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Sourcing of HIV/AIDS treatment news: A case study of selected South African print media

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The media's role in the covering of HIV/AIDS issues is more than vital. Consequently, the manner with which the media choose to cover and frame the whole issue, largely determines the eventual impact and management of the epidemic in the world as a whole. In general press coverage and analysis plays an important role in developing public understanding of key elements of the epidemic and hence proper information and reporting on HIV and AIDS is of paramount importance.

In South Africa over the past decade there has been a substantial amount of coverage of the HIV/AIDS issues by the print media although various criticisms have emerged out of this coverage. The news media have among other things been blamed for reporting reactively instead of being proactive by developing specialist HIV/AIDS desks focused on seeking out the untold facts and stories that official and commercial sources filter out of their press releases. The print media today operate within a very different political and social context as compared to that of the apartheid era. Noteworthy is also the fact that reporters in the corporate media sector are under considerable pressure as a result of profit-driven (i.e. cost-effective, or low cost) story-production. Individual journalists who desire to, and are capable of, producing informed and well-researched features on HIV/AIDS issues often have to rely on agency sources because their workload does not afford them time to carry out the necessary research. More often than not these sources will be picked according to their 'expertise' and 'knowledge' on the topic. Hence, they will presumably be government and expert sources as opposed to non-expert and activist sources.

Therefore, the purpose of this research report is to analyse the sources that are used in the coverage of HIV/AIDS treatment news and to ascertain whether there is indeed a dominant use of these state or government and expert sources as opposed to non-expert and activist sources and then to eventually determine if there may be a growing use of these alternative or non-official sources in the coverage of these issues in the selected South African newspapers. This analysis will include a study of the role of sources in the construction of the news, a focus on how sources of information make use of media organisations and a look at how social institutions seek to define and manage the flow of information.

This research report aims to answer this key question:

- Could there be a growing use of non-official sources (non-expert and activist sources) in the South African press where HIV/AIDS treatment news is concerned and why is this happening?

It also seeks to answer the following questions:

- What is the range of sources being used and which ones dominate?
- What importance and value do these sources bring into a story?
- What are the ways in which the non-expert and activist sources can mobilise their material and symbolic resources to secure some media opportunities?

The period of June 2003-November 2003 has been selected as an appropriate time – span of the study because it was in August 2003 that the government announced that they were going to implement an Antiretroviral (ARV) treatment programme. Therefore it would be interesting to use articles that were written two months before the government made this announcement because various people had a lot to say about the rollout of the ARVs. The government also said that they were going to develop an operational plan on ARV treatment by the end of September 2003 but once again it was delayed and later announced in November of 2003. During this period there was extensive reporting on the rollout of ARVs and generally around ARV treatment issues.

However, his study focuses on general ARVs and not nevirapine because general ARV's deal with treatment while nevirapine deals with the prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT). Nevirapine is a drug taken to prevent the transmission of the HIV virus from mother to child. This study selectively looks at particular and relevant articles on HIV/AIDS treatment news with the key intention of analysing the sources used. At the same time, the study looks at the rollout of ARVs because it has been widely reported on in the South African press.

This report is divided into several chapters. Chapter 1 gives the rationale of the study. Chapter 2 explores the broader theoretical framework which is the foundation of the

study with a review of the existing literature on sources, source strategies, the role of sources in the construction of news, media organisations and their use of sources, how social institutions seek to define and manage the flow of information and finally how sources have used their resources to secure media opportunities. Chapter 3 discusses the research methods used to establish the dominant sources used in the articles gathered as well as to determine the reason for such domination and an explanation of the value a particular source may bring to a story or article. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study in detail, that is the sources used from the articles analysed and the data gathered from the interviews. Chapter 5 uses the theoretical framework of the study discussed in chapter 2, to analyse the results of the findings. Chapter 6 provides a broad conclusion and answer to the overall question.

1.1 Rationale

The knowledge of source profiles and the diversity of sources used in news makes a great contribution in the broader understanding of the media and in understanding the role of the media in society. By understanding the types of sources that are used in writing news stories, why they are used and the consequences of using these particular sources, the media is able to make an informed choice of their source profiles as opposed to following a particular norm. The matter of how the media select and use sources has been a growing focus of content analysis research in the last decade. Theorists argue that journalists view certain sources as more legitimate, thereby allowing those sources to pre-empt media access and dominate the news in a public debate. Most research demonstrates that sources used in the news tend to come from institutional, elite, or official spheres of life. Institutional sources for example, receive privileged access to media and become the 'primary definers' (see page 10 for definition) of news agendas by virtue of their power, representativeness, and expertise (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke &Roberts, 1978: 58). Journalists tend to assume that certain sources are entitled to know certain things by virtue of their social structural position and routinely rely on these authoritative sources, as it is the most efficient way of gathering news (Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Sigal, 1973; Tiffen, 1989).

According to Wittebol's study (1995) the media's reliance on official sources is reflected in various studies of international news, which collectively indicate that news sources generally represent institutional or establishment interests (Brown, Bybee, Wearden, & Straughan, 1987). Furthermore, Wittebol notes there is a selection bias from within this group, which gravitates toward the more politically conservative institutions and influential interest groups (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Hoynes & Croteau, 1989; Soley, 1989). These same kinds of sources bring a narrow, official Western interpretation to (for example) international events; a broader, world perspective is lacking in how media report international stories (Page, Shapiro, & Dempsey, 1987).

Generally speaking, as has been noted in the subsequent paragraph, in news stories official sources and experts tend to be used more frequently. Nevertheless, studies of media-source interaction offer alternative perspectives (Davies, 2000a;Miller, 1994;Miller and Williams, 1993). They argued that some sources may play a key role regularly in the news output; however, they still must engage in strategic actions to achieve access even though their status as legitimate authorities is already accepted (Schlessinger & Tumber). In the meantime, alternative sources with limited resources – whether material or symbolic – also can make a significant impact by for example, adopting effective PR strategies. It is therefore possible that non-expert sources, alternative sources and activists can become the dominant sources. In circumstances where for example, non-governmental organisations or their spokespeople are used as key sources and very frequently, non-official sources or alternative sources could be considered the dominant sources. Also in circumstances where NGOs or activist organisations are constantly driving at an issue, they can position themselves in such a way that they become key sources.

Miller and Williams (1998) contend that because of the complexities surrounding HIV/AIDS, journalists require a wide array of sources to provide quotes, background information, explanations of complex aspects or technical details, useful suggestions and leads, new findings or other news, and even contact with other sources. In other words, the news media have to negotiate an information milieu of competing interpretations and accounts to make sense of conflicting

information about HIV/AIDS. With the various interpretations of the AIDS issue, it is very difficult for journalists who are constantly looking for sources who can add credibility to their stories, to decide which source's interpretation to believe and therefore publish.

Shepperson (2000: 12) in his study *HIV/AIDS Reporting in South Africa: an analysis of the response of the press*, has noted that in the past, reporting on HIV/AIDS has principally been sourced from press releases, press conferences and wire services. He states, "The number of reports generated from newspapers' own inquiry and based on primary information sought out independently of official sources, falls far below the number generated on the initiative of instances outside the news room."

Shepperson (2000:16) has further noted that there has been a strong reliance on official sources in government and in commerce and industry for newsworthy stories. He argues that, "Based on the review of sources of information, the non-governmental and community-based sectors are under-represented in terms of their value as sources." In Shepperson's study a sample of 25% of the reviewed articles (255) served as a basis for analysis by predominant source of information. This analysis reveals that national government is by far the most prominent source of information, with a quarter (25%) of all articles sourced in this way, and government (including provincial, and local) making up almost a third (30%) of the sources of articles. In contrast, national NGOs served as sources for only 7% of articles, and with provincial/local NGOs included the total was 11%. These articles were on HIV/AIDS issues in general and not solely the treatment issue.

However, since the publishing of Shepperson's study, the situation may have changed and perhaps there is an increased use of non-official sources in particular areas of the reporting of HIV/AIDS news. In South Africa, NGOs and activist groups like the TAC (Treatment Action Campaign) have over recent years become a common source of HIV/AIDS news. According to an opinion piece in *The Star* by Evelio Contreras on June 24, 2003, "Though there are other reasons for the TAC's prominence in the news, many journalists believe that the TAC's success is in large part, a result of the government's inability to communicate with the media on matters relating to AIDS." At the same time the use of an official source such as the Health Minister, Manto

Tshabalala-Msimang or the Health department in an unfavourable manner raises questions of the value of her continued use by the media as a key source. Is it possible that a source can be used dominantly and yet bring little value to a story? This study also hopes to determine whether the case of HIV/AIDS treatment may be indicating a growing use of non-official sources in the media.

"Studies of relationships between the media and the sources insist on the contest between sources and in particular the vital role of official sources: powerful institutions with greater financial, cultural and institutional capital," (Miller and Williams, 1998:127). It is important to ask whether non-official sources too can play a vital role in the sourcing of HIV/AIDS treatment news.

In a study in Britain, the "failure of the Health Education Authority (HEA) to make itself the leading source of AIDS information, illustrates some of the potential problems for official sources in trying to manage the media" (Miller and Williams, 1998: 142). According to Miller and Williams (1998) among the reasons that led to such a failure were a distrust of the media by health educators and as Holmes (1985) has noted, - they regard the media as 'untrustworthy' and as 'sources of conflict and misinformation - the HEA's relationship with the Department of Health (DoH)[1] and the low status of health education in the eyes of the mass media[2]. The example of AIDS indicates that official sources have considerable advantage because of their capacity and resources to influence media accounts. However, these advantages do not necessarily result in success, as the example of HEA indicates. Conversely, a lack of resources does not mean that sources are always excluded from the media. Alternative and oppositional groups can and do gain coverage and even access to the news and the case of AIDS shows how this happened with the Terrence Higgins Trust (THT)[3]. This example of the THT may seem more similar to that of the TAC (an

[1] News releases by the HEA had to be checked by administrative civil servants and clearance was often delayed and this discouraged the HEA from issuing statements. The lack of quotable material and the restrictions placed on the HEA by the DoH made it difficult for the HEA press office to establish effective relations with journalists who despaired of what they saw as the authority's 'fence sitting' (Miller and Williams, 1998: 141-42).

[2] Health educators are near the bottom of the journalists' 'hierarchy of credibility'. Doctors and scientists have much greater authority and therefore credibility for journalists (Miller and Williams, 1998: 142).

[3] Part of the THT's success can be explained by reference to its media friendly approach and the strategies it used to try and manage the media. The trust was also very useful for journalists anxious to

AIDS activist NGO in South Africa), which has for some time now seemed to feature prominently as a news source for HIV/AIDS issues. Hence the rationale of this study lies in seeking to show that an alternative source can seize an opportunity to establish itself as a key source despite its under-rated position as a non-official source.

balance a story on government policy or respond to the latest statement or activity of moral right. Such opportunities while not necessarily in the interests of the Trust did enable it to become a regularly used source of information (Miller and Williams, 1998: 142).

Chapter 2 Literature review and Theoretical framework

A literature review of sources in news and strategies used by sources as well as media and social institutions is vital in trying to analyse the sources used in the press coverage of HIV/AIDS treatment news in South Africa. The chapter is divided into six parts. Part one analyses the role of sources in the construction of news in a broad context. Part two and three generally define official sources and non-official or alternative sources respectively. Part four explains why official/elite sources have tended to dominate in the past and finally part five evaluates strategies used by source organisations and social institutions to define and manage the flow of information.

2.1 The role of sources in the construction of news

Although numerous studies have been conducted on news production, it is only recently that studies have focused on the role of sources in the construction of the news. The relationship has been under-conceptualised as organisational approaches "largely, although not exclusively, focused on how media organisations, especially those producing news, have made use of sources of information," (Schlesinger, 1990: 62).

As Schudson (2003: 134) states, "Sources are the deep dark secret of the power of the press. Much of this power is exercised not by news institutions themselves but by the sources that feed them information." Sources are the informants or where news originates and they often influence and shape the news. A range of sources, which may refer to location in society, expertise and knowledge, gender, class, race and ethnicity, often means a good news product. Ward (1995) points out that sources are central to news production, because reporters never witness most events. Instead they depend on others telling them what has happened. In this case, reporters must cultivate sources to obtain their information. The relationship between sources of information and the news media has been described as a 'dance' in which the sources take the lead (Gans, 1981). Furthermore the media may be used for information or intelligence gathering by sources. Nevertheless, sources also recognise that the news media are powerful.

According to political scientist Leon Sigal (1986: 25), "news is not what happens, but what someone says has happened or will happen." From such an analysis, one role of a source is the construction of news at the very basic level because the information divulged by a source makes the news or the story. In addition if news is a product of transactions between journalists and their sources then this confirms their role as producers of news (Ericson et al., 1989). "Studies of the media that see the process of news production beginning in the newsroom rather than in the halls of power have been criticised as 'too media centric' and rightly so," (Schlesinger, 1990: 61-83) Schudson (2003) has critically noted that very few studies have looked at the whole development of a news story, starting with the news source rather than the news reporter. And this is evident from the scarcity in literature on news sources in particular.

Schlesinger (1990) in one of his works[4] focuses on how the role of sources is conceptualised by means of the concept of 'primary definers', one widely employed in a spirit of uncritical emulation, with little attention being paid to its deep flaws. Hall et al.'s (1978) analysis offers a very clear instance of the way in which adherence to a theory of dominance may entail some crucial blind spots. In *Policing the Crisis* (Hall et al., 1978) the social role of the media is integral to a theory of ideological power, which draws upon a Gramscian conception of the struggle for hegemony between dominant and subordinate classes in capitalist societies. According to Hall et al. (1978: 59; with Schlesingers' emphases -1990: 65):

> It is this structured relationship – between the media and its "powerful" sources – which begins to open up the neglected question of the ideological role of the media. It is this, which begins to give substance and specificity to Marx's basic proposition that "the ruling ideas of any age are the ideas of its ruling class".

Hall et al. (1978: 58), argue that media accounts are grounded in '"objective" and "authoritative" statements from "accredited" sources'. These sources are the

[4] 'Rethinking the Sociology of Journalism: Source Strategies and the Limits of Media-Centrism' pp 65 in Public Communications: The New Imperatives: Future Directions for Media Research, (Ed. Fergusson, 1990)

representatives of major social institutions, which are 'accredited'. The argument, then, is that media give access to those who enjoy 'accreditation'. This is a resource limited to certain social groups, which enjoy a special status as sources in virtue of their institutional power, representative standing or claims to expert knowledge. As a consequence of what they conceive as professional practices of ascertaining source credibility, the media are structurally biased towards very powerful and privileged sources that become 'over-accessed'.

2.2 Official sources ('accredited' sources)

Official sources are considered to be the 'powerful' and these, according to Hall and his colleagues (1978) are the 'various institutions of the state, the leaders and senior figures within the main political parties, the institutions of law and security, and also the established interest groups close to government' (Manning, 2001). These 'accredited' sources are the representatives of major social institutions, which are 'accredited'. Journalists are very likely to take the frameworks for understanding events offered by such institutions as a starting point for their reports because of their institutional power and position and therefore they are newsworthy, but also because of their 'representative status': either they represent 'the people' (MPs, Ministers, etc.) or organised interest groups and strategically important sections of society (trade unions, industry, the City, etc) which makes them enjoy a kind of legitimacy in the eyes of journalists by virtue of their status. One final 'accredited source' is the 'expert': his calling - the 'disinterested' pursuit of knowledge - not his position or representativeness, confers on his statements 'objectivity' and 'authority' (Hall et al., 1978: 58).

