”<sup>24</sup> Another interviewee (IY-02-J) added: “AIDS is not as horrible as people think, although it is an incurable disease. But, if we propagate the knowledge of HIV/AIDS in a proper way, it is even easier to prevent than hepatitis A & hepatitis B, current H1N1 Influenza and previous Avian Influenza.”<sup>25</sup>

My analysis indicated that the majority of journalists and editors (25 out of 30 interviewees) considered HIV/AIDS to be a socio-economic and cultural problem. They held that although HIV/AIDS is a disease, it is not as simple as other diseases, given its impact upon society, economics and politics. Interviewee IP-05-J<sup>26</sup> for example, emphasised that:

AIDS is a special disease, a highly stigmatized disease. It has been attached to many social symbols and signs beyond the disease itself. AIDS differs from other diseases in that it covers many [social] aspects, such as morality, law, and humanity. Hence, we should concern ourselves not only with the disease itself, but also with a series of social problems caused by the disease and the deep-rooted and underlying problems behind the disease.<sup>27</sup>

Interviewee IN-01-J<sup>28</sup> provided a similar account:

There are some deep-seated social reasons behind the disease.... The importance of coverage of HIV/AIDS is not only to present the disease itself to the public, but also to let the public have an opportunity to consider some essential issues, such as humanity, character, the idea of human rights that everyone is equal, human values, and also gender consciousness.<sup>29</sup>

Three interviewees (IS-08-J, IS-07-E, IS-03-J), who worked for *The Southern Weekly*, placed particular emphasis on the relationship between poverty and HIV/AIDS: they considered

<sup>23</sup> The code IY-05-J+E: is used to identify a particular interviewee. I = interviewee; Y = Yunnan province; 05 = the interviewing sequence in Yunnan; J = journalist; E = editor. IY-05-J+E, formerly a journalist, is now Editor-in-Charge of one page of the newspaper she serves.

<sup>24</sup> Original text in Chinese: “对我来讲, 艾滋病就是一个普通的病……它是慢性传染病。”

<sup>25</sup> Original text in Chinese: “艾滋病本身并没有人们想象的那么可怕, 虽然它是不可治愈的, 但是只要宣传得法, 其实它是非常容易防的, 比甲肝、乙肝, 包括现在的甲流感, 以前的禽流感好防多了。”

<sup>26</sup> IP-05-J: I = interviewee; P = *The People's Daily*; 05 = the interviewing sequence; J = journalist.

<sup>27</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “艾滋病是一个特殊的病, 是耻辱感很强的这么一种疾病。它被赋予了很多疾病之外的社会性的符号, 一些标志在里头。这个疾病和其它疾病不一样, 它包含的东西很多, 包括道德、法律、人性这些东西在里面。因此, 我们对这个疾病的关注不只是对疾病本身的关注, 还要关注这个疾病所引发的一系列社会问题, 疾病背后的深层次的问题。”

<sup>28</sup> IN-01-J: I = interviewee; N = interviewees from other national media; 01 = interviewing sequence; J = journalist.

<sup>29</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “这个病的背后有一些深层次的社会原因, ……报道艾滋病的重要性不仅仅在于把这个疾病给它呈现给大众, 而在于它带来了一种机会, 让大家会更深刻地去思考一些特别本质的问题, 比方说人性的问题, 人的品质, 人是要平等的这种人权观念, 还包括人的一种价值观, 包括一些性别意识。”

poverty to be one of the factors that precipitated HIV/AIDS in China. Interviewee IS-03-J<sup>30</sup> commented upon his experience of reportage:

There are some differences in AIDS transmission between China and the Western countries. In Western countries, sexuality and drug abuse are the main reasons that cause AIDS while in China, blood [trafficking] is the main problem that causes AIDS. The infectors are mainly blood suppliers, in other words, commercial blood sellers and transfusion recipients. Those commercial blood sellers in fact are poor people. In addition, the drug traffickers and drug users in Xin Jiang, Yunnan, Guizhou and Sichuan are poor people. They got into drugs to make some money for a living.<sup>31</sup>

Journalists and editors also expressed their concern regarding the economic impact of HIV/AIDS on both the country and the individual. Interviewees IN-01-J, IY-02-J, IY-02-J and IY-04-E pointed out that not only does HIV/AIDS increase the State's financial burden (the State has to invest a considerable amount of money in the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS and in testing equipment and free treatment), but it also increases the burden on the families of PLWHAs. The latter have to pay a high price for treatment, even though nowadays the State provides some free treatment. But, inevitably families crumble under such a heavy financial burden.

My analysis further indicated that HIV/AIDS used to be considered a political issue. Several journalists and editors (IP-01-J, IS-01-J, IH-01-J, IY-03-J) revealed that due to the government's policies, and its attitude towards HIV/AIDS in the initial stages of the outbreak, they considered HIV/AIDS a sensitive issue, one associated with politics rather than a common disease and a public health problem. At that time, HIV/AIDS was either neglected or intentionally covered up in many areas of China, including Henan and Yunnan, because local government agencies feared that the epidemic might affect their political achievements and local image. Thus, there was little coverage of the disease and some areas coverage was forbidden.

Most of the interviewees, especially those who had been reporting HIV/AIDS over a long period of time, admitted that they went through a long process during which they came to consider HIV/AIDS a common disease and a public health problem. They (IP-01-J, IP-05-J, IP-02-J, IN-01-J, IY-05-J+E, IY-07-J, IY-01-J) agreed that their views on HIV/AIDS have altered in line with changes in government opinion and policy vis-à-vis HIV/AIDS and that they in turn have increased their knowledge of the disease as well.

<sup>30</sup> IS-03-J: I = interviewee; S = *The Southern Weekly*; 03 = the interviewing sequence; J = journalist.

<sup>31</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “中国和西方国家（艾滋病）的感染途径不一样。西方国家的是因为性的问题，因为吸毒的问题。而中国主要的血液的问题，一个是输送血液就是卖血的人，另一个是受血的。这些卖血的人其实是穷人。另外还有一个是贩毒吸毒的人，在新疆、云南、贵州、四川有很多，其实都是很贫穷的，他们贩毒就是为了生计挣点钱。”



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### *Secondary frames*

My analysis indicates that apropos of secondary frames, journalists and editors initially considered HIV/AIDS an “others” problem. But, the actual meaning of “others” changed as the epidemic progressed. Initially, HIV/AIDS was considered a foreigner’s illness. Then, with the occurrence of indigenous HIV/AIDS in China, HIV/AIDS came to be considered a particular social group’s problem, e.g., of the disadvantaged or of those relegated by public opinion to the bottom of society; for example, drug users, prostitutes and promiscuous people. Included also were poor peasants who survive by selling their blood.

According to my analysis, America and Africa were commonly mentioned by journalists and editors when recalling their first awareness of HIV/AIDS epidemic. Interviewee IP-05-J said:

The first time I heard about HIV/AIDS was in 1987. AIDS was described as a super cancer that was more horrible than any cancer that occurred in America. Once you were infected, you surely died. The coverage of HIV/AIDS at that time gave me an impression that HIV/AIDS was an inevitable result of the way of decadent and dissolute life of Western capitalism and moral degradation whereas we have been taught good values and good morals. Therefore we will not have such problem. HIV/AIDS was in America. So it was far away from us.<sup>32</sup>

Interviewee IS-08-J observed that he initially thought that HIV/AIDS was an African disease associated with ‘immoral people’. So, he was shocked when he heard that some peasants in Henan had been infected with HIV. Recalling his first reaction, he stated:

What is AIDS? AIDS is an African disease. Only those drug users, homosexuals, women employed by bars and promiscuous people can have AIDS. How can peasants have AIDS? They neither used prostitutes nor take drugs. The cause for their infection was a weighty topic. The background of this news was very subtle.<sup>33</sup>

At the outset, journalists and editors saw HIV/AIDS as solely a ‘certain’ social group’s problem. But, the emergence of indigenous cases in China changed their minds. Up until that time, the terms they had commonly used to describe PLWHAs included: “people at the

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<sup>32</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “我第一次听说艾滋病的事是87年，艾滋病被称为出现在美国的比癌症还恐怖的超级癌症，只要得上就会死。那时候的报道给我的印象是艾滋病是西方腐朽没落的资本主义生活方式，道德沦丧所带来的必然结果，而我们一直倡导的是更好的价值观，更好的道德，所以我们不会出现这个问题。艾滋病是美国的，所以很遥远。”

<sup>33</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “艾滋病是什么？艾滋病是非洲的（病），是吸毒的、同性恋的、酒吧里的小姐，那些性乱的人才会有。农民怎么会有艾滋病？他们又不嫖又不娼，然后又不吸毒，怎么会有艾滋病呢？他们得艾滋病的原因恰恰是一个非常沉重的话题，新闻背景很深。”

bottom of society” (社会底层的人), “a certain group” (特定人群), “disadvantaged or vulnerable groups” (弱势人群), “drug users” (吸毒者), “prostitutes” (妓女), “promiscuous people” (性乱的人), “poor peasants” (贫困农民), and, “blood sellers” (卖血者). But, with the increase in the range of transmission via sexual intercourse in China, the majority of interviewees realised that anyone could become infected. Yet some continued to view HIV infection as confined to certain social groups and thought it impossible for them to become personally infected. For example, interviewee IS-07-E insisted: “At present, in my point of view, HIV/AIDS is confined to certain groups. As for me, it hasn’t endangered me individually”.<sup>34</sup> Interviewee IY-04-E expressed the same opinion: “Personally I should say, as for you and me, if we adhere to morals and norms, and exercise self-control, it is simply not possible for us to contract HIV.”<sup>35</sup>

#### *Noteworthy idiosyncratic attitudes framing toward HIV/AIDS*

Considering HIV/AIDS as the consequence of local government’s negligence was identified as the noteworthy idiosyncratic frame in my analysis. Several journalists and editors (IH-03-J, IH-04-E, IN-03-J, IS-08-J, IS-07-E) stressed that the local government should take the responsibility for the blood transmission of HIV in Henan province because it was the local government’s blunder that caused the transmission. Interviewee IH-04-E provided the following account:

There was a special reason that caused the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Henan. It was the government’s malpractice that brought about a serious public health event. The spread of HIV/AIDS among the poorest peasants in Henan should be attributed to the development of a blood economy in those years. But until now they still avoid to admitting it.<sup>36</sup>

Interviewee IS-08-J agreed, adding:

At that time, it was drug use and homosexual behaviour that caused AIDS in the whole world. But, it was peasants who contracted HIV due to selling their blood in

<sup>34</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “就目前来讲, 在我看来艾滋病还是在一个特定的人群里, 我个人觉得还没有真正危害到我个人。”

<sup>35</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “从我个人角度来说, 像你我这种人, 只要做人的道德规范达到基本要求, 洁身自好, 根本就不可能感染上艾滋病。”

<sup>36</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “河南艾滋病(蔓延)有个特殊原因, 这是一次由于政府渎职而造成的严重的公共卫生事件。河南在最贫穷的农民中大量得传播了艾滋病的原因是当年搞的血液经济, 直到现在他们还在回避这样一个要害。”

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China. HIV, to a great extent, was the result of an individual's moral problem and individual behaviour. Transmission was the result of blood sales. Moreover, blood stations were set up illegally by the [local] government. Governmental staff and staff from the medical and health-care institutes were involved in it. It is obvious that the result was that the (local) government was unable to meet its obligations.

<sup>37</sup>

This point of view was strengthened by interviewee IS-07-E, who suggested that one special characteristic of AIDS transmissions in China, when compared to that of the Western countries, was that AIDS transmission through blood was associated with poverty and with darker aspects of local government administration.

## 6.2.2 Framing PLWHAs

My analysis revealed that in the main, journalists and editors used two specific frames to describe PLWHAs: framing: (1) PLWHAs as common patients; and, (2) PLWHAs as victims (“innocent victims” vs. “deserved victims”).

The majority of the journalists and editors (25 out of 30) considered PLWHAs to be common everyday patients, who should be respected and allowed to enjoy the same basic rights as other patients. Interviewee IS-01-J observed that “once people have been unluckily affected with HIV, they are already patients. As patients, they need help and treatment. It is not easy for them to infect others. They are only patients, just like cancer patients.”<sup>38</sup> Interviewee IN-01-J, who agreed with this view, added:

We should separate a person from his/her behaviour. Or in other words, we should separate the consequences of one's behaviour from one's behaviour. As people, everyone is born equal. From the human rights perspective, patients, no matter if they caught flu or are infected with HIV, they should be treated equally without discrimination. However, that does not necessarily mean that we commiserate with them because they are infected with HIV and agree with their behaviour.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “当年那个环境下，全世界都是吸毒感染艾滋病，同性恋感染艾滋病，而在中国居然是农村的农民，还是卖血感染（艾滋病）的。前者，那很大程度是属于个人道德问题，个人因素导致的，而后者是因为卖血。而且你政府是违法开血站，是政府工作人员，医疗卫生系统自己的人在做，这明显是因为政府监管不利造成的。”

<sup>38</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “我觉得他们一旦不幸感染上病毒，就是病人了。作为患者他们就需要得到救助，需要得到治疗，他们不是那么容易感染别人的。他们就是病人，就像癌症病人一样。”

<sup>39</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “我们应该把人和人的行为，或者把这个结果和他的行为分开。从人的角度说每个人是生而平等的；从人权的角度来看他这个人得了病，不管他是得了感冒，还是艾滋病都应该一视同仁。当然，我们

However, several interviewees disagreed. They not only considered PLWHAs to be victims, but also differentiated between them according to the transmission routes of the disease. They claimed that those who became infected with HIV through blood transfusion were “innocent victims” deserving of sympathy, while those who were infected due to their personal behaviour had only themselves to blame. Interviewee IY-04-E provided a representative account:

According to the three routes of AIDS transmission, it is impossible to make AIDS free from discrimination, although a few of them are innocent. We should associate a person with the transmission route. If people contract HIV because of their lack of self-respect and self-control, we should care for and sympathize with them, but, at the same time, we should treat them as negative examples. If they went to see a doctor and needed a blood transfusion, and then contracted HIV, they are surely innocent. They can be considered among the most unfortunate people in the world. As a single individual, we can have different attitudes towards these two kinds of infectors. But, from the angle of the State and the government, in terms of care, they should be treated equally.<sup>40</sup>

The interviewee IN-03-J supported this view citing the Henan example:

The reason that the PLWHAs in Henan could receive a lot of international support and sympathy was because most of them were innocent. They were infected with HIV in ignorance, rather than because of their individual behaviour. That was the consequence of the government’s negligence and their own ignorance. Hence, they deserved more sympathy.<sup>41</sup>

To some extent, their different attitudes towards “innocent victims” and “deserved victims” affected journalists’ choice of coverage. IS-02-J admitted that her coverage of HIV/AIDS mainly focused on the more vulnerable groups, i.e., people who were passively infected with HIV through blood transmission and were “innocent victims”. She said: “During my interviews with PLWHAs, I also met some people who had contracted HIV through sexual transmission, such as [members of the] homosexual population. But they did not enter into my coverage because I was more willing to cover the vulnerable groups and the innocent. I do not necessarily mean they were not worthy of reporting, but it was just because of my personal preference.”<sup>42</sup>

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不是因为他得了艾滋病就可怜他，觉得他的行为是对的，提倡这种行为。”

<sup>40</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “从艾滋病的三种传播渠道来看，要没有歧视都是不可能的，当然有极少数是无辜的，这个要和他的感染途径相联系。如果有人感染上（艾滋病）了，他是因为不自重、不自爱感染上的，我们要关爱、同情他，但同时也要把他做为反面教材。如果他是因为去看病，需要输血就染上了，这个人确实是无辜的，可以理解为天下最不幸的人了。作为个体的人来讲，对这两种人可以有良种不同的态度；但对于国家和政府来讲，关爱应该是一样的。”

<sup>41</sup> Original text in Chinese read “为什么河南的这些患者能够得到国际上很多人的声援或者他们的同情，就是因为他们更多的是无辜的。他们在无知状态中感染了这个病，而不是因为他的个人行为。更多的是因为政府管理上面的疏漏加上他们个人的无知造成的，所以他们更值得同情。”

<sup>42</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “在我的采访过程中也接触到一些因为性的原因造成的，比如同性恋人群，但是我

All in all, the majority of the interviewees considered HIV/AIDS to be a medical issue, a public health problem and a socio-economic and cultural issue. But, it may be that with time, attitudes associated with the politics of AIDS have gradually mellowed. The majority of the interviewees considered PLWHAs as common everyday patients, who should enjoy the same basic rights as other patients (although a few interviewees differentiated between PLWHAs as “innocent victims” and “deserved victims”). No significant differences emerged between the frames of journalists and editors who worked for national, provincial and metropolitan level newspapers.

### 6.3 Analysis of Research Question 2: Journalistic Frames Adopted in the Coverage

Research question 2 sought to examine the frames adopted by journalists from the six newspapers in their coverage of HIV/AIDS. My analysis indicates that there were slight differences between frames adopted by journalists associated with the three Party organs (*The People's Daily*, the *Henan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily*)<sup>43</sup> and those adopted by journalists from the two metropolitan newspapers (the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*) that are affiliated to the two provincial Party organs.<sup>44</sup> But, there were significant differences between the frames used by journalists from the three Party organs and the two metropolitan newspapers, and those used by journalists from *The Southern Weekly*,<sup>45</sup> a paper that pursues journalistic professionalism, is market-driven and relatively independent. The main frames utilised by journalists employed by the Party organs (*The People's Daily*, the *Henan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily*), were as follows: political, policy/legal, prevention/education, medical/scientific and ‘other’ miscellaneous frames (i.e., daily routine reportage or

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没有纳入我的报道视野，我还是愿意做一些弱势群体的，无辜的，跟个人偏好有关系，并不是说那些东西不值得报道。”

<sup>43</sup> *The People's Daily* is an official newspaper of the Central Communist Party; *The Henan Daily* is an official newspaper of the Henan Provincial Communist Party; and, the *Yunnan Daily* is an official newspaper of the Yunnan Provincial Communist Party.

<sup>44</sup> The *Dahe Daily* is affiliated to the *Henan Daily*; *The Spring City Evening* is affiliated to the *Yunnan Daily*.

<sup>45</sup> *The Southern Weekly* was originally one of newspapers affiliated to *The Southern Daily* (Nanfang Ribao), an official newspaper of the Guangdong Provincial Communist Party. Based on *The Southern Daily* and its affiliated newspapers, the Southern Daily Group was set up in May 1998 and renamed the Southern Media Group in July 2005. However, *The Southern Weekly* was more open-minded and more independent compared to the majority of newspapers affiliated to the Party organs due to its special location in Guangdong province, a pilot province for reform and opening-up in China, and due to its development model of pursuing journalistic professionalism and complete dependence upon market.

event-oriented reportage). A slightly difference was evident in the adoption of frames by the journalists from the two metropolitan newspapers when compared to those employed by their counterparts from the Party organs. The main frames frequently employed were policy/legal, prevention/educational, medical/scientific and 'other' frames (e.g., routine reportage or event-oriented reportage).<sup>46</sup> The secondary frame adopted by journalists from the Party organs and the two metropolitan newspapers was the socio-economic/cultural frame. Journalists who worked for *The Southern Weekly* favoured the socio-economic/cultural frame; secondary frames included the policy/legal and the prevention/education frames. A noteworthy idiosyncratic frame identified in *The Southern Weekly* was the medical/scientific frame.