While being informed by the theory of dominance in which Hall and his colleagues in the book *Policing the Crisis* (1978) first articulated the concept of primary definition, this study will also attempt to build on the works of the critics of this concept. In this concept - primary definition - Hall et al., (1978) argue that the media is 'structurally biased' to official sources. The 'result of this structured preference given in the media to the opinions of the powerful is that these spokesmen become what we call the primary definers of topics' and they 'establish the initial definition or primary interpretation of the topic in question' (Hall et al., 1978: 58). The media thus tend faithfully and impartially, to reproduce symbolically the existing structure of power in

society's institutional order[5]. Hall implies that if the official sources are the 'primary definers of topics' then the non-official sources are the 'secondary definers of topics.' Manning states, 'It is not suggested in *Policing the Crisis* that other possible sources, including those who might contest the primary definitions of the powerful, will be barred from any access to news agendas but that their views or interpretations will be regarded as secondary definitions,' (2001: 15)

Pluralists and Marxists have both come to see official sources as dominating the news agenda. Preference is given to the opinions of those in authority as 'news privileges the privileged' (Ward, 1995: 114). Both approaches stress the power of official sources comes from their ability to exploit the organisational routines of the news media. This is complemented by the lack of financial and cultural resources at the disposal of non-official sources. The 'resource poor' face almost insurmountable hurdles in gaining access to the news (Goldenberg, 1975).

As Ericson et al. (1989: 377) put it, "News represents who are the authorised knowers and what are their authorised versions of reality." At the same time Schudson (2003) has further claimed that most of the authorised knowers are government officials. The fact that news institutions are under a constant constraint of time and money and the regularity of news publication means that the news institutions require a readily available and reliable flow of information. In turn, government agencies and politicians eager to satisfy the desires of the news institutions, make information available on a regular basis in a form that the media perceive as easily digestible. As a matter of fact, a Brazilian editor once said,

> All of us have been educated professionally according to the idea that the government is the main source of information, that everything that happens with it is important…That's the journalistic law of the least effort. It's faster and easier to practice journalism based in the world of government than putting emphasis on what's happening in society (Waisbord, 2000: 95).

[5] This is what Becker has called the 'hierarchy of credibility' – the likelihood that those in powerful or high status positions who offer opinions about controversial topics will have their definitions accepted because such spokesmen are understood to have access to more accurate or specialized information on particular topics than the majority of the population. The result of this structured preference is that these 'spokesmen' become what we call the primary definers of topics (Hall et al., 1978:58).

Schudson (2003) claims that among government sources, routine government sources matter most. This otherwise put means that most news comes to the news media through ordinary, scheduled, government-initiated events such as press releases, public speeches, public legislative hearings or deliberations, press conferences and background briefings for the press.

2.5 Non-official ('alternative') sources

Generally, non-official sources are considered to be the marginal groups (politically subordinate or alternative groups), which are in most cases activist groups and non-governmental organisations. However, Schlesinger (1990) and Ericson et al., (1989), have noted that the relative advantages or disadvantages faced by non-official sources and their differing media strategies has remain a neglected theme in media research because research approaches tend to suffer from a 'media-centrism' which has placed journalists and news organisations, rather than their sources in the forefront of the investigation. Manning (2001) notes that for example both Shell and Greenpeace are formally unattached to government and are in this respect both non-official sources, yet a 'theory of dominance' might suggest that the experience of each as a potential news source might be quite different because they have both seemed to garner quite some attention from the media as sources. It must therefore be noted that there can be no definite divide between official and non-official sources and their status is and can be dynamic. A formally alternative source can over time transform into an official source by virtue of the strategies it employs to get itself used frequently as a source and ultimately become a primary definer of the news agenda.

According to a graphical summary[6] of the theoretical framework employed to explore the diversity of positions in which non-official news sources find themselves, a continuum between 'insiders and the most politically marginalized' suggests two points:

> First, that there is not a simple dichotomous division between the powerful and the powerless but rather a variety of positions for non-official sources along the continuum, determined by their command over the resources and opportunities identified. Second, that the politics of news sources is dynamic -

[6] fig. 6.1(Manning, 2001: 150-51)

> the positions of particular non-official sources may change over time. As their command over the resources and opportunities identified grows or diminishes, so their position on the continuum between the more powerful and the politically marginalized will change (Manning, 2001: 152).

But the situation according to this summary is not that simple. Therefore politically marginal news sources or the alternative sources may work very hard at trying to improve their position through effective strategies and the skillful mobilisation of their resources but their success at being more powerful may be limited and their power of being in a better position not that effective. Yet according to Manning (2001), powerful non-official news sources, by virtue of their position in relation to ideological structures and political economic forces are far more (although never entirely) secure. Might this be the case with organisations and individuals working on treatment issues such as the South African AIDS activist group, Treatment Action Campaign (TAC)?

In Schlesinger's (1990) view, it might be erroneously supposed that posing questions about non-official sources somehow runs counter to a notion of dominance in the exercise of media power, that it implies adherence to a pluralist conception of social organisation. This could only be defensible on the most simplistic understanding of the debate about dominance versus pluralism in the media. Certainly, it is classical pluralists such as Gans (1979) and Blumler and Gurevitch (1977, 1986b) who have evinced curiosity along these lines, but there is no reason at all why such questions should not be posed from within a theory of dominance with the beneficial effect of making such theories broader in a clarifying capacity.

2.4 The dominance of official/elite sources

The emphasis on how official or elite sources dominate has been the focus of a number of studies, particularly in the area of politics, which explore how these sources have developed their ability and capacity to manage the news. News organisations are constrained by limitations of time and resources, and both of these are controlled by the requirement of deadlines for putting out a news product on a daily basis. Schudson (2003) notes that the regularity of news publication means news organisations have a craving for a readily available, reliable flow of information.

Studies of the sociology of news tend to view news making as a reality-constructing activity governed by elites. According to Sociologist Mark Fishman (1980: 51) who conducted a participant-observation study at a mid-sized California newspaper, he found that journalists are highly attuned to bureaucratic organisations of government and that "the world is bureaucratically organised for journalists". In other words, the nature of newsgathering was such that reporters get the largest share of their news from official government agencies. Fishman (1980: 51) further claims that "the journalist's view of the society as bureaucratically structured is the very basis upon which the journalist is able to detect events." One of the great advantages for the journalist in dealing with bureaucracies is that "…the bureaucracies cater to the reporter's occupational imperative by providing a reliable and steady supply of the raw materials for news production," (Schudson, 2003:150).

One study after another produces essentially the same observation: whether at the national or local level, journalism, on a day-to-day basis, is the story of the interaction of reporters and government officials, both politicians and bureaucrats. Media scholar Stephen Hess (1984) claims that most analysts claim officials have the upper hand while some media critics, including many government officials, say reporters do. But there is little doubt that the center of news generation is the link between reporter and official[7]. Official sources acquire status not only through spending money on the provision of 'information subsidies' (Gandy, 1982) but also through the accumulation of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1985). With their resources, power and capital, official sources are the 'primary definers' of the news agenda while the media are the 'secondary definers'. Hess (1984) confirms in his study of Washington correspondents: he found that reporters use no documents apart from press releases in the preparation of three quarters of their stories. What journalists do is to talk to people. This is what columnists Joseph and Stewart Alsop (1958) urged them to do half a century ago when they recommended that reporters live by the rule of the feet-which in Washington terms means that a reporter should try to see-not telephone-at least four officials or politicians every working day. This again demonstrates the

[7] Richard Ericson and his colleagues suggest that the view that sources dominate is a reporters view, and that sociologists have inadvertently adopted it by having chosen to interview reporters. If they would interview sources as well as Ericson did in his study, they would see the matter as one of negotiated meanings rather than of source domination. See Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1989) pp. 24

importance placed on officials as sources even back then. Not only are reporters and their organisations reliant on official sources for their information, these sources also provide the frames and themes the media use to interpret the news (Hall et al., 1978; Paletz and Entman, 1981). In other words the media's structural relationship with the elite is such that they depend on them also as a result of their developed and well-resourced media strategies that ensure that they remain an authority as far as sources are concerned.

According to Hall et al., (1978) the result of the structured preference given in the media to the opinions of the powerful is that these 'spokesmen' become the primary definers of topics, which permits the institutional definers to establish the initial definition or primary interpretation of the topic in question. This interpretation then 'commands the field' in all successive treatment and sets the terms of reference within which all further coverage of debate takes place. Arguments against a primary interpretation are required to insert themselves into its definition of 'what is at issue' – they must begin from this framework of interpretation as their starting point.

From this argument, it can be claimed that the structure of access necessarily secures strategic advantages for 'primary definers', not just initially but also subsequently for as long as a debate or controversy lasts. It also asserts that counter-definitions can never dislodge the primary definition, which consistently dominates. But official sources do not always succeed in setting the news agenda and although it has been shown that 'resource poor groups' face many problems in gaining news coverage (Goldenberg, 1976), compromises and accommodations can be made for such groups to gain access to the news media (Gitlin, 1980). Primary definition is then temporal and ideological. Williams (2003) also explains that Schlesinger views the model as deterministic and static, though he does accept that journalistic routines are generally organized so as to promote the interests of the powerful. Moreover, he proposes a less rigid theory of domination that does not accept the triumph of official sources as an inevitable, pre-determined outcome but something to be struggled over and which in certain circumstances can fail. This analytic focus on the possible dominance of non-official sources enables another contribution to the work of Schlesinger (1990), who argues that non-official sources should not be underestimated in terms of their power.

2.5 Source strategies for managing the flow of information

Once one begins to scrutinise the tactics and strategies pursued by sources seeking media attention, to ask about their perceptions of other opposing actors in the fields over which they are trying to exert influence, to enquire about the financial resources at their disposal and the organisational contexts in which they function, to ask about their goals and ideas of effectiveness, one speedily discovers how oblivious they can be about such matters – and this despite the undoubted importance of the contribution that production studies have made to the field (Schlesinger, 1990). Schlesinger (1990) claims that one reason for this is that media sociology has largely, although certainly not exclusively, focused on how media organisations, especially those producing news, have made use of sources of information (a term which one is well advised to define broadly, so as to include, for instance, disinformation and 'economies of the truth'). Thus media sociology has been far too media-centric.

Schlesinger (1990) argues Hall's original definition underestimates the extent to which definitions are contested and negotiated. There is an emerging literature on the news media strategies employed by groups and organisations seeking to contest the way in which issues and events are defined through news media coverage in areas such as health, sexuality, environmentalism and labour relations (Anderson, 1997; Manning, 1998; Miller and Williams, 1998) The strategies employed by particular subordinate or politically marginal groups to gain access to the news agenda setting process have been charted and relationships of exchange or negotiation described in detail. The evidence suggests then that it is possible in certain circumstances to contest or resist definitions offered by the powerful and to exert power in a counter direction.

Miller and Williams (1998) note that a range of interactions between the media and social institutions are reflected in the strategies deployed to influence the media. They further note that the main contact between sources of information and journalists is on the phone. The authors have also noted that:

> Press conferences, launches and briefings are still very popular. Off-the-record-briefings, quotes or information may be used by any source but it is government

> sources who are best able to use them to strategic advantage. They have access to more information and, crucially, are the locus of decision-making. For resource-poor groups and activist organisations, lobbying is either a luxury they can ill afford or is eschewed for ideological reasons. For example in the UK, lesbian and gay pressure group, Stonewall 'opts for discreet lobbying, a measured assimilationist approach concentrated on the corridors of political power', while OutRage! 'likes to take to the streets' to organise "kiss-ins" and "queer weddings" and events tinged with humour that belie serious intent. It organizes marches and vigils and demos at which it carries banners and blows whistles (Miller et al., 1998:133).

According to Garfield (1991) it gets its name into the newspapers. OutRage! according to Miller et al. (1998) has been the most sophisticated activist group in the UK because from the beginning they have aimed to orchestrate lesbian and gay activism to maximum effect by targeting the media. This has gone far in showing that the use of the media by sources can make their strategies more effective.

Miller et al., (1998) note that charities cannot afford to pay for glitzy launches or even be sure of attracting more than a handful of journalists to their press conferences. Nevertheless, in recent years, publicity and the cultivation of both formal and informal contacts with the media have been seen as increasingly important and organisations of all kinds have allocated more and more time and money specifically to media relations activities. This has resulted in source organisations investing more in media training for its employees or members.

According to Miller and Williams (in Eldridge, 1993) the process of media production is a field of contest and negotiation in which official sources cannot always take it for granted that they will be able to set the agenda. This is why powerful organisations such as the Department of Health in the UK, actively organize media strategies to influence relevant agendas. In the U.S. for example, most of the influence that sources exert over reporters has nothing to do with money or favours changing hands. It is instead a matter of pleasure, the sheer pleasure journalists feel at having access that other mortals are denied (Southern Folklore 49, 1992). It is according to Schudson (2003) a matter of human relations, where journalists manipulate sources and sources manipulate journalists. Beharell and Phillo (1977) have noted that there is a growing

principle among trade unionists that the media and newspapers especially are biased against them. In reaction, some unions have developed publicity departments, with the objective of countering the problem. There are two strategies employed in this area.

i. To develop and maintain public relations contacts with the media institutions to improve the unions' image and better the chances of getting its case across.
ii. To make complaints about particular instances of coverage by press and broadcasting.

Beharrell and Phillo (1977) further note that the first strategy's central priority is the upgrading of personal communications with individual journalists and the extensive use of press releases. Such relations with the media are obviously important. However, the strategy is rather one-sided in that it identifies the problem as being the lack of available detailed information, and the insufficient presentation of 'the facts of the case' by the unions themselves. The approach of the second strategy denotes a more aggressive attitude towards hostile journalism. It highlights the conflict of interests between unions and the media. This conflict has found its most coherent expression in the presentation of general complaints to government enquiries, such as the Royal Commission on the Press and the Annan Committee on the Future of Broadcasting.

However, even when official sources do organise media strategies, they can be hampered by a number of factors in gaining access to the media. In the UK for example, the HEA's campaign placed great emphasis on the mass media. Its strategy for using the mass media as part of its education efforts involved two components: advertising and press, and PR. The HEA acknowledged the importance of targeting individual media outlets, editors and reporters to create a positive climate to support its advertising campaign. This was spelled out in the 'total public communication strategy' drawn up for the HEA by the advertising agency Boase, Massimi, Pollit (BMP). A practical public relations campaign was envisaged which sought to 'brand' the HEA the 'most useful source of AIDS information' (Boase, Massimi, Pollit 1988). But the failure of the HEA to make itself the leading source of AIDS information, illustrates some of the potential problems for official sources in trying to manage media (Miller et al., 1998).

Generally, the execution of this strategy was influenced by several factors, including health educators' distrust of the mass media, the HEA's relationship with the Department of Health (DoH) and the low standing of health education in the eyes of the mass media (Elridge, 1993). Miller and Williams (in Eldridge, 1993) have noted that Health educators have in the past tended to be suspicious of the media, resulting in a reluctance to deal with journalists. As has been noted further by Holmes, they regard the media as 'untrustworthy' and 'sources of conflict and misinformation' (Holmes 1985: 18). A HEA public affairs division employee said that for many health educators: their idea of a journalist was somebody from the S*un*…A journalist to them was a hack of the lowest order. As for the relationship of the HEA and the DoH, it became sour when the HEA took over responsibility for HIV/AIDS from the department, which was not very satisfied of the HEA trying to establish itself as 'the most useful source' of HIV/ AIDS information. The DoH in its mission to avoid giving up its 'expert' role drew up a memorandum of understanding with the HEA in 1989, to formalise its concerns. The document detailed the conditions, under which public statements could be made,

> The HEA was not established to be, nor is funded as, a campaigning 'pressure group', although it is conceivable that issues might arise on which it would attempt to influence strongly the direction of government policy through 'pressure' and be seen to be doing so. It must judge such instances carefully. It is important that ministers, through the department are informed in advance of advice to be given in public (DoH/HEA, 1990:7).

This definitely had implications for the information strategies of the HEA. It became mandatory that news releases be checked by administrative civil servants and this way clearance was often delayed. Quite regularly, according to HEA sources, a 'terribly straightforward and anodyne press release' would vanish down a black hole in the 'Department of Health'. Such delays disheartened the HEA from issuing statements to the press, making it difficult for the HEA press office to institute effective relations with journalists who despaired of what they saw as the authority's 'fence sitting,'(Miller et al., 1998: 141-2).

The strategies used by a particular alternative source in the UK, put to rest any doubts of the power that may lie with the politically marginal or sub-ordinate groups. Formed in 1983 to provide information on HIV/AIDS, the Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) had by the late 1980s established itself as the leading AIDS voluntary agency and had won the right to be consulted by journalists as a credible source of information as well as an advocate on the need and interests of people with HIV. According to a THT spokesperson, "Overall certainly no other voluntary organisation has been widely quoted and widely used as a resource," (Miller et al. 1998: 142). This is supported by an analysis of press coverage of AIDS carried out for the HEA (between April and July 1993). According to Miller et al. (1998) part of the THT's success can be explained by reference to its media friendly approach and strategies it used to try and manage the media. "However it is also the case that the Trust was very useful for journalists anxious to balance a story on government policy or respond to the latest statement or activity of the moral right. Such opportunities, while not necessarily in the interests of the Trust, did enable it to become a regularly used source of information," (Miller et al., 1998: 142). At the same time the Trust's success with the media proved to be a problem when their public image became bigger than the organisation itself. Also Miller et al. (1998) have noted that their success with the media and in promoting change in public opinion and culture has not necessarily been matched by success with government, where even the funding of the Trust was cut in 1991. In other words, "while activist groups can be successful in reaching some of their goals, their continued existence testifies to the goals and target audiences that remain to be influenced. Nevertheless it is clear that the media in the UK (and to some extent state) practice has been changed by the intervention of the THT as well as other AIDS organisations in the provision of information and opinion," (Miller et al., 1998)

While Phillip Schlesinger (1990:63) is critical of the way in which the concept of primary definition has been employed, he also insists that an empirical exploration of the media opportunities available to a variety of potential news sources can still be conducted 'from within a theory of dominance'. Manning (2001) argues that Schlesinger is quite clear about the value of retaining a model that describes the ways in which powerfully dominant groups in society can exploit their control of material and symbolic resources to secure more frequent access to the news media. A corollary to the power of the source is that resource poor organisations have great difficulty

getting the media's attention (Goldenberg, 1975). If they are to be covered, they must fine-tune to modes of organisational interaction more like those of established governmental and business organisations.

According to Williams (2003) sources most successful at gaining access to the mainstream news media are those who are well organised, well resourced and able to supply a regular and reliable flow of newsworthy information. These tend to be powerful groups and organisations in society; usually official bodies, experts in various fields and in particular, government. News represents *who* are the 'authorised knowers' (most of whom are government officials) and *what* are their authorised versions of reality (Ericson et al., 1989: 377). Does this suggest that it is possible for non-official sources that are well resourced and able to supply a regular and reliable flow of information to have access to the media and therefore even set the news agenda?

As is articulated by Schlesinger (1990), the key issue at the heart of the study of sources is that of the relations between the media and the exercise of political and ideological power, especially, but not exclusively, by central social institutions, which seek to define and manage the flow of information in a contested field of discourse. Inevitably, at the core of such an interest are the organs of the state and the ways in which these compete among themselves and with other more or less institutionalized sources of information. Any sociology of information management – which is surly fundamental to the workings of the 'information society'- has to take due account of what the sociology of journalism can tell us about the nature and scope of source power (Ferguson, 1990).

According to Manning (2001), Hall and his colleagues suggest that the 'powerful' have a built in advantage in the scramble to set news agendas or define news issues in particular ways. They (Hall et al., 1978) continue to argue that 'powerful' institutions will almost always succeed in shaping the news agendas and interpretative frameworks constructed by journalists because they are positioned at the top of a hierarchy of credibility. Hall and his colleagues (1978) presented this conceptualisation as a way of thinking through in 'practical terms' how a sophisticated Gramscian Marxist theory might avoid a 'crude conspiracy' model

while still tracing the 'structured sub-ordination' of the news media to the powerful primary definers in capitalist societies. For Hall et al., (1978: 58) "official news sources and those institutions closely associated with the capitalist state routinely set the terms of the news agenda, or primarily defined the news, not as a consequence of conspiracy but because news journalists, working within the constraints of a pressurised news production process, identified them as 'authoritative sources' or 'accredited witnesses'."

The theory of primary definition (as originally formulated within an approach owing a large debt to Althusser and Gramsci)[8], is criticised by Schlesinger and others as being flawed both theoretically and empirically (Manning, 2001). This concept has been viewed as too inflexible in its attempt to distinguish those institutions with the capacity to primarily define the news from those without. In other words some institutions may be underestimated or overestimated in terms of their power to define news primarily. Either way, the concept of primary definition does not appear to be flexible with this fact. In addition, it rests upon an ahistorical model, which cannot elucidate changes over time in the distribution of opportunities to primarily define. As was earlier seen with the case of the THT, which managed to over time alter its status from insignificant to significant, it would be erroneous to assume that there is a lack of opportunities to change a certain situation if well strategised by sources. Finally, empirically it can be demonstrated that organisations such as non-official sources or marginal political groups can also successfully set the agenda, or primarily define, in particular policy arenas (Schlesinger, 1990; Anderson, 1993; Miller and Williams, 1993; Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994).

The foundation of this study lies within the criticism, which recognises the possibility of non-official sources to set the agenda or to primarily define certain issues. Schlesinger (1990), while wishing to retain 'a theory of dominance' still insists that there are more opportunities for non-official news sources and politically marginal groups to intervene in the defining of news agendas than implied by the concept of

[8] The Gramscian and Althusserian influence stimulated what could be described as the hegemonic model that emerged during the 1960s and 1970s characterised by a new interest in the news media text as a site of struggle – an arena through which the powerful sought to secure hegemony but within which the subordinate might also resist and where oppositional readings, or elements of critical agendas, might surface (Manning, 2001:40).

primary definition. Using this criticism, it is feasible then that non-official sources dominate just as much as official sources. What Schlesinger does, is not to rule out that possibility when he notes that there are 'opportunities' for non-official sources to define news agendas. In examining the sources used for the HIV/AIDS treatment news, it is important to remember that according to some studies (Shepperson, 2000), it has been noted to be the most dominant theme in the representation of HIV/AIDS issues in the South African print media. Therefore, it may be justified to claim that HIV/AIDS treatment news is already part of the news agenda, in which case should the non-official sources dominate in the sourcing of this news, these sources will have assisted in setting a news agenda. This is the argument that is raised by Schlesinger's criticism, which chooses not to underestimate the power of alternative or non-official sources.

Conclusion:

Schlesinger's (1990) angle on the 'theory of dominance' is important to this study because it identifies with the notion that non-official sources can sometimes dominate and even set the news agenda. Because Hall's (1978) model is blind to the question of source competition, it follows that those dismissively lumped together as 'alternative' are of virtually no interest at all. But according to Schlesinger (1990), empirical research shows that their views and arguments may be integrated pre-emptively into so called 'primary definers' definitions', thereby modifying them and at the same time indicating that the boundaries between sources are not always as impermeable as the charmed circle of conception of primacy would imply. This study hopes to prove that while official sources may have been qualified the primary definers by Hall (1978) and his colleagues, non-official sources cannot be underestimated as powerless. After analysing the sources that have been used for the HIV/AIDS treatment news in selected print media from South Africa, this study will attempt to prove whether there is indeed a growing use of non-official sources.

Chapter 3 Research methods

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this research report and thus forms the basis of the analysis in the following chapters. The chapter covers issues on the methods chosen and gives reasons why some were chosen over others with regards to the research questions and the theoretical framework, as well as the processes followed to acquire valid answers.

3.1 Mapping the South African press situation in the coverage of HIV/AIDS issues

Shepperson (2000) has noted that reporting on HIV/AIDS in South Africa is principally sourced from press releases, press conferences and wire services. Further on, the number of reports generated out of newspapers' own inquiry and based on primary information sought out independently of official sources falls far below the number generated on the initiative of instances outside the newsroom.

From the Shepperson (2000) study, a large proportion of all articles were derived through government events/junkets and through spokespersons. The breakdown of sources overall also indicated only a small proportion of articles are sourced through specific motivations of journalists or their publications. Shepperson also notes that in the South African case, most reporters are not necessarily dedicated health writers, but just general or political reporters. According to other studies[9]that have been carried out, treatment is one of the most frequently represented themes in the South African print media. This therefore renders it the most suitable for this study. In dealing with treatment, the rollout of ARVs has once again been widely focused on by the South African press in comparison to other HIV/AIDS issues.

The Sowetan and *The Star*, the two major dailies[10] have been selected to analyse the sources of the HIV/AIDS treatment news. *The Star* has a wide readership and a wide

[9] Siyam'kela, January- March 2003, Examining HIV/AIDS stigma in selected South African media. A Summary. A joint project of the policy project, the Centre for the Study of AIDS at the University of Pretoria, USAID and the Chief Directorate: HIV/AIDS and TB, National Department of Health designed to explore HIV related stigma, an aspect of the AIDS epidemic, which has had a profoundly negative effect on the response to people living with and/or affected by HIV/AIDS.

[10] Source: A.B.C Jul-Dec 1999 / Jan-Jun 2000 in a study by Arnold Shepperson, HIV/AIDS Reporting in South Africa: an analysis of the response of the press © 2000 HIV/AIDS and STD Directorate Department of Health, South Africa.

circulation in South Africa and therefore its content is likely to reach and influence a wide audience. The same applies to *The Sowetan,* which has a wider black readership as compared to *The Star*. Both papers can be afforded by the low, middle and upper classes and which therefore guarantees a wide circulation and readership. These two papers were therefore mainly picked on the basis that they are the two biggest dailies.

This study selectively looks at particular and relevant articles on HIV/AIDS treatment news with the key intention of analysing the sources used. In looking at the area of treatment, the focus is on the rollout of Antiretrovirals (ARVs) because it has been widely reported on, in the South African press. The period during which the study was done is June of 2003 to November of 2003. As explained in chapter 1, the rollout of ARVs was extensively highlighted during this period and the focus was mainly on ARVs as opposed to Nevirapine.

3.2 Methods

This study uses both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Therefore it is a qualitative study in which some quantitative measures are used as a basis to ascertain dominance of sources. Many questions have arisen on whether the contrast between qualitative and quantitative research is a particularly constructive one, arguing that the best research in social science contains elements of both. Nonetheless "of all the methodological distinctions that have been concocted, it is the quantitative/qualitative one which has proved most durable and which, to be fair most accurately reflects the customary division of practice in social science," (Allan and Skinner, 1991:177).

According to Allan (1991), one aspect of the contrast between qualitative and quantitative concerns the mode of data analysis used. The authors further note that a core feature of qualitative research methods is that satisfactory explanations of social activities require a substantial appreciation of perspectives, culture and 'world-views' of the actors involved. As Burgess (1984a) notes, prominence is given to understanding the actions of participants on the basis of their active experience of the world and the ways in which their actions arise from and reflect back on experience. Wisker (2001: 100) notes that "qualitative research is carried out when researchers

wish to understand meanings, or look at, describe and understand experiences, ideas, beliefs and values – intangibles such as these." The advantage of using this research method is that it explains behaviours, processes as well as the 'actors' in the processes, attitudes and motivations. The actors here would be the subjects or objects being researched on.

Allan (1991) further explains that this method requires a fuller and more flexible involvement by the researcher with those from whom the data is being collected, which is typical of more quantitative approaches. However, this greater involvement does not just stem from what the researcher regards as valid data. It is a consequence of the way that the research question is selected and then translated into a research agenda. It is important to note that often the researcher may not appear to be forced to make a real decision about whether a qualitative or quantitative approach is to be adopted. The way the research problem is formulated and the research agenda specified, progressively make it apparent what approach is most appropriate. As the Allan (1991) notes, quite frequently, limited qualitative research is seen as a precursor for more quantitative methods. The former is held to be useful as a kind of insightful pilot stage, capable of generating motivating ideas and hypotheses that can be 'properly' tested by more methodical and thorough quantitative investigation. Qualitative research is thus about being objective in order to be able to generate more questions. This though does not imply that as the research evolves, it is appropriate to shift to a quantitative mode. That may be the case in some instances, but more likely the researcher will want to continue as before because other methods would not generate such appropriate or well-founded data.

According to Allan (1991) some major criticisms made on qualitative methods are that they are impressionistic and non-verifiable. Allan (1991) further notes that qualitative methods are impressionistic because in general the researcher initially attempts to adopt a naïve pose with respect to the topic being studied. However, while the researcher will certainly want to keep an open mind and be reflective about the processes and action being observed or discussed, at the same time the collection of data and the testing of ideas need to become as systematic as possible. Thus Allan (1991) notes in qualitative interviews the same topics must be covered for all respondents; every effort should be made to explore in similar detail each occurrence

of significant phenomena. So too in analysing data, being systematic is crucial to good research because through systematic iteration the researcher can go a long way towards ensuring that the analysis generated is more than just impressionistic.

Verification according to Allan (1991) is clearly a central tenet of science. The criticism that qualitative methods are non-verifiable may come from the difficulty that these methods pose be they ethnographically or interview based. Allan (1991) notes that this is because the precise procedures used to achieve the data cannot be repeated in all their detail. All in all, "…with systematic data collection and analysis it is quite possible for qualitative approaches to spawn analyses which are in general terms replicable and cumulative," (Allan, 1991: 70).

On the other hand, "Quantitative research is a formal, objective, systematic process in which numerical data are utilised to obtain information about the world," (Burns and Grove cited by Cormack 1991:140). Quantitative approaches assume interval or ordinal data which are amenable to statistical manipulation and the advantage of this method is that its results are very objective and that they can be generalized.

3.2.1 Quantitative Content Analysis

At the initial analysis stages, quantitative content analysis method, which is essentially a counting exercise, was used. According to Berger (1991), this is a research technique that is based on measuring the amount of something in a representative sampling of some mass-mediated popular art form. In content analysis, researchers examine artifacts of social communication, be they written documents or even transcriptions of recorded verbal communications. Broadly defined however "content analysis is any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages" (Holsti, 1968: 608). Abrahamson (1983) suggests that content analysis can be effectively employed to examine virtually any type of communication. For that matter, content analysis may focus on either quantitative or qualitative aspects of communication messages.

In this study this method was used to determine the sources that have been used in the sample articles that were collected. From this analysis the dominating number of sources used was consequently given. Williams (2003) notes that usually certain

conceptual categories are established and then quantitatively assessed against their presence or absence in the content of the media. In the case of this study, the relevant samples were collected by visiting www.sovs.ac.za, which keeps the PDF copies of all South African newspapers. Here, all the articles appearing under the caption 'HIV/AIDS health and social issues' during the period under study in the daily papers *The Star* and *The Sowetan*, were analysed. Further filtering was done to pick only articles that dealt with HIV/AIDS treatment. During the period under study, the rollout was focused on general ARVs and not on nevirapine. Nevirapine is an ARV that is given to prevent the transmission of the HIV virus from a mother to her child and therefore deals with prevention as opposed to treatment, which is the theme that the study focuses on.

3.2.2 Qualitative analysis:

Merriam (1998) notes that qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible. The goal of the investigation of a qualitative researcher is to understand, to discover, to describe and to finally generate a hypothesis for the questions at hand. Therefore, qualitative analysis in this study involves analyzing texts in order to understand certain phenomena. More precisely, a textual analysis which involved analysing articles from the two dailies *The Star* and *The Sowetan* was conducted to establish the value a particular source brings to a story. After establishing the sources that were used in the samples, the range of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHAs) used was shown. These sources were analysed through two particular indicators: **race** and **gender**. While the race variables were largely determined by the references used for them (black, white, coloured, etc) the names of the sources also helped to establish the racial profile of the source. The gender variables were however largely determined by the references used for them in the news (he/she and female or male). In dealing with HIV/AIDS issues, the race and the gender of the 'victims' has become very important. Questions have been raised whether or not AIDS has been labelled as a disease of a particular race and gender. These indicators therefore were used to show how the PLHAs that were sourced were depicted so as to analyse and comment on the value the journalists were looking to bring to the story.

At the same time, if most of the articles analysed in the study show that most sources used came from a particular category (categories of sources used in table 1 and 2), it might be that these sources are used most frequently because they bring more value and credibility to a story or just because they were the most available at the time.

The context of a source (through an interview, official meeting, press release, drama/actual event, conference, parliament, research report, filed statement,) will also be relevant in trying to determine the value that the source may bring to a story. For example, a one on one interview that usually takes place between a source and a journalist will normally indicate credibility and therefore bring more value to a story. On the other hand a press release is usually generic and therefore does not hold too much value. A drama or an event on the contrary is specific and therefore will normally bring a lot of value to a story. Alternative sources like the Treatment Action Campaign of South Africa and the Terrence Higgins Trust of Britain may hold events from where the journalists may source their stories and this again brings value to a story because the information comes firsthand from the source organisation.