### *Main frames*

My analysis reveals that the main frames commonly employed in their coverage of HIV/AIDS by journalists and editors who worked for the three Party organs (*The People's Daily*, the *Henan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily*) were as follows: political, policy/legal, prevention/education and medical/scientific frames. Among these four main frames, the political frame was the dominant frame used most frequently by the journalists and editors in their HIV/AIDS coverage. Seven among them (IP-01-J, IP-02-J, IP-03-J, IH-02-J, IY-02-J, IY-03-J, IY-04-E) provided similar accounts in the interviews, saying that their coverage of HIV/AIDS always conformed to the requirements of the Party organs; that is, to propagating the Party's principles, policies and voice, disseminating its attitudes, views or stances regarding HIV/AIDS, and to reflecting the achievements and problems that persist in the prevention of HIV/AIDS. There was a slightly difference in focus between the Central Party organ and the provincial Party organs. Whereas the former mainly focuses upon the Central Party's policies and voice, the latter, apart from propagating the Central Party's policies and voice, also disseminated the local Party and government's attitudes and policies related to HIV/AIDS and PLWHAs. Interviewee IP-02-J from *The People's Daily* provided the following interpretation:

The positioning of the Party organs is that they are government-operated newspapers or mouthpiece. For the Party organs, whether it is the Central Party

<sup>46</sup> Here the main frames that the journalists from the two metropolitan newspapers (that are affiliated to the Party organs) refer to are the frames that the journalists used in their own coverage and writing. Frames of news items or articles (the majority was politics-oriented coverage) that were directly copied from other media were excluded.

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organ or provincial Party organ, the general principals of the coverage are the same. The coverage of *The People's Daily* may put particular emphasis on the Central government's policies and voice, while the coverage of the provincial Party organs may focus more on the provincial or local government's policies on AIDS care and treatment according to its specific circumstances. But, our reportage shares the same goal, although there may be some regional characteristics in our respective reportage.<sup>47</sup>

This above comment was supported by interviewee IY-02-J.

As a Party organ *Yunnan Daily* mainly reflects the official wishes and expresses the government's voice. The main task of our coverage is to tell the public what the government is doing and what the government has done, and what are the achievements that the government has made, and that the government is performing service for the people and is doing things for the public.<sup>48</sup>

The focus of the Party organs' journalistic coverage of HIV/AIDS was mainly upon Party and government news; in other words, politics-oriented news. As interviewee IY-04-E suggested, coverage by the Party organs can generally be divided into 1) arrangements and requirements of the Party committee and the government (concerning the prevention of HIV/AIDS) and government policies and regulations (concerning HIV/AIDS and PLWHAs); 2) achievements and problems (associated with the prevention of HIV/AIDS) that persist at government level over a period of time; 3) efforts and achievements of each level of society regarding the prevention of HIV/AIDS; 4) comparatively little coverage of PLWHAs' expectations of the Party, the government and society, and the voices of the PLWHAs.<sup>49</sup> Apart from the political and policy/legal frames, the prevention/education, medical/scientific and 'other' miscellany of frames (i.e., daily routine coverage or event-oriented coverage) were a further three main frames that the journalists often adopted in their coverage of HIV/AIDS. Five interviewees (IP-02-J, IP-03-J, IY-02-J, IY-03-J, and IY-04-E) from the Party organs revealed that their coverage not only focused on the dissemination of HIV/AIDS knowledge, but also on the development of medical research and advanced international and national medical

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<sup>47</sup> Original Chinese text reads “党报的定位本身就是机关报嘛，对于党报这个系统无论是中央级党报，还是省一级的党报应该说总的原则是一样的。那么具体到报道的内容，人民日报侧重于传播党的政策、中央的声音；而省级党报就是根据各省、各地的实际，传递当地政府对艾滋病关怀救治的一些政策。大家的方向是一致的，不过是有一些地域化的特征而已。”

<sup>48</sup> Original Chinese text reads “《云南日报》党报的特点么主要是反映政府的意愿，表达政府的心声。政府在做什么？政府做了些什么工作？取得了些什么成效？这就是《云南日报》主要做的工作，向公众表明，我是在为你们服务的。我是在做事情。”

<sup>49</sup> Original Chinese text reads “我们关于艾滋病报道的内容大概可以这么说，第一方面就是党委的政府的部署和要求和政策法规；第二个方面就是党委政府部署工作和颁布政策法规一段时间以后，取得的成绩和存在的问题；第三个方面，就是社会各个层面在防治艾滋病方面所做的一些努力和成果；第四方面，这块就相对少一点，就是艾滋病的感染者和患者他们对党委、政府、社会的期盼，以及他们的心声。”

achievements in the field of HIV/AIDS. In addition, they engaged in daily routine reportage as well.

As regards the journalists from the two metropolitan newspapers (the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*), my analysis shows a slight difference in their frame adoptions compared with those of the journalists from the Party organs. The main frames frequently employed in their coverage were the policy/legal, prevention/educational and ‘other’ frames.<sup>50</sup> It appeared that the journalists from the two metropolitan newspapers were involved in more daily routine coverage or event-oriented coverage. Interviewee IH-01-J may provide a clue: “My coverage of HIV/AIDS generally surrounds the annual theme of the “World AIDS Day” and mainly focuses on the government’s new policies and regulations related to HIV/AIDS, AIDS-related events and activities organised by the Health Department and other governmental departments, and the lives of PLWHAs.”<sup>51</sup> A similar account was provided by interviewees IY-05-J+E, IY-06-J, and IY-01-J.

As far as the main frame adopted by journalists from *The Southern Weekly* was concerned, the socio-economic/cultural frame was the persistent and dominant frame in their coverage of HIV/AIDS. During the interviews, all of the interviewees (IS-01-J, IS-02-J, IS-03-J, IS-04-E, IS-05-J, IS-06-J, IS-07-E, IS-08-J, IS-09-J, IS-10-J) from *The Southern Weekly* agreed that there was consistency in the coverage of HIV/AIDS among journalists *working for this paper*. Their coverage focuses upon the lives of the vulnerable or marginalised groups and individuals in society, the humanistic care afforded them, the impact of AIDS on individuals and society, and the social-economic problems caused by AIDS. Each journalist in turn emphasised in his/her coverage according to the range of development of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and its impact on the individual and society. For example, interviewee IS-08-J’s coverage mainly emphasised blood transmission of HIV/AIDS among the poor peasants in Henan province, while interviewee IS-05-J mainly highlighted the impact of HIV/AIDS on children, especially their lives and the problems they had to endure as a result of being orphaned by HIV/AIDS. As interviewee IS-04-E explained:

<sup>50</sup> Here the main frames that the journalists from the affiliated newspapers of the Party organs refer to are the frames that the journalists used in their own coverage and writing. The frames of news items or articles (the majority being Party and government news) that were directly copied from other media were excluded.

<sup>51</sup> Original Chinese text reads “我报道的内容一般都围绕每年‘世界艾滋病日’的主题来报道。主要内容如政府出台的新的艾滋病政策、法规，卫生部门及其它政府部门的与艾滋病有关的相关活动，还有艾滋病患者的生活等。”



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The coverage of HIV/AIDS reflects the sense of social responsibility that *The Southern Weekly* consistently bears. We think that media should cover the issue as much as we can and make the government, all social sectors and the public aware of the serious situation of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, so as to arouse concern (about the HIV/AIDS) and call for the government to adopt some strategies and measures to solve the AIDS problems through our coverage. For this reason, we became involved in AIDS reportage in the very earlier stage of HIV/AIDS epidemic. And our coverage of HIV/AIDS has been continuing every year. It is just a matter more or less in terms of the volume of coverage. Our news stories cover every aspect of HIV/AIDS. The topics vary according to the different period of the epidemic. This reflects the common understanding shared by the editorial board of *The Southern Weekly*.<sup>52</sup>

### *Secondary frames*

My analysis indicates that the secondary frame used by the three Party organs (*The People's Daily*, the *Henan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily*) and the two metropolitan newspapers (the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*) was the socio-economic/cultural frame.

Some interviewees (IP-02-J, IP-03-J, IY-01-J, IY-04-E, IY-05-J+E, IH-01-J, IY-06-J, IY-08-E) from the Party organs and two metropolitan newspapers observed that the gradually expanding openness of the government vis-à-vis the coverage of HIV/AIDS and its increasing understanding of the problem, showed its concern for the people, especially for those affected by HIV/AIDS. This saw some changes in the focus of the coverage, which started to include more news stories about people involved in the prevention of HIV/AIDS and people living with the condition. Journalists began to more actively probe the problems surrounding the implementation of policies related to HIV/AIDS, the impact of HIV/AIDS on PLWHAs and the discrimination directed towards them. Interviewee IP-02-J, who provided an example of the change in the coverage of *The People's Daily*, said:

In the past, the official news dominated the coverage of HIV/AIDS in *The People's Daily*: and there was little in-depth coverage and individual case coverage in *The People's Daily*. With the change in thinking of the Central Government leaders, and the increasing openness of the government in relation to HIV/AIDS coverage, the content of the coverage in *The People's Daily* has improved a lot. In recent years,

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<sup>52</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “南方周末（对艾滋病）的报道体现了它一贯的社会责任感。我们认为作为媒体的话要尽可能的去报道，尽可能的让政府、让社会各界，让公众意识到这个问题的严重性，然后会引起关注，呼吁政府采取一些策略，采取一些措施来解决艾滋病问题。因此，我们对艾滋病报道这块介入的非常早，基本上每年都还有（报道），只不过是多与少的问题。根据艾滋病流行的不同时期，我们的报道涉及艾滋病的方方面面。这还是体现了南方周末编辑部的这样一种共识吧。”

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we pay more and more attention to AIDS events and ordinary people's stories. Now faces are shown in our news stories and more humane care is embodied in our coverage.<sup>53</sup>

Expansion of content also occurred in the coverage by the *Yunnan Daily*. Although still small in number, according to interviewee IY-04-E, case stories telling of humane care of PLWHAs started to appear. Compared with the journalists from the three Party organs, the journalists from the two metropolitan newspapers were more likely to include individuals' stories in their coverage. A similar account to those of interviewees IH-01-J, IH-03-J, IY-01-J, IY-05-J+E, IY-06-J from the two metropolitan newspapers suggested evidence of "concern about the lives of PLWHAs (关注艾滋病患者的生活)" or of "concern about the lives of the vulnerable groups (关注弱势人群的生活)". For example, interviewee IY-05-J+E stated:

Our coverage in *The Spring Evening News* has been always around people. Our infectious stories tell about caring for PLWHAs, stories about PLWHAs who are optimistic after being infected with HIV, and other people's stories related to AIDS....In other words, the stories of these infectors can bring us something (to think about) in the respect of humanity. And, at the same time, they open a window for us to understand PLWHAs and their needs, and to understand if they obtained help and support? What problems do they still have? And what is their mental status? Those are our concerns in our coverage.<sup>54</sup>

Among the five newspapers, it appears that the journalists from *The Spring City Evening* tended to include more individual stories in their coverage.

As regards the usage by the journalists working for *The Southern Weekly*, my analysis identified the policy/legal frame as the secondary frame. As the interviewee IS-04-E observed, *The Southern Weekly's* coverage evolved in tandem with the development of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In the early stages of the epidemic, the paper's coverage mainly focused upon its severity and impact on individual's lives, e.g., economically and/or socially (IS-02-J, IS-03-J, IS-08-J, IS-09-J). Around the middle stage, the focus of their coverage shifted from discussion surrounding the prevention of the disease to aspects of policy (IS-01-J, IS-06-J, IS-05-J). In the later phase, coverage changed to emphasising (a) the performance of policies,

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<sup>53</sup> Original text in Chinese reads "过去《人民日报》的艾滋病报道, 官方新闻占绝大多数, 深度报道缺乏, 尤其是个案报道非常少。随着我们(国家)领导人的观念发生的变化, 对媒体报道的开放, 《人民日报》的报道内容也有了较大突破。最近这些年我们逐步地更关注一些艾滋病事件, 关注普通人的故事, 新闻有了人的面孔, 多了些人文关怀。"

<sup>54</sup> Original text in Chinese reads "我们晚报始终会围绕人物来做文章, 通过我们一些比较有感染力的故事的报道, 这些故事包括关爱艾滋病的故事、艾滋病感染者自身奋发不息的故事。……也就是说从人性的角度这样的感染者还是能够给予我们一些东西。当然也是通过他作为一个窗口能够了解感染者, 他们自身还有什么样的需求。他们是不是受到了资助? 他们还有一些什么样的问题? 他们自身的精神状态是什么样子? 在报道中我们始终关注这些。"

and (b) the problems that persisted in the implementation of said policies (IS-05-J). Journalists now included more reportage on the policies and legal aspects of HIV/AIDS. For example, interviewee IS-05-J claimed to have been continually concerned about the orphans that HIV/AIDS has left in its wake since 2002. Initially, coverage mainly focused upon the orphan's living conditions and the degree to which HIV/AIDS had impacted on them both physically and mentally. Later, coverage turned to emphasising policies of legal protection of the orphans. Once these policies were announced, focus turned to exploring the problems that impeded the implementation of policies, and to appealing for the regulation of relief for children orphaned by HIV/AIDS.

#### *Noteworthy idiosyncratic frame*

The medical/scientific frame was identified as a noteworthy idiosyncratic frame among the journalistic frames of *The Southern Weekly*. While on the one hand, the coverage of HIV/AIDS is usually included in the medical and health reportage in Chinese newspapers, on the other, HIV/AIDS, to some extent, is associated with science, e.g., when talking about the treatment and prevention of the disease. Thus, medical and scientific coverage of HIV/AIDS was another focus for some journalists. Interviewee (IS-01-J) suggested that as a journalist in charge of reporting on science and health for *The Southern Weekly*, he was more likely to give greater attention to the scientific aspect of HIV/AIDS, for example, the progress of studies of HIV vaccine and treatment. Although he was concerned with other topics related to HIV/AIDS, he was of the view that the scientific aspect of HIV/AIDS was worth being concerned about and reporting on, and needed someone to cover it.<sup>55</sup>

Generally speaking, there was only a slight difference between the frames adopted by the journalists from the three Party organs (*The People's Daily*, the *Henan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily*) and those from the two metropolitan newspapers (the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*), the difference being that the journalists from the Party organs were more likely to adopt the politics-oriented frame while those from the two metropolitan newspapers were more likely to opt for the 'other' routine coverage or event-oriented frame. However, a significant difference emerged in the frames adopted by the journalists from *The Southern Weekly*. Compared to their counterparts from the other five newspapers, *The Southern Weekly* journalists were more likely to use the socio-economic/cultural frame.

<sup>55</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “作为一个跑健康、科学的记者，我对科学本身可能会关注的更多一点，比如说疫苗、治疗方面的研究进展什么的。当然其实说起来我关注的话题还是比较多的，但是科学方面的报道一直要做，因为这是个值得关注的领域，另外总得有人去做吧。”

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## **6.4 Analysis of Research Question 3: Internal and external factors that influence Journalists' coverage of HIV/AIDS**

As previous studies (McQuail, 1994; Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) demonstrate, many factors influence journalistic coverage and representation: they may come from either within or without an organisation. Research question 3 seeks to examine the internal and external factors that may influence HIV/AIDS coverage by the journalists from the six selected newspapers. My analysis reveals that the values and norms of media organisations (i.e., positioning of media, newsworthy value, and self-discipline), and values of the journalists (i.e., professional responsibilities and self-censorship) were the main internal factors that influenced the content of their coverage. A secondary internal factor was routinisation of HIV/AIDS coverage. The main external factors that influenced this coverage were sources of information and the marketisation of the press. Media environment constituted the secondary external factor.

### **6.4.1 Internal Factors**

#### *Main internal factors*

The values and norms of media organisations (as listed above), and the values of the journalists, were identified in my analysis as the main internal factors that influenced the content of the HIV/AIDS coverage in the six newspapers.

According to previous studies (Liangrong Li & Liu, 2009; Yuezhi Zhao, 1998) (See chapter 2, section 2.5.1.2), the positioning of the media determines the values and norms of media organisations. My analysis confirmed the findings of the previous studies. The positioning of the newspapers has a significant impact on the values and norms of the six newspapers. The Party organs (*The People's Daily*, the *Henan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily*), i.e., China's

'political media', are the "mouthpieces" and "ears and eyes" of the Party. As well, they are the "battlefield" of propaganda. Their main task is to disseminate Party and government policies and directives. In short, they strive to build up a positive image of the Party and the government (Liangrong Li & Liu, 2009; Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). My analysis of the interview transcripts (IP-01-J, IP-02-J, IP-03-J, IY-02-J, IY-03-J, IY-04-E, IH-02-J, and IN-03-J) <sup>56</sup> confirmed this point. The news values held by the Central Party organ (*The People's Daily*) and the two provincial Party organs (the *Henan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily*) were similar. The Party organs' criteria for selecting news were the newsworthiness of facts and their propaganda value. But, propaganda value was prioritised over the newsworthiness of facts. Interviewee IP-02-J may have proven this point:

*The People's Daily* is the chief representative of public opinion. Its criteria for selecting news are difference from the other ordinary media. The political criterion must be taken into account, except for the criterion of newsworthy facts. Hence, *The People's Daily* is not only a "news paper", but also a "political paper". For the choice of the coverage of HIV/AIDS, the first criterion should be news of public concern. Second, we are concerned with social effect of our coverage. We should consider whether it will bring positive and constructive effect or negative and gloomy effect to the society. If it is positive and constructive and will be beneficial to eliminate the discrimination of HIV/AIDS and promote the prevention of HIV/AIDS, we will report it; if it will bring negative effects to the society, we will not choose it. <sup>57</sup>

*The People's Daily's* coverage of HIV/AIDS usually focuses on the directives and guidance pertinent to policies, although it has gradually increased its coverage of ordinary people's stories since 2002. The same principal applies to the *Henan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily*. Interviewee IY-04-E from the *Yunnan Daily* provided the following account.

As a Party organ, *Yunnan Daily* emphasises the directive and guidance function of news. We mainly disseminate important decisions of the Party and the government. This is the main function of our newspaper ... newsworthiness value and propaganda value are most important criteria for us to select news. We emphasize the major policies and measures that the government has taken, and their implementation and achievements regarding HIV/AIDS issue. This is the major difference between Party organs and citizen newspapers. <sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> IH-02-J and IN-03-J were journalists working for other mainstream newspaper and national media in Henan province. I had to interview journalists from the other media who also covered HIV/AIDS issues in the province, because my request to interview journalists working for *Henan Daily* was rejected.

<sup>57</sup> Original text in Chinese reads "《人民日报》是舆论角色的首席代表。《人民日报》的标准与其它普通媒体不同，除了新闻事实以外，《人民日报》还要考虑政治标准。所以说《人民日报》不仅仅是一张新闻纸，还是政治纸。我们的艾滋病报道标准应该说是：第一应该是读者关注的；第二就是说要考虑它的社会效果。我们要考虑这个报道能给社会带来的是一种建设性的、积极的效果，还是一种负面的，然后灰暗的效果。如果是正面的、积极的、建设性的，对我们的社会消除艾滋病歧视，推动艾滋病的防控工作有利的，我们就做报道，如果它会产生一些消极的、负面的影响，我们就不建议做这个选题。"

<sup>58</sup> Original text in Chinese is "因为《云南日报》是党报，我们强调的是指导性和权威性。我们党报主要传达的是党和政府的重大政策，这是我们主要承载的功能。.....新闻价值和宣传价值应该说这是我们这边选择新闻最重要的一个标准。我们的重点是省里面有什么关于艾滋病的、新的重大的措施出台了，这些政策措施的执行，和取得的成绩、存

In the case of the two metropolitan newspapers (the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*), their positioning is that of citizen newspapers. They mainly target urban readers and their main function is to serve the public. To this end, they place great emphasis on newsworthiness and the tastes of their readers. So, their criteria for selecting news differ from those of the Party organs. Notwithstanding, they are required to report political news when required. As interviewee IH-01-J from the *Dahe Daily* emphasized, “our newspaper is a citizen newspaper. Our main aim is to be close to the public and provide service. Our coverage should be useful for the audience. Thus, the serviceability and readability of our coverage are very important. The majority of our coverage is related to the knowledge of HIV/AIDS, because common people need this.”<sup>59</sup> Interviewee IY-06-J claimed that “for *The Spring City Evening*, the criteria for selecting news are the ‘three closenesses’ (i.e., close to reality, close to civilian life and close to readers) and newsworthiness. Our news is more likely to include common people’s stories, and reflects humane care and the voice of the mainstream society.”<sup>60</sup>

*The Southern Weekly* is positioned as a quality weekly newspaper or weekly broadsheet. Although it has experienced some changes of its focus since it was established in 1984, it has remained constant to its aim and direction; that is, to impel the social progression of China. Thus, it keeps a close watch on the current status quo - and tends to reflect the reality - of China (IS-04-E, IS-07-E, IS-08-J). Its positioning and aim impact greatly upon its news selection process. Several interviewees summarised the news value of *The Southern Weekly*. Interviewee IS-04-E, for example, said:

When we select news, first, it must be in conformity with the alteration of the newspaper and publicness. And the public interest is surely the first hot spot that we are concerned with. This is the first criterion. The second criterion is the acceptability of the readers. As a market-driven media, we have to be concerned about the attention of the readers. But it does not necessarily mean we must pander to all the tastes of the readers. Some news we will not cover. And some news that attracts no readers, we will not cover either. This is another criterion.<sup>61</sup>

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在的问题。这个也就是我们党报和市民报的不同之处。”

<sup>59</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “我们的报纸是都市报，主要是要贴近民众，体现服务性。我们的报道要对读者有用。服务性和可读性很重要。因此，我们的艾滋病报道多为知识性的报道，因为老百姓需要。”

<sup>60</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “我们（春城）晚报在选择新闻时注重‘三贴近’（贴近实际，贴近百姓生活，贴近读者）和新闻价值。我们的新闻更关注普通人的故事，反映人文关怀，反映主流的声音。”

<sup>61</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “我们选择新闻的时候，新闻一定要符合整个报纸的变动和公共性。公共利益肯定是我们考虑的第一个热点，这是第一个标准。第二个标准就是读者的接受度，我们是个市场化的媒体，就是说考虑到读者的关注度，当然这个也不是片面的来迎合读者的关注度，有些新闻我们肯定是不做的，没有读者看的新闻我们肯定不会做，这肯定是一个标准。”

Interviewee IS-10-J added: “For the news coverage of HIV/AIDS, we tend to select those that embody both newsworthiness and effects of communication. We follow the principles of newsworthiness and respect for journalistic professionalism: we judge news based on the news facts. At the same time, we are concerned about our social responsibilities when we are selecting news.”<sup>62</sup> The news values of *The Southern Weekly* manifested in its news stories inasmuch as the angle from which the journalists approached their coverage was invariably humanist and personal. The policies and regulations surrounding HIV/AIDS were merely background information. Focus was always upon the impact of HIV/AIDS on individuals, the impact of policies and regulations on individuals, and the relationships between people in a given environment (IS-01-J, IS-04-E, IS-05-J, IS-07-E).

My analysis reveals that the value and norms of media organisations had a significant impact on the operation of media, especially regarding sensitive issues or topics such as HIV/AIDS. It was generally agreed among interviewees that while whole coverage of HIV/AIDS has been relatively relaxed by the government, there are still some boundaries that journalists may not breach (IH-03-J, IS-08-J, IS-07-E, IY-02-J). As regards discipline of news reportage, media must comply strictly with the boundaries of the coverage irrespective of whether they are Party organs or non-Party organs. Hence, in order to avoid penalties, media usually self-discipline themselves, in this way ensuring that journalists observe these boundaries (J. M. Chan, 1993). Terms that interviewees commonly used to describe these boundaries included ‘bottom-line’ (底线), ‘high-tension line’ (高压线), and ‘red line’ (红线). The “boundaries” to which the journalists and editors referred were the regulations and restrictions stipulated by the Central Propaganda Department and the provincial propaganda departments for the coverage of HIV/AIDS. According to my analysis, irrespective of whether they were national, provincial, local, a Party organ or market-driven newspaper, the regulations and restrictions surrounding the coverage of HIV/AIDS were, in effect, similar, any differences being in the degree or extent to which each newspaper applied them in their operations and daily practices. For example, whereas the three Party organs and two metropolitan newspapers automatically avoid sensitive topics, market-driven media, e.g., *The Southern Weekly*, take their stories as close to the boundaries as possible. As Lynch (1999) suggests, they keep testing the limits by hitting boundaries; that is, by ‘hitting the ball to the edge’. Interviewee IS-03-J from *The*

<sup>62</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “从艾滋病的新闻报道方面，我们会选者更能体现新闻性和传播效果，尊崇新闻规律，尊重新闻专业主义这样一个标准。从是否是新闻的最基本的角度来判断。另外在选择新闻时还会考虑社会责任问题。”

*Southern Weekly* provided the following account: “Our criterion is that the issue can be covered, if it is not forbidden to cover it. ‘Not forbidden’ means there is not a ban from the Propaganda Department; while other media are self-disciplined”.<sup>63</sup> Interviewee IS-04-E commented:

It was a gradual process of opening up the coverage of HIV/AIDS in China’s media. At the very beginning, we may have felt it was more sensitive. But it did not mean that you were completely not able to cover it. It wasn’t to such an extent. It was just the matter of how you covered it? And to what degree you covered it? It was not the whole field of HIV/AIDS that you could not touch. I think that the most important thing for media is how to achieve the best within the boundaries. This is the reality of news media in China. We can only say that we do the best we can within the boundaries.<sup>64</sup>

This point of view was supported by several interviewees (IS-05-J, IS-07-E, IS-03-J, IH-01-J, IH-02-J, IY-01-J, IY-06-J). For example, interviewee IS-05-J claimed:

Some media always shuffle off their responsibilities on to the Central Propaganda Department and provincial propaganda departments and always say that we were not able to cover it, because we were not allowed to do it. Actually, if we analyzed carefully [these regulations and restrictions], parts of them were forbidden, but, there was still a lot of space between “can be done” and “cannot be done”...we could “hit the edgeball” and strived for the reportage.... We should not take what leaders said as an excuse and do nothing.<sup>65</sup>

IH-03-J, who held an identical view, commented on the coverage of HIV/AIDS in Henan’s newspapers:

In fact, media should have their own voice. It is not the government that forces media not to express other voices, except for the government’s voice. It is not true. It is media that do not express their own voices. I think there were some complicated reasons that caused the media [to do this]. First is our understanding of HIV/AIDS itself. Second is the impact of some previous experience of media in the past years.<sup>66</sup> Media became too careful because of the previous

<sup>63</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “我们的标准是如果这个事情没有被禁止都是可以做的。没有被禁止就是说没有宣传部门的禁令。而其它媒体是领导在自我的管制。”

<sup>64</sup> Original text in Chinese read “中国媒体对艾滋病的报道也是一个逐渐开放的过程，可能在最开始的时候大家会觉得更敏感一些，但它不是说你完全不能做，没到这个程度。只是说你怎么做？做到什么程度？不是整个领域你就不能碰的问题。我觉得媒体最重要的问题是在能碰的范围内，你怎么样能够做到最好。在中国做新闻这是一个现实，只能说能做的把它做得比较好。”

<sup>65</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “我们好些媒体总是把自己的责任推卸到中宣部、宣传部身上，说我们都做不了，因为不让我们做。其实你仔细分析一下（这些规定和限制），这里面不让做的有一部分，但是还是有许多领域在可做和不可做之间，可以打擦边球，就是你可以去争取的。……我们不能把这个借口说是领导说不能做，那我们都不做了。”

<sup>66</sup> The term ‘previous experience of media’ refers to the removal of Ma Yunlong, the previous deputy editor-in-Chief of the *Dahe Daily* from office. Due to a series of reportage of sensitive issues including HIV/AIDS, Ma Yunlong, who was in charge of reportage in the *Dahe Daily*, was dismissed in 2001. To date, the most comprehensive coverage of Henan’s HIV/AIDS epidemic that has ever been published was by the *Dahe Daily* in May 2000 (ten pages of coverage). Subsequently,



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experiences. I think it is not right that media evade all issues that related to HIV/AIDS.<sup>67</sup>

Interviewee IH-02-J maintained that all media should choose a suitable angle from which to report the news, reporting being more important than not reporting.<sup>68</sup>

My analysis indicates that the values and norms of media organisations have influenced journalists' values, that is, of their understanding of their professional responsibilities and practices. The research shows a significant difference between the journalists attached to the five newspapers and those working for *The Southern Weekly* vis-a-vis their understanding of their professional responsibilities, although they all emphasised the importance of professional responsibility. The journalists from the three Party organs and the two metropolitan newspapers tended to agree with "the idea of the overall interests" (大局观念) or accept it habitually. They commonly considered it the responsibility of journalists to take the overall interests into account. Hence, they may evade some topics voluntarily or self-censor their coverage for fear of affecting the harmony and steadiness of Chinese society or overstepping the boundaries. Interviewee IH-03-J may have provided a clue:

In fact, we have already taken the overall interests into account in many cases....That is, we thought about the social effects of our coverage. We should consider this issue.... As a matter of fact, our heads (of the newspaper) also consider that we should maintain unity with the government for the sake of the overall interests. This was not forced by the government. It was because we realized our social responsibilities. We did that from the heart. I think it conformed to conditions in China.<sup>69</sup>

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coverage of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Henan province was prohibited and the name of the AIDS activist, Gao Yaojie was not allowed to appear in media by order of the provincial propaganda department (Interview with Ma Yunlong, 21 July 2009). It seems that the issue of the Ma Yunlong incident had a chilling effect on the *Henan Daily* and the *Dahe Daily*. Journalists still hesitated to talk about their HIV/AIDS coverage when I conducted my field work in Henan province in July 2009.

<sup>67</sup> Original text in Chinese reads "其实媒体应该有自己的声音, 这个不是政府强制说除了我这个声音之外你别的都不能发出, 不是这样的, 是媒体自己没有发出这个声音。至于造成媒体没有发出自己的声音的原因, 我认为也不是单一的, 它也比较复杂。我觉得第一是我们对艾滋病本身这个问题的认识, 第二也跟之前这些年所经历的一些事情有关系。媒体可能因为前些年的一些事情, 过于小心了。我觉得媒体自己把所有关于艾滋病的東西都屏蔽掉了也是不对的。"

<sup>68</sup> Original text in Chinese reads "我觉得任何媒体都应该选择一个适合自己的角度把新闻报出来, 报出来比不报更重要。"

<sup>69</sup> Original text in Chinese reads "其实我们很多时候已经主动的考虑到大局, .....就是在我们报道范围之内的一我们要考虑到它的社会影响, 应该考虑到这些问题。.....其实(报社)领导也考虑到我们在做新闻的时候还是应该跟政府从大局上我们要保持一致。这个不是政府强迫的, 因为意识到自己的社会责任感, 也是发自内心的想这样做, 我觉得这也符合中国的国情。"

Interviewee IY-05-J+E gave a similar account. “At least, we share the common value judgment (with the government and the relevant governmental departments). China’s media are helpers of the government, rather than trouble makers. I think that this status will never ever be changed.”<sup>70</sup> In their bid to maintain the overall interest, the journalists from the three Party organs (*The People’s Daily*, the *Henan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily*) and the two metropolitan newspapers (the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*) opted to report positive news stories regarding HIV/AIDS issue or report news from a positive angle. For example, interviewee IY-05-J+E mentioned that their individual stories usually portrayed persons working for the prevention of HIV/AIDS, such as medical workers, community workers and philanthropists. As well, they covered PLWHAs striving to cope with the disease with a positive attitude. “These stories did not violate the red line of the coverage and might even inspire people” (IY-05-J+E).<sup>71</sup>

The journalists from the three Party organs and the two metropolitan newspapers generally had the ability to “mind the degree” of the reportage, as Pan (2000) terms it. They knew very clearly what their organisations needed and consciously evaded certain news items in their coverage. For example, interviewee IP-03-J said: “I know very well what news my newspaper needs. So I have not touched the kind of news that undoubtedly would not be published. I have not written those kinds of news stories”.<sup>72</sup> Interviewee IH-01-J, who had a similar experience, said: “About the boundaries of the coverage, about the high-tension line, I don’t want to talk about it. I would not have chosen extreme issues, because I have basic judgment about the issues that I would report.”<sup>73</sup> Interviewee IY-02-J spoke more frankly:

You are a person inside the system. You’d better do whatever the system requires. Then, you won’t have any pressure.... Those news stories that you investigated and wrote are not necessarily published. Ten to one they will be killed. Thus, unless you are an extremely passionate person, no one would like to do that. I’m not an extremely passionate person. I won’t do that. I only do what the system requires me to do. Do according to the requirements of the system, and you won’t make any mistake.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “我们（与政府和相关部门）的价值判断是共同的，至少是这样说。中国媒体是帮政府，而不是添乱，这个地位我觉得它始终是不会变的。”

<sup>71</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “一是，它不触犯整个报道的红线；二是有它人性的一种感召力。”

<sup>72</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “因为我知道我们报社需要什么，就没有去碰那些特别的报社肯定就发不出来的东西，就没有往那方面去弄。”

<sup>73</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “关于报道范围，关于高压线的问题，我不想说这个问题。因为我不选择极端的事件来报道，我会对所报道的事件有个基本判断。”

<sup>74</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “你是体制内的人呢，你就按照体制的要求来做就行了，你就不会有任何压力。.....你要下去一点点的调查，调查后写出来还不一定登，十有八九会被枪毙掉。一般情况下除非你是个极度热情的人，

A propos of the journalists working for *The Southern Weekly*, their understanding of their professional responsibilities was quite different. They pursued journalistic professionalism, and considered the pursuit of truth to be the responsibility of media. Hence, seeking truth is most important in their coverage. It was as interviewee IS-05-J said:

For the news itself, seeking truth is always the most important [aim]. We cannot guide the public opinion by one aspect or several aspects of an issue....In fact, reporting problems is a better way of showing love and caring. Only by revealing faithfully the existing problems of an issue can the problems be solved and the interests of these groups be really preserved.<sup>75</sup>

Interviewee IS-08-J, commenting upon the responsibilities of journalists, said: “After uncovering the truth and presenting the problems, media have completed their role of disseminating truth through news coverage. We have accomplished our great mission. Then, the government should decide how the problems are to be tackled.... No matter whatever measures they take, the health department should do whatever is possible.”<sup>76</sup>

### *Secondary internal factor*

Routinisation of HIV/AIDS coverage was identified as the secondary factor that influence the coverage of HIV/AIDS in the six newspapers, although there were some differences between the three Party organs and the two metropolitan newspapers, and *The Southern Weekly*.

Previous studies (Fishman, 1980; Parenti, 1993; Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Sigal, 1973; Tuchman, 1973) indicate that the structure of newsgathering and the shape of news content are greatly influenced by the established routines of media organisations (for details, see chapter 2). The results of my analysis, which are consistent with those of previous studies, reveal three outstanding features of routinisation manifested in the transcripts of the interviews: the strategies of sources of information; the typifications of news coverage: and, “pack journalism”. In terms of strategies for the sourcing of information, there were

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要不然都不会去做。我就不是极度热情的人，我不会去做，我就只会做体制内的事情。按着轨道来就不会犯什么错误了。”

<sup>75</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “因为从新闻的角度来讲，无论怎么样始终这个真相是最重要的，我们不能够选取其中的一面或者是几面来引导社会的舆论。……其实问题的报道是为了更好的去体现爱心，你只有把里面存在的问题很真实的暴露出来，才能够去解决这些问题，也才能够让这些群体的利益得到真正的保护。”

<sup>76</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “把事实真相揭露出来，问题呈现出来，然后就完成了媒体报道新闻、传播事实真相的作用，我们的最大的使命就完成了。接下来政府该处理处理，……不管采取什么方式，然后卫生系统该怎么做就怎么做。”

similarities in their adoption of news sources among the journalists from the three Party organs and the two metropolitan newspapers. In the main, they tended to rely upon official sources. Routine channels, such as government press conferences, National Centres for Disease Control (CDC), provincial Centres for Disease Control (CDC) and other relevant governmental departments or agencies were prioritised sources that journalists listed, although on occasion they sourced other media, experts, NGOs, doctors and informants. The strategies that journalists from *The Southern Weekly* employed to source information were somewhat different. They tended to rely on sources other than the official sources; e.g., experts, doctors, fellow professionals and other media, those who work in the field of HIV/AIDS, the government, NGOs, journals and PLWHAs.

In terms of the typifications of news coverage, the journalists from all five newspapers tended to adopt politics-oriented and event-oriented coverage. The main difference was that the journalists from the three Party organs tended to adopt more politics-oriented coverage, while the journalists from the two metropolitan newspapers opted for more event-oriented coverage. The highest rate of coverage by the journalists employed by the five newspapers was as follows: the progress/achievement of the government's prevention of HIV/AIDS, new HIV/AIDS-related policies and regulations and their implementation, activities organised by the health departments and other government agencies at all levels, and HIV/AIDS-related events. The majority of their coverage was general news. As far as *The Southern Weekly's* journalists were concerned, some among them (IS-01-J, IS-03-J, IS-04-E, IS-07-E) admitted that their coverage of HIV/AIDS decreased yearly due to AIDS fatigue, both editorial and audience fatigue. The coverage of HIV/AIDS has become routinised. Moreover, journalists from the six newspapers claimed that the majority of their coverage of HIV/AIDS concentrated around 1 December, the annual "World AIDS Day". Interviewee IP-02-J considered it a characteristic of the routinisation of HIV/AIDS coverage.

We can cover the AIDS news if it happens in our daily life. And we also can concentrate our coverage around 1 December, because it comforts to the news rule. It is natural for media to pay attention to HIV/AIDS on "World AIDS Day", because the whole world is concerned about HIV/AIDS on "World AIDS Day". This is blameless. And it is an objective reality that there is little coverage in normal times. It is also a characteristic of routinisation".<sup>77</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Original text in Chinese reads "在日常中,如果有关于艾滋病的新闻,我们可以报道。那么12月1日前后的集中报道也是符合新闻规律的,因为世界艾滋病日前后,全世界的目光都关注这个事件,所以媒体自然地关注。这是无可指责的。那么平时的少也是客观存在的,它也是常态化的一个特征。"

Another characteristic of routinisation is, as Parenti (1993) suggests, “pack journalism”. The journalists from the six newspapers, to varying degrees, either referred to or took their cues from other media. *The People’s Daily* and *The Southern Weekly’s* journalists and editors, customarily took cues from other media for their commentaries and in-depth reporting (IP-03-J, IS-04-E, IS-05-J, IS-01-J, IS-02-J). Journalists from Henan and Yunnan not only took cues from other media, but also reprinted some important news stories about the senior leadership obtained either from the national media or from *Xinhua News Agency* news releases. Interviewee IY-04-E claimed that:

As far as the reference or guiding function of the national media is concerned, first, if the news item is about the activities of the Central leaders, it is not only for our reference, but copy the stories directly. For example, the news reports that “President Hu Jintao visited AIDS patients in You’an Hospital”; “Premier Wen Jiabao shook hands with PLWHA” , in the national media was placed on the important page—the front page of our newspaper. Second, as required, news releases from *Xinhua News Agency* must be published in our newspaper as well.”  
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Some interviewees summarised the reasons that contributed to the routinisation of the HIV/AIDS coverage as follows: 1) the influence of the traditional propaganda news model of the Party organs and the journalists’ professional skills (IY-04-E and IY-08-E); 2) the influence of the production mode of quick-grab news (IP-01-J, IY-01-J); and, 3) “AIDS story fatigue” of both media and audience. In several journalists’ words, the HIV/AIDS issue has become stale news (IH-02-J, IN-03-J, IP-02-J, IS-03-J, IS-04-E, IS-07-E, IS-08-J, IY-03-J, IY-05-J+E).