To analyse the contexts of the source, 23 sample articles were picked by order of their dates beginning June 2003. Out of the 56 articles analysed from *The Star*, 15 articles were picked using a rolling sample (every fourth article). Out of the 31 articles analysed from *The Sowetan*, 8 articles were picked using the same principle of the rolling sample. The sources used were then listed along with the contexts. This number of articles was the best manageable in analysing the contexts of the sources.

3.2.3 The semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interviews were held with the health reporters of the two dailies in order to further investigate why there may be a growing use of non-official sources. At the same time, the objective of the interviews with the two respondents from the AIDS activist groups, the TAC and the AIDS Consortium, was to find out what strategies they may use to secure media opportunities.

Since the study was chiefly based on exploring whether there was a growing use of non-official sources, the interviews with the sources were reserved for the non-official or alternative sources (as the barely researched group). This is because, besides the fact that the background study had already established that official sources have

previously been used in domination, the two reporters that were going to be interviewed, were also going to shed light on the use of official sources, in addition to giving their opinions on - if and why - they thought official sources were used more frequently. This set-up was also very convenient in trying to manage the material and time constraints of the study.

At the same time the interviews were restricted to journalists or reporters purposely because whereas, editors will sometimes instruct the journalists to go to particular sources, the journalists being the ones that actually goe to the field to acquire their stories, will in the end (more often than not) choose their preferred sources. According to Powers & Fico (1994), journalists rely on their own "judgements" when selecting sources. They treat sources differently – according to the degree of respect – with which they regard those sources (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995: 55). They may view regular and accurate sources as more reliable and thus more legitimate (K. Hansen, 1991). They may evaluate sources that can command more resources as more important and thus more legitimate (Anderson, 1991). They may consider a large pressure group as a legitimate news source. Legitimacy may also depend on the whether journalists like and agree with sources or whether they perceive sources "as prominent, knowledgeable and credible,"(Powers & Fico, 1994: 88).

According to Merriam (1998), in qualitative research, interviewing is often the major source of the qualitative data needed for understanding the phenomenon under study. Jensen (2002) also notes that interviews range in form and structure - from simple surveys requiring little analysis, to the in-depth interview, which is well suited to a topic requiring a social agent's perspective on the media. According to Jones (1991) qualitative interviews are distinguished from survey interviews in being less structured in their approach and in allowing individuals to expand on their responses to questions and mostly, interviewing in qualitative investigations is more open-ended and less structured. These less structured formats mean that individual respondents define the world in unique ways, and this is very essential for this study. An interview guide was used in this case in order to have the interviewees explain why there may be a growing use of non-official or alternative sources. "The interview guide or schedule as it is sometimes called, is nothing more than a list of questions you intend to ask in an interview," (Merriam, 1998: 81).

Since most interviews in qualitative research are semi structured, the interview guide will probably contain several specific questions that one may want to ask everyone. Some will be more open-ended followed up with probes and perhaps a list of some areas, topics and issues that one may want to know more about but does not have enough information about at the outset of the study to form specific questions. Therefore, the interview was a mix of more and less structured questions where the major part of the interview was guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions was determined ahead of time. This set-up allows the researcher to respond to the circumstances at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the subject.

According to Lindlof (2002), an interview's major advantage is that it serves a referential function that is useful in understanding processes outside of the immediate context. You can also ask follow up questions for a considerable length of time. Berger (1991) also adds that when conducting an interview, you can ask the respondent to be more specific or to deal with generalisations as required. Furthermore as suggested by Wisker (2001), interviews can provide both the detailed information you set out to gather and some fascinating related or other information.

Merriam (1998) explains that of the three basic ways to record interview data, the most common by far is to tape record the interview. This practice ensures that everything said is preserved for analysis. The interviewer can also listen for ways to improve his or her questioning technique. Malfunctioning equipment and a respondent's uneasiness with being recorded are some of the drawbacks the researcher may experience. However, after a while, most respondents forget they are being taped. In this study, all respondents were recorded without much of a problem besides a little initial discomfort. The author further notes that a second way to record interview data is to take notes during the interview. Some interviewers though prefer to take notes in addition to taping the session. This is because the interviewer may want to record his or her reactions to something the informant says, to signal the informant of the importance of what is being said, or to pace the interview. The two methods were used in this study for maximum results.

3.3 Problems of the research process

Qualitative methods of research require quite a different personal stance from the rather dry approach often associated with more quantitative methods. Jones (1991) notes that the accomplishment of systematic data through qualitative interviewing is a much more complex activity than collecting data using structured schedules. However, interviews are not as complicated as ethnographic work is. For example, ethnographic work requires that the researcher be politically aware and sensitive to the impression she or he is making on others. However, what goes on in one interview will usually not have an effect on the relationship the researcher develops with other respondents. At the same time data from interviews is comparatively easy to record either in written form or else on tape.

Nevertheless, there is always the problem of the interviewee not saying what they mean. A researcher has to consider that while using an interview to gather data, some information gathered may not be necessarily true. Several reasons may lead to this. First, since there is no such thing as complete knowledge or understanding, it is almost impossible for any human being to fully articulate the processes impacting upon an event (Jensen, 2002; Lindlof, 2002). Therefore, the experiences of the interviewee and their opinions of a certain thing or situation will not always be ideal. In this case a researcher should be mindful of the limitations to the respondent's understanding. An interviewee may also respond to questions according to how they believe they should, as opposed to actually telling it as it is. This can well be seen from respondents who hold senior positions in firms and who therefore have a stake in protecting the image of their firms. In terms of journalists or reporters and other media representatives, where their names are mentioned, they may worry about getting into trouble with their employers for creating a negative image. The researcher is also faced with the task of verifying whether the arguments presented by the interviewees are inconsistent thus indicating either confusion or an acceptance of systematic values that even they may not know to be existent. As Halloran (1998) notes the process of 'professional socialisation' where newcomers to an industry are assimilated through the unconscious adoption of professional values and routines is particularly strong amongst journalists and editors. As a result they tend to unquestioningly accept organisational values around the media's role in society and the necessary financial requirements to keep a publication running.

Another problem that arises when using interviews is the unavailability of the respondents. Journalists are generally very busy and therefore scheduling appointments with them is equally difficult. Some are also unwilling to do so for various reasons. Deacon et al (1995) also note that it is difficult for researchers to gain easy access to the corridors of corporate power. During the research of this report, the unavailability by some respondents and the unwillingness to comment was evident with journalists and reporters seeming sceptical about being interviewed about the papers they write for. However, with time, some trust was created through continued contact and eventually there was some easing up. All respondents scheduled to be interviewed were finally available although the respondent from National Association for People Living With Aids (NAPWA) proved quite difficult to reach because none of the organisations' contact details seemed valid after futile efforts to access them. Fortunately a respondent from another organisation, the AIDS Consortium was available for the interview and the views of the four respondents as well as all the other findings will be available in the consequent chapters.

In summary, this chapter details the methods that were used to gather the data for this research report. It begins by briefly illustrating the situation on the coverage of HIV/AIDS issues in South Africa. Then it discusses the use of both the qualitative and the quantitative research methods that were used and a brief discussion on the debate that surrounds the use of these two methods is given. A list of all the methods that were used to gather the data and an explanation why these methods were used follows. Finally this chapter discusses problems that the researcher experienced.

Chapter 4 Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the study that was carried out. The data that was collected is required to answer the key research question and the three sub-questions.

4.1 Quantitative and Qualitative analysis:

A total number of 87 articles were analysed: 56 articles from *The Star* and 31 articles from *The Sowetan.* Out of the 56 articles that were analysed from *The Star*, the sources were categorized and put into a table to show how frequently each source appeared. Thereafter, a total number of official as well as the non-official sources was listed. This is illustrated by table 1a below.

Table 1a: *The Star*

Official sources	**No. of sources**	**Non-official sources**	**No. of sources**
Health Professionals	13	AIDS Activists	17
Government	37	NGOs	4
Pharmaceutical Companies	12	PLHAs	7
Business firms	0	Opposition parties	9
Media	2	Traditional healers	3
Academics	5	Unions	2
Analysts	1	Other	4
International Organisations	8		
Clergy	0		
*Reliable sources	1		
Societal Heroes & Celebrities	1		
Other professionals	0		
Total no. sources	**80**	**Total no. of sources**	**46**

Table 1a (Table showing range of official sources versus non-official sources in *The Star*)

***Reliable sources – Unamed, unidentified or anonymous sources that the press views as legitimate or credible.**

Table 1b: Extrapolated from table 1a above:

Government Sources	**No. of times used as source**	**Health Professionals**		**Pharmaceutical Companies**		**AIDS Activists**		**Opposition Parties**		**PLHAs**	
Health Minister-Manto	11	Doctors	5	GSK	4	TAC	15	DA	5	B/F	4
Tshabala-Msimang		Clinicians	3	Boehringer–Ingelheim	2	ALP	1	NNP	3	B/M	2
Department of Health	11	Professional Nurses	2	Aspen	2	NAPWA	1	UDM	1	W/F	1
Other Ministers	15	SAMA officials	2	Cipla	1						
		MRC officials	1	Pfizer	1						
				Ranbaxy	1						
				Canadian Company	1						
Total no. of sources	**37**		**13**		**12**		**13**		**9**		**7**

SAMA – South African Medical Association, GSK- GlaxoSmithKline

Table 1b (Table showing three most frequent source categories from both official and non-official sources, against the no. of sources by each source category in *The Star*)

Table 1c: Extrapolated from table 1b above:

Source	**Treatment Action Campaign**	**No. of times used as a source**	**Democratic Alliance**	**No. of times used as a source**
Key sources	Zackie Achmat	4	Mike Waters	3
	Mark Heywood	2	Sheila Camerer	1
	Siphokazi Mthathi	2	Johnny de Lange	1
	Others	7		
Total		**15**		**5**

Table 1c (Table showing key sources from the non-official sources (AIDS activists and opposition parties) and the no. of times they are used as sources)

Similarly, the 31 articles analysed from *The Sowetan*, produced sources that were eventually grouped into the two official and non-official sources. There were a total number of 59 official sources and a total number of 26 non-official sources. From the 60 official sources, the highest was 39 government sources while from the 25 non-official sources the highest was 13 AIDS activist sources. This is further illustrated in table 2a as follows.

Table 2a: ***The Sowetan***

Official sources	**No. of sources**	**Non-official sources**	**No. of sources**
Health Professionals	3	AIDS Activists	13
Government	39	NGOs	1
Pharmaceutical	3	PLHAs	1
Companies	3	Opposition parties	6
Business firms	2	Traditional healers	2
Media	3	Unions	1
Academics	0	Other	2
Analysts	4		
International	1		
Organisations	1		
Clergy	0		
Reliable sources			
Societal Heroes &	0		
Celebrities			
Other professionals			
Total no. of sources	**59**	**Total no. of sources**	**26**

Table 2a (Table showing range of official sources versus non-official sources in ***The Sowetan)***

Table 2b: Extrapolated from table 2a above:

Government Sources	**No. of times used as source**	**Health Professionals**		**Pharmaceutical Companies**		**AIDS Activists**		**Opposition Parties**		**PLHAs**	
Health Minister-	8	Doctors	3	Bristol Myers	1	TAC	11	DA	4	B/F	1
Manto Tshabalala-				British		AIDS		NNP	1		
Msimang				Pharmaceutical	1	Consortium	1	ACDP	1		
Department of				Industries		NAPWA	1				
Health	12			Aspen	1						
President											
Other Ministers	1										
	18										
Total no. of sources	**39**		**3**		**3**		**13**		**6**		**1**

Table 2b (Table showing three most frequent source categories from both official and non-official sources, against the no. of sources by each source category in ***The Sowetan*****)**

Table 2c: Extrapolated from table 2b (previous page):

Source	Treatment Action Campaign	No. of times used as a source	Democratic Alliance	No. of times used as a source
Key sources	Zackie Achmat Nathan Geffen Mark Heywood Others	3 6 1 1	Mike Waters	4
Total		**11**		**4**

Table 2c (Table showing key sources from the non-official sources (AIDS activists and opposition parties) and the no. of times they are used as sources)

The context of a source (through an interview, official meeting, press release, drama/actual event, conference, parliament, research report, filed statement) will also be relevant in trying to determine the value that a source may bring to a story. An interview which usually takes place between a source and a journalist (one on one) will normally indicate credibility and therefore bring more value to a story. An official meeting will designate credibility as it occurs in an 'official' context. A research report will show credibility as it is a certified study by an academic as an expert and finally a source context in parliament will also connote credibility.

On the other hand a press release or a statement is usually generic and therefore does not hold that much value. Press conferences will also be generic. A drama or an event on the contrary is specific and therefore will normally bring a lot of value to a story. The 23 articles in total (15 from *The Star* and eight from *The Sowetan*) that were picked as a rolling sample (every fourth article) by ascending order of their dates to show the sources and the contexts are shown in the following tables below.

Table 3a (on the following page) lists the 15 articles from the *The Star:*

Table 3a: The Star

Sample	Source	Context
1	Health Minister	Interview
	HIV+ Lifeline Counselor	Interview
2	Head AIDS research UCT	Interview
	Health Minister	Conference
3	Health Department - Spokesperson	Interview
	Head, HIV/AIDS directorate	Interview
4	Spokesperson AIDS, Democratic Alliance	Interview
	Government Communication and Information System	Press release
5	SAMA Chairperson	Interview
	Government	Statement
	Health Minister	Statement
	Treatment Action Campaign - Spokesperson	Interview
6	Treatment Action Campaign - Chairperson	Conference
7	Member, Democratic Alliance	Meeting
	Committee Chairperson, Democratic Alliance	Meeting
8	Treatment Action Campaign task team	Report
	Cabinet	Meeting
9	Lawyer, AIDS Law Project	Interview
	CEO, Cipla Ltd	Interview
	GlaxoSmithKline	Statement
10	Health Minister	Statement
	Treatment activist	Interview
	Respected HIV Clinician	Interview
	Treatment Action Campaign	Statement
11	Director General, WHO	Conference
12	Health Ministry	Statement
13	The Competition Commission	Statement
	AIDS activists and Union Leaders	Statement
	GlaxoSmithKline	Statement
	Competition Commissioner	Statement
14	Person Living with HIV/AIDS	Interview
	Cabinet	Statement
	Health Minister	Statement
	Health E-News service	Report
	Gauteng Project leader on rollout	Interview
15	Government Official	Interview
	Cabinet	Statement

Table 3a (Table showing ten articles with the sources used and their source contexts)

Table 3b (Table showing summary of results in table 3a)

Source Context	Interview	Statement	Conference	Research Report	Meeting	Press Release
Total	**15**	**13**	**3**	**2**	**3**	**1**

Table 4a: *The Sowetan* (Table showing eight articles with the sources used and their source contexts)

Sample	Source	Context
1	Director General of Health Department	Interview
	Treatment Action Campaign - Chairperson	Interview
2	President of South Africa	Online Letter
3	Spokesperson for AIDS, Democratic Alliance	Letter
4	NNP Spokesman, Kobus Gouws	Interview
	Spokesperson for AIDS, Democratic Alliance	Interview
	Member, African Christian Democratic Party	Interview
5	Cabinet Spokesperson	Statement
	Treatment Action Campaign - Spokesperson	Interview
6	Finance Minister	Press Conference
	Cabinet Spokesperson	Statement
7	Western Cape Premier	Statement
	Finance Minister	Statement
	Western Cape Health Member of Executive Council	Statement
8	Provincial AIDS Programme Head	Statement
	SA Medical Journal	Report
	Health Minister	Statement
	United States Medical Herbalist	Interview

Table 4b (Table showing summary of results in table 4a)

Source Context	Interview	Statement	Conference	Report	Letter
Total	**7**	**7**	**1**	**1**	**2**

A qualitative analysis which entailed analysing articles from the two dailies was conducted to establish the value that a particular source brings to a story. After establishing the range of the sources that were used in the sample articles, the people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHAs) were analysed through the following indicators: ***Race*** and ***Gender.***

From all the sample articles analysed in *The Star* seven PLHAs in total were used as sources. Four of the PLHAs used as sources were black and female. Two of the people living with HIV/AIDS were black and male and the remaining one was white and female. This is evident from table 5 below.