## 6.4.2 External Factors

My analysis indicates that sources of information and marketisation were identified as the main external factors: media environment was identified as the secondary external factor that affected HIV/AIDS coverage by the six newspapers

<sup>78</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “中央级媒体对我们的参考作用或者说指导作用应该这样来看，第一，比如，中央领导的活动，那就不是参考，而是直接照登。你比如说胡锦涛去医院看望艾滋病患者，温家宝跟艾滋病患者握手呀，在我们这里都是重要版面（登出），而且是一版头条。第二个，就是要求的，你比如说要求的新华社的通稿，我们是一定要登的。”

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### Main external factor

Previous studies (Herbert J. Gans, 2004; Miller & Williams, 1993; Molotch & Lester, 1974; Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Sigal, 1973) have indicated that sources have a considerable influence on news content. The official sources are often the priority sources chosen by journalists, because they are more easily available and reliable. My analysis also shows that sources of information affected the news content of journalists of the six newspapers. Journalists from the three Party organs (*The People's Daily*, the *Henan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily*) and two metropolitan newspapers (the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*) relied heavily upon official sources. For example, interviewee IP-03-J from *The People's Daily* claimed, "we usually used government news conferences as sources. We sometimes covered activities organized by the Ministry of Health."<sup>79</sup> Interviewee IY-02-J from the *Yunnan Daily* also provided similar account. Saying: "Our sources were the government departments, Yunnan Provincial Leading Group for HIV/AIDS Control, the provincial CDC, and the Yunnan AIDS Care Center (YACC) and the provincial propaganda department as well. Basically our sources were formal although sometimes, we sourced NGOs, such as the Global Fund and the Sino-British Project. We still depend on a single source."<sup>80</sup> The journalists from Henan province seemed totally relied upon government sources. Interviewee IH-01-J admitted: "Our sources mainly were the provincial CDC. They usually inform us the progress of their work and new HIV/AIDS related policies in time. We have established a very good communicating mechanism with the governmental health department. We usually cover their working mechanism, their target groups and also the problems they are facing."<sup>81</sup> Comparing with *The People's Daily*, the *Henan Daily*, the *Yunnan Daily* and the *Dahe Daily*, the journalists from *The Spring City Evening* seemed more likely to adopt alternative sources, besides government sources. Three interviewees (IY-01-J, IY-05-J+E, IY-06-J) admitted that they often adopted alternative sources, such as experts, NGOS, and their informants. the journalists from *The Southern Weekly* tended to draw upon more diverse sources including experts, doctors, fellow professionals<sup>82</sup>, other media and informants (e.g., those who worked in the field of HIV/AIDS), government, NGOs, journals

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<sup>79</sup> Original text in Chinese reads "我们一般是从政府的新闻发布会获得信息, 有时候是卫生部组织的一些采访活。"

<sup>80</sup> Original text in Chinese reads "我们的信息源还是政府部门, 省艾办、疾控中心这些地方, 还有艾滋病关爱中心, 还有宣传部……。来源基本都是从正规的渠道过来的, 有时候还有民间组织, 像全球基金啊, 中英项目。我们的渠道还是比较单一。"

<sup>81</sup> Original text in Chinese reads "我们的信源主要是 CDC 的, 他们的工作进展, 新的艾滋病政策都会及时通知我们。我们与卫生行政部门建立了很好的沟通机制, 他们的工作机制, 对应人群, 以及他们工作面临的问题, 我们都报道。"

<sup>82</sup> According to interviewee IS-04-E, at the end of 1990s, *The Southern Weekly* was more open than the other media outlets. Many fellow professionals across the country often provided *The Southern Weekly* with news sources that they were not able to cover due to various reasons. But, it was not the case after entering the 21<sup>st</sup> century due to the rapid development of the other media. However, with the advent of the Internet, it became easy for them to access other media's coverage and conduct in-depth reports of issues that may have been published as simple news items in other media.

and those who live with HIV. Consequently, the voices of government officials dominated the news stories of the three Party organs and the two metropolitan newspapers. Other voices, including those of the marginalised groups, were represented in news stories in *The Southern Weekly*.

Marketisation was identified as another main external factor. According to my analysis, marketisation not only affected the journalistic selection of the news, but also led to the decline of HIV/AIDS coverage, although the degree of the influence of marketisation varied between the Party organs (*The People's Daily*, the *Henan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily*), the metropolitan newspapers (the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*) and *The Southern Weekly*. Hot news, hot topics and eye-catching topics became the focus of the journalists of the six newspapers. Even the Party organs, e.g., *The People's Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily* had to increase their coverage of the individuals' news stories and in-depth reporting so as to enhance readability (IP-02-J, IP-03-J, IY-04-E). As regards the two metropolitan newspapers, they tended to appeal to the tastes of their readers, providing touching individual stories, sometimes even sensational news (IY-05-J+E, IY-01-J, IH-01-J). *The Southern Weekly* journalists preferred hot news stories that aroused or had the potential to arouse widespread concern in the whole of society; for example, hot news that "hits the ball to the edge" to attract readers (IS-03-J, IS-04-E, IS-05-J, IS-07-E, IS-09-J). Moreover, marketisation also resulted in routinisation and the decline of HIV/AIDS coverage in the six newspapers. The interviewee IS-09-J acknowledged the following:

With the media maketisation, the utilitarianism of media outlets has become more and more strong. Whether or not report ran issue? Will it be profitable for the newspapers? Will it catch the eyes of the public to an extreme? These are matters that concern many media. . Money has come to be regarded as the essence of survival, especially after economic crisis.<sup>83</sup>

Interviewee IS-07-E stated: "The social responsibility of media is always a secondary thing. The first thing that media consider is their survival....For media, this a topic that hasn't had much newsworthiness, for everyone feels that the topic (of HIV/AIDS) is stale, although it is still an important issue."<sup>84</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Original text in Chinese reads "媒体越来越商业化后, 媒体的功利心越来越强了, 报什么?不报什么?能不能给报社带来效益?能不能把大家的眼球给吸引爆了?这些是许多媒体考虑的。尤其是经济危机后, 金钱成为活命的唯一要素。"

<sup>84</sup> Original text in Chinese reads "媒体的这种社会责任永远都是次要地位的, 首先还是要考虑自己的生存。……因为你那个(艾滋病)话题大家觉得不新鲜了, 对媒体来说就没太大意义了, 虽然它还是那么重要的。"

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### *Secondary external factors*

Media environment was identified as a secondary external factor that influenced the media content. Some journalists (IS-04-E, IS-07-E, IS-09-J, IN-01-J, IN-04-J, IH-03-J) held that the status of a medium - and the politico-social and economic environment in which a medium embedded - affects media's coverage of HIV/AIDS. Interviewee IS-09-J, who earlier worked for the *Dahe Daily* and *The Southern Weekly* claimed:

Both *Dahe Daily* and *The Southern Weekly* were excellent media. There were no differences in terms of their value judgment and the goals that they wanted to achieve. But there was much difference in terms of their status and the environment in which they were embedded, and the constraints that they faced. Thus, there was a distinction in their coverage. The status of *The Southern Weekly* allowed it to achieve its value judgment to a greater degree and gave it more space for reportage. The sparse coverage (of HIV/AIDS) in *Dahe Daily* did not mean that journalists did not want to cover it, but meant that they lacked space for coverage. Many factors hindered their reportage.<sup>85</sup>

This point of view was supported by interviewees IS-04-E and IS-07-E. Interviewee IS-04-E raised some reasons as to why *The Southern Weekly* was able to cover many sensitive topics compared to other media.

It is because it is based in Guangdong province, which is the frontier of the reform and openness of China and comparatively far away from the centre of authority. And, the media environment of Guangdong was relatively loose during the late 90s to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Moreover, it attracted a number of fine journalists, who have ideals across the country to work for it. The interaction of the environment and the people resulted in our continual concern on important topics and managing to cover them. HIV/AIDS coverage was only one of those topics.<sup>86</sup>

In short, my analysis reveals that there were some internal and external factors that influenced the coverage of HIV/AIDS. These factors included the values and norms of media organisations, journalists' values, routinisation, marketisation and the media environment.

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<sup>85</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “《大河报》和《南方周末》都是优秀的报纸。他们在新闻标准和判断，达到目的是没有二致的。但是他们所处的地位和土壤，他们所处的环境和限制性的因素有多寡之分，因此在表达形式上就有一些分野。比如南方周末的平台让他在这样一个价值判断方面能够得以实现程度比较大，把握空间比较大。而《大河报》就没有这个空间，报得少了。但是不能说明他们不愿意做，而是说有很多因素让他们做不了。”

<sup>86</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “它是一个在广东的媒体，相对来讲在广东在中国改革的前沿，离权利中心相对来说比较遥远，然后整个广东媒体环境至少在九十年代末到本世纪初这段时间相对来说是比较宽松的。另外，《南方周末》也聚集了一些全国各地比较优秀的新闻人，一批有理想的新闻人，这个环境和人相互都有影响，就会导致它对一些我们认为比较重要的选题持续的关注，持续地想办法去做，艾滋病只是其中之一。”



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## 6.5 Analysis of Research Question 4: The Impact of HIV/AIDS Coverage on Policy Making

Research question 4 sought to examine the impact of HIV/AIDS coverage on policy making; that is, to identify any positive or negative impacts on government policy-making related to HIV/AIDS issues. According to my analysis, journalists held two attitudes regarding the impact of coverage of HIV/AIDS on policy making, the main one being that coverage positively impacted upon policy making. The noteworthy idiosyncratic attitude's impact upon media coverage of policy making was limited.

### *Main attitudes – positive impact*

The majority of interviewees agreed that media's continuous coverage of HIV/AIDS issues in China has exerted a positive impact upon Chinese society by raising public awareness of HIV/AIDS and impelling policy-making related to HIV/AIDS issues. They also agreed that the positive impact was attributable to the joint forces of all of the media, rather than to the sole effort of a single medium or single coverage. However, it seems that the journalists who worked for national level newspapers and Party organs were more likely to emphasise the impact of coverage on policy making, while those representing the metropolitan newspapers were more likely to emphasise the impact of coverage of public awareness of HIV/AIDS. As regards the impact of coverage of HIV/AIDS policy making, fifty per cent of interviewees (IN-01-J, IN-03-J, IN-04-J, IP-02-J, IP-03-J, IS-01-J, IS-03-J, IS-04-E, IS-05-J, IS-06-J, IS-08-J, IS-09-J, IH-05-E, IY-02-J, IY-05-J+E) claimed that the positive impact was manifested in the impulsing of policy making.

My analysis indicates that as far as the journalists interviewed were concerned, the most important contribution of media's coverage of HIV/AIDS policy-making was that media uncovered the truth of the serious epidemic of HIV/AIDS in China and pressured the government to confront the problem and take appropriate measures. The classic example provided by the journalists was the serious and persistent reportage of HIV/AIDS among the plasma donors in Henan province and the impact upon the whole society and its leaders (including the central authorities) in the late 1990s and early 21<sup>st</sup> century when the truth of the epidemic, which had previously been hidden, was revealed by the local government. In the

words of the journalists, the significance of the early stage coverage of HIV/AIDS was to “lift the lid off it” (揭盖子) (IS-08-J, IS-01-J), “blow their cover” (暴光) (IS-09-J), “disclose the truth” (披露真相) (IS-05-J, IS-08-J, IS-09-J), “bring the serious problems of HIV/AIDS to the table” (使艾滋病问题的严重性浮上台面) (IH-05-E); and, to make the issue the concern of the government and policy makers (加速这件事情进入政府和决策者的视野) (IS-01-J, IS-05-J, IS-09-J, IY-08-E). The journalists also maintained that the media coverage triggered Vice Premier Wu Yi’s (who is also acting Health Minister) inspection tour of Henan province in December 2003. After Wu Yi’s tour, a series of policies and measures pertaining to HIV/AIDS were enacted and promulgated; for example the “Four Free and One Care” ( “四免一关怀” 政策) (Xinhuanet, 2004),<sup>87</sup> and the large scale relief activities that have been conducted in Henan province since 2003 (IH-05-E, IN-03-J, IS-09-J). As interviewee IS-09-J observed:

The deep investigation of media into the reality of AIDS, and the description and disclosure of AIDS epidemic in media aroused the attention of the relevant departments of the State Council to the matter and their verification of the facts. Then policies came out, for example, the relief projects for “AIDS villages” in Henan, “AIDS Orphans” relief fund, and the governmental responding measures. Those were not impelled by the government. I thought they were the results of the media’s unceasing disclosure of the issue that impelled the government to do some things, no matter whether it was for the sake of a political show or for the sake of doing something actually for the people. They did do these kinds of thing.<sup>88</sup>

Journalists employed by the Party organs also emphasized the impact of their coverage on the government policy makers and the introduction of HIV/AIDS relief policies. They (IP-02-J, IP-03-J, IY-02-J) held that due to their particularity target readers - Party and government leaders at all levels - the impact of their coverage was mainly manifested in the change of policy makers’ ideas or opinions and their decision making. As interviewee IP-03-J pointed out:

The readership of *The People’s Daily* is mainly the Party and government officials. Our coverage mainly influenced the policy makers’ decision making, ideas and

<sup>87</sup> The “Four Free and One Care” policy, which was launched at the end of 2003, included free antiretroviral drugs for AIDS patients, who were rural residents or people without insurance living in urban areas; free voluntary counseling and testing; free consultation, screening tests and antiretroviral therapy for pregnant women; free schooling for AIDS orphans; and care and economic assistance for the households of people living with HIV/AIDS.

<sup>88</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “我们(媒体)对艾滋病的现实的挖掘、描述,对现状的披露,引起了国务院有关部门的重视、核实,进而有了政策,比如对河南艾滋病村的帮扶,对艾滋孤儿的基金关怀和政府措施的配套。这些东西不是政府在推动,我认为是媒体不断的暴光,促使政府,不管是做政治秀,或者实在是为老百姓做事实,他确实是做了这样一些事情。”

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changes of opinions. Their ideas or opinions were the most important things. If our leaders changes of ideas or opinion are most important. If our leaders pay attention to an issue, everything becomes easy in China. Therefore, influencing decision makers is the most important thing. Our newspaper has played its role in this aspect.<sup>89</sup>

Interviewee IP-02-J added that the stance adopted by the central Party committee and the central government usually played an exemplary role in local Party committees' and local governments' policy and decision-making: local governments usually followed their example, culminating in a benign cycle of HIV/AIDS prevention being formed. Interviewee IY-02-J supported this view, saying:

Covering HIV/AIDS news in Party organs like *Yunnan Daily* conveyed that the government paid great attention to the issue. The local officials in our country always follow the example set by their superiors. If their superiors take action, then they will follow suit. They will pay much more attention to the issue. And, they may also do something. At least they will not stand in the way. Anyhow, many problems in our country came down in the end to [the] ... [dictum] "once the number one leader tackles the issue, it is easier to solve the problem", meaning that once the Party committee and government pay attention to this issue, the whole society will start running vigorously as one. Even though their working efficiency may not be high, or they may waste a lot of resources, they are advancing onwards the improvement or the disease control.<sup>90</sup>

#### *Noteworthy idiosyncratic attitude – limited impact*

My analysis reveals that only one interviewee contested the impact of HIV/AIDS coverage on government policy-making. Interviewee IY-03-J, who considered the impact of media's coverage limited in this respect, suggested that two reasons underpinned this limitation: (1) the historically awkward position of media in China; and, (2) the ambiguity surrounding decision-making in the communication process. He further insisted that:

In China, media are not independent organisations that may speak the voice of the society. Hence, their communication effects on the policy making of public health

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<sup>89</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “《人民日报》的读者群主要是党政领导干部，我们主要是影响决策层，他们的一些政策的制定，还有他们的思想的一些理念，思想的变化。观念是最重要的，改变观念是最重要的。中国的事情只要领导重视了，就都办好了，所以影响决策层是最重要的。我们的报纸起的主要是这方面的作用。”

<sup>90</sup> Original text in Chinese is “通过《云南日报》这种党报（报道）的话，其实是传达一个信息，就是政府在高度重视这个事情。我们国家的地方官员都是上行下效，上面做了，下面也觉得那我也要关注了，他就会更加的重视这件事情。他也会做一些工作。至少他不阻挠。反正我们国家很多问题归结到一点就是，所谓就是老大一抓，一抓就灵。一把手一管就好。党委政府一重视，整个社会这个机器就强力的运转起来了。哪怕他效率不高，浪费很多资源，但始终是朝着改善的方面，或者说控制这个疾病的方向迈进。”

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are less significant and limited, although media has made some contribution to tackling the problem of HIV/AIDS and has had some impact on the society. Due to the ambiguity of the decision-making in the communication, media are considered as official organisations by the public and as representing the voice of the government.... But, there is a procedure for the authority to confirm an infectious disease. It is not everyone who can publish the [prevalence of a] disease. So, once media release the news, it represents the stance of the government. Therefore, the safest practice for media is to report it after the Departments of Health release the epidemic status.<sup>91</sup>

In sum, the majority of the interviewees generally agreed that the coverage of HIV/AIDS has contributed to the shaping of government policy. The influence on policy was a result of the joint efforts of all of the media in China. They also agreed that the crucial role of media in policy making must not be overlooked. First, they argued that being a source of information for policy makers as well as for the public, media on the one hand provided accurate information to enable the policy makers to understand the nature of the HIV epidemic. As well, they alerted policy makers to the problems and concerns of the people they represented, so that the right decisions were made; on the other, media ensured “people’s right to know” and created public awareness of HIV/AIDS issues in the community and an awareness of the need for a policy that would gain support from all walks of life for government policies (IN-01-J, IN-03-J, IP-02-J, IY-02-J, IS-04-E, IS-05-J). Second, they argued that being a watchdog of the government, media to a great extent played an important role in the supervision of public opinion. The exposure of the local government’s malpractice, and its serious repercussions for HIV/AIDS, forced the government to face up to the problem and reveal its position regarding the HIV/AIDS issue. It also stimulated the output of a series of policies and measures issued by the government for the sake of curbing AIDS. The watchdog function of the media was heavily underscored (IH-05-E, IN-04-J, IS-04-E, IS-08-J, IS-09-J).