Table 5: ***The Star***

PLHA (Person Living with HIV/Aids)	**Race**	**Gender**
1	Black	Female
2	Black	Female
3	Black	Female
4	Black	Female
5	Black	Male
6	Black	Male
7	White	Female

Table 5 (Table showing PLHAs sourced in *The Star:* with race and gender)

In *The Sowetan* the only person living with HIV/AIDS used as a source was black and female as is shown in table 6 below.

Table 6: ***The Sowetan***

PLHA (Person Living with HIV/AIDS)	**Race**	**Gender**
1	Black	Female

Table 6 (Table showing PLHAs sourced in *The Sowetan:* with race and gender)

These indicators (**Race** and **Gender**) will be used to show how the people living with HIV/AIDS that were used as sources were depicted so as to analyse and comment on the value the journalists were attempting to bring to the story. At the same time, if most of the articles analysed (in total) show that most sources used came from a particular category, it might be that these sources are used most frequently because they bring more value and credibility to a story or because they were available at the time of writing the story.

4.2 The semi-structured interviews:

Four interviews were conducted: two with journalists and two with respondents from two HIV/AIDS activist groups. More accurately, the interviews with the journalists were conducted to investigate further whether and why there may be a growing use of non-official sources. The objective of the interview with the two respondents from the AIDS activist groups, the Treatment Action Campaign and the AIDS Consortium was to find out what strategies they may use to secure media opportunities.

The journalists interviewed were **Jillian Green, the H**ealth reporter for *The Star,* and **Chriselda Leuuis, the** former reporter at *The Sowetan.* At the TAC, the respondent was **Luyanda Ngonyama, the** Spokeperson for the TAC Gauteng Office. Finally the other respondent was **Susie Clark the** Senior Program Manager at the AIDS Consortium. Two reporters on matters of health were required from the two publications hence the choice of this particular reporters. From the TAC, a media liaison or anyone who acts like a spokesperson was eligible as a spokesperson and the availability of this particular respondent was a big determining factor on why he was picked. At the AIDS Consortium, because of a lack of a media liaison or specific spokesperson, this respondent was a reference point of any major inquiries made to the organisation and therefore she proved to be very advantageous. The respondents all have over to years experience working for their organisations and therefore were assumed to be quite conversant with their organisational routines.

4.3 The source through the eyes of the 'beholder'?

The respondents mapped sources from their personal experience with them, and then gave a general idea on the situation of sources in the South African press context. According to Jillian Green, the health reporter from *The Star*, when she thinks of her

HIV/AIDS treatment sources, the following sources emerge: the Treatment Action Campaign, the AIDS Consortium, the National Association for People living with AIDS (NAPWA), research units and Department of Health. When asked who her main HIV/AIDS treatment sources are Chriselda Leuuis, former reporter of *The Sowetan* is quick to name the TAC and Zackie Achmat who she describes as an expert as he is living with HIV/AIDS. She also names officials from the Department of Health, the Health Minister, Sidane Mgadi, Humphrey Zukufa among others, who she admits she has close relationships with which allows her easy access. She also takes people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHAs) among her main treatment news sources because she believes that they have a better perspective on these issues as opposed to other people just commenting on it but not living with it.

Jillian Green, of *The Star*, comments on the process that is followed in getting a source saying that in most cases, she goes through the spokesperson of the organisation. However this is not always very easy but the main thing is usually to start the process and eventually the reporter does get someone to comment. More precisely, she calls her potential sources by getting telephone numbers of various organisations. She then introduces herself as a journalist and they form an initial relationship, which later develops into a journalist - source relationship. Some of these contacts will even call her to let her know when something is happening, but she will only attend if the information is newsworthy. She also makes certain to go to conferences where she establishes contact with various sources for future references by exchanging business cards. Chriselda Leuuis, of *The Sowetan*, claims that a journalist or reporter must get out of the office as frequently as is possible. For her, telephone journalism is not the way to go. “To build sources, one must meet people by going to conferences and telling people who you are,” she notes.

Chriselda Leuuis former reporter of *The Sowetan* confirms that sources do make efforts to be noticed or heard by the media. According to Leuuis, journalists get emails from sources marketing themselves. Sometimes these sources can be credible and sometimes they might have no credibility at all. One source of credibility is derived from reputability through publishing or through lobbying and fighting for a cause.

Jillian Green, health reporter of *The Star* says that if she is working on a deadline and in need of sources but they are unavailable immediately, the person that responds after all her efforts to reach someone will be quoted. Chriselda Leuuis, of *The Sowetan* also feels that even with time constraint issues a journalist is sure to pick a credible source even when they are short of time. According to Green, choosing one source over another has to do with their availability, their coherence in an argument and being able to know what they are talking about. She claims that journalists need to conduct research on their sources to know who they are and what they stand for. In other words how newsworthy their information is. At the same time, editors do not determine the sources that a reporter picks.

Government sources are accused of being difficult with information sometimes but this may be according to Leuuis of *The Sowetan*, because government cannot always disclose everything due to bureaucracy. They often try to avoid giving out statements that may cause panic and unrest and they therefore choose to give no comment on most issues. The reason however, why journalists do not understand this is because it is their job to reveal information as it is. At the same time the issue of HIV/AIDS is a very sensitive issue and the government has to be very careful. For example:

> Leuuis of *The Sowetan* happened to be at a dinner conference in the presence of President Thabo Mbeki, and she asked him when the government was going to start the roll out of ARVs, and he could not respond to that question. It was either because he did not know when it was going to start or because the truth might have reflected badly on government and this might have caused panic.

The main objective of the Treatment Action Campaign is to campaign for greater access to HIV treatment for all South Africans, by raising public awareness and understanding about issues surrounding the availability, affordability and use of HIV treatments. According to the TAC website[11], among its objectives in relation to treatment are to campaign for equitable access to affordable treatment for all people with HIV/AIDS; to challenge by means of litigation, lobbying, advocacy and all forms of legitimate social mobilisation, any barrier or obstacle, including unfair discrimination, which limits access to treatment for HIV/AIDS in the private

[11] www.tac.org.za

and public sector; to educate, promote and develop an understanding and commitment within all communities of developments in HIV/AIDS treatment and care.

According to Susie Clark, the Senior Program manager of the AIDS Consortium and the AIDS Consortium website[12], the aims and objectives of this organisation within the community are to contribute to the development and implementation of a conducive legislative and policy framework for a dynamic and effective social policy response to HIV/AIDS; to contribute to an effective response to the key social and economic issues related to the HIV/AIDS pandemic; to actively mobilise and raise consciousness amongst AIDS Consortium members and the broader HIV/AIDS movement behind progressive social transformation.

In terms of the use of a wide range of sources, Clark of the AIDS Consortium believes that the media do not access everyone involved in the management of the pandemic. They have a selected few that they constantly use and this in turn is creating exhaustion in the media audience who grow tired of hearing the same things said over and over again by the same people. The message may be necessary but variety is vital in order to effectively cover all angles of the pandemic and at the same time avoid the possible growing fatigue.

As regards the voices of other sources who are left unheard by the media, Clark of the AIDS Consortium says that it is about time that the real issues are brought out in the media as opposed to egos being satisfied for sources that are only looking to be featured in the press. She has an issue with some NGOs and groups that are not using the media to get the real message out there. Clark however, appreciates the fact that it is a difficult task for the media to decide whom they want to give attention to.

4.4 The use of official sources:

According to Jillian Green *The Star's* health reporter, official sources are valuable because they bring credibility to a story and journalists are aware of this fact. Green concurrs with this but also notes that government sources can sometimes be difficult with their information by declining to provide information.

[12] www.aidsconsortium.org.za

Green of *The Star* does not tend to use official sources more than non-official sources or vice versa. She says, "I use a combination of both so that I can get various arguments." However, she adds that in most cases, where the angle of the story focuses on a particular source, this source will be used most. She also notes that journalists will tend to use alternative sources so as to generally inform the reader and to create a debate around an issue.

In terms of the use of alternative sources and smaller activist groups, Chriselda Leuuis, former reporter of *The Sowetan* claims that as far as she is concerned the National Association for People living with AIDS (NAPWA) for example would be less 'expert' than the Treatment Action Campaign. This is because the NAPWA is being heard less than the TAC is. However, in her opinion NAPWA's strength as an AIDS activist group and its power to gain media attention could be growing everyday.

According to Leuuis of *The Sowetan*, the reason why some sources are more dominant is because they have better strategies. The TAC for example use mobilization which involves campaigns and masses to get their message heard. With actions like 'taking the minister to court', it is difficult not to give them attention and space as the media. The TAC also has had a huge role to play in the government finally rolling out the ARV plan. This is because the TAC in the past always demanded when the government was going to do it, challenging it to fulfill its promises or go to court. They also constantly challenged the health minister fearlessly.

As for the degree of accessibility of sources, Leuuis of *The Sowetan* claims that in her opinion government sources are more accessible. For example, in the Department of Health, to get a comment, one requires to have many contact numbers. This means that one should have a first, a second and third alternative person to talk to. Nevertheless, Leuuis rarely has problems accessing sources because it is also about the relationships you form with sources. If you respect their wishes, then they are often available for a journalist.

4.5 The use of non-official sources

Jillian Green, health reporter of *The Star* notes that the reason why activist and non-official sources appear to be growing as sources of news stories on HIV/AIDS, is that they have realised how powerful the media are and therefore try to provide what the media want. This is their availability to always comment on issues and their commitment to being sources. In other words, "It is playing up to the media by providing emotive stories that are close to people."

Chriselda Leuuis, former reporter of *The Sowetan* comments on the possible growing use of non-official or alternative sources presently by saying that she feels that official sources are not being used any less. It just depends on the particular story. However, reporters appear to be using non-official sources more than they used to because they are trying to be more objective. The government always paints a very positive picture of all situations claiming that all is well and because a story needs balance, when an AIDS activist group gives its' view, it will more often than not be contrary to what the government claims. "The government never says anything is wrong," says Leuuis. Yet the use of official sources remained high because they had 'financial backing' which is necessary for the running of any publication. At some point she remembers being told to "sit down and shut up" (by a colleague in a meeting) when she appeared to be bashing an official source.

As regards activist or alternative/non-official sources, Leuuis of *The Sowetan* notes that most journalists today writing on HIV/AIDS seem to accommodate activist groups like the TAC. In her opinion, the TAC is a prominent activist group which has more or less become an 'expert' source. She adds that using the TAC as a source 'is a good way to go' because government and the TAC are rarely on the same platform and therefore they mostly make the lead story due to their opposing views.

In terms of a possible growing use of non-official sources, Luyanda Ngonyama, the TAC spokesperson for the Gauteng office believes that there has been a shift in terms of giving coverage and attention to civil society members. In the case of the Treatment Action Campaign, he attributes this to the fact that they have useful information to disseminate because they research their facts and they may have access

to information that media may not. This is the reason why the media may constantly need to contact them. As opposed to the tendency by the media to assume that official sources 'know it all' the TAC are proving that other sources that are considered less credible may have something important to say too.

4.6 Source organisations and their tactics

According to Miller and Williams (1998) sources attempt to use and manipulate the media in order to influence a wide variety of debates, agendas and audiences although media strategies are not only formulated to influence public opinion but also local or national government policies. According to Luyanda Ngonyama, Gauteng spokesperson for the TAC, the fact that the TAC are the only AIDS public advocacy group dealing with treatment, already places them at an advantage in terms of getting media attention. The fact also that they are constantly trying to engage government even by the use of the legal system is interesting to the media. The TAC also sends press releases and issue statements to various media houses. Ngonyama of the TAC believes that even if they do not have particular relationships with journalists, they appear to be sympathetic to the TAC because they are a human rights organisation trying to access treatment for the people.

In terms of resources that may be needed to acquire media attention, Ngonyama of the TAC is quick to point out that one cannot provide good information without financial and material resources. Symbolic resources are also equally vital because they bring credibility. Ngonyama notes that "the Treatment Action Campaign could not have been in a position to provide information if they had no financial resources. They needed something 'to go to the media with' in the first place and for this they needed to conduct research. At the same time the media would never have listened to them if they did not have something unique and heavy to give."

Luyanda Ngonyama, Gauteng spokesperson for the Treatment Action Campaign also argues that the TAC has grown in terms of its capacity to be used as sources of HIV treatment news. In the past the attention they got was definitely less than what they get today. For him, making noise consistently and making the government listen to you will get you media attention. "Now we do not have to call the media to be heard, the media calls the TAC."

One may however wonder what will happen when the TAC's mission is fulfilled and the rollout of Antiretrovirals (ARVs) is effected. Will they close shop and will this mean that their voices will not be heard in the media as much? Ngonyama of the TAC points out that beyond just lobbying for the start of the rollout they also are going to continue monitoring the actual rollout and also making sure that there is an allocation of a budget for ARVs among other things. "That will actually be the beginning of our work"

Some sources are less interested in trying to manage the news agenda to influence policy. The goal of activist groups such as OutRage! of the UK, was to impact on media representations and public understanding of the gay community and AIDS. According to Susie Clark, the Senior Program manager of the AIDS Consortium, the organisation (a network of over 1000 members mainly community-based organisations focusing on HIV/AIDS related issues), does not have a media or communications department with a particular role to play. They also do not only focus on treatment issues as can be seen from their objectives, they also focus on a broad spectrum of HIV/AIDS issues as will be shown by their objectives below. Clark of the AIDS Consortium does not see the media as very important in the case of her organisation because they "…play a very different role to that of the Treatment Action Campaign." They actually do not have an advocacy manager at present. She nevertheless feels that it is very essential for the TAC to have a communications department or spokesperson and to also have strategies to use to get attention from the media because this helps to achieve their objective. She is quick to point out that TAC has done a lot in terms of the position of the HIV/AIDS situation in South Africa today.

In terms of strategies that they may have in place to get media opportunities, Susie Clark the Senior Programme manager of the AIDS Consortium is quick to point out that they do not have any. She refers to the journalism and AIDS resource centres at the University of the Witwatersrand and the Nelson Mandela foundation as places where journalists can get whatever information they need on AIDS. According to her, all the members of the AIDS Consortium can assume the role of spokesperson. To communicate their cause they go to the key stakeholders and have a round table with them where everyone at the table voices their concerns. These are the NGOs,

government, civil society members, the private and the public sector. The AIDS Consortium deals with the people that are directly involved in the pandemic and these are the community members and the key stakeholders. To familiarise themselves with the public, they circulate their newsletters and they also have a website which they use to get their message across.

4.7 Conclusion:

This chapter has presented all the data that was gathered through the research process of the study. The range of sources used in the samples analysed, the contexts of the sources and the responses from four interviewees have been detailed in the various sections. All findings have been very informative and they have already begun to assist in answering the research questions of this report. However, a thorough analysis can only be achieved by taking all these findings and analysing them against the theoretical framework of this study and the works of other authors, as will be done in the following chapter.

Chapter 5 Data Analysis

The concept of 'primary definition' by Hall (1978) and his colleagues claims that official news sources and the institutions closely associated with the capitalist state routinely set the terms of the news agenda not as a consequence of conspiracy but because news journalists working within the constraints of a pressurized news production process, identify them as 'authoritative sources' or 'accredited witnesses' (Hall et al., 1978: 58). However, Schlesinger and a host of other authors (Schlesinger, 1990; Anderson, 1993; Miller and Williams, 1993; Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994), contend that empirically it can be demonstrated that organisations such as non-official sources or marginal political groups can successfully set the agenda or primarily define, in particular policy arenas. This chapter centers its debate on these two thoughts and seeks to determine the situation of sources in the South African context through the incorporation of the findings and the theoretical framework. Fundamentally, the objective of this chapter is to answer the research questions of the study.