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<sup>91</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “在中国，大众传媒影响决策层的手段是有限的，因为媒体不是独立性的，真正的发出社会声音的一种机构。但实际上它也是做了一些事的，也有一些影响，但在公共卫生决策方面的影响力是小的。因为传播的决策不明晰，受众本身就当你是一个官方机构，那你媒体展现的就是官方的声音了。.....但是官方在传染病的认定上是有一个程序的，不是谁想发布就去发布，媒体发布就代表官方表态了。因此，一般媒体最保险的操作流程就是卫生部门发布以后我才能报道。”

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## **6.6 Analysis of Research Question 5: Journalists' Views on Improvement in and Alternatives for Future Coverage of HIV/AIDS**

Research question 5 sought to ascertain the journalists' views regarding media coverage of HIV/AIDS in the future; in other words, their opinions regarding improvements to - and alternatives vis-à-vis - the coverage of HIV/AIDS in China in the future. According to my analysis, the journalists offered several proposals, suggesting providing complete and accurate information to audiences and shifting the coverage from politics-oriented and event-oriented frames to human-oriented frames. Secondary alternatives included normalising AIDS disease and PLWHAs, removing "AIDS" labels, and eschewing discriminatory language in coverage. The noteworthy idiosyncratic improvement would provide regular training to journalists and editors involved in HIV/AIDS coverage.

### *Main improvement and alternatives*

Providing complete and accurate information to audiences, and shifting the coverage from politics-oriented and event-oriented frames to human-oriented frames, were identified as the main improvements and alternatives proposed by the journalists.

My analysis indicates that the provision of complete and accurate information to audiences generated considerable concern among the interviewees, who agreed that the most important role of the coverage of HIV/AIDS is to acknowledge the public's right to know the truth. However, some (IH-02-J, IH-05-E, IP-02-J, IS-04-E, IS-07-E, IS-09-J, IY-02-J, IY-05-J+E) claimed that their possession of information was neither adequate nor comprehensive, although the Central government and the local governments publish the statistics of the HIV/AIDS epidemic every year and have to some degree relaxed the restrictions on HIV/AIDS reportage. But, some local governments still try to conceal the true facts of the epidemic for fear of affecting their image and the government officials' political achievements (IP-02-J, IH-02-J, IH-05-E, IY-02-J). Inadequate information has weakened the effect of

communication and resulted in public lack of confidence in the government propaganda surrounding HIV/AIDS. As interviewee IY-02-J commented:

Why didn't the public trust the government's propaganda? It is because our coverage was not inadequate.... Most of our government's propaganda featured positive stories. The negative stories were concealed or avoided as far as possible.... If you always cover or hide information, the truth is unexplainable. And, the rumours that were going around were entirely different from the official announcements. This resulted in the suspicions of the common people toward our coverage as to whether it was exaggerated or reduced.<sup>92</sup>

The journalists maintained that only by providing the public with open and transparent information, and informing the public of the severity of AIDS and that it should be the concern of everyone, can the public's awareness of preventive measures be aroused and the problem of HIV/AIDS be managed.

The employment of human-oriented frames in their HIV/AIDS coverage was a highly recommended alternative. Interviewees held that in the interests of reducing the discrimination and stigma targeting PLWHAs and dealing with the "AIDS fatigue" of both the editors and the audience, media should shift their focus from politics and events to humanistic coverage, advocating respect for PLWHAs, and encouraging all members of society to treat them equally.

Some journalists (IN-02-J, IN-03-J, IP-03-J, IY-01-J, IY-02-J) stated that because the main role of the previous coverage of HIV/AIDS was to serve the national interest and national policies, rampant coverage of government measures, policies and achievements and government officials' activities related to HIV/AIDS dominated the Chinese media. Moreover, the angle of news stories was always skewed towards the government rather than towards PLWHAs. Hence, news stories invariably focused upon the government's and leaders' concerns about PLWHAs and what the government had done for them rather than on the PLWHAs themselves, their living conditions, their needs and their ordinariness as common people. Although media have for many years mobilised the people countrywide to prevent HIV/AIDS and care for PLWHAs, especially on "World AIDS' Day" each year, "PLWHA is still a group of people who are not able to be exposed to daylight" (IS-09-J).<sup>93</sup> In the words

<sup>92</sup> Original text in Chinese reads "为什么公众对政府的宣传不信任呢? 这就是报道不到位产生的塞。.....政府的宣传大部分都是正面宣传为主, 负面宣传的话能掩就掩, 能盖就盖, 尽量回避。.....你经常要捂着、塞着呢, 真正的真相都是莫名其妙的, 反正街头巷尾的传闻都和政府官员公布的大相径庭。每一篇报道老百姓都怀疑有水分, 或者说是夸大, 或者说是缩小。"

<sup>93</sup> Original text in Chinese reads "艾滋病患者和病人还是一群不能见光的人。"

of interviewee IY-05-J+E: “It seems that the more we pay attention to the field of AIDS, the more PLWHAs are hidden, rather than stand out.”<sup>94</sup> Therefore, the interviewees felt that by telling the stories of PLWHAs and reporting on them fairly, the public may grow to understand them, their desires and demands, and, by extension, reduce the general prejudice towards PLWHAs. As the interviewee IY-02-J suggested:

If fact, if you have seen PLWHAs many times, you would know they are just like others and get used to them. But, if you have never seen them and only heard of them, there are many rumours about them. And now what is impressed deeply in [the minds of] common people is that PLWHAs may retaliate against society.<sup>95</sup>

Several interviewees (IN-01-J, IN-02-J, IP-01-J, IS-05-J, IS-07-E, IS-09-J, IY-01-J, IY-02-J) proposed that reportage of PLWHAs should be based on respect for the latter’s rights, the protection of their rights, and avoidance of demonisation or ‘entertainment’ of PLWHAs. This, they agreed, is extremely vital to the coverage of PLWHAs. Moreover, they felt that more attention should be paid to existing problems related to PLWHAs, e.g., medical treatment and AIDS relief. Only by revealing the extant problems, and promoting solutions to these problems, can the rights and interests of PLWHAs be preserved.

### *Secondary improvement and alternatives*

Normalising AIDS disease and PLWHAs, removing “AIDS” labels, and avoiding discriminatory language in coverage were identified as secondary alternatives by interviewees.

Several (IH-05-E, IN-01-J, IP-01-J, IS-01-J, IS-07-E, IY-05-J+E, IY-01-J, IY-02-J) held that normalising AIDS disease and PLWHAs in their coverage is important for reducing the discrimination and stigma directed towards PLWHAs. They noted that some of the coverage of PLWHAs by Chinese media either attached moral judgment or showed sympathy – perhaps sometimes undue concern – for PLWHAs. These forms of inadequate coverage, to a certain extent, resulted in discrimination and stigma among common people towards PLWHAs.

<sup>94</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “似乎是现在大家越来越关注艾滋病领域之后，更多的艾滋病感染者不是站出来了，而是躲在后面去了。”

<sup>95</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “说句老实话，你见艾滋病病人见多了，也就那么一回事，也就习惯了。但是如果你没见过，只是听说的话，传闻就很多了。而且现在在老百姓心目中扎下根来的就是艾滋病病人报复社会这些东西。”

Interviewees suggested that moral judgments concerning AIDS and PLWHAs should be avoided in future coverage of the condition. The important message that media should convey to audiences is: “Everyone may be affected with different kinds of disease, such as heart disease and phthisis. AIDS is just a kind of disease. You cannot connect morality with the disease. A PLWHA should be treated as a patient, as a common person who has a disease” (IH-05-E).<sup>96</sup> Moreover, some interviewees (IN-01-J, IN-02-J, IN-03-J, IP-01-J, IS-07-E, IS-10-J) saw expressing undue concern over PLWHAs as a form of discrimination. True concern is respect for PLWHAs, respect for their basic rights and the preservation of their dignity.

Several interviewees (IH-02-J, IS-01-J, IY-05-J+E), commenting on the negative effect of the “AIDS label”, appealed for its removal from PLWHA descriptive material; as well, they advocated avoiding the use of language that may fuel stereotypes and give rise to prejudice in future coverage. Interviewee IH-02-J admitted that “the coverage of media can be easily ‘labelised’”. The headlines of news stories tend to be labels in media. Certainly, it is not good to refer to *Wenlou* - “AIDS Village”. When peasants from *Wenlou* go out to do migrant work and say they come from *Wenlou*, no one likes to employ them as housemaids. This is the negative effect.”<sup>97</sup> Interviewee IY-05-J+E agreed, saying: “We did not want to discriminate against PLWHAs, but there were discriminatory descriptions in our previous coverage. We used to attach labels to them like ‘AIDS Patient’, ‘AIDS Girl’ and ‘AIDS Orphan’. The public might have been guided by our coverage, which caused such problems.”<sup>98</sup> However, she conceded that it was not solely the responsibility of media. The authorities also must bear some of the responsibility. Interviewee IS-01-J added that apart from the “AIDS label”, the vocabulary, tone and expression of some of the coverage had the potential to fuel discrimination. The public could read between the lines, i.e., that the person had contracted AIDS because of individual, lax behaviour such as drug use or indiscriminate sexual activity.

<sup>96</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “人会得各种病，像心脏病，肺结核，艾滋病只是一种病。你不能把它和道德联系起来。要把艾滋病人作为病人，作为一个正常的有病的人来对待。”

<sup>97</sup> Original Chinese text reads “这个媒体报道东西容易标签化，做标题的时候容易标签化。确实文楼叫艾滋病村对这个村当然不好，这个村的出去打工说是文楼的，请保姆的话肯定不愿意请她，这是媒体报道的负作用吧。”

<sup>98</sup> Original Chinese text reads “我们不想歧视，但是，我们的传播带有了歧视的东西。你想以前动不动就“艾滋病人”，动不动就是“艾滋女”，“艾滋孤儿”。我们自身给他们打上了一些标签，大众可能就顺着我们的诱导，就出现了这样的问题。”



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*Noteworthy idiosyncratic improvement*

Interviewees identified the training of journalists involved in the coverage of HIV/AIDS as noteworthy idiosyncratic improvement. Several interviewees (IN-02-J, IN-03-J, IS-01-J, IS-05-J) maintained that regular and continual training of journalists and editors involved in the coverage of HIV/AIDS is essential to good AIDS reporting. Before conveying information and facts to audiences, journalists and editors should ensure that their facts and information are totally correct. In the Chinese context, the mobility of journalists is frequently vulnerable to the influence of “valuing official position”. A journalist may change his/her job, seek promotion or give up reporting after a couple of years after reaching maturity in his/her career. In the words of interviewee IN-04-J: “Those who are at the frontline of reporting are always the youngest. Once they achieve some success, they become leaders. Under the value of the ‘official position’ [system], most frontline Chinese journalists are always lacking in experience and are novices.”<sup>99</sup> Interviewee IS-05-J, who considered it a strange phenomenon in Chinese media, said that it was rare for someone like her to continually conduct in-depth coverage for more than eight years. She claimed that “working for eight years is considered as the utmost limit by my colleagues. I’ve already worked beyond the limit.”<sup>100</sup> As a result, the same mistakes in coverage persist. Interviewees claimed that health reportage, such as HIV/AIDS reportage, requires journalists’ long-time investigation of the topic as well as their acquisition of professional knowledge. Therefore, in order to maintain effectiveness, regular training of journalists involved in this type of coverage is essential. .

## 6.7 Summary

This chapter presents the research results from the analyses of thirty interview transcripts. The interview data have been organised around the five core research questions that sought to examine the journalists’ attitudes towards HIV/AIDS and PLWHAs, the journalistic frames adopted in the coverage, the factors that influenced the media’s framing of the coverage of

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<sup>99</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “在一线跑的记者永远都是最年轻的，稍微跑得成功一点就当领导，所以在整个一套官本位的价值体系下，使得我们在第一线的永远是稚嫩的，欠打磨的年轻记者居多。”

<sup>100</sup> Original text in Chinese reads “我们内部把工作八年称为极限运动，我已经超越极限了。”

HIV/AIDS, the impact of the coverage on public policy and the improvement of - and alternative frames that may be adopted for - future coverage. My analysis indicates that interviewees generally saw HIV/AIDS as a medical, socio-economic and cultural issue. The majority of interviewees considered PLWHAs to be ordinary patients, who should be treated exactly like other patients. However, a few journalists differentiated between “innocent victims” and “deserving victims”. My analysis also shows some similarities and slight differences between the journalists employed by the three Party organs (*The People’s Daily*, the *Yunnan Daily* and the *Henan Daily*) and the two metropolitan newspapers (the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*) vis-a-vis their adoption of particular frames for their coverage. Similarities were evident in their usage of politics-oriented and event-oriented frames. The slight differences were that the journalists from *The Spring City Evening* were more likely to employ the socio-economic/cultural frame. There was significant difference in the adoption of frames between the journalists from *The Southern Weekly* and those from the other five newspapers. The journalists working for *The Southern Weekly* favoured the socio-economic/cultural frame. My analysis identifies the factors that influenced the journalistic framing of coverage. Internal factors included: the values and norms of media organisations, the values of the journalists, and the routinisation of HIV/AIDS coverage. The external factors included sources of information, marketisation of the press and the media environment. In terms of the impact of HIV/AIDS coverage on policy-making, the majority of interviewees stated that coverage of HIV/AIDS by China’s media had influenced the policy makers and their changed their ideas about HIV/AIDS, impelling policy making regarding the disease. As regards future coverage, the interviewees advocated several improvements and alternatives including: 1) providing complete and accurate information to audiences; 2) shifting the coverage from politics-oriented and event-oriented frames to human-oriented; 3) normalising AIDS disease and PLWHAs; 4) removal of the “AIDS label” and eschewing discriminatory language in coverage; and, 5) providing regular training to journalists and editors involved in HIV/AIDS coverage.

The next chapter (Chapter 7), which is the final chapter of this thesis, I conclude by demonstrating how the research questions and propositions have been addressed, discuss the contribution and limitations of the study, and identify potential areas for future research. I also put forward alternative strategies that will allow China’s media to make the fullest possible contribution towards eliminating stigmatisation and discrimination towards PLWHAs.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

The final chapter of this thesis aims to present the discussion and conclusion of the thesis, and offer valuable recommendations for reframing communication strategies of HIV/AIDS in Chinese media. The chapter consists of four main sections: Section 1 (7.2) revisits the research questions and research propositions of the thesis; section 2 (7.3) reviews the significance and limitations of the study, and suggests possibilities for further research; section 3 (7.4) offers relevant recommendations for the Chinese government and Chinese media to reframe the communication strategies of HIV/AIDS so as to make use of mass media with maximum efficiency in the crusade against AIDS in China; and, section 4 (7.5) presents the conclusions of the thesis.

#### **7.2 Revisiting the Research Questions and Propositions**

This research, which examines the framing of the discourse surrounding HIV/AIDS and its influencing factors in Chinese newspapers, aims to uncover the nature of the social reality of HIV/AIDS in China as perceived, interpreted and presented by news professionals. In the

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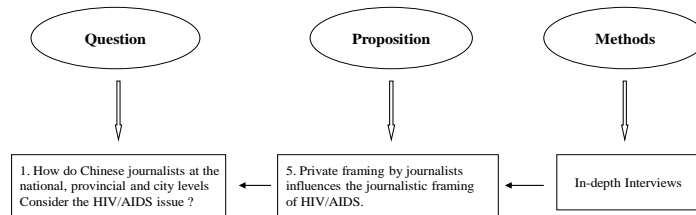
interests of achieving this research purpose, the following core research questions were identified and addressed: (1) How do Chinese journalists at the national, provincial and city levels consider the HIV/AIDS issue? (2) How is HIV/AIDS framed in Chinese newspapers? What is the dominant discourse surrounding HIV/AIDS in Chinese national, provincial and metropolitan newspapers? And, how does this discourse relate to the ways in which the issue is framed by different journalists at different levels of the Chinese administrative system? (3) What factors influence the ways in which different levels of journalists frame the HIV/AIDS issue? (4) How does journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS affect public policy? Are there positive and negative consequences associated with the development of public policies? (5) How can HIV/AIDS be reframed to evoke a different way of thinking, one that embraces a broader range of alternative policies? What forms would new ways of framing HIV/AIDS take?

In order to respond to these five questions, five propositions were examined through text analyses of 981 news stories, and in-depth interviews conducted with 30 journalists at the various levels. The five propositions are as follows: (1) National and provincial policy framing of HIV/AIDS influences the journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS; (2) Internal and external factors of media organisations influence the journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS; (3) Journalistic framing, to a certain extent, influences public policy making; (4) There is a greater space for public deviation at the level of national journalists regarding national HIV/AIDS policy framing than at the local journalists' level; and, (5) Private framing by journalists influences the journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS.

In this section, I will revisit the research questions and their corresponding propositions, which are presented in Chapters 5 and 6 under each Core Research Question.

## 7.2.1 Research Question 1 corresponding to proposition 5

Figure 7.1 Research Question 1: Proposition and Methods



In an attempt to ascertain how Chinese journalists at the national, provincial and city levels contemplate HIV/AIDS, the following proposition was examined through in-depth interviews with journalists and editors at the various levels: journalists' private framing influences the journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS. The findings from the in-depth interviews reported in Chapter 6 show that to some extent this proposition may be viewed as correct. This proposition may be revisited from three perspectives.

First, the findings detailed in Chapter 6 indicate that private framing by journalists reporting on HIV/AIDS to a great extent was in accord with the journalistic framing presented in Chapter 5. The three main private frames of journalists, i.e., medical/scientific, socioeconomic/cultural and political, were identified in the news stories in the six newspapers. Moreover, the deep-rooted and underlying social problems associated with HIV/AIDS (e.g., the causal relations between poverty and HIV/AIDS, and the basic rights of those who live with HIV/AIDS) that have been emphasised by journalists, have to some extent been reflected in news reports, particularly in *The Southern Weekly*.

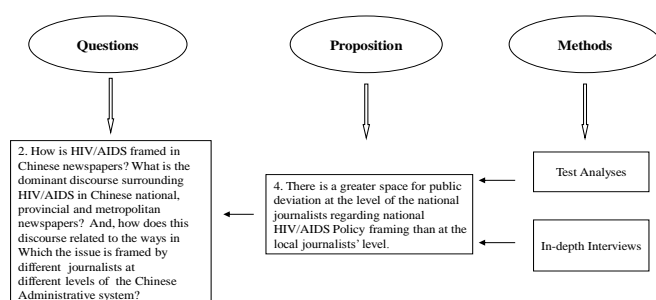
Second, the dichotomy of a "healthy us" and a "diseased other" persists among journalists at all levels. AIDS is still considered a problem peculiar to certain groups, or a health condition

confined to certain groups of people, albeit some journalists have come to consider AIDS a public health problem. The ‘othering’ of blame is, to a great extent, reflected in the news stories of the six newspapers.

Third, notions of “innocent victims” and “deserving victims” harboured by some journalists have to a certain degree affected the selection of news stories. When reporting individual stories, journalists have tended to emphasise “innocent victims”, such as peasants who contracted HIV through blood sales or those who contracted the condition through blood transfusion. Journalists working for the national media, e.g., *The Southern Weekly*, were more likely to cover the Henan province epidemic because those infected in Henan province were mainly victims of blood sales. The first HIV cases detected in China were in Yunnan province among intravenous drug users. The Yunnan epidemic was more serious than Henan epidemic.

## 7.2.2 Research Question 2 corresponding to proposition 4

Figure 7.2 Research Question 2: Proposition and Methods



With regard to research question 2, in order to determine the dominant frames and dominant discourse surrounding HIV/AIDS in Chinese newspapers at different levels, the following proposition was examined through text analyses of the six selected newspapers and in-depth

interviews with journalists and editors at the various levels: There is a greater space for public deviation at the level of the national journalists regarding national HIV/AIDS policy framing than at the local journalists' level. My findings from the text analysis reported in Chapter 5 and from the in-depth interviews reported in Chapter 6 support this proposition in part only. This proposition may be revisited from the following two stances:

First, in terms of framing, with the exception of *The Southern Weekly*, one of the two national newspapers, the journalistic framing of the other five newspapers—*The People's Daily* (the Central Party organ), the *Henan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily* (provincial Party organs), and the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening* (metropolitan newspapers) - basically accorded with the national HIV/AIDS policy framing that evolved in tandem with the onset of HIV/AIDS epidemic, albeit with distinguishing characteristics. Evolution coincided with the initial resistance to the entry of what was seen as the foreigner's disease, and to the internal prevention policy against deviance. This saw effective policy implementation, including the introduction of pragmatic measures of treatment, relief and care for those living with AIDS.<sup>101</sup> The communication strategies of the media mainly focused upon disseminating HIV/AIDS knowledge and information and increasing public awareness of HIV/AIDS. The emphasis of the national HIV/AIDS policies was upon biomedical prevention, that is, advocating change of individual behaviour rather than social prevention that emphasised the politics, systems, structures and cultures associated with the pandemic (D. Li, 2008a); in other words, the structural approaches to HIV prevention (Gupta, Parkhurst, Ogden, Aggleton, & Mahal, 2008). Only *The Southern Weekly* broke through the national policy framing, evincing great deviation in their coverage by investigating the deep-rooted social problems that underpin the disease, e.g., poverty, inequality, and protection and preservation of human rights. *The People's Daily*, the *Henan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily*, the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening* opted to adopt politics-oriented, prevention/education and event-oriented frames. *The Southern Weekly* opted for the socioeconomic/cultural frame, while the other five newspapers had a predilection for the behavioural frame. This finding lends support to the findings of Zhang's (2009) study, which suggest that whereas Party organs and their affiliated media tended to use political and prevention frames to represent the HIV/AIDS issue, journalistic professionalism media tended to adopt a social-oriented frame to represent the HIV/AIDS

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<sup>101</sup> For details see Chapter 1

issue. The adoption of the above different forms of frames highlighted the different power relations in the news coverage. The political framing of HIV/AIDS employed by the three Party organs was predictable given that they were organs of the ruling entities. The central government and governments at all levels, as ruling entities, were positioned in the news coverage as playing central roles in the prevention of HIV/AIDS. They were the only sources of HIV/AIDS information related to epidemics. And, as long as the official voice dominated the HIV/AIDS coverage, the voices of those affected by HIV could not be heard. Conversely, the socioeconomic/cultural framing that *The Southern Weekly* adopted focused largely on economic and cultural aspects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and the influence of HIV/AIDS on society in general and upon individual lives. It tended to be concerned with the dignity and rights of those affected by HIV, leaning more towards advocating equity and social justice. The concerns of vulnerable groups were represented in the reportage. Moreover, the behavioural frame utilised by the two metropolitan newspapers tended to emphasise the relationship between personal behaviour and HIV/AIDS infection. The journalistic approach was didactic: it sought to educate the ordinary people and promote adherence to the ethical and moral principles of society. The common people were positioned in the role of caring about and participating in the prevention of HIV/AIDS, responding to the call of the government regarding the prevention of HIV/AIDS. However, this call was more like a series of slogans: it failed to suggest and delineate action.

Second, in terms of discourse, journalistic discourse basically reflected the official line. As Chinese scholar Dun Li (2008a, p. 80) observes, the power of the discourse surrounding HIV/AIDS in China has been monopolised by health administration departments and their affiliated centres for disease control (CDCs) over a twenty year period. The CDC discourse, or official discourse of HIV/AIDS, mainly contained information pertaining to the definition of AIDS, the transmission routes, the consequences of contracting AIDS, means of prevention, at risk groups and the potential threat posed by such groups to others (Jun Jing, 2006). The official discourse of HIV/AIDS evolved concomitant with the development of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in China. It shifted from “the life style of capitalism” to “AIDS is in the midst of us—exists in a handful of people” to “understanding and caring for people affected by HIV”, with changes of approach marked by senior officials visiting and shaking hands with PLWHAs (Jun Jing, 2006). The CDC discourse seemed more to emphasise the relationship

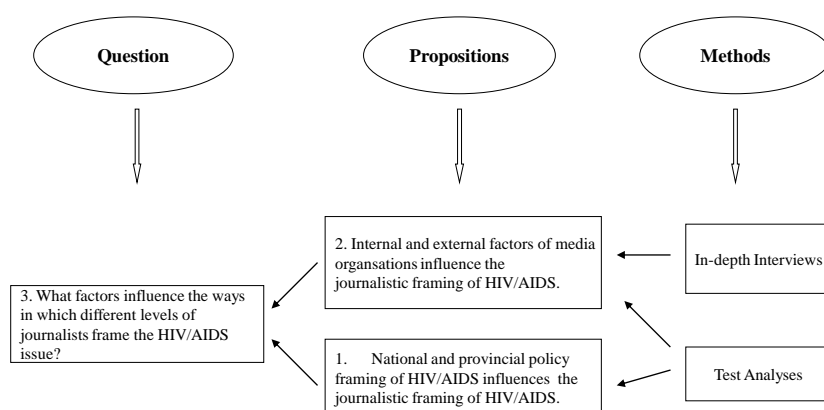


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between individual behaviour and the disease, i.e., to neglect the relationship between the social conditions and social status of the marginalised or vulnerable groups at risk of contracting AIDS (Jun Jing, 2006). With the exception of *The Southern Weekly*, which to a certain extent adopted an alternative discourse, the five newspapers opted to adhere to the official discourse, a decision that doubtless affected journalistic discourse's framing of certain social groups as risk groups, and the framing of AIDS victims as at "risk groups" rather than as people engaging in "risky practice". Such framing of risk resulted in the separation of "innocent victims" from "guilty victims" in the HIV/AIDS discourse. It may, in fact, have influenced the policy of HIV/AIDS treatment and actual operation. "Innocent victims" may have been given priority; that is, access to free treatment, especially valuable when the sources of such free treatment were limited. The dichotomy of a "healthy us" and a "diseased other" may have misled the public into believing that AIDS is a problem of the "other", thus distancing the general population from the reality and providing them with a false sense of security. To a certain extent, it may have impeded members of the public from taking effective action to protect themselves (X. Zhu, 2010). Data from a 2008 Knowledge, Attitudes, Behavior and Practices (KABP) survey of over 6,000 respondents in six Chinese cities revealed that 88.1% (including 92% white-collar workers, 92% youth, 90% blue-collar workers and 78% migrants) of interviewees felt that they were not at risk of HIV transmission (CHAMP, 2008). However, it is widely accepted that only when people come to consider themselves as vulnerable to HIV/AIDS will they seek to learn more about it. Then they may change their drug use and sexual behaviour (PANOS, 2003).

### 7.2.3 Research Question 3 corresponding to propositions 2 and 1

Figure 7.3 Research Question 3: Propositions and Methods



In order to establish what factors influence the ways in which journalists at different levels frame the HIV/AIDS issue, my propositions were examined through text analyses and in-depth interviews with journalists and editors at the various levels. Internal and external factors of media organisations influence the journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS; and, national and provincial policy framing of HIV/AIDS influences the journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS. The findings from the in-depth interviews reported in Chapter 6, and from the text analysis reported in Chapter 5, clearly show that these propositions may be viewed as correct. The propositions may be revisited in accordance with constraints from both inside and outside media organisations.

My findings from the interviews show that constraints from inside the media organisations have a significant influence on the journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS. Constraints originate from the positioning and orientation of media which determines their news agendas, news values, and choice and representation of news stories. The differences in the journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS adopted by the six newspapers have proven this point.

As suggested earlier, *The People's Daily*, the *Henan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily* are Party organs. For them, the value of propaganda is always higher than newsworthiness; hence, they tend to adopt a political or politics-oriented frame. This is manifested in the HIV/AIDS coverage of the three Party organs, that is, in the ways they emphasise the activities of Party and government leaders, the actions and measures that the government takes, government strategies and policies concerning HIV/AIDS-related issues, and the achievements of the government in HIV/AIDS prevention. Their ultimate goal is to promote a positive image of the government (M. Zhang, 2009). Therefore, they tend to avoid negative news stories that may affect the image of the government or pose a potential threat to the general interest of society.

The *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening* are metropolitan newspapers: they are citizens' newspapers and as such are more likely to consider serviceability and newsworthiness compared to the Party organs; in addition, they are more likely to adopt prevention/educational and event-oriented frames for their coverage of HIV/AIDS. Compared with the three Party organs, the two metropolitan newspapers were more likely to adopt an alternative frame (such as a socio-economic/cultural frame) when reporting the common people's stories (often sensational ones), in a bid to attract a wider audience. However, because they are affiliated to the two provincial Party organs, they are to some extent affected and/or restricted by the values and norms of their parent organisations and unable to break through the boundaries of the coverage of HIV/AIDS. The *Dahe Daily* is a typical example. It maintains a relatively higher rate of politics-oriented frame than *The Spring City Evening*, which employed a relatively higher rate of socioeconomic/cultural frame. This may be because the degree of control of the *Dahe Daily* by its parent organisation is relatively tighter than that of *The Spring City Evening*.

*The Southern Weekly*, which is positioned as a quality weekly newspaper or weekly broadsheet with the goal of impulsing the social progression of China, pursues journalistic professionalism. Newsworthiness and public interest are the major concerns of its coverage. Therefore, its journalists tend to adopt the socioeconomic/cultural frame in their coverage of HIV/AIDS, and to challenge the impartiality and legitimacy of the social rights and economic structure by investigating the deep social problems that have given rise to HIV/AIDS. As well, they advocate the basic rights of those affected by HIV, and are more willing to risk "hitting the edgeball" (Lynch, 1999) in their coverage.

The news values and norms of media organisations also influence the perceptions of journalists towards their roles. Journalists working for the three Party organs and the two metropolitan newspapers weighed their role in protecting the “overall interests”, harmony and stability of Chinese society and self-censor their news stories accordingly, both to avoid destabilising social harmony or overstepping the journalistic boundaries. Journalists attached to *The Southern Weekly*, on the other hand, tend more to weigh their roles in uncovering the truth and in pursuing the impartiality of society. Consequently, most of the news stories that appear in the three Party organs (*The People’s Daily*, the *Henan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily*) and the two metropolitan newspapers (the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*) report positive news, whereas most of the news stories in *The Southern Weekly* take the form of investigative reporting, probing the problems associated with HIV/AIDS.

Second, my findings from the interviews reveal that constraints external to the media organisations have tremendously influenced the journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS. These constraints mainly included the sources of information, marketisation and the media environment. Sources of information were among the important factors that influenced the coverage of HIV/AIDS in the six newspapers. The three Party organs and the two metropolitan newspapers, which rely heavily upon government sources, usually receive most of their information from routine channels such as government press conferences, the National Centres for Disease Control (CDC), the provincial Centres for Disease Control (CDC), and other relevant government departments or government agencies. Several reasons accounted for the journalists’ reliance upon governmental sources for their reporting. They included government control of epidemic information, journalists’ lack of knowledge about the story subject, and deadline pressures (Len-Rós et al., 2009). Previous studies (Herbert J. Gans, 2004; Miller & Williams, 1993; Molotch & Lester, 1974; Pamela J. Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Sigal, 1973) have indicated that the government may set rules and exert greater control over the information disseminated through official sources such as press releases and press conferences, so that it can retain control over the content. In effect, the official voice dominates the coverage of HIV/AIDS by the three Party organs and the two metropolitan newspapers. The sources of information of *The Southern Weekly*, which was relatively independent of government control, were more diverse compared with the other five newspapers. Different voices, including the voices of marginalised groups, and of those affected by HIV, had more opportunities to be heard in *The Southern Weekly*. Sources of information imply that the national and provincial policy framing of HIV/AIDS have greatly impacted upon journalistic framing.

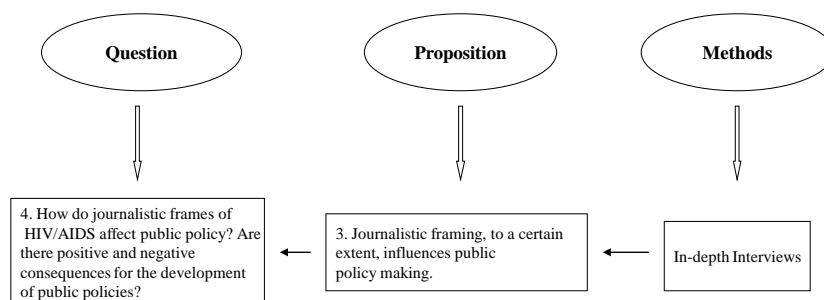
The marketisation of the press has inevitably affected the coverage of HIV/AIDS. It seems that the more marketisation a media experiences, the more the newsworthiness is emphasised. Due to the pressure of the market place, the six newspapers, to various degrees, have had to seek hot and eye-catching topics to retain their target audiences. While on the one hand, marketisation has affected the content of the news stories of the six newspapers, on the other, it has resulted in the decline of the coverage of HIV/AIDS due to AIDS news fatigue among audiences as well as the editorial board.

The media environment was another very important factor that influenced the coverage of HIV/AIDS. The status of the media, and the political, social and economic environments in which media are embedded, determine the degree of variation that media can exercise vis-a-vis national policy framings of HIV/AIDS. *The Southern Weekly* was a typical example. The reason why *The Southern Weekly* could cover some topics that were considered out-of-bounds by the other five newspapers was that the media environment in which it was embedded facilitated such coverage. First, as one of the newspapers affiliated with the *Nanfang Daily Media* Group, which is the Party-organ of Guangdong's provincial Party committee, *The Southern Weekly* is based in Guangdong province, the frontier of China's opening-up. From the late 1990s onwards, the socio-political and economic environment of Guangdong province became relatively relaxed, particularly the political climate. As well, local government control of media was relaxed. And, because it is based in Guangdong province, it has the political advantage of not having to administratively subordinate itself to the other provincial Party-state authorities that it covers (Yuezhi Zhao, 2008, p. 254). Second, due to the *Nanfang Daily Media* Group's unique social background and organizational culture, *The Southern Weekly* not only enjoys relatively larger amounts of political capital and the state-secured monopoly right to produce original news as a subsidiary of the provincial level Party-organs, but also has the higher political stature to access official sources and claim provincial and above-level political authorities as their own base (X. Zhang, 2011, p. 150; Yuezhi Zhao, 2008, p. 297). In addition, its political and economic positions have enabled it to recruit some of the best journalists around the country (Yuezhi Zhao, 2008, p. 297). Moreover, the *Nanfang Daily Media* Group has consistently insisted upon "staying within the core newspaper business, pursuing excellence in journalism, and launching and nurturing new, innovative, politically courageous, and intellectually relevant newspapers of regional and national influence" (Yuezhi Zhao, 2008, p. 254). This principle fostered the liberal editorial orientation and professional culture of *The Southern Weekly* and made it an outspoken liberal

paper that has often challenged the boundaries of the Party-state's censorship (Yuezhi Zhao, 2008). Last but not least, as a market-oriented newspaper, credibility is not only important for attracting and maintaining readership, but also affords *The Southern Weekly* the leverage it requires to bargain for more autonomy (X. Zhang, 2011). In the interests of establishing its credibility in the eyes of the public, *The Southern Weekly* devoted itself to investigative journalism committed to exposing the sensitive social problems that caused public concern, such as HIV/AIDS. In effect, *The Southern Weekly* owes its unique coverage and framing of HIV/AIDS to what Xiaoling Zhang (2011) calls its "bargaining power with the Party-state". That is, its political and economical capital allows it to enjoy more autonomy than other media (p. 149).

#### 7.2.4 Research Question 4 corresponding to proposition 3

Figure 7.4 Research Question 4: Proposition and Methods



In order to ascertain if and how journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS affects public policy, and if there are any positive and negative consequences for the development of public policy, the following proposition was examined through in-depth interviews with journalists and editors at the various levels. Journalistic framing, to a certain extent, influences public policy making.

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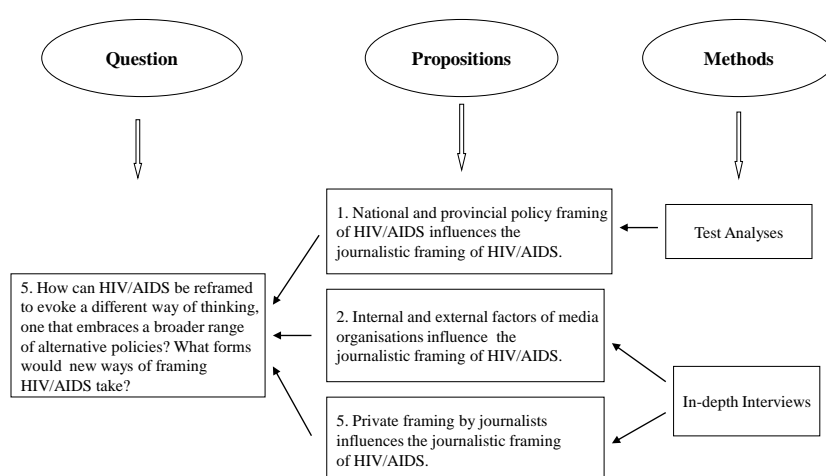
The findings from the in-depth interviews reported in Chapter 6 show that to some extent this proposition may be viewed as correct and may be revisited from the following two perspectives:

My findings from the interviews reveal that the journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS, to some extent, had a positive influence on HIV/AIDS policy making. This manifested in two forms: first, it forced the government to confront the problem and to take measures against HIV/AIDS due to its unceasing coverage of the truth surrounding the HIV epidemic. To some extent, it propelled the debut of policies regarding HIV/AIDS treatment and care, e.g., the national policy of “Four Free and One Care”, relief projects for villages affected by AIDS in Henan, a relief fund for children orphaned by AIDS, and local government response measures.

Second, journalistic framing and the unceasing coverage of HIV/AIDS issues to a certain extent influenced the variation in the policy makers’ opinions and attitudes towards HIV/AIDS and, by extension, their decision-making. It is well recognised in Chinese political culture that local officials always follow the example set by their superiors. “Once the number one leader tackles the issue, it is easier to solve the problem.” (IY-02-J) HIV/AIDS related issues are no exception: the influencing of decision makers is of the utmost importance. Once the coverage of HIV/AIDS impacted upon the central authorities and forced them into taking action, local governments at all levels imitated and took corresponding action and measures concerning HIV/AIDS. Unarguably, news coverage of HIV/AIDS contributed to the policy making surrounding HIV/AIDS in China.

## 7.2.5 Research Question 5 corresponding to propositions 1, 2 and 5

Figure 7.5 Research Question 5: Propositions and Methods



In order to arrive at new ways of framing HIV/AIDS that could evoke a different way of thinking about the condition and illuminate a broader range of alternative policies, the following propositions were examined through text analyses and in-depth interviews with journalists and editors at various levels: National and provincial policy framing of HIV/AIDS influences the journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS; Internal and external factors of media organisations influence the journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS; and, private framing by journalists influences the journalistic framing of HIV/AIDS. The findings from the text analyses and in-depth interviews reported in Chapters 5 and 6 clearly show that these propositions may be viewed as correct.

Possible improvement in the forms of alternative framing proposed by journalists basically involved three aspects, i.e., national and provincial policy framing, journalistic framing, and private framing by journalists. First, improving or reframing national and provincial policy frames is essential, because these frames, to a great extent, affect the journalistic frames. Only



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by effecting more transparency and openness of both the national and provincial policies regarding information pertinent to HIV epidemics can the media provide the complete and accurate information expected of journalists. Moreover, emphasis on biomedical prevention can effectuate individual behaviour change. Hence, there is a need to integrate biomedical prevention with social prevention, thus emphasising the social structure and social processes. Media can then shift from politics-oriented and event-oriented framing to human-oriented framing highlighting concern for human beings, equality and human rights. Journalists may come to view AIDS as a collective problem rather than as an individual problem.