5.1 A lack of diversity of sources

While the findings suggest that a range of sources is being used, there is also evidence that the range is not that wide. It is clear that the same sources are being accessed repeatedly. From a total of 56 articles in *The Star*, 80 official sources and 46 non-official sources were used; from a total of 31 articles in *The Sowetan* 59 official sources and 26 non-official sources were used. This suggests that there is a dominance of official sources in both publications. Hall et al., (1978) note that official sources are the 'powerful' and these are the various institutions of the state, the leaders and senior figures within the main political parties, the institutions of law and security, and also the established interest groups close to government. Manning (2001) also notes that these 'accredited' sources are the representatives of major social institutions, which are 'accredited'. 'Accredited' in this case means that these sources have been qualified as credible and expert by the society. Either they represent 'the people' (MPs, Ministers, etc.) or organized interest groups and strategically important sections of society (industry, the City, etc), which makes them enjoy a kind of legitimacy in the eyes of journalists by virtue of their status. Official sources in the study were therefore categorised using the above definitions. It must be noted that government

sources appear to be the most frequently used by both publications, suggesting that most journalists were pursuing government sources more. Fishman (1980) concurrs with this idea when he suggests that the nature of newsgathering is such that reporters get the largest share of their news from official government agencies.

Nevertheless, as is noted from the articles in *The Star,* of the 37 government sources under the official source group, 11 are Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang leading the pack, while the rest are shared among government and cabinet spokesmen as well as other ministers. In the articles from *The Sowetan* out of 39 government sources from the official sources, eight are the Health Minister, while the rest are the other government and cabinet spokesmen and other ministers. Both papers demonstrate that she is a frequent source and therefore a key source; although, being the Health Minister, this is only logical. However, she is often a source in ways that discredit her. This means that the frequent use of a source does not necessarily mean that the source brings value to a story or that a source is dominant. In one of the articles analysed from *The Star*, it says,

> No matter how often she is parodied in the media, Manto Tshabalala-Msimang will continue to sing praises of lemons, garlic and olive oil.

The President is only used once having been quoted from his weekly ANC online letter. Since he is not used in *The Star,* an assumption can be made that on matters concerning AIDS, journalists are not keen on using him as a source either because of his stand on HIV/AIDS or because he is not easily available.

The second most highly used official sources are the health professionals. Thirteen health professionals in *The Star* were used while they rank third in *The Sowetan* where there are three health professionals. There is generally a low use of health professionals by *The Sowetan* as compared to *The Star* although the total number of official sources and the total number of articles analysed by *The Star* is higher than that of *The Sowetan*. Nevertheless, there are three pharmaceutical companies used as sources and three health professionals used as sources in *The Sowetan.* From the articles in *The Star* there are12 pharmaceutical company sources which was close to the 13 health professionals sources also used in *The Star*. This demonstrates a

relatively equal accessing of both the health professionals and the pharmaceutical companies in each paper. This could suggest that because the two categories are equally accessed they both have an equal value as sources.

In the articles from *The Star,* among the non-official sources, AIDS activists are used the most as sources where out of 17 sources four are Zackie Achmat the head of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) while all the rest are other TAC officials. The National Association for People living with AIDS (NAPWA) and the AIDS Law Project (ALP) are used as sources once showing that TAC was frequently used as a source in this publication (15 sources). Of the 13 AIDS activists used as sources in *The Sowetan,* Zackie Achmat and Nathan Geffen are used six times and three times respectively. Two other TAC sources are used. This means that in total the TAC are used 11 times out of the total 13 while NAPWA and the AIDS Consortium each are used once. It is therefore clear from both publications that TAC is the key source in the AIDS activists' category.

At the same time, when Jillian Green of *The Star* ranks her HIV/AIDS treatment sources, the following emerges: the Treatment Action Campaign, the AIDS Consortium, the National Association for People living with AIDS (NAPWA), research units and the Department of Health (DoH). It is obvious that she thinks first of AIDS activists as her sources. Perhaps it is because they are easier to access or maybe because they appear more credible at present. Nevertheless, she does not forget to mention that the Department of Health are among her more frequently used treatment sources. This clearly shows that accessing of government sources still remains high even in the wake of a possible growing use of alternative sources. Chriselda Leuuis of *The Sowetan* also regards TAC and Zackie Achmat as among her main treatment sources. She in fact labels Zackie as an 'expert' because he is a Person living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA). This suggests that because there is no clear distinction between official or non-official/activist sources, they can also be classified as experts. Evidently the state of being either a non-official or official source can be very dynamic. A source can move from being a non-official source to being an official source. It will highly depend on the strategies that this source will utilize to gain access to media opportunities and this will include having financial and symbolic resources.

Chriselda Leuuis of *The Sowetan* also notes that she regards People living with HIV/AIDS (PLHAs) as very important and credible sources because they are 'experts' by virtue of living with HIV/AIDS. However, only 7 PLHAs sources are used in *The Star* yet they are the real 'experts'. In *The Sowetan,* only one PLHA is used proving a very low accessing of PLHAs as sources. Generally the use of PLHAs as sources is relatively low for both publications while they should among the most highly accessed sources.

From the articles in *The Star*, nine opposition parties are used as sources. The Democratic Alliance was used five times and the former New National Party three times. The United Democratic Movement was used only once as a source. Mike Waters of the DA is the most frequently used source (three times out of the five). In the articles in *The Sowetan* four of the six opposition party sources are DA's Mike Waters while the African Christian Democratic Party and NNP each were used once as a source. This is a clear indication that in both publications the Democratic Alliance is the key source among the opposition parties. This can be explained by the fact that the DA is the most dominant opposition party in South Africa. It could also be that because the DA constantly criticises government policies vigourously and this enables them to catch the media attention.

In articles from *The Star* there are five academic sources. Four are sources from a university while one is a study. In articles from *The Sowetan*, there are three academic sources that hail from studies. The use of academic sources is however not as high would be expected in relation to the rest of the official sources, considering the fact in terms of 'expertise', they should rank very high.

In both dailies, two sources that come from the media are used. From the articles in *The Star,* the editor of a medical journal and Health-E are sourced. From the articles in *The Sowetan*, the sources used are the editor of a journal as well as another medical journal. This could suggest that the media are not being used s sources that much in HIV/AIDS treatment issues. When they are consulted, then medical journals and editors are a key source suggesting that even though the media are used as sources, journalists continue to rely on specialist opinions. It is however worth noting that

while using the media as active sources, *The Star* also has a tendency to source news from the Health- E news service and this could have some advantages as well as disadvantages. It is advantageous because the information will most likely be well researched. However the information will be generic and so any paper will be in a position to reproduce the story as it is. This definitely eliminates the element of exclusiveness or uniqueness especially with a sensitive topic as that of HIV/AIDS.

When the concept of 'primary definition' was first formulated by Hall and his colleagues (1978), it regarded the trade union elites as 'primary definers'. The ensuing political marginalisation of unions throughout the advanced capitalist world (Edwards et al., 1986; Ferner and Hyman, 1992) has underlined the force of Schlesinger's critique; that an ahistorical understanding of primary definition will miss the process through which the capacity to primarily define is eroded (Manning, 2001). Therefore in this study trade unions have been categorised as non-official sources. COSATU is the only trade union source used in both publications. In *The Star* unions are used twice as sources while in *The Sowetan* only once. Although not very highly used as a source, this suggests that COSATU is one among the key sources.

When it comes to the source category of celebrities, *The Star* uses Nelson Mandela sourcing him mainly as a leading personality and not as a politician. *The Sowetan* does not use a single celebrity as a source. The fact that not too many sources are used from this category from both publications is puzzling given the fact that celebrities often have a big influence on societal values. However, it may be the case that not too many celebrities in South Africa were speaking out on AIDS related issues regularly and readily during the study period.

Traditional healers are used three times in *The Star* and two times in *The Sowetan* as sources, proving that they get relative media attention. Traditional healers and traditional medicine have in the past been considered 'primitive' and for this reason their association with AIDS has been controversial. Nevertheless, their use as sources shows that their voices were still being given a chance in the articles from the time of the study period.

In general, some sources are over-used which translates to the use of a very narrow range of sources by both publications. This suggests that the range of sources accessed in the articles analysed was not very wide. Susie Clark also notes this fact when she claims that not all available sources are being used. Instead she notes that there is a tendency to use the same sources over and over again, which she believes, causes a loss of interest in readers.

5.2 Value a source brings to a story

Within all the sample articles analysed in *The Star* seven people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHAs) in total are used. There is a paradox posed by the scanty use of people living with HIV/AIDS considering that they are in an advantaged position to tell their HIV/AIDS story. Monroe (1992) argues that the AIDS discourse has to be pragmatic. In other words, to be effective it should involve the people living with HIV/AIDS. According to the Siyam'kela Policy project[13], the findings suggest that the print media seldom use PLHAs as sources even though people living with HIV/AIDS, with their living experience should be an important source of information about the epidemic. The reasons for this are unclear: are the media reluctant to use PLHAs, are they difficult to access or are there a limited number of people living with HIV/AIDS willing to talk to the media? This needs to be established by a separate study.

Moreover, four of the people living with HIV/AIDS used as sources are black females while two of the people living with HIV/AIDS are black males and the last is a white female. From the articles in *The Sowetan* the only person living with HIV/AIDS used as a source is a black female. From this analysis it is evident that one group of PLHAs – the black female-is most frequently used as a source. One could argue that the media may be perpetuating the stereotype that AIDS is a black female disease. Further they could be insinuating that a credible PLHA source has to be black and female. One could also argue that the female PLHAs are easier to get and easier to talk to. The study also notes a very low use of white people living with HIV/AIDS if any. This

[13] Siyam'kela, January- March 2003, Examining HIV/AIDS stigma in selected South African media. A Summary. A joint project of the policy project, the Centre for the Study of AIDS at the University of Pretoria, USAID and the Chief Directorate: HIV/AIDS and TB, National Department of Health designed to explore HIV related stigma, an aspect of the AIDS epidemic, which has had a profoundly negative effect on the response to people living with and/or affected by HIV/AIDS.

implies that the disease does not infect whites and this could be harmful to the white community who might imagine that they are immune to the disease. Journalists will often argue that they are reporting the reality and that white people living with HIV/AIDS are in the private hospitals because they have a better income and therefore are not accessible. However, since journalists are expected to be by nature investigative and their job is to look for 'news' they should take the initiative to look for white people living with HIV/AIDS as sources as opposed to settling for the easiest target. In other words, more PLHAs from various social groups need to be used as sources in order to reduce the possibility of stereotypes developing around HIV/AIDS.

5.2.1 Source Contexts

In relation to the context of the sources (from *The Star,* see table 3b), there are a total of 15 interviews, thirteen statements, three conferences and two research reports and one press release from the 15 articles analysed. Out of the 15 interviews five are government sources. There are three AIDS activist sources who were interviewed. At the same time, the two people living with HIV/AIDS used as sources from the 15 articles were both interviewed. Samples one and three both have sources that were all interviewed. As previously mentioned, an interview as it is done on a one-on-one basis brings more value and credibility to a story. This therefore suggests that in samples one and three which have sources who were all interviewed; more value can be placed on the stories. In contrast, less value is derived from samples like number thirteen, which had all the contexts of its sources as statements.

Within the articles from *The Sowetan* (see table 4b), there are 7 sources that were statements/press releases, seven were interviews, one was a conference, one was a report and two were letters. Of the 7 statements/press releases, all are from government sources. This suggests that government sources issue statements more than any other sources do. According to Miller and Williams (1998) off-the-record briefings, quotes or information may be used by any source, but it is government sources who are best able to use them to strategic advantage because they have access to more information and crucially are the locus of decision making. Of the seven interviews, five are non-official sources while one is a government source. This could

mean that activist and opposition party sources are more available in person and therefore the use of interviews, which adds to the value brought to a story.

5.3 Source strategies to get media access

According to Miller and Williams (1998) a range of interactions between the media and social institutions are reflected in the strategies deployed to influence the media. In recent years, publicity and the cultivation of both formal and informal contacts with the media have been seen as more and more important and organisations of all kinds have began to allocate more time and money exclusively to media relations activities. This has also led to source organisations vesting more in media training for its workforce.

Several strategies have been employed by source organisations in trying to achieve access to media opportunities in the South African context. Availability is a very important issue when it comes to choosing one source over another or when determining who gets quoted, as has been observed by Jillian Green, health reporter of *The Star*. When working on deadlines the available source will generally get quoted. In short, if one is the only person available then they will be the person quoted. This could be a strategy that non-official sources have picked-up on, making themselves always readily available for quoting and that way replacing the official sources who may not always be available for comment. In one of the articles analysed from *The Star,* it had been noted at the end of the article that,

> 'Several calls were made to the department of health for comment on the reasons behind the delays but the department did not respond'

This is evidence of the unavailability of some government sources to comment. Yet another one said,

> 'The spokesperson of the Department of Health could not be reached for comment'

Another said,

> 'Cabinet spokesperson and health ministry spokesperson not available for comment at time of print'

One may wonder why it appears as if activist/non-official source were never unavailable. Perhaps they were really never unavailable or their unavailability meant

nothing to the journalists and hence was never published. Whatever the case, the non-official sources always appear to be available for comment and this is an advantage for them.

The main objective of the Treatment Action Campaign is to campaign for greater access to HIV treatment for all South Africans, by raising public awareness and understanding about issues surrounding the availability, affordability and use of HIV treatments. TAC is therefore unique in that it focuses on treatment issues. According to Luyanda Ngonyama Gauteng spokesperson of the TAC, the fact that the TAC is the only AIDS public advocacy group dealing with treatment, already places them at an advantage in terms of acquiring media attention on treatment issues. Being the only group of its kind, means that they are privileged in terms of getting media attention and treatment being among the widest covered topics of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, which means that they are at the centre of the news.

Credibility is also vital for source organisations trying to get media opportunities. Journalists want a source that is sure about what they are saying. In other words coherence in an argument and expert knowledge in one's field is essential. Jillian Green, health reporter of *The Star* notes that journalists need to conduct research on their sources to know who they are and what they stand for and how newsworthy their information is. Chriselda Leuuis, former reporter of *The Sowetan* also confirms that journalists get emails from sources marketing themselves. However, a journalist has to ascertain that the source is credible. Sources may become credible by either frequently publishing their work, by lobbying and also by fighting for a cause. Clearly even with time constraint as an issue, credibility of a source is vital and a journalist not his editor normally picks his sources. Ngonyama, Gauteng spokesperson of the TAC also confirms that sources do a lot of research to ascertain factual knowledge that is credible so as to appeal to journalists. He attributes the Treatment Action Campaign's success to well researched information that media may not have access to and hence the need by the media to constantly give them access. As opposed to the tendency by the media to assume that official sources 'know it all' the TAC are proving that other sources that are considered as less credible can have valid and credible information as well.

The TAC moreover goes a step further to send press releases and to issue statements to various media houses. This is a major strategy that sources can use to gain media attention. While Pluralists and Marxists have both come to see official sources as dominating the news agenda perhaps it is inappropriate to suggest that non-official sources do not have the power to do the same. Evidently, the power of official sources comes from their ability to exploit the organisational routines of the news media. This is complemented by the lack of financial and cultural resources at the disposal of non-official sources as is noted by Goldenberg (1975). The 'resource poor' face almost insurmountable hurdles in gaining access to the news. This may be different for non-official sources that nevertheless employ strategies to gain access to the media.

Evidently, one requirement for a source trying to acquire media attention is by being 'loud' which might often translate to being heard. In other words, having your name and your activities out there for all to see and hear almost everyday. Chriselda Leuuis, former reporter of *The Sowetan*, regards the National Association for People living with HIV/AIDS for example to be less expert than the Treatment Action Campaign because they are heard less in comparison to the TAC. However, she also notes that their strength as activist groups gaining media attention could be growing everyday. As mentioned earlier, their position as sources is not necessarily permanent. It must therefore be noted that there can be no definite divide between official and non-official sources and their status is dynamic. A formally alternative source can transform over time into an official source by virtue of the strategies it employs to get used frequently as a source and ultimately become a primary definer of the news agenda.

According to Leuuis former reporter of *The Sowetan*, some sources may be more powerful than others because they have not taken into account strategies that can be used to strengthen their position as sources. The Treatment Action Campaign for example use mobilization to get their message heard. Leuuis also notes that stories like 'taking the Minister to court' obviously catch media attention. Also the TAC's huge role in the governments Antiretroviral (ARV) rollout plan meant that that they were at the centre of HIV news. At the same time by challenging the government to fulfill its promises or go to court, not to mention constantly challenging the minister fearlessly, the limelight was on them nationally and internationally. Luyanda

Ngonyama Gauteng spokesperson of the TAC also feels that the fact that they are constantly trying to engage government by the use of the legal system is fascinating to the media. The Treatment Action Campaign uses the campaign method to get their message across. Notice how when detailing their objectives in relation to treatment they focus on campaign methods such as 'lobbying, litigation, advocacy and all forms of legitimate social mobilisation'.

According to Manning (2001) the long term or overall success or failure of news media strategies is more often than not related to the structures of authority in society and the unequal distribution of material and symbolic resources. Access to a secure financial base is a key resource for any organisation, which wants to pursue particular aims. Luyanda Ngonyama, Gauteng spokesperson of the TAC, explains that one cannot provide good information without financial or material resources. "Treatment Action Campaign could not have been in a position to provide information if they had no financial resources. They needed something to 'go to the media with' in the first place and for this they needed to research. At the same time the media would never have considered them if they did not have something unique and heavy to give." Campaigning can also be a very expensive exercise and TAC therefore constantly needs financial resources to achieve its goals. The question of financial resources is related to the degree to which an organisation is institutionalised. Government departments clearly exist on a more secure footing than do AIDS/gay or lesbian activist groups. This means that they have to find a way to sustain themselves constantly. Miller et al., (1998) appear to suggest that financial capital is vital, when they suggest that for resource-poor groups and activist organisations, 'lobbying' is either a luxury they can ill afford or is eschewed for ideological reasons. Manning (2001) has also noted that there is not a simple dichotomous division between the powerful and the powerless but rather a variety of positions for non-official sources along the continuum, determined by their command over the resources and opportunities identified.

Symbolic resources are also vital. The TAC symbolises the constant fight for access to HIV treatment and that is a symbolic resource. The TAC gives the media what they need as Jillian Green health reporter of *The Star* puts it. They also symbolise a source of credible, regular information. Theoretically, Schlesinger (1990) is quite clear about

the value of retaining a model that describes the ways in which powerfully dominant groups in society can exploit their control of material and symbolic resources to secure more frequent access to the news media. Goldenberg (1975) notes that a corollary to the power of the source is that resource poor organisations have great difficulty getting the media's attention. Accordingly, if they are to be covered, they must fine-tune to modes of organisational interaction more like those of established governmental and business organisations and this is evident from the strategies that were and continue to be used by sources like the Treatment Action Campaign or the THT (Terrence Higgins Trust) of Britain.

However, the TAC did not always have the attention of the media. They used tactics like 'making noise consistently' and 'having the government listen to them' to acquire media attention. As Manning (2001) notes, the politics of news sources is dynamic. In other words the positions of particular non-official sources may change over time. As their command over the resources and opportunities identified grows or diminishes, so their position on the continuum between the more powerful and the politically marginalized will change. Luyanda Ngonyama, Gauteng spokesperson of the TAC, claims that beyond just lobbying for the start of the rollout they are also going to continue monitoring the actual rollout and also making sure that there is an allocation of a budget for Antiretrovirals among other things. Judging from these comments these strategies will continue to be used. Interestingly now, the media need them as sources so now they sought them out too. As Gans (1981) notes the relationship between sources of information and the news media has been described as a 'dance' in which the sources take the lead. In this case TAC could be considered to be in the lead.

It is therefore justified to agree with Goldenberg (1976) and Gitlin (1980) who posit that official sources do not always succeed in setting the news agenda. They imply that non-official sources can sometimes triumph in setting the agenda of news. Although it has been shown that 'resource poor groups' face many problems in gaining news coverage, compromises and accommodations can be made for such groups to gain access to the news media. This then confers with the idea by Schlesinger (1990) that primary definition is temporal and ideological. Schlesinger views the model as deterministic and static, so he proposes a less rigid theory of

domination that does not accept the triumph of official sources as an inevitable, pre-determined outcome but something to be struggled over and which in certain circumstances can fail.

After analysing the objectives of The AIDS Consortium one can see that the kind of mobilisation that they practise takes place within their members as opposed to fighting for a cause that is being prevented by a particular group like government. According to Susie Clark the Senior Program manager of the AIDS Consortium, they work with the key stakeholders to better a situation. As is evident from their objectives, they mainly contribute to bettering a situation. There is little mention of the use of campaign methods from their objectives. The key word they frequently refer to is – to contribute: to contribute to the development and implementation of a conducive legislative and policy framework for a dynamic and effective social policy response to HIV/AIDS; to contribute to an effective response to the key social and economic issues related to the HIV/AIDS pandemic; to actively mobilise and raise consciousness amongst AIDS Consortium members and the broader HIV/AIDS movement behind progressive social transformation.

At the same time, unlike the Treatment Action Campaign, which particularly focuses on treatment issues, the AIDS Consortium focuses on a broad spectrum of issues within HIV/AIDS. These key areas of focus are the promotion of equality and removal of unfair discrimination; the transformation of the Health Care Service; access to affordable medicines and HIV/AIDS treatment; social security and services; local reconstruction and development. This suggests that unlike the TAC who might have an advantage by the mere fact that they are the only treatment advocacy organisation, the AIDS Consortium will lack that uniqueness and therefore organisations such as theirs that may require media attention might not be in a position to get it. Fortunately as Clark of the AIDS Consortium is quick to note, the AIDS Consortium does not require media attention.

In terms of strategies that they may have in place to get media opportunities, Clark of the AIDS Consortium, was quick to point out that they did not have those. She referred to the journalism and AIDS resource centres at the University of the Witwatersrand and the Nelson Mandela foundation as places where journalists can get whatever information they need on AIDS. They are not as a group really interested in

media attention. As far as she is concerned the stakeholders matter more. This is not new because moralist pressure groups such as Family and Youth Concern of the UK, concentrate on lobbying and 'educational' work in preference to targeting the media. Their main work is distributing propaganda materials to educational establishments. Both organisations see the media and public opinion as important but secondary (Miller and Williams, 1998). The AIDS Consortium almost operates under the same ideology. Clark does not see the media as very important in their case because they "... play a very different role to that of the Treatment Action Campaign." In fact, their advocacy manager is no longer present and they do not have a media or communications department. This organisation shows a lack of interest in advocacy issues.

However, Susie Clark the Senior Program manager of the AIDS Consortium feels that it is very necessary for TAC to have a communications department or spokesperson and to even have strategies to use to get attention from the media because this helps to achieve their objective. A source organisation such as this may connote some form of sincererity as compared to other groups; as if they are fighting for a cause selflessly. Whether this suggests that source strategising connotes a sense of insincerity in trying to achieve a purpose, needs to be established. According to Clark all the members of the AIDS Consortium can be spokespersons and to communicate their cause they go to the key stakeholders and have a round table discussion with them. The key stakeholders refer to the NGOs, government, civil society members, the private and the public sector. For the public to know them they circulate their newsletters and they have a website which they use to get their message out there.

Perhaps what can be derived from her comments is the fact that different organisations with different needs must have different approaches. Obviously the AIDS consortium cannot use the same strategies that the Treatment Action Campaign uses because it has different objectives. Evidently though, TACs strategies appear to have assisted in achieving its goals because Clark of the AIDS Consortium is quick to point out that TAC has done a lot in terms of the position of the HIV/AIDS situation in South Africa presently.

Hall et al., (1978) argue that the structure of access necessarily secures strategic advantages for 'primary definers', not just initially but also subsequently for as long

as a debate or controversy lasts. Hall's concept of primary definition, also asserts that counter-definitions can never dislodge it. However, this may not necessarily be the case as has been shown in the case of the TAC, and the fact that Hall's concept of 'primary definition' asserts that it cannot be dislodged is completely erroneous. It may be true that the structure of access does secure strategic advantages, but this is not always the case. Some official sources can fail in their quest to primarily define topics while some non-official sources through effective strategies can become primary definers. As Schlesinger (1990) argues, Hall's original definition underestimates the extent to which definitions are contested and negotiated. The strategies employed by particular subordinate or politically marginal groups to gain access to the news agenda setting process have been charted and relationships of exchange or negotiation described in detail. The evidence suggests then that it is possible in certain circumstances to contest or resist definitions offered by the powerful and to exert power in a counter direction. This is again the case with organisations like the TAC.

5.3.1 The TAC - an 'expert' non-official source?

Can source organisations like the TAC or the Terrence Higgins Trust of Britain still be considered non-official sources when yet they appear to enjoy the same amount of 'authority' and 'expertise' given to 'official sources' by the media?

It is evident that within the category of non-official sources some are used far more frequently than others. This suggests that some sources within this category of sources are getting more media access and opportunities than others are. In short, there are some key sources within these non-official sources, which appear to behave and to be treated by the media like official sources. They get to be heard through effective strategies (public relations or others) and consequently appear to be more expert than other non-official sources. It is very interesting to note how the 'hierarchy of credibility' appears to be applying to the non-official sources. The focus in the past has been on official sources trying to dominate non-official sources, but perhaps some research should go into the dominance of some non-official sources over others in this category. There are definitely other non-official source organisations who feel that they are not getting access to the media. Evidently, the fact that some AIDS activist groups are given more access will not guarantee all of activist sources or even non-official sources equal treatment.

The theory of primary definition is criticised by Schlesinger (1990) and others as being too inflexible in its attempt to distinguish those institutions with the capacity to primarily define the news from those without. In other words some institutions may be underestimated or overestimated in terms of their power to define news primarily. This has been noted in the case of non-official sources like the Terrence Higgins Trust of Britain and the TAC being underestimated because they are alternative sources. Through strategies such as those discussed above, the TAC has managed to gain access to media opportunities and to 'primarily define' AIDS issues in South Africa. The two organisations have proved that given the success of their strategies, a theory of 'primary definition' should not be rigid.

It is now an issue of debate whether to term sources organisations like this as official or non-official sources. They may have the same advantages that an official source has but whether that makes them official sources is still debatable. Perhaps it is safer to call them 'expert' non-official sources.

5.4 A possible growing use of non-official sources (non-expert and activist sources) in the South African press?

From a study done on the coverage of AIDS news by the media in South Africa, the Policy project - Siyam'kela, government officials, medical professionals or health care workers and activists constituted 44% of total number of sources used, apparently because they were regarded as having 'expert' knowledge. In other words official sources were the dominant sources. From the analysis of the articles used in this study, in *The Star* there were 82 official sources and 44 non-official sources used while in *The Sowetan* there are 60 official sources and 25 non-official sources used. This suggests that there was a higher use of official sources in both publications. In the concept of primary definition by Hall et al., (1978) posits that the media is 'structurally biased' to official sources. The 'result of this structured preference given in the media to the opinions of the powerful is that these spokesmen become the 'primary definers of topics' and they 'establish the initial definition or primary interpretation of the topic in question' (Hall et al., 1978: 58). However, this is debatable because Hall et al., imply that non-official sources may not have equal power to define topics 'primarily'. This is flawed because from the analysis of articles

done in this study, it is clear that the TAC is one of the 'primary definers' of HIV treatment issues in South Africa.

This is also evident from journalists who appear to slant towards the use of non-official/alternative sources as their main treatment news sources. As mentioned earlier, when Jillian Green the health reporter of *The Star* ranks HIV/AIDS treatment sources the following emerges: the Treatment Action Campaign, the AIDS Consortium, the National Association of people living with HIV/AIDS, research units and the Department of Health. Perhaps AIDS activist sources are easier to access or are more credible on this issue. Noteworthy however, is the fact that she does not leave out the Department of Health, which is an official source. This perhaps suggests that official sources are still important to journalists. The data collected shows that, official sources dominate in the articles collected on both papers that were analysed. Ultimately, the use of official sources will remain high because these sources represent the most powerful institutions and therefore using them as sources comes with certain advantages like financial backing which is vital for a media house to run smoothly.

In terms of the value that she places on official sources as a journalist, Jillian Green, health reporter of *The Star* notes that official sources bring credibility and legitimacy to a story. The issue of credibility appears to be a basic necessity for a source to be valuable. However, governments will sometimes decline to give information and journalists will turn to credible non-official sources because they are available. In most cases however, these non-official sources will always be available for comment. Their only task remains proving their credibility and many alternative sources have picked up on this tip and always try to have factual information.

As for the possible growth of activist and non-official sources in the HIV/AIDS stories, Green of *The Star* says that these 'alternative sources' have realised how powerful the media are. They therefore give the media what they need to get their attention and this way they create opportunities for themselves to be key sources. In short, they make sure that they are always available to comment on issues. Hall (1978) and his colleagues have suggested that the 'powerful' have a built in advantage in the scramble to set news agendas or define news issues in particular ways. They

continue to argue that 'powerful' institutions will almost always succeed in shaping the news agendas and interpretative frameworks constructed by journalists because they are positioned at the top of a hierarchy of credibility. What Hall and his colleagues may have failed to verify is that 'powerful' is a relative term that may in this case, be used to mean official or non-official sources that have influence over the defining of topics. TAC may be one such source that is as Jillian Green the health reporter of *The Star* puts it, 'playing up to the media by providing emotive stories that are close to people.' At the same time, Schudson (2003) notes that the regularity of news publication means news organisations have a craving for a readily available, reliable flow of information. If the media get this from non-official sources, then they will no doubt use them as regular sources.

Most journalists seem to accommodate the TAC because they are regarded as 'experts'. At the same time they have information that the media need and is credible. According to Chriselda Leuuis, former reporter of *The Sowetan*, the TAC is 'a prominent activist group' which has more or less become an 'expert' source. Although Hall implies that official sources are the 'primary definers of topics' while the non-official sources are the 'secondary definers of topics', it is clear that the TAC even though theoretically is a non-official source, is able to be a primary definer of the treatment topic. As was noted earlier, it is obvious that TAC has shaped the debate on HIV/AIDS treatment in South Africa. Manning (2001) notes that it is not suggested in *Policing the Crisis* that other possible sources including those who might contest the primary definitions of the powerful, will be barred from any access to news agendas but that their views or interpretations will be regarded as *secondary definitions*. Once again, it is flawed to assume that non-official sources cannot primarily define topics because as this study has proved the TAC was able to do it. Nonetheless, Leuuis of *The Sowetan*, has also noted that accessing the TAC is advantageous because government and the TAC often have opposing views and therefore they make lead stories. Perhaps this might explain why the TAC and the government appear to be ever in competition.

Leuuis of *The Sowetan* feels that official sources are not being used any less than non-official sources are. However, reporters do appear to be using non-official sources more than they used to perhaps because they are looking to be objective by getting

both sides of the arguments. This is evident from the data gathered which clearly indicates a great reliance on non-official sources. When the government sources claim that everything is running smoothly, more often than not the alternative sources (activists or opposition parties) will claim otherwise. This clearly creates a debate around an issue. Jillian Green the health reporter of *The Star* also suggests this when she notes that using both official and non-official sources creates a debate around an issue therefore informs the reader more. Journalists want to make a good story; preferably one that exhausts various viewpoints. This could explain why they are presently using non-official sources more than they did in the past. With issues like HIV, which are controversial and very delicate it is vital that many voices be heard. But this according to Susie Clark of the AIDS Consortium, is not happening. She reckons that not all voices are being heard and this is causing fatigue in the reader. However, Green of *The Star* is quick to note that that in most cases, where the angle of the story focuses on a particular source, this source will obviously be used most. Nevertheless she agrees that journalists have to use alternative sources to inform the reader and generally to create a debate around an issue.

Nonetheless, there has been a shift in terms of giving coverage to civil society members as far as Luyanda Ngonyama, Gauteng spokesperson for the TAC is concerned. Human rights issues automatically gain media attention and therefore journalists will appear to be very attentive to the TAC. Although the Treatment Action Campaign does not have particular relationships with journalists, their sympathy to the TAC is perhaps humane because they are trying to access treatment for the people.