Second, a reframing of the public discourse surrounding HIV/AIDS is imperative. In order to remove the “AIDS label”, that is, media’s use of overt and covert discriminatory language in its coverage, it is necessary to have recourse to the original, official discourse because the relevant government departments, such as health administration departments and their affiliated centres for disease control (CDC), dominate the discourse surrounding HIV/AIDS in China. Official discourse has greatly influenced public discourse; therefore, a reframing of the official discourse is essential.

Third, journalistic professionalism is critical because the coverage of HIV/AIDS requires not only highly professional journalistic skills, but also specialised knowledge of, and a correct approach to the disease. Therefore, training is crucial for journalists and editors involved in the coverage of HIV/AIDS.

### **7.3 Theoretical Implications**

There are some implications revealed under the scrutiny of the theories discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 and the concrete case of constructing HIV/AIDS in the Chinese press presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

First, the landscape of the Chinese media has undergone tremendously change as a result of China’s three decades of economic reform. Chinese media policy has transformed from propaganda to hegemony (A. Chan, 2002; X. Zhang, 2011), evidence that the Party still

maintains a tight rein on news media (C.-C. Lee, 2000a). While the Maoist Era's pure political propaganda has been curtailed, market forces have been increasingly emphasised (X. Yu, 1994). In other words, a once strict Party mouthpiece has become "Party Publicity Inc" (Z. He, 2000), in which multi-dimensional outlets including Party-organs (propaganda model) and commercial outlets (commercial model) co-exist in China's contemporary media system. (Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). Under the new market mechanisms, all media outlets – irrespective of whether they are Party-organs or commercial outlets - have to strive for their survival, both politically and economically. Consequently, they have to serve two masters (i.e., the Party and their audiences), toe two lines (i.e., the Party line and the bottom line) and perform under two logics (i.e., the Party logic and the market logic) (Zhongdang Pan, 2000; Yuezhi Zhao, 1998). Thus, China's media system and its practices cannot be examined and explained by any single theoretical and ideological theory ranging from totalitarian to authoritarian, liberal-pluralism to the various Marxist or post-Marxian schools of thought discussed in chapter 2.

Second, the transformation of the media system led to the changes in the "journalistic paradigm," which in turn brought about various patterns of journalistic practice among the Chinese media (Zhongdang Pan & Chan, 2003). Journalistic professionalism emerged and has systematically grown since the 1980s (Polumbiaum, 1990). However, media professionalism does not live in social vacuum. The imported norm of western media professionalism has been incorporated into China's internal journalistic values. In this way, China's journalistic professionalism has acquired its unique character. Different modes of practice, marshalled under the name of "professionalism" have changed journalists' reportage, manifested in the coverage of HIV/AIDS related issues. I argue that if the AIDS problem can be considered as the thermometer measuring Chinese society's social problems, because it reflects every aspect of Chinese society (D. Li, 2008b), the media's coverage of HIV/AIDS, which is the focus of this research, to a great degree can be used as an exemplar that reflects the Chinese media's different modes of practice.

For party journalism, 'professionalism' means performing a propagandist role, that is, being the state and the eye, ear, and mouth of the Party. In other words, "[s]erving the [P]arty and its enlightened leaders" (H. Yu, 2009, p. 133). Thus, Party journalists see Party membership and official patronage as advantageous to influencing policymaking (H. Yu, 2009). They are more inclined to emphasise "interpretive and popular advocacy roles" through their interpreting,

publicising and advocating of state policies (Zhongdang Pan & Chan, 2003, p. 649; H. Xu, 2000). For professional journalism, ‘professionalism’ means speaking on behalf of the people and being the conscience of society. The main role of journalists as professionals is to gather, disseminate and analyse information based upon the principles of objectivity, efficiency and intellectual autonomy (H. Yu, 2009, p. 135). As professionals, they “use journalism to challenge the authorities, express popular grievances, and educate the people about enlightenment ideas and the need for reform” (H. Yu, 2009). They tend more to emphasise the “disseminator role of the media” (Zhongdang Pan & Chan, 2003, p. 649), they promote and practice its watchdog role, albeit they are limited in scope and practice (Yuezhi Zhou, 2000). Under the pressure of economic forces and political repression, they have to position themselves between the state and their audiences and take situated action, and even on occasion compromising in a changing Chinese society (H. Yu, 2009). The case of HIV/AIDS reportage, to a great extent, has demonstrated the reality of today’s Chinese media.

Third, the Chinese authorities used news as a form of social knowledge to build a consensus on understanding the AIDS problem and the legitimacy of the AIDS policy. As I suggest in chapters 2 and 3, news is a product of journalists who operate within a given political and cultural system. As a form of socially constructed reality, news not only provides its audiences with knowledge that is essentially “ranged in this and that perspective to the purpose and point of view of the investigator” (Park, 1955, p. 74, cited in Dong, et al., 2008, p. 360), but also represents the ideas, beliefs, values and ideologies of those who have power in the larger social structure (Molotch & Lester, 1974). That various institutions or forces in the economic, political and cultural arenas strive to create a consensus about the social meaning of a social problem, such as HIV/AIDS. “When the authority is involved, the created consensus about a given social problem represents a form of official knowledge that both restricts and enables what is to be understood and how it collectively may be solved” (Dong, Chang, & Chen, 2008, p. 361). Thus, it has significant implications for policy outcomes (Entman, 1993). AIDS policy is largely determined by how AIDS is defined or framed in the first place (Conrad & Barler, 2010). When HIV/AIDS was medicalised by the authorities, the dominant policy approach tended to focus on solutions such as behaviour intervention rather than examining the social systems that caused the AIDS problems (Conrad & Barler, 2010). In the context of China, AIDS news serves as a form of knowledge sanctioned by authorities to convey a consensus about AIDS problems and the policies that authorize social control. This applies not only to HIV/AIDS problems, but also can be applied to other social problems in China.

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## 7.4 Significance, limitations and suggestions

In its exploration of the dominant frames and discourse surrounding HIV/AIDS constructed in Chinese national, provincial and metropolitan newspapers, this research has focused upon the various factors that have influenced the journalistic framing and discourse that have reified public perceptions of HIV/AIDS. The findings reveal that many constraints attributable to both inside and outside media have influenced the coverage of HIV/AIDS in the six newspapers under scrutiny. The results will provide the Chinese government and state-controlled media with useful information that will allow a reframing of HIV/AIDS that may evoke a different all over response and give rise to a broader range of alternative policies that may eliminate stigma and discrimination towards PLWHAs, making reaction more humanistic and less exclusive. This research goes further than previous studies (Bu & Liu, 2004; X. Liu & Zhang, 2005; Z. Xu & Qi, 2007; M. Zhang, 2009; Z. Zhang, 2004) that limited their focus to newspaper content only. This thesis has extended its reach to analysing the views of journalists and editors, in particular to those who wrote and edited the news stories featured in the six selected newspapers. In addition, because this research is an empirical study based on first-hand material, it will contribute to a deeper understanding of the social reality of HIV/AIDS in China. And, to some extent, it will throw light on and enable broader understanding of media and social change in China as well.

However, despite the important findings of this thesis, there are some limitations that warrant mention. First, this thesis is based on print media; for this reason, the results may not be generalisable to other traditional media, e.g., radio and television, and to new media such as the Internet and SMS. Apart from the print media, other traditional media and new media are also important channels through which people acquire knowledge of and information about HIV/AIDS. They too play important roles in the social construction of HIV/AIDS in China. Second, the four local newspapers (two provincial newspapers and two metropolitan newspapers) were selected from the two geographic regions of China most affected by HIV/AIDS. Thus caution should be exercised when generalising these findings to media in other geographic locations due to the various aspects of the HIV epidemic, and the various local government policies focusing on HIV/AIDS. Third, this study's focus is on journalistic

framing only. Study of both journalistic and audience framing ascertaining the link between media and individual framing was too broad in scope under the time limitations of a PhD project as the project was already looking at journalists in two provinces at three organisational levels.

The above limitations may inspire future candidates to advance the field in the following areas:

1. Further study may be conducted of different forms of media channels within the category of mass media, in attempt to determine the differences in the framing and discourse between the various forms of media channels. The factors that underpin these differences also deserve studying.
2. Research into the relationship between media and audience framing, in other words, between what is presented in the media and what people are led to believe, should be furthered.
3. Research into the media habits of people of different socio-economic classes and ages is worthy of consideration.

These three areas deserve further academic attention because the research findings reached may provide government and media organisations with important and useful references that will facilitate the reframing of communication strategies regarding HIV/AIDS and see media disseminating more effective messages about HIV/AIDS among different target audience.

## **7.5 Recommendations**

Promoting awareness, increasing knowledge and eliminating stigma are crucial to arresting the spread of HIV/AIDS. Unarguably, as the main sources of HIV/AIDS knowledge and information (Bu & Liu, 2004; CHAMP, 2008; Li Li, et al., 2009), Chinese mass media have contributed to promoting public awareness and increasing public knowledge of HIV/AIDS; and, to some extent, Chinese media have influenced government policy-making regarding HIV/AIDS. However, despite these valuable contributions, the results of the KABP vis-a-vis

the public are less than optimistic: HIV and AIDS-related stigma and discrimination are still serious problems in Chinese society.

According to a survey<sup>102</sup> of over 6,000 respondents in six Chinese cities, published by China HIV/AIDS Media Partnership (CHA(CHAMP, 2008)MP) in 2008, more than 48% of respondents still believed they could contract HIV from a mosquito bite; over 18% thought they could be infected if an HIV positive person sneezed or coughed on them; 30% of respondents thought HIV positive children should not be allowed to study at the same schools as uninfected children; approximately 41% were unwilling to work alongside an HIV-positive co-worker; 65% approximately were unwilling to share a house with an HIV-infected person; 48% were unwilling to share a meal with an HIV-infected person; and, approximately 32 % of respondents considered that people with HIV deserved their condition because of their drug use or lax sexual behaviour. In sum, HIV/AIDS is still one of the most stigmatised diseases in China. Thus, stigma and discrimination have become a major hindrance to the constraint of HIV/AIDS in China.

Based on my own findings and the survey undertaken by CHAMP, I question the effectiveness of the current HIV/AIDS communication strategies in China. Given that HIV/AIDS is still a major health problem in China (there are additional new HIV infections each year (MOH, 2009)), and that media and the public have gradually developed HIV/AIDS coverage fatigue, I deem it essential to reappraise and reframe China's current HIV/AIDS communication strategies, so that more effective communication strategies may be adopted. In this way, the function of media in the prevention of HIV/AIDS may be brought into full play. On the basis of my findings, and drawing upon the successful experiences of some countries, for example, Uganda, Thailand, Brazil and Australia, I suggest that there is a need to shift the emphasis on biomedical prevention to social prevention, to shift the focus on message to voice, and to further strengthen the role of media in HIV/AIDS prevention.

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<sup>102</sup> This survey was carried out by Renmin University with the support of UNAIDS, the Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria (GBC), and Ogilvy. More than 6,000 white-collar workers, blue-collar workers, migrant-workers and youth were interviewed in six major Chinese cities: Kunming, Shenzhen, Shanghai, Wuhan, Zhengzhou and Beijing. Among these six cities, Kunming and Zhengzhou were my target cities of my project. my two selected metropolitan newspapers were from these two cities.

### **7.5.1 Macroscopic Level: from Biomedical Prevention to Social Prevention**

From a macroscopic level, reappraisal and readjustment of the government's HIV/AIDS prevention framework will be a prerequisite for the reordering of media communication strategies, which come under the umbrella of the policy framework of the government HIV/AIDS prevention program in line with the government's control of the media. Media coverage and mass media campaigns are inevitably shaped by the government's HIV/AIDS prevention policies. Thus, without government prevention policies' support, good and effective communication strategies are rendered ineffective.

Chinese scholar Dun Li (2008a) notes that biomedical prevention which puts the onus on the individual, has been the dominant model of the Chinese government's HIV/AIDS prevention framework. The biomedical prevention model emphasises the individual's responsibility: He/she must play the main role in HIV/AIDS prevention. The individual, as "the new-liberal rational and autonomous subject", must take responsibility for his or her own health (Henderson, et al., 2009, p. 124). Educating, advising and counselling are considered appropriate means for individual prevention of HIV; and, intervention is behaviour-centred rather than practice-centred. (Henderson, et al., 2009). As a result, risk is positioned as a problem for individuals usually categorised as "risk groups" (Kippax & Race, 2003, p. 4). In other words, HIV/AIDS tends to be associated with "risk groups" behaviour rather than with "risky practices". Under this model, behaviour change communication is adopted as the main communication strategy. Health prevention is addressed "from an individual, linear, and rational perspective" (Airhihenbuwa & Obregon, 2000, p. 8). Prevention information is disseminated primarily top-down from the government, i.e., from experts to the grass roots individual. Hence, the main task of media is to provide HIV-related knowledge and information in order to increase public awareness of HIV/AIDS. HIV-positive and HIV-negative people are in general considered to be passive subjects: they should respond to the prevention message and change their health behaviour accordingly. But, the CHAMP survey suggests that public response has fallen short of that expected.

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The limitations of biomedical prevention and individual behaviour change communication have long been a concern for scholars and leading international organisations. Some scholars (Airhihenbuwa & Obregon, 2000; Freimuth, 1992; Kippax, 2006, cited in Henderson et al. 2009) argue that as HIV/AIDS results from complex social, cultural and economic contexts, knowledge of HIV/AIDS alone may not be enough for individuals to change their health behaviour. In order to strengthen the behaviour prevention response, there is a need to shift the focus from biomedical prevention to social prevention; in other words, to place more emphasises on social structure and social processes. Social prevention is a bottom-up prevention model in which civil society and the community play major roles in informing the public through mass media campaigns, community out-reach and social marketing. Prevention information is “shared, discussed and debated through collective activity (Kippax, 2010)”. In order to achieve a sustained reduction in HIV-transmission numbers, the people, as members of communities, networks and groups, must respond collectively to the challenge of HIV/AIDS (Kippax, 2010). Prevention programs concentrate on social practice rather than on behaviour; as well, health messages focus on the risks associated with particular practices rather than on behavioural patterns (Kippax, 2010). In the main, emphasis is upon social processes and social transformation (Henderson, et al., 2009).

Since the late 1990s, some international organisations, including UNAIDS, UNESCO and the Rockefeller Foundation, have expressed the need to respond to HIV/AIDS through a more integrated, more-sectoral framework (Figueroa, Kincaid, Rani, & Lewis, 2002; UNAIDS, 1999, 2001a; UNESCO, 2001). The above organisations have also noted the inadequacy of responding to HIV/AIDS using a single-point education strategy or one-way transmission of information, while at the same time neglecting the complex systems and circumstances surrounding the disease. For example, UNAIDS (2001b) proposes five domains that need to be considered when developing communications strategies for HIV/AIDS prevention: government policy; socio-economic status; culture; gender relations; and, spirituality. UNAIDS argues that individual health behaviour is “a component of this set of domains, rather than the primary focus of health behaviour change”, because “individual behaviours are shaped and influenced by factors and domains within a broader contextual focus” (UNAIDS, 2001b). For these reasons, HIV/AIDS intervention programs need to be addressed in the broader framework of poverty, inequity, illiteracy and gender imbalance (UNAIDS, 1999).



This argument was further supported by the work of the Rockefeller Foundation of Communication for Social Change Network. Experts (Figueroa, et al., 2002) associated with the network argued that the focus of the prevention programs should shift from a persuasion message to dialogue, debate and negotiation surrounding issues that resonate with members of the community, and that the outcomes of the prevention programs should go beyond individual behaviour to social norms, policies, cultures and the supporting environment, because behaviour change depends upon deep-rooted social change. Social change, they suggest, is more likely to be sustainable if individuals and affected communities own the process and content of communication. Thus, it is important to empower and give voice to previously unheard members of the community.

According to Cardey (2006), successful curbing of HIV/AIDS requires the adaption of a multi-sectoral and multifaceted approach that operates from the individual level to the macro level, and that addresses both the content and context of the HIV/AIDS.

### **7.5.2 Microscopic Level: From Message to Voice**

There is some evidence to suggest that media play a critical role in providing a space for public or civil society debate in which people can give voice to and promote alternative agendas. Success stories of effective HIV/AIDS control in Uganda, Thailand, Australia, Senegal and Brazil show that open dialogue was one of the important factors in containing the epidemic. In these countries, media played an important role in stimulating public debate and dialogue and in challenging social norms and conventional attitudes (PANOS, 2003). Their media coverage or mass media campaigns were designed not only for disseminating information, but also for facilitating broad public debate. Take Uganda as an example, where open discussion and dialogue in media not only challenged previously conservative attitudes towards sex and sexuality, but also challenged conventional attitudes towards the position of women in Uganda society (Hogle, 2002). The experience of Uganda indicates that one of the key elements of this country's success in containing the epidemic was free discussion of HIV/AIDS in the media (UNAIDS, 2004). Evidence shows that individual's behaviour change took place when prevention information was passed on and discussed between people

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(Hogle, 2002; PANOS, 2003). Media in Thailand have also played a vital role in disseminating information and accelerating political change (PANOS, 2003). The Thai press provided a space for public debate which allowed a diversity of voices, including those of AIDS activists, to be heard. With the help of the media, AIDS activists and other civil society actors combined to become a powerful force driving the promotion of the AIDS agenda. Moreover, massive mass media campaigns, and public information disseminated by media, NGOs and entertainment leaders also actively mobilised civil society to fight together against AIDS, and against the stigma and discrimination directed towards PLWHAs (PANOS, 2003; UNAIDS, 1998).

The successful experiences of Uganda, Thailand, Senegal, Brazil and Australia also reveal that the participation of PLWHAs is crucial in impeding the spread of HIV/AIDS. The visibility and involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS in policy, program design and implementation have not only led to the reduction of stigma and discrimination, but have also served as a means of “reorienting priorities, ensuring relevance and effectiveness, and increasing accountability” (UNAIDS, 2001a, p. 7). For example, PLWHA groups were actively involved in the design of prevention campaigns in Australia. The prevention and care messages delivered by them had a powerful impact on both HIV-infected and HIV-uninfected people. Acting as role models for other people with HIV, and as advisors to schools and community groups, PLWHAs have contributed to reducing stigma and discrimination, at the same time increasing HIV awareness (UNAIDS, 1998). Similar to Australia, the involvement of people living with HIV in health promotion programs in Uganda has greatly enhanced the acceptability and visibility of those infected. Their participation ranged from public speaking, counseling, peer support and information to advocacy. Gradually, PLWHAs have been included into government decision-making bodies. Their participation is considered essential to good policy decisions and the effective implementation of government decisions (UNAIDS, 1998).

However, a study conducted by PANOS in 2003 of the successes and failures of the global response to AIDS over the last 20 years showed that the voices of those most affected are usually excluded from AIDS decision-making and that “the voice of civil society is often unsatisfactorily represented” (PANOS, 2003, p. 45). My research findings support this conclusion. Although some journalists and media, e.g., *The Southern Weekly* in China, have

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recognised the importance of the voices of those most affected in civil society, and have included human faces and voices in their coverage, the voices of those most affected in civil society are still neglected and have not been included among the mainstream voices. Therefore, for a successful response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, there is a need to include PLWHAs and other civil society actors into the policies and programs developed and to empower them to air their views.