5.5 'The source' in a South African context

Getting a source that a journalist can rely on for factual information and availability to comment upon issues can be difficult. Jillian Green the health reporter of *The Star*, notes that in most cases she goes through the spokesperson of the organisation who eventually leads her to someone who can comment. This suggests that she is after both legitimacy or credibility. Chriselda Leuuis, former reporter for *The Sowetan* on the other hand claims that journalists must leave the office to get sources as opposed to relying on telephone journalism. Columnists Joseph and Stewart Alsop (1958) urged journalists half a century ago to live by the rule of the feet-which in

Washington terms meant that a reporter should try to see - not telephone - at least four officials or politicians every working day.

As far as Chriselda Leuuis, former reporter of *The Sowetan* is concerned however, government sources are the most accessible. This claim could hold true because from the data collected it was evident that the most frequent sources accessed were government sources. But the frequency of official sources can also be explained by the fact that there are often many people one can contact in government, such that if one is not available one of the others might be. As Leuuis of *The Sowetan* suggests, in the Department of Health for example, to get a comment, one requires to have all the available numbers. This translates to having a first, a second and a third alternative person to talk to. Here the issue of good relationships with sources is raised. Sources talk to each other and a journalist with a bad reputation in terms of relationships with sources might have a hard time getting sources that are willing to comment.

Nevertheless, some articles show that attempts to reach certain government officials were futile. According to Leuuis of *The Sowetan* there is always a valid reason why the government officials will not comment on an issue. Sometimes, this reflects badly on them but at the same time, they must do their jobs. Obviously the public as well as journalists will not always understand this, but perhaps the government may justify this by claiming they keep the public sane by not issuing comments that would cause panic. In the example of the President, as Leuuis of *The Sowetan* suggests, he chose not to issue a comment on the roll-out of Antiretrovirals because at the time it was safer thing to do. It is also important to bear in mind that the issue of HIV/AIDS is a very sensitive one and therefore the government has to be extra careful.

However, Susie Clark, the Senior Program manager at the AIDS Consortium does feel that the media does not use as sources everyone involved in the management of the pandemic. This could be true as was shown by the common sources that both Green of *The Star* and Leuuis of *The Sowetan* selected when asked to name key sources in terms of HIV treatment news. They have a particular few that they constantly use and this is creating weariness among the audiences who grow tired of hearing the same things said over and over again by the same people. Kanyi Ndaki from Plus-News notes that the problem with depending on government and organisations like the TAC

for comment is that smaller groups which also address the pandemic in the communities in which AIDS is rampant, are largely ignored and appear not to exist in the fine print of a published newspaper. The message that the 'over-accessed' source has to give may be necessary but variety is vital in order to effectively cover all angles of the pandemic and at the same time avoid the possibility of a growing exhaustion. This could be considered as a way forward for sourcing of HIV treatment news.

In one article for example, only Zackie Achmat was used as a source. It was a news story with the headline 'AIDS takes a heavy toll on young female activists' the story was about how the TAC had lost 100 of its leaders to AIDS most of who were women. The source context was a ceremony. Was he the only source that the writer could have used to write this story? Certainly someone else should have been contacted to comment on this issue. The more the sources a story has, the more well researched an article. This story was perhaps taken directly from the news wire and it probably would never have been printed had it been a source less credible than Achmat is. This might suggest that he has become an expert source and maybe even an official source. It could also suggest that too much voice is being given to a few activists and non-official sources as was suggested by Susie Clark the Senior Program manager of the AIDS Consortium.

In looking for a way forward, Clark of the AIDS Consortium feels that it is about time that the real issues are brought out in the media as opposed to egos being satisfied with sources that are only after being featured in the press. Perhaps the sources with the real information and real issues are not being given a chance to voice their concerns. She has an issue with some NGOs and groups that are not using the media to get the real message out there. However, she does appreciate the fact that it is a difficult task for the media to decide whom they want to give attention to. Maybe the media should endeavour to search for a variety of sources so that a cross-section of views can be heard and also to avoid situations where some sources become over-accessed while others are ignored and therefore not all the issues are heard. Hall et al., (1978) agree with this argument when they note that as a consequence of what journalists conceive as professional practices of ascertaining source credibility, the media are structurally biased towards very powerful and privileged sources who become 'over-accessed'.

It is worth noting that *The Star* had more articles on treatment issues than *The Sowetan.* The Star had 56 while *The Sowetan* had 31 articles. This does suggest that during the study period, *The Star* reported more on Antiretrovirals than *The Sowetan*. Judgement can be made based on either publication's reporting and it can be assumed that the fact that there was no designated health reporter by *The Sowetan* could explain the fewer number of articles written on HIV treatment.

Evident is the fact that most of the articles analysed are written by political/general reporters as opposed to AIDS or health reporters. This was also not surprisingly noted by Shepperson (2000) when he did his study on the coverage of HIV/AIDS news in South Africa. Perhaps what media organisations need to do is get specialised reporters on health or even HIV/AIDS and short of that to train their journalists on HIV/AIDS issues so as to better the quality of the coverage of HIV/AIDS in general. Specialised reporters will help improve the problem of the use of sources because they will be better informed on what is required for quality and effective HIV/AIDS news coverage.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has among other issues highlighted source strategies that dictate the acquiring of media opportunities by source organisations. It is clear that the financial, institutional and cultural capital of sources, are important determinants of their capacity to shape media accounts. Schlesinger's (1990) angle on the 'theory of dominance' was important to this study because it identifies with the notion that non-official sources can sometimes dominate and even set the news agenda. While, non-official sources did not exactly dominate in terms of the number of times they were used, it is evident that they are being used more often than they have in the past. Non-official sources like AIDS activists, opposition parties, NGOs etc appeared to be key sources in many articles that were analysed. In the case of the Treatment Action Campaign, they are frequently used as sources and they also appear to define HIV/AIDS treatment news to a great extent. Therefore, Hall's (1978) model which is blind to the question of source competition and which implies that those dismissively lumped together as 'alternative' are of virtually no interest at all, can be contested by the findings of these study. Schlesinger (1990), has noted that empirical research

shows that Hall (1978) and his colleagues views may be integrated pre-emptively into 'primary definers' definitions', thereby modifying them and at the same time indicating that the boundaries between sources are not always as impermeable as the conception of primacy would imply. Indeed, the findings of this research report indicate that the position of sources can be dynamic; in which case Schlesinger's (1990) position provides greater exploratory value to the issue of sources in the news.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

This report set out to establish if there was a growing use of non-official/alternative sources in the sourcing of HIV/AIDS treatment news. It also set to demonstrate the range of sources being used as well as the value these sources bring to a story. This was achieved through the analysis of 87 articles on HIV treatment from the two dailies *The Star* and *The Sowetan* and through the findings of the interviews that were done with four respondents.

The study began with an introduction that laid down the rationale of the study which basically pointed out that in the past official sources have been assumed to dominate in terms of who gets used as a source. The theoretical framework of this report is therefore centred on a criticism by Schlesinger of the concept of 'primary definition' by Stuart Hall (1978) and his colleagues. This concept suggests that the 'powerful' sources, which are the official sources, have the greatest power to define topics. The explanation for the ability of the powerful to primarily define news in terms of their preferred agendas is identified in terms of the pressures of news deadlines and the inclination of journalists to regard non-official sources as lower in the 'hierarchy of credibility' (Hall et al., 1978). However, the underprivileged position of non-official sources has been simply taken as a given rather than established through empirical investigation. While Schlesinger (1990) is critical of the way in which the concept of primary definition has been employed, he also insists that an empirical exploration of the media opportunities available to a variety of potential news sources can still be conducted 'from within a theory of dominance'. In other words it is possible to show through the theory of dominance that opportunities exist for a variety of news sources and not just official sources as has been implied by the concept of primary definition by Hall and his colleagues (1978).

Schlesinger's (1990) point is valid because this study has shown that it is possible that non-official sources can be primary definers of topics, if they use effective strategies. It was suggested by the case of the Terrence Higgins Trust of Britain and now the case of the Treatment Action Campaign in South Africa is suggesting that this is possible.

In the recent past, there has been the frequent use of non-official or alternative sources in the coverage of HIV treatment news in South Africa. These sources include activist groups, NGOs, People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA), opposition parties and other politically marginal and sub-ordinate groups. It is worth noting that these sources will more often than not connote some sense of marginality.

This report has demonstrated that the dominant sources in the articles analysed were the official sources. Meanwhile a relatively large use of non-official sources was also noted. It was also not surprisingly noted that the Minister of Health Manto Tshabalala-Msimang was often a key source while government spokespersons were also very frequently used as sources. However, activist groups like the Treatment Action Campaign, the AIDS Law Project, etc and NGOs like the MSF have also become frequently used sources. The voices of opposition parties like the Democratic Alliance through Mike Waters (spokesperson on AIDS) and the former New National Party will also often be heard. It is however rather surprising that the use of academic sources is not as high as would be expected in relation to the rest of the official sources. This is puzzling considering the fact that academics are experts and should therefore be frequently used as sources.

Nevertheless, even if there is a shift towards the use of non-official sources, official sources continue to be the main regular source for journalists. This is perhaps because they ultimately represent among the strongest institutions in the country and therefore their views and comments remain vital to society. At the same time some journalists claim that if they maintain a good rapport with these official sources, they are not as difficult to access as might have been implied in the case of government sources.

The study has reflected that Zackie Achmat the head of the TAC and Nathan Geffen, a spokesperson for the TAC, are among key sources of HIV/AIDS treatment news. Owing to the fact that Achmat and Geffen can be cited in almost every HIV treatment article, the analysis of the study suggests that it is possible that the TAC is viewed as an ‘expert’ source. This is one reason why most HIV articles have utilized them as their key sources. This is not difficult to understand because the Treatment Action Campaign has greatly shaped the position of HIV/AIDS in this country. Some

positive changes have happened on account of their continued persistence on treatment issues.

Nevertheless, other smaller activist groups, or AIDS organisations that also deal with treatment among other issues feel that their voices are not being heard. One wonders whether these other groups are being given an opportunity to voice their concerns. Perhaps it is time that more voices were given an ear because Susie Clark the Senior Program manager of the AIDS Consortium feels that not all relevant voices are being given access. This can probably be achieved through the use of a wider range of all sources. Logically, using various sources only broadens and enriches the HIV debate in this country and in turn informs all relevant and interested parties. At the same time it ensures that the readers do not get weary of having the same people talk about the same issues everyday. The public needs information on various angles of HIV and this cannot be accomplished by using the same sources repeatedly.

However, journalists cannot be blamed for using the same sources constantly because the findings of this report have indicated that some sources are often not available for comment. Some sources also do not have their facts right because they do not have sufficient knowledge of issues they would like to comment upon. It is clear that no journalist wants to appear as though they do not know what they are writing about, and some sources might be the cause of such embarrassment.

Schlesinger (1990) reiterates that it is important to note the structural inequality between organisations in the field. These inequalities are the outcome of the financial, institutional and cultural resources available to source organisations. Source organisations appear to have recognised this fact because they have learnt how to gain access to media opportunities. Using effective strategies, they are slowly becoming 'primary definers' of topics. Most alternative sources for example will ensure that they have well researched facts so as to gain a good level of credibility. In addition they will be available for comment, making sure that journalists do not have to look too far for them. Some will also look for ways of being at the centre of news by engaging with powerful institutions like government and so on. Having a unique cause or being experts at particular things also helps bringing focus and attention to a source.

The Treatment Action Campaign is an excellent example of the implementation of the above strategies. The TAC are always available for comment, they have well researched information and they constantly engage with government whether by opposing them, taking them to court or repeatedly challenging them. Aggressive campaigning which they conduct through marches and demonstrations also greatly assist them in acquiring the media attention they require to get their message heard. The use of articulate spokespeople is another strategy that they may use to get themselves media attention. At the same time being by large the only treatment specific campaign group in South Africa already places them at an advantage. This suggests that just like TAC other smaller groups can also through strategies like these, grow to become key sources. In other words, this report has generally established that there has been a growing use of non-official sources recently as compared to the past where as was noted by Shepperson (2000) there was a heavier reliance on the use of official sources. In his study, HIV/AIDS Reporting in South Africa: an analysis of the response of the press, Shepperson (2000) noted that in the past, reporting on HIV/AIDS had principally been sourced from press releases, press conferences and wire services. He further noted that " the number of reports generated from newspapers' own inquiry and based on primary information sought out independently of official sources, falls far below the number generated on the initiative of instances outside the news room," (2000:12). This means that at the time when he wrote his report, most information used to write the news stories or reports that he analysed had been dependent on official sources.

Another interesting aspect of sourcing of HIV news has to do with people living with HIV/AIDS. These sources are relatively under-accessed. However, when PLHAs get used as sources, black females will most often be used. Black men will be used as sources that bring factual information while the black women will be used as sources that bring the emotional dimension. According to a study done by the Siyam'kela policy project[14], studies have shown that women tend to be used to convey emotions

[14] Siyam'kela, January- March 2003, Examining HIV/AIDS stigma in selected South African media. A Summary. A joint project of the policy project, the Centre for the Study of AIDS at the University of Pretoria, USAID and the Chief Directorate: HIV/AIDS and TB, National Department of Health designed to explore HIV related stigma, an aspect of the AIDS epidemic, which has had a profoundly negative effect on the response to people living with and/or affected by HIV/AIDS.

into a story as opposed to hard facts. The same study also notes that no white person living with HIV/AIDS was used as a source in articles that were assessed over a three-month period. This might create an assumption that white people are not living with HIV. This assumption is even dangerous to the white community who might assume that they are immune to AIDS. It can be suggested from such evidence as well as the findings of this report, that the media could be perpetuating the notion not only that AIDS is a black woman's disease but also that it is not a disease of the white community.

The media seldom use people living with HIV/AIDS as sources. This may be because they are difficult to access or because there are a limited number of PLHAs willing to talk to the media openly about their status. Whatever the case, evidence suggests that the print media seldom use people living with HIV/AIDS as sources even though with their experience are an important source of information about the epidemic. If journalists are looking for credibility, then PLHAs are who they should be using as sources. Statistics from the UN 2004 Global report on AIDS, showed that women were increasingly at greater risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. As of December 2003, women accounted for nearly 50% of all people living with HIV/AIDS and in Sub-Saharan Africa they accounted for 57%. Clearly, the disease seems to have affected more black women in Africa than any other group. However, if the media gives PLHAs a black female face, they risk perpetuating an already pervasive stereotype. Although, some factors appear to have led to the vulnerability of the black woman in Africa including socio-cultural and biological factors, it must be remembered that once upon a time, the gay man was the victim of a HIV/AIDS stereotype. Today the media appear to have dismissed this notion.

Ultimately if the media are looking to help in managing the AIDS pandemic, they should refrain from perpetuating any stereotypes in relation to HIV/AIDS. AIDS is a sensitive topic, and it should be treated as such. In the sourcing of HIV news, the media must utilize a wider range of sources in order to provide the public with a more realistic picture of HIV/AIDS.

In conclusion, the argument of this study which was based on Schlesinger's (1990) critic of Hall's (1978) concept of 'primary definition'- which suggests that the power of alternative sources cannot be underestimated – has been supported by the results of the study. The report has suggested that the Treatment Action Campaign, which are an alternative source, have through the employment of a range of different strategies, succeeded in defining HIV/AIDS and in particular treatment issues in South Africa. This has also been demonstrated by the success of other alternative sources like the Terrence Higgins Trust of Britain (another alternative source dealing with AIDS issues).

To gain more insight into the issue of this official and non-official sources and their dynamism, more studies need to be conducted to determine if there is a definite divide between the two categories. Further research is also needed to determine if and when non-official sources begin to be official sources. These studies should most probably be conducted using the 'theory of dominance' as suggested by Schlesinger (1990), although it must be emphasized that the model will have to be much less rigid than the original concept of 'primary definition'.

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Websites:

The following websites deal with HIV/AIDS treatment news:

www.aidsinfo.nih.gov/

www.aidsnews.org

www.aids.org

www.avert.org/treatmentnews.htm

www.cadre.org

www.doh.gov.za/aids/index.html

www.fda.gov

www.nlm.nih.gov

www.accessmed-msf.org

www.journ-aids.org

www.hivsa.com/phru

www.sahealthinfo.org

www.samedical.org

www.tac.org