### **7.5.3 Further Strengthening of the Role of Media in HIV/AIDS Prevention**

Kreps and Thornton (1984) argue that media, as powerful communication tools, play an important role in storing and transmitting important and relevant health care information to health consumers. The vital role of the media in providing preventive information and knowledge of HIV/AIDS is commonly acknowledged in China (Bu & Liu, 2004; Li Li, et al., 2009). However, my findings suggest a decline in media concern due to “AIDS fatigue” affecting both media and audiences. Thus, in order to achieve maximum efficiency in future HIV prevention, media organisations need to develop sustained strategies that may further strengthen the role of media in raising awareness, promoting sustainable behaviour change, and ultimately accelerating social change. In order to achieve these goals, three aspects need to be improved.

First, to ensure keeping the topic on news agenda lists and encouraging leaders’ participation, there is a need to develop a sustainable editorial-level policy on AIDS coverage. There is some evidence to show that the more leaders are exposed to HIV/AIDS news coverage, the greater their investment in anti-AIDS strategies. This, in turn, leads to an increase in media coverage and public awareness of the issue (UNAIDS, 2004). Moreover, media need to find innovative ways of reporting HIV/AIDS. Increasing the quality of HIV/AIDS coverage in terms of range and depth, and providing locally relevant and evidence-based news stories that can be used by audience for discussion, can sustain audience interest (Cohen et al., 2010) and avoid “AIDS fatigue”.

Second, media campaigns play an important role in shaping public attitudes, i.e., the social stigma and discrimination surrounding HIV/AIDS (Hanan, 2009). There is a need to develop sustainable, long-term and multifaceted media campaigns, especially when AIDS news coverage becomes stale. Evidence shows that multifaceted campaigns are more likely to significantly impact upon public awareness than a single program (UNAIDS, 1998, 2004). Media could consider designing education campaigns using different formats including news items, documentaries, public service announcements, columns, competitions, hotlines, and websites to reinforce awareness and messages about HIV-related attitudes and behaviour (UNAIDS, 2004). Media campaigns should be well designed and have specific target audiences including HIV-infected and uninfected people. In addition, involving non-government organisations, government agencies and service providers in campaigns will not only help ensure that vital services, such as counseling and testing, treatment and care are available to those in need, but will also increase the trustworthiness of HIV/AIDS information and education (Li Li, et al., 2009).

Third, regular and sustained training of campaign producers and of journalists and editors engaged in HIV/AIDS reporting is crucial. Training should be developed to fit in with participants' career trajectories (PANOS, 2003). In addition, ethical issues regarding the standards of conduct required to be observed when reporting HIV/AIDS-related issues should be included in the training (IFJ, 2006): media should work with governments and relevant authorities and other civil society groups to create a legal and cultural framework for professional journalism, which will ensure freedom of information legislation and respect for independent journalism (IFJ, 2006).

## **7.6 Conclusion**

This thesis has examined the construction of HIV/AIDS in Chinese newspapers. Nine hundred and eighty-one news stories focusing on HIV/AIDS in six national, provincial and metropolitan newspapers, published from the 1 November to 31 December each year between 2000 and 2008 were scrutinised, and 30 in-depth interviews with journalists and editors from the six newspapers and other media were undertaken. Analyses focused on the sources of

news coverage, frames of the themes, and upon the metaphors and terms that were employed in the description of HIV/AIDS and PLWHAs and used to frame risk groups. As well, themes relevant to causation, responsibility and solutions, - usually to the fore in discourses surrounding the general HIV/AIDS pandemic in news media, along with the constraints that affected their construction, were examined.

The findings revealed that medical/scientific, prevention/education, political and socioeconomic/cultural framing dominated in the six newspapers, whereas the framing of human rights/ethics remained marginal. But progress could be noted when comparisons were drawn with the findings of the previous studies (Bu & Liu, 2004; X. Liu & Zhang, 2005; TICC, 2005). Journalists from the three party organs (*The People's Daily*, the *Henan Daily* and the *Yunnan Daily*) and the two metropolitan newspapers (the *Dahe Daily* and *The Spring City Evening*) were more likely to adopt politics-oriented, prevention/education and event-oriented framing that tended to emphasise the individual behaviour change, whereas the journalistic professionalism pursuing newspaper (*The Southern Weekly*) was more likely to use socioeconomic/cultural framing that emphasised improvement of the social structure that underpins the poverty and inequality associated with the spread of HIV/AIDS. The findings also revealed that the government voice dominated the HIV/AIDS issue in the Chinese press, leaving the voices of the PLWHAs marginalised; HIV/AIDS has been framed primarily around certain social groups' individual behaviour rather than around risky practices. The dominant public discourse surrounding HIV/AIDS in China remains morality-centred and marginalised; thus stigma, prejudice and discrimination continue to be directed towards people living with HIV and AIDS.

As Entman (1993) suggests, framing determines public attention and their evaluation of and response to an issue. Based on my findings, it is not hard to infer the degree of influence that particular forms of framing and discourses have had on Chinese audience's perceptions of HIV/AIDS. I strongly argue that Chinese news media need to reframe the HIV/AIDS issue: they need to help the public see the HIV/AIDS issue in ways that evoke a different way of thinking and facilitate solutions. Such framing should focus on HIV/AIDS health promotion and individual/collective responsibility (UNAIDS, 1998). Focus should not only be upon individual behaviour, but also upon addressing the socio-cultural and political factors that underpin the pandemic (Melkote, Muppidi, & Goswami, 2000). Such an approach should

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facilitate dialogue and debate and give expression to the voices of those most affected by HIV and other civil society actors (PANOS, 2003).

I would like to stress here that media do not live in a vacuum: their journalistic framing and discourse are influenced and limited by many factors. As my findings reveal, many constraints, both inside and outside of media organisations, affected media's construction of HIV/AIDS. Among them, government policy framing of HIV/AIDS, and government control over information and the media environment, are hugely restrictive factors. Furthermore, rivalry among media organisations has grown more intense due to the marketisation of the media. Naturally, media centre their attention on issues that are eye-catching and may prove profitable. But, this approach may result in media's intervention in HIV/AIDS gradually falling into decline. Should this occur, the government must reappraise and readjust its national communication strategies and implement them on a sustained, coherent, and long-term basis. Moreover, it is important that the government create a better communication environment for multi-sectoral response. "An open, inclusive, accountable policy environment can support the kind of dialogue and public mobilization typifying successful responses to HIV/AIDS" (PANOS, 2003, p. 49). Increasing evidence has shown that real individual and social change occurs when people become genuinely involved in discussions surrounding HIV (PANOS, 2003).

Social transformation and social change should be the ultimate goal of communication.

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# Appendix 1 Macquarie University Final Ethics Review Approval Letter



29 January 2009

Ms Xiaoguang Zhu  
Department of Media, Music and Cultural Studies  
Macquarie University

Reference: HE27FEB2009-D06271)

Dear Ms Zhu

## FINAL APPROVAL

**Title of project:** "Constructing HIV/AIDS in Chinese Newspapers: A frame Analysis"

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Ethics Review Committee (Human Research) and you may now commence your research.

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. Approval will be for a period of twelve (12) months. At the end of this period, if the project has been completed, abandoned, discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are required to submit a Final Report on the project. If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. The Final Report is available at: [http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human\\_ethics/forms](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human_ethics/forms)
2. However, at the end of the 12 month period if the project is still current you should instead submit an application for renewal of the approval if the project has run for less than five (5) years. This form is available at [http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human\\_ethics/forms](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human_ethics/forms). If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report (see Point 1 above) and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).
3. Please remember the Committee must be notified of any alteration to the project.
4. You must notify the Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
5. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University  
[http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human\\_ethics/policy](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human_ethics/policy)

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project **it is your responsibility** to provide Macquarie University's Research Grants Officer with a copy of this letter as soon as possible. The Research Grants Officer will not inform external funding agencies that you have final approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Officer has received a copy of this final approval letter.

ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE (HUMAN RESEARCH)  
LEVEL 3, RESEARCH HUB, BUILDING C5C  
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY  
NSW, 2109 AUSTRALIA

Ethics Secretariat: Ph: (02) 9850 6848 Fax: (02) 9850 4465 E-mail: [ethics.secretariat@vc.mq.edu.au](mailto:ethics.secretariat@vc.mq.edu.au)  
[http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human\\_ethics](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human_ethics)

Yours sincerely



P.P. Dr Shirley Wyver  
Acting Chair, Ethics Review Committee (Human Research)

Cc: Professor Naren Chitty, Department of Media, Music and Cultural Studies

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ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE (HUMAN RESEARCH)  
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[http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human\\_ethics](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human_ethics)



## Appendix 2 Information and Consent Form in Chinese

MACQUARIE  
UNIVERSITY



Media Music and Cultural Studies

Faculty of Arts

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109 AUSTRALIA

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### Information and Consent Form in Chinese

#### 知情同意书

项目名称：中国报纸艾滋病建构的框架分析

我们将邀请您参加一项有关艾滋病的媒介干预研究。本研究的目的在于探究中国报纸对于艾滋病议题的报道方式。

本研究由澳大利亚麦考瑞大学艺术学院媒介、音乐及文化研究系的博士生朱晓光担任主要调查人，其电子邮箱为：xiaoguang.zhu1@students.mq.edu.cn 联系电话：+61 422647345。本研究是应麦考瑞大学博士学位授予的要求而做。本研究将在澳大利亚麦考瑞大学艺术学院媒介、音乐及文化研究系的教授内忍·奇蒂，其电子邮箱：naren.chitty@mq.edu.au 联系电话：+61 (2) 9850 8725，以及中国社科院新闻研究所教授卜卫，其电子邮箱：buwei@public3.bta.net.cn，联系电话：+86-10-65940575 的共同指导下完成。

如果您决定参与此项研究，您将在采访中回答一些开放式的关于您如何报道艾滋病议题的问题。整个采访时间最长不超过一个半小时，采访地点设在我们双方一致认可的地方。除非您反对，我将对整个采访进行录音。采访后，我会及时把根据采访录音整理成的文字送给您审阅。采访中不会有危险或不适。本次采访不付报酬。

本研究过程中的所有采访信息及个人信息都将是保密的。除非有您的授权（请看以下签名上方的说明），我们将不会在任何研究成果的公布中暴露您参与本研究的情况。只有主调查人朱晓光，主导师内忍·奇蒂，以及副导师卜卫有权接近采访信息。本研究的数据将在不暴露参与者身份识别信息的情况下提供给其他研究人员使用。本研究的成果将在学术会议及专业杂志上发表。另外，本研究成果的摘要将存放在清华大学新闻与传播学院国际传播中心，以备参与者索取之须。

如果您参与本次采访需要得到贵工作机构的允许，请在采访前务必获得批准。如果需要，我会为您提供有关本次采访的详细信息。

3

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如果您决定参与此项研究，在整个研究中您可以随时退出而无需任何理由或担心有什么不良后果。您将保留一份知情同意书的副本。如果您对本研究涉及研究伦理方面的问题有什么质疑，请与清华大学新闻与传播学院国际传播中心研究助理相德宝先生联系。联系邮箱：  
xiangdebao@gmail.com

我(参与者姓名)已经通读并完全理解以上内容及问题，我所质疑的问题均得到满意的答复，我同意参与本研究，并清楚在任何情况下我均可以退出本研究，并不承担任何后果。我将保留一份知情同意书的副本。

- 1) 我同意/不同意在该研究的论文及其它任何出版刊物中被识别出接受了本研究的采访。
- 2) 我同意/不同意在该研究的论文及其它任何出版刊物中有我的言论出现时被特别指出与我有关。
- 3) 我同意/不同意在该研究的论文及其它任何出版刊物中被暴露身份。
- 4) 我同意/不同意在该研究的采访中录音

参与者姓名：

(印刷体)

参与者签名：

调查人姓名：朱晓光

(印刷体)

调查人签名：

本研究的有关研究伦理问题已经得到澳大利亚麦考瑞大学研究伦理评估委员会(人类研究)的批准。假如您对本研究中所涉及研究伦理的任何问题感到不满或有所保留，请通过研究伦理评估委员会的秘书与该委员会联系(联系电话：+61 (2) 9850 7854；电子邮箱：ethics@mq.edu.au)。我们会保守您投诉的秘密，并对您提出的问题进行调查，以及及时告知您处理结果。

## Appendix 3 Information and Consent Form in English

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### Information and Consent Form in English

Name of Project: Constructing HIV/AIDS in Chinese Newspapers: A Frame Analysis

You are invited to participate in a study of *the Media Intervention in HIV/AIDS*. The purpose of the study is to *explore the manner in which the Chinese newspapers make sense of the HIV/AIDS issue*.

The study is being conducted by Xiaoguang Zhu as the Chief Investigator, Ph. D candidate from the Department of International Communication at Macquarie University, Email: [xiaoguang.zhu1@students.mq.edu.au](mailto:xiaoguang.zhu1@students.mq.edu.au), Mobile: +61 , NSW 2109, Australia. The research is 'being conducted to meet the requirement for the degree of Ph. D under the supervision of Professor Naren Chitty from the Department of International Communication at Macquarie University, Email: [Naren.Chitty@scmp.mq.edu.au](mailto:Naren.Chitty@scmp.mq.edu.au), Tel: +61 (02) 9850 8725, NSW 2109, Australia', and Professor Wei Bu from the Institute of Journalism and Communication, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Email: [buwei@public3.bta.net.cn](mailto:buwei@public3.bta.net.cn), Tel: +86--10--65940575, Beijing, 100026, P.R. China.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to answer some open-ended questions that take nearly one and a half hour. The interview will be involved with your ideas of Chinese journalists' coverage on HIV/AIDS issue. Unless you disagree, I will record the interview with audiotape or digital audio recorder. There will be no risks and discomforts. There will be no payment of money or other remuneration.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential. No individual will be identified in any publication of the results unless specific authorisation is provided (see below above the signature line). Only the principle investigator Xiaoguang Zhu, the Professor Naren Chitty as the principle supervisor and the Professor Wei Bu as the adjunct supervisor will have the access to the data. The results of the study will be published on the SCMP Division HDR research network website that is under construction, at conference and in journal articles.

If it is required that I seek approval from your organization before conducting an interview, please indicate who I should write to in this regard:

Name:

Title:

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*Organization:*

*Email address:*

If you decide to participate, *you are free to withdraw* from further participation in the research at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence. And if you *have any ethics concerns* about this research, please contact the Centre for International Communication Studies, the School of Journalism and Communication, Tsinghua University.  
E-mail: [tsjc@tsinghua.edu.cn](mailto:tsjc@tsinghua.edu.cn)

I, (participant's name) have read and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

- 1) 'I consent/do not consent to be identified as having been interviewed for this research project, in the thesis and any associated publication';
- 2) 'I consent/do not consent to my statements during the interview for this research project to be associated specifically with me in the thesis and any associated publication'.
- 3) I consent/do not consent to being identified in the thesis and any associated publication'.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(block letters)

Participant's  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature:

Investigator's Name: XIAOGUANG ZHU  
(block letters)

Investigator's  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature:

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research). If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Ethics Review Committee through its Secretary (telephone +61 (02) 9850 7854; email [ethics@mq.edu.au](mailto:ethics@mq.edu.au)). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

[www.mq.edu.au](http://www.mq.edu.au)



## Appendix 4 In-depth Interview Questions

### 1. 记者采访提纲

- (1) 你为什么报道艾滋病问题？你的报道动机是什么？您觉得报道艾滋病问题重要吗？为什么？
- (2) 您个人如何看待艾滋病？作为一个媒介从业人员，您从社会、经济和政治的角度又是怎样看待艾滋病问题的？您怎么会有这样的看法？
- (3) 如果您不得不对一个不了解艾滋病的人解释艾滋病，您会怎么解释呢？在您想到艾滋病的时候，您的头脑中有没有什么固定形象或图像出现？
- (4) 有关艾滋病话题，您通常采访报道什么样的内容？您的信源从哪里来？对于艾滋病问题您最关注的是什么？
- (5) 你们报社选择新闻，特别是有关艾滋病问题新闻的标准是什么？
- (6) 您在报道艾滋病问题时有没有感到任何压力？如果有的话，是什么压力？这些压力来自哪里？
- (7) 您觉得您所报道的艾滋病问题会有什么社会影响？您怎样看待这些影响？
- (8) 您认为我们中国记者现在的艾滋病报道有没有存在什么问题？如果有的话，是什么问题？您对今后的艾滋病报道有什么建议？
- (9) 为了更好地报道艾滋病，您觉得还需要什么支持？

The top 9 interview questions for journalist participants are listed below for general reference:

- (1) Why do you report HIV/AIDS issues? What is your motivation? Is it important to report on HIV/AIDS? Why?
- (2) How do you think personally about HIV/AIDS? And, as a professional media worker, how do you think about HIV/AIDS in social, economic and political terms? How have you reached that opinion?
- (3) If you had to explain HIV/AIDS to someone who has no knowledge of the disease, how would you explain it? Are there any images or pictures that come to mind when you think about associated issues?
- (4) What kind of news stories related to HIV/AIDS do you usually cover? Where do your sources come from? What is your main concern regarding HIV/AIDS?
- (5) What criteria do you apply when selecting news for your news organisation, especially news related to HIV/AIDS?
- (6) Do you feel any pressure when reporting on HIV/AIDS? If so, what form of pressure? Where does it come from?
- (7) How do you think about the social impact of your coverage of HIV/AIDS?
- (8) Do you think that Chinese journalists currently have to contend with problems when covering HIV/AIDS and, if so, what kinds of problems? What are your suggestions for the further reporting of HIV/AIDS?
- (9) What kind of support – if any - do you need when reporting on HIV/AIDS?

## 2. 编辑及发稿人员采访提纲

- (1) 在编发记者的有关艾滋病报道的稿件时，贵报的标准是什么？
- (2) 对于艾滋病问题，贵报认为最有新闻价值的话题或主题是什么？
- (3) 当你们编发艾滋病报道时有没有参考其它媒体的报道？如果有的话，是什么媒体？为什么？
- (4) 您个人如何看待艾滋病问题？作为一个媒介从业人员，您从社会、经济和政治的角度又是怎样看待艾滋病问题的？你怎么会有这样的看法？
- (5) 您认为一个好的艾滋病报道应该是什么样的？
- (6) 您通常最期待您的记者发回什么样的艾滋病报道？
- (7) 您的报社在报道艾滋病时有没有什么压力？
- (8) 在您看来，我们的艾滋病报道有什么需要改进的地方？
- (9) 在您看来，在预防艾滋病工作中，媒介应该承担什么样的责任？

The top 9 questions compiled for editor participants, i.e., for those in charge of distributing news dispatches in the newsrooms, are listed below for general reference:

- (1) What criteria do you use to support and assess your colleagues' coverage of HIV/AIDS?
- (2) What topics or themes surrounding HIV/AIDS are considered most newsworthy by your organisation?
- (3) Do you refer to any media coverage of HIV/AIDS as reference when you are in the newsroom? If so, to which? And why?
- (4) How do you personally think about HIV/AIDS? And how, as a professional media worker, do you think about HIV/AIDS in social, economic and political terms?
- (5) What form do you think good coverage of HIV/AIDS should take?
- (6) What kinds of topics or themes do you expect from your colleagues' coverage of HIV/AIDS?
- (7) Does your news organisation experience any pressure when reporting on HIV/AIDS?
- (8) From your point of view, what needs to be improved in the coverage of HIV/AIDS?
- (9) From your point of view, what role should the media play in the prevention of HIV/AIDS